Contributions To Phenomenology 87

Kwok-Ying Lau

Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding

Toward a New Cultural Flesh

Springer

Contributions To Phenomenology

In Cooperation with The Center
for Advanced Research in Phenomenology

Volume 87

Scope

The purpose of the series is to serve as a vehicle for the pursuit of phenomenological research across a broad spectrum, including cross-over developments with other fields of inquiry such as the social sciences and cognitive science. Since its establishment in 1987, *Contributions to Phenomenology* has published more than 80 titles on diverse themes of phenomenological philosophy. In addition to welcoming monographs and collections of papers in established areas of scholarship, the series encourages original work in phenomenology. The breadth and depth of the Series reflects the rich and varied significance of phenomenological thinking for seminal questions of human inquiry as well as the increasingly international reach of phenomenological research.

The series is published in cooperation with The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology.

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/5811

Kwok-Ying Lau

Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding

Toward a New Cultural Flesh

Springer

Kwok-Ying Lau
Department of Philosophy
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, Hong Kong

ISSN 0923-9545 ISSN 2215-1915 (electronic)
Contributions To Phenomenology
ISBN 978-3-319-44762-9 ISBN 978-3-319-44764-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016954428

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG Switzerland

Preface

The studies collected in this volume were written between 1996 and 2016. While most chapters were originally written in English, some of them were first conceived in Chinese or even in French. They are all published here in English after revision or further elaboration. All of these studies have been first presented in conferences or lectures held respectively in Basel, Beijing, Delray Beach (Florida), Dublin, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Kyoto, Prague, Seoul, and Taipei. During all these conferences or lectures, I have greatly benefitted from exchanges with colleagues and friends coming from the five continents of the planet (East Asia, Europe, North America, South America, and Australia). Their comments and criticisms are constant sources of further reflection and improvement. These studies are thus themselves the fruits of intercultural understanding.

There are a lot of people to whom I would like to express my gratitude. While it is impossible to name every individual here, I would like to thank in particular Prof. Elmar Holenstein and Prof. Kah Kyung Cho who are the first to have encouraged me to advance on the road to intercultural understanding in philosophy through phenomenology. I also thank my friends of P.E.A.CE (Phenomenology for East-Asia CirclE) and C.A.R.P. (Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, USA) from whom I received the most constant support since almost two decades. My thanks go also to academic and administrative colleagues of my home department, the Department of Philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who always provide me with the help and support I need, especially in terms of conference organization and conference participation. To my family, I thank them for their tolerance to my frequent absence from home because of research and conference trips. I also thank the two anonymous reviewers' encouraging comments and suggestions for revisions, which have been seriously taken into consideration. Last but not the least, I am grateful to Dermot Moran and Nicolas de Warren, General Editors of the series Contributions to Phenomenology, who have gracefully accepted my work to be published in this prestigious series. Phenomenology is a rich garden of cultural diversity. This book is the witness of the author's humble contribution to its irrigation.

Shatin, Hong Kong — Kwok-Ying Lau

Contents

1 Introduction: Cultural Flesh and Intercultural Understanding: A Phenomenological Approach 1
1.1 The Need for Intercultural Understanding 1
1.2 Antithetic Aspects of Husserlian Phenomenology with Respect to Intercultural Understanding: the Closed-Nature of Husserl's Idea of Philosophy and the Openness of the Phenomenological Method and Practices 3
1.3 Three Aspects of Intercultural Understanding in Philosophy 9
1.4 Cultural Flesh and Its Cultivation: The Way to Enter into the Horizon of Another Culture 15

2 Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality 21
2.1 A Double Epoché 23
2.2 Husserl: Double Exclusion 24
2.3 Derridian Deconstruction: Cultural Transgression Forbidden 27
2.4 Para-deconstruction: Deconstruction and Re-appropriation 29
2.5 Lévi-Strauss: Hybridity of Cultural Formations 31
2.6 Merleau-Ponty: From the Pre-objective World to Inter-worlds 32

3 To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice to Chinese Philosophy? A Phenomenological Reading of Laozi 35
3.1 Contrasting Attitudes in the Western Representation of Chinese Philosophy 36
3.1.1 Daoist Philosophy as Anti-rationalism 36
3.1.2 Philosophical Daoism as One of "Heidegger's Hidden Sources" 37

3.2 Is a Phenomenological Reading of Chinese Philosophy Committed to Eurocentrism? Return to Husserl's Eurocentric Conception of Philosophy 40
3.3 Elements of a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi 42
3.3.1 *Dao* as Inchoative Nature 42
3.3.2 Deployment of the *Dao*: Dialectic and Retrieval 46
3.3.3 Characteristics of the *Dao*: Vacuity and Quietude, Tenderness and Weakness 48
3.4 Concluding Remarks 51

4 Husserl, Buddhism and the Crisis of European Sciences 53
4.1 Husserl, Hegel and the Eurocentric Conception of Philosophy 54
4.2 Husserl's Praise of Buddhist Scriptures 56
4.3 Buddha: The Eastern Socrates? 59
4.4 Husserl's Conception of Philosophy, the Crisis of European Sciences and Buddhism 64

5 Jan Patočka: Critical Consciousness and Non-Eurocentric Philosopher of the Phenomenological Movement 67
5.1 Introduction: Patočka as Non-Eurocentric Phenomenological Philosopher 67
5.2 Patočka's Significance for the Chinese Philosophical Community Today 69
5.3 Patočka as the Critical Consciousness of the Phenomenological Movement 70
5.4 Post-European Humanity and the Aporia of the Meaning of History 77
5.5 Phenomenology of the Natural World and Its Promise 79
5.6 In the Place of a Conclusion 82

6 Europe Beyond Europe: Patočka's Concept of Care for the Soul and Mencius. An Intercultural Consideration 85
6.1 Introduction 85
6.2 Patočka's Critical Reading of Husserl's Diagnosis of the Crisis of European Humanity 87
6.3 Care for the Soul and the Philosophical Anthropology Underlying the Mythical Framework of the Greeks 93
6.4 The Philosophical-Anthropological Framework of Mencius' Theory of the Fourfold Human Spiritual Disposition: A Chinese Counterpart to the Idea of Care for the Soul? 98

7 Disenchanted World-View and Intercultural Understanding: From Husserl Through Kant to Chinese Culture 103
7.1 Disenchanted World-View and Intercultural Understanding: Eurocentrism of Husserl's Idea of Philosophy and Rediscovery of Certain Moment of Its "Rational Kernel" 104

7.2 Modern Science and the Disenchanted World-View: From Weber Through Nietzsche Back to Kant 108
7.3 Chinese Culture's Contribution to the Disenchanted World-View: The Chinese Chronology Controversy and the Chinese Rites Controversy in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Europe 113
7.3.1 The Chinese Chronology Controversy 115
7.3.2 The Chinese Rites Controversy and the Debate Around the Nature of Chinese Culture 117
7.4 Conclusion 124

8 Self-Transformation and the Ethical *Telos*: Orientative Philosophy in Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl 125
8.1 Introduction: Hegemony of "Cognitive Philosophy" and the Rise of "Orientative Philosophy" in Contemporary West 125
8.2 Lao Sze-Kwang's Concept of "Orientative Philosophy" with Zhuangzi and Mencius as Examples 128
8.3 "Self-Transformation" and Orientative Philosophy in the Final Foucault: Ethical Turn and Self-Transformation of the Subject 135
8.3.1 Contribution and Insufficiency of Archaeology of Knowledge and Genealogy of Power in the Earlier Foucault 135
8.3.2 Foucault's Ethical Turn: *Askēsis* (Techniques of the Self) and the Formation of the Autonomous Ethical Subject 139
8.3.3 Techniques of the Self in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy: Morality of Autonomy and Aesthetic of Existence through Self-Mastery and Askēsis (Orientative Philosophy in Twofold Sense) 141
8.3.4 Ancient Western Philosophical Practice as Spirituality or Spiritual Exercise 144
8.4 Phenomenological Epoché: Husserl's Philosophical Practice as Orientative Philosophy? 146
8.5 Concluding Remarks 150

9 Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: From Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and Their Intercultural Implications 153
9.1 Nature, Culture and History: Lévi-Strauss' Challenge to Phenomenology as Philosophy of Consciousness 154
9.1.1 What Is Nature? 154
9.1.2 The Nature-Culture Distinction 155
9.1.3 Structural Method's Challenge to Philosophies of Subject 159

9.2 Merleau-Ponty's Response to Lévi-Strauss: From the Nature-Culture Distinction to Brute Being and Savage Spirit 160
9.2.1 Structural Anthropology as a Mode of Thinking Close to Phenomenology 160
9.2.2 Savage Mind and the Emergence of Culture and History: Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty's Ontological Search for Brute Being and Savage Spirit of the Primordial Order 162
9.3 Intercultural Implications of Structural Anthropology: Merleau-Ponty's Reading 165
9.3.1 Psychoanalysis as Myth and the Primitive Side of Western Civilization 165
9.3.2 Distance and Other Cultures as Co-constitutive of Total Being and Total Truth 166
9.3.3 Broadening of Reason by Lateral Universals 167
9.3.4 Indian and Chinese Philosophies as Other Relationships to Being That the West Has Not Opted for 169
9.4 Conclusion 171

10 The Flesh: From Ontological Employment to Intercultural Employment 173
10.1 Introduction 174
10.2 Has the Notion of Flesh Any Theoretical Validity? 176
10.3 Going Beyond Metaphysical Dualism While Taking into Account Ontological Duality: The Flesh as Two-Dimensional Being 179
10.4 The Flesh or Thinking the Domain of the In-between: Interpenetration, Interdependence, Intertwining, Encroachment, Intercorporeity, Interworld 186
10.5 Interworld: Explication by Intercultural Experience 188
10.6 Cultivation of a Cultural Flesh as Condition of Possibility of Intercultural Understanding 190
10.7 In the Place of a Conclusion 191

11 Conclusion: Toward a New Cultural Flesh 193
11.1 Recapitulation 193
11.2 Further Reflections on the Concept of Cultural Flesh 196
11.2.1 Lévinas' Appraisal of the Concept of Flesh and the Enigma of Ontological Separation 196
11.2.2 Non-sympathetic Reception of the Notion of Flesh by Deleuze and Derrida 200
11.2.3 Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology of Flesh and Its Theocentric Concept of Life, History and Culture 206

11.2.4 Philosophy of Pure Immanence and Eurocentrism of Deleuzian Geophilosophy 210
11.2.5 Advantage of Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh for a Theory of Intercultural Understanding 216
11.2.6 What Is New in the Concept of Cultural Flesh? 225

Bibliography 231

Author Index 243

Subject Index 245

Chapter 1
Introduction: Cultural Flesh and Intercultural Understanding: A Phenomenological Approach

This book aims at promoting intercultural understanding in philosophy as a philosophical response to the intensification of conflicts among cultures in the Twenty-First Century. This introductory chapter explains the phenomenological approach adopted to carry out such a task. It will begin by presenting the antithetic aspects of Husserlian phenomenology in regard to intercultural understanding in philosophy. It will point out the closed nature of Husserl's Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria" and the openness of the phenomenological method exemplified by the heritage of the phenomenological movement as the collective result of concrete philosophical practices of its classical authors. This will be followed by exposition of the three aspects of intercultural understanding in philosophy undertaken throughout the whole book, namely: critique of the Eurocentric Idea of philosophy; reflections on the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in philosophy; and concrete exercises of intercultural understanding in philosophy with regard to doctrines, theses, concepts and methods between the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions. The novel concept of cultural flesh coined by the present author will be introduced and a preliminary explanation of how this concept can facilitate the entrance into the horizons of other cultures will be undertaken.

1.1 The Need for Intercultural Understanding

The need for and even the imperative of intercultural understanding in philosophy can be considered at least from the following two aspects.

Firstly, the intensification of conflicts among civilizations and cultures in the twenty-first century in parallel to the acceleration of the pace of globalization is an undeniable fact. This is especially evident since the "September-11" event and the end of the domination of a single hegemonic power in world affairs. From the perspective of realizing the Ideal of "Perpetual Peace", a moral, political and historical task assigned by Kant more than 200 years ago to humankind who understands

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_1

herself as rational being, intercultural understanding is part of the entire immensely challenging but necessary work of reducing conflicts and promoting understanding among rival cultures. Even though we are not sure the exact extent to which intercultural understanding in philosophy can contribute to accomplish such a task, as philosophers in the planetary age we have a duty not to neglect it.

Secondly, since the middle of the nineteenth century, philosophy as a high order reflective activity enters the age of crisis both in the West and in China. The classical ways of doing philosophy in each of these traditions, being unable to take serious consideration of the thinking of the other tradition, have been questioned more and more in the face of the complex reality of the contemporary global intercultural constellations. Face to this crisis, to appropriate intellectual resources from different cultures and to pursue intercultural understanding in philosophy is a possible though not at all easy tentative that deserves our attention. In the Western philosophical community, more and more people realize that the Hegelian mode of understanding philosophy as the immanent deployment of *Spirit* within Western Culture is simply unable to cope with the complex setting of the very divergent intellectual manifestations in the present planetary age. Hegel's extremely biased view on the traditional Eastern mind as a rudimentary philosophical spirit is simply unable to appreciate the rich and diverse cultural and intellectual traditions of India, China, Japan and other Asian peoples. Even though Hegel was the first modern European philosopher to have proposed a theory of world history, both his conception of history of philosophy and philosophy of history are hindrance to intercultural understanding (cf. *infra*, Chap. 4).

On the other hand, in East-Asian countries such as China and Japan, their traditional way of understanding philosophy and thinking as a purely national affair has been severely challenged by the necessity to initiate the reorganization of classification of knowledge and the introduction of the modern Western University, all these brought about by the continuous influx of modern technologies and the industrial mode of production from the West. Since the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, a specific academic division called "philosophy" based on the model of Western philosophy has come into place in universities in Japan and China respectively. In the case of universities in China, the newly formed departments of philosophy, while introducing the teaching of Western philosophy, reconsidered the teaching and understanding of traditional Chinese thought from the perspective of conceptual analysis and theoretical construction. The new disciplines of "Chinese Philosophy" and "History of Chinese Philosophy" were formed under which Chinese classics traditionally classified under the heading of "jing" (「經部」, "Canonical Classics") and "zi" (「子部」, "Ancient Philosophers") began to be read and studied in the new light of philosophical understanding and criticism. This is a first step toward intercultural development in the realm of philosophy in the sense that traditional Chinese classics and the thinking elements embedded there are read, discussed and researched with constant reference to the existence or not of any counterpart in Western philosophy. After almost a century of collective endeavor, doing philosophy in the Chinese speaking communities today is already engaging in one way or another in cross-cultural or intercultural understanding.

1.2 Antithetic Aspects of Husserlian Phenomenology with Respect to Intercultural Understanding: the Closed-Nature of Husserl's Idea of Philosophy and the Openness of the Phenomenological Method and Practices

To the present author who has learnt to think rigorously mainly through phenomenological philosophy, he has been under an immense tension while he undertook research on intercultural understanding in philosophy. On the one hand, he is aware that there are a lot of universal elements in phenomenology. To give just a few notorious examples: the maxim of "back to the things themselves" ("zurück zu den Sachen selbst") is a guarantee to rigorous cognition against mere conjecture or pure speculation. The method of epoché and phenomenological reduction which suspends judgment on any unexamined assertions and unfounded believes is a methodological device to save-guard ourselves from cultural and intellectual prejudices. The various descriptive themes such as the intentional structure of consciousness, the body as the concrete knowing, acting and feeling subject, the world and its horizons, the universal form of inner time consciousness at the basis of all forms of conscious activities: all these themes unfolded by Husserl and his German and French followers have a reach far beyond the strict cultural soil upon which they took root (we will return to this point later in greater details). For they are methodological and thematic elements underlying the most basic structure of our pre-reflective and thinking experiences which exhibit a high degree of universality. With all these universal elements, phenomenology will occupy a privileged position in the work of intercultural understanding in philosophy. However, the late Husserl's formulation of the Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria", which he believed to be a Greek heritage, is evidently full of Eurocentric overtones. This Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria" is a severe obstacle to intercultural understanding in philosophy, for with this Idea in mind the father of phenomenology denies other forms of philosophy, such as those of India and China, as genuine philosophy.

Why does phenomenology in general and Husserlian phenomenology in particular manifest such antithetic aspects in front of the task of intercultural understanding in philosophy? Expressed in the terms of Lao Sze-Kwang (劳思光, 1927–2012), one of the most productive and respected philosophers in contemporary Cultural China, the above state of affairs can be understood by the concepts of "open elements" (「開放元素」) and "closed elements" (「封閉元素」).[1] Lao proposes to understand the essential structure of a philosophical system by means of this

[1] 劳思光:《中國文化路向問題的新檢討》 (台北: 東大圖書) (Lao Sze-Kwang, *Chinese Culture's Way Ahead*, Taipei: Dong-Dai Publishing House, 1993), pp. 184–187; 劳思光: 《中國之路向新編》, 劉國英編 (香港: 中文大學出版社 (Lao Sze-Kwang, *China's Way Out*, new and augmented edition, ed. Kwok-ying Lau, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2000), pp. 43–44;劳思光:《危機世界與新希望世紀──再論當代哲學與文化》, 劉國英編(香港:中文大學出版社 (Lao Sze-Kwang: *A World of Crisis and the New Century of Hope*: *On Contemporary Philosophy and Culture* (*II*), ed. Kwok-ying Lau, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), pp. 40, 54–57.

conceptual pair inspired by Kantian critical philosophy. To Lao every theoretical system with a certain degree of explanatory power contains necessarily open elements which are more or less universal. However, since every system of thought is necessarily arisen out of a specific social, historical and cultural context, such a system contains by the same token theoretical elements which, bound to this context, exhibit a degree of universality more or less limited. When the historical and cultural context within which a philosophical system was born has changed, the explanatory power of these theoretical elements will diminish as their degree of universality decreases. They become the closed elements of this system when they have no more or little explanatory validity.

If we use Lao's conceptual pair of "open elements" and "closed elements" to examine Husserl's phenomenology, it will not be difficult to see that his Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria" is precisely a closed element. For when Husserl consciously advocates pure theoretical thinking practiced by the Greeks as the permanent guiding idea of philosophy, he is just making a determining judgment on philosophy as a kind of high order reflective thinking arisen in a particular cultural context and in a particular age. The way in which this determining judgment operates is top-down, in the manner of natural laws. It posits a predetermined idea as the supreme principle of judgment; everything that is not conformed to this principle is judged to be unqualified as philosophy and is thus excluded from the list of genuine philosophies. In fact a determining judgment is one which does not tolerate difference. Fixing one model of Greek thought, namely that of pure theoretical thinking, as the determining idea of philosophy in general results necessarily in the exclusion from the list of philosophical activities of all forms of reflective activities which consider pure theoretical thinking neither as of the highest interest nor as the basic paradigm. For sure these latter forms of reflective activities are not foreign to the Greeks; but judged from Husserl's Idea of philosophy they could never occupy any significant position in the Greek culture.

Is there philosophy ever in China? Can traditional Chinese thinking claim to be philosophy?[2] Against all those who show a skeptical or even negative attitude face to this question, Lao Sze-Kwang has proposed the term "orientative philosophy" to understand Chinese philosophy properly. To Lao traditional Chinese thinking deserves the name of philosophy too, for she is also a kind of reflective activity of the higher order. In traditional Chinese philosophy the theoretical work of conceptual distinctions and methodological considerations also exists. However, these theoretical endeavors have a higher aim: they serve the moral-practical purpose of "self-transformation" and "transformation of the world", whereas in the Western philosophical tradition the epistemological leitmotiv, i.e. the quest for knowledge,

[2] Since the very beginning of the Twenty-First Century, there is a vast debate among Chinese intellectuals and philosophers around the problem of "The Legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy". Some of the most important contributions to the debate are translated into English and published in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol. 37 (2005–2006), No. 1–3.

constitutes the supreme interest.[3] That is why Western philosophy is essentially cognitive in essence to which the practico-moral interest is subordinate. Yet in the eyes of Husserl, though Chinese thinking is reflective thinking, but since Chinese thinkers do not share the Greeks' Idea of Philosophy and do not have pure theoretical thinking as their supreme interest, the work of Chinese philosophers cannot be called genuine philosophy. Husserl is even of the opinion that to speak of "Chinese philosophy" and "Indian philosophy" is "a mistake and a falsification of their sense."[4]

Husserl's determination of the Idea of philosophy in terms of "pure thêoria" not only denies the factual existence of Indian and Chinese philosophies, but also excludes other modes of philosophy within Europe. It is now well known that the contemporary French historian of Ancient Western philosophy Pierre Hadot has revisited a lot of Greek and Roman philosophical works since the 1950s. He found out that one of the most constant concerns of Ancient Western philosophers is focused on the moral and practical dimensions of human life. Hadot argues with abundant textual support that philosophy in Greek and Roman antiquity is essentially a form of spiritual exercise whose ultimate end is "to achieve a state which is practically inaccessible to humankind: wisdom … which demanded a radical conversion, a radical transformation of the individual's way of being."[5] Thus the veritable supreme maxim of philosophy is not the traditionally supposed slogan "know thyself", but rather "care for your life or your way of being". That is why Hadot proposes the formulation "philosophy as a way of life" ("la philosophie comme manière de vivre") to summarize the typical essence of Ancient Western philosophy.[6] We know too today that the studies of Hadot had played a significant role in the "ethical turn" of the late Foucault, in particular in the thematization of "askēsis"

[3] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy: An Inquiry and a Proposal", in *Understanding the Chinese Mind. The Philosophical Roots*, ed. Robert E. Allinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 277.

[4] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962), p. 331; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 284–285. The famous contemporary German phenomenological philosopher Klaus Held shares a similar position as Husserl: "It has become fashionable to call every achievement of knowledge and every kind of deeper thought within the tradition of the non-European high cultures 'sciences' or 'philosophy'. However, one thereby levels an essential cultural distinction… So long as knowledge remains in the service of life bound within particular horizons, however, and has not yet been carried out by the 'theoretical' openness to the world *as* world that developed out of philosophy and science in their unity, philosophy and science in the original European meaning of these concepts are not in play." K. Held, "The Origin of Europe with the Greek Discovery of the World", *Epoché*, Vol. 7, Issue I (Fall 2002), p. 90.

[5] Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1st ed. 1993, Paris: Institut d'Études augustiniennes; augmented ed. 2002, Paris : Albin Michel), p. 290; *Philosophy As a Way of Life* : *Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. *Arnold I. Davidson* (Oxford & New York : Blackwell, 1995), p. 265.

[6] Pierre Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre. Entretiens avec Jeanne Carlier et Arnold I. Davidson* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001); Eng. trans. *Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

in the later volumes of his *History of Sexuality* as well as in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, a course of lectures delivered at the Collège de France at the same period.[7] In *L'usage des plaisirs*, Foucault redefines the essence of philosophical activity from Antiquity to today in terms exceedingly close to those of Hadot: "The tentative (essai) which shows the living body of philosophy (le corps vivant de la philosophie) should be understood as the testifying exercise which brings about the transformation of the self (épreuve modificatrice de soi-même) within the operation of truth,… i.e., an 'ascesis', an exercise of the self, in thinking'."[8] In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault uses even the term "spirituality", after Hadot, to name the kind of philosophical activity he aims at: "Spirituality postulates …that for the subject to have right of access to truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point, other than himself… This conversion, this transformation of the subject … is a work of the self on the self, an elaboration of the self by the self, a progressive transformation of the self by the self for which one takes responsibility in a long labour of ascesis (*askēsis*)."[9] The influence of Hadot on the final Foucault can be no more evident: to both of them philosophy is never a pure theoretical entreprise.

In other words, if we accept Husserl's Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria", not only the existence of Indian and Chinese philosophies is denied, would also be ruled out as philosophical works a significant number of important original and influential works of contemporary Western thinkers. Such would be the fate of the works of the last Foucault, the entire mature works of Lévinas, many of Derrida's later writings, as well as Rorty's writings after his Neo-pragmatic turn. All these works share the common feature of reversing the primacy of the cognitive-theoretical interest in favor of the ethical-practical concern. In fact this tendency of the primacy of the ethical-practical concern in contemporary Western philosophy can be traced back to Kant, one of the favorite philosophical forerunners of Husserl, in his famous formulation of the principle of the "primacy of the practical reason".[10] Seen within this

[7] Michel Foucault mentions explicitly Hadot in *L'usage des plaisirs*, *Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 14; *The Use of Pleasure*, *The History of Sexuality*, *Vol. 2*, Eng. trans. R. Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 8. The version presented by Hadot himself can be found in "Un dialogue interrompu avec Michel Foucault. Convergences et divergences" and "Réflexions sur la notion de « culture de soi »", both articles are now collected in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, *op. cit*., pp. 305–312 and 323–332.

[8] Michel Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, *Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 15, English translation by the present author. The English version provided in *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 9, fails to capture Foucault's key expression "épreuve modificatrice de soi-même" by rendering it as "the essay or test by which one undergoes changes".

[9] Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2001), p. 17; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Eng. trans. G. Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), pp. 15–16.

[10] Kant formulates this conception in the section entitled "On the Primacy of Pure Practical Reason in its Connection with Speculative Reason" in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (5: 191): Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 236–238. Yet a similar idea has already been expressed in the First Section "On the ultimate end of the pure use of our reason" in the chapter on "The Canon of Pure Reason" in the "Transcendental Doctrine of Method" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A798/B826-A801-B829):

context, the narrowness and exclusiveness of the determining judgment at the root of Husserl's Idea of philosophy as "pure thêoria"—universalization and generalization without condition of a particular form of philosophy born on a specific historical and cultural soil—can be no more manifest.

However, Husserlian phenomenology in practice has many open elements. They are shown first of all in its operative concepts and methods. Through the vigorous execution of epoché and reduction, phenomenology of Husserlian inspiration is able to get rid of unexamined psychological, cultural and theoretical prejudices as far as possible, and bring us back to the most basic structural invariants, the so-called "essences", of all types of human experience. The prescription of description prior to interpretation is a methodological guarantee to let speak the things themselves and not our unfounded opinions. When phenomenological description is undertaken, it proceeds from concrete cases of experiential givenness and aims at finding out the invariable structural elements or components of such an experiential type by the guiding method of eidetic variation. In contrast to the top-down method of determining judgment, the operative procedure of eidetic phenomenological description shares the characteristics of a reflective judgment in the Kantian sense. It starts from the examination of a variety of given different experiential cases before arriving at the conclusive determination of the common structural characteristics of the experiential type in question. In doing so, the results obtained from the phenomenological descriptive method exhibit a sensibly higher degree of universality. Essentials of the heritage of the phenomenological movement are the results of such descriptive vigor. Husserl's descriptions of the intentional structural modes of consciousness and the horizonal and the ontologically stratified structure of the world, his unfolding of the triply interwoven structure of internal time consciousness as the most basic formal structure of intentional life and as the condition of possibility of memory and reflection, his discovery of writing as the condition of possibility of the ideality of meaning as well as of historical consciousness and historical sedimentation of objects of ideality in general: these are among the most celebrated results of the phenomenological heritage. The descriptions of the ontological structure of Dasein and the body-subject as being-in-the-world undertaken respectively by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty belong also to the most well-known flowers and fruits in the phenomenological garden.[11] All these phenomenological acquisitions

"The final aim to which in the end the speculation of reason in its transcendental use is directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God… Thus the entire armament of reason … is in fact directed only at these three problems. These themselves, however, have in turn their more remote aim, namely, *what is to be done* if the will is free … Now since these concern our conduct in relation to the highest end, the ultimate aim of nature which provides for us wisely in the disposition of reason is properly directed only to what is moral." Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and Eng. trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 673–675.

[11] Jean Héring, one of Husserl's earliest students in the Göttingen period, has used the imagery of garden to describe the results of the phenomenological movement in the following terms: "If phenomenology has not become a factory, it forms a vast garden with a great variety of flowers which however show a clear spirit of kinship." ("Si la phénoménologie n'est pas devenue une usine, elle

manifest a high degree of universal validity precisely because they are results of a descriptive process which respects scrupulously the primacy of experiential givenness. This serves as the guarantee of the openness of the descriptive method cherished so much by phenomenologists of all boards. Since these descriptive results focus on the most basic underlying structure common to all types of human experience, they carry the least possible cultural prejudices. Thus they can serve as the starting point of intercultural understanding in philosophy.

Since Husserl's discovery of the pre-scientific life-world as the soil upon which all theoretical activities are rooted, all philosophical models based on the theoretical mode of thinking of the natural sciences have lost their hitherto privileged position of being self-explanatory and self-sufficient. Husserl has further shown that the theoretical prejudices of scientific objectivism and naïve naturalistic realism are hindrance to the rediscovery and the return to the terrain of the pre-scientific life-world upon which philosophy has been given rise.[12] The demystification of the absolute and unconditional privilege given to modern scientific culture of the West paves the way to the possibility of re-appreciation and re-appropriation of other forms of philosophy or modes of thinking born in cultures not yet dominated by modern science.

In this respect, Merleau-Ponty is probably the first to have caught sight of the possibility of intercultural understanding opened up by Husserl's thematization of the life-world. To the author of *Phenomenology of Perception*, if "Husserl admitted that all thought is part of an historical whole or a 'life-world', then in principle all philosophies are 'anthropological specimens', and none has any special rights."[13] Not only highly developed cultures such as those of China and India, but the so-called primitive cultures would also play an important role in the exploration of the life-world in so far as these specimens could offer us variations of this world without which "we would remain enmeshed in our preconceptions and would not even see the meaning of our own lives."[14] We need others to help us to understand our own selves: this means that we are never self-sufficient in matters concerning self-understanding. European culture needs other cultures in order to understand herself: that means European culture, though unique, is by no means superior to other cultures. Thus, in diametric opposition to Husserl's declaration of the merely empirically anthropological character of Chinese and Indian cultures, Merleau-Ponty thinks that we could find in these non-European cultures and their doctrines "a

---

forme un immense jardin aux fleurs variées qui cependant dénotent un net esprit de parenté." *C.f.*, J. Héring, "Edmund Husserl. Souvenirs et réflexions", in *Edmund Husserl, 1859–1959, recueil commémoratif publié à l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance du philosophe* (La Haye: M. Nijhoff, 1959), p. 27.

[12] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, Zweiter Teil; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Part II.

[13] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 173; "Everywhere and Nowhere", in *Sign*s, Eng. trans. R. C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 137.

[14] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 173; *Sign*s, p. 138.

variant of man's relationships to being which would clarify our understanding of ourselves, and like a sort of oblique universality."[15] With a much more humble attitude in comparison to Husserl and Hegel, Merleau-Ponty not only admits that Indian and Chinese philosophies are genuine philosophies, he is also able to recognize the uniqueness of these forms of philosophy which "have tried not so much to dominate existence as to be the echo or the sounding board of our relationship to being."[16] Consistent with his conception of the complimentary character of Western and Eastern philosophies in terms of the relationship to being, Merleau-Ponty even declares that "Western philosophy can learn from them to rediscover the relationship to being and the initial option which gave it birth, and to estimate the possibilities we have shut ourselves off from in becoming 'Westerners', and perhaps reopen them."[17] In short, Indian and Chinese philosophies are no longer regarded as inferior forms of philosophy; they carry with themselves possibilities lost sight of by Europeans. This amounts to saying that neither philosophy has just one unique model nor is it the monopoly of European culture. Philosophy is reinstituted as a possibility rooted in other cultural traditions.

1.3 Three Aspects of Intercultural Understanding in Philosophy

Situated under the continuous tension between the exclusiveness of Husserl's Idea of philosophy and the openness of the operative concepts and methods of phenomenology, the present author has undertaken during the last two decades works on intercultural understanding in philosophy on the following three aspects:

I. Critique of the Eurocentric Idea of philosophy or philosophic judgment of Eurocentric overtones. This consists mainly of critical discussions of the Idea of philosophy of Husserl or his followers, as well as of the very biased assertion of Hegel and thinkers on the same line of thought on the so-called rudimentary character of Eastern philosophies in general.[18]

[15] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 176; *Sign*s, p. 139; English translation slightly modified.

[16] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 176; *Sign*s, p. 139.

[17] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 176; *Sign*s, p. 139.

[18] Works by the present author on such a thematic include:

(a) "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, special issue of *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth & C.-F. Cheung, Freiburg / München: Verlag K. Alber, 1998, pp. 229–249; revised version collected in this volume as Chap. 2.

(b) "To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice To Chinese Philosophy?—Attempt at a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi", paper presented to the International Conference *Phenomenology As a Bridge Between Asia and the West* organized by the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Florida Atlantic University, May 7–10, 2002, Delray Beach, Florida, USA, Chinese version: 劉國英:<現象學可以還中國哲學一個公道嗎? – 試讀老

II. Reflections on the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in philosophy.

(a) The first condition is related to the language of intercultural communication. Owning to the hegemonic position of Western cultures in the global setting today, in matters concerning intercultural communication a philosopher of ethnic Chinese origin must perform a double epoché with regard to language use if she wants to be understood. First of all she must give up, at least temporarily, her mother tongue, i.e., Chinese, and adopt a so-called international language which is in fact a Western language, and very often English, or more exactly, American English.

(b) Secondly she must replace concepts or vocabulary of traditional Chinese philosophy by concepts or vocabulary of current usage in Western philosophy.[19]

(c) The Merleau-Pontian concept of "inter-world" ("inter-monde") is also introduced as the theoretical pre-requisite of the condition of possibility of intercultural understanding.[20]

子>,《現象學與人文科學》, 第2期, 2005,<現象學與道家哲學專輯>, 頁9–35; revised version collected in this volume as Chap. 3.

(c) "Husserl, Buddhism and the Problematic of the Crisis of European Sciences", paper presented to the First P.E.A.CE. (Phenomenology for East-Asian CirclE) Conference on *Identity and Alterity*: *Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, co-organized by the Research Centre for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences and the Department of Philosophy, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 24–28 May 2004, published in *Identity and Alterity. Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, eds. Kwok-Ying Lau, Chan-Fai Cheung and Tze-Wan Kwan, series "Orbis Phaenomenologicus Perspektiven" (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), pp. 221–233; Chinese version : 劉國英: <胡塞爾論佛教>, 《現象學與人文科學》, 第3期, 2006, <現象學與佛家哲學專輯>, 頁9–26; expanded version collected in this volume as Chap. 4.

(d) "Disenchanted World-view and Intercultural Understanding: from Husserl through Kant to Chinese Culture", paper presented in the *International Conference on Philosophy of Culture and Practice*, organized by the Department of Philosophy, Soochow University, Taipei, 16–17 June 2007 in Taipei; Chinese version : 劉國英:<解昧的世界觀與文化交互理解 – 胡塞爾、康德與中國文化>,《德意志思想評論》,第二卷(上海:同濟大學出版社),2005,頁289–315; revised version collected in this volume as Chap. 7.

(e) "Patočka's Concept of Europe: an Intercultural Consideration", presented first in the Patočka Session of "An International Conference to Commemorate Jan Patočka 1907–2007 and the 37th Annual Meeting of the Husserl Circle", organized by the Center for Theoretical Study, Charles University Prague, Center for Phenomenological Research, Charles University Prague, and Institute for Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 22–28 April 2007; published in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology. Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatik and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 229–244; collected in this volume as Chap. 6 under the title "Europe Beyond Europe: Patočka's Concept of Care of the Soul and Mencius. An Intercultural Consideration".

[19] *C.f.*, "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", *op. cit.*, pp. 231–232; *infra*, Chap. 2.

[20] *C.f.*, "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", *op. cit.*, pp. 245–249; *infra*, Chap. 2.

(d) It is also argued that in the present age of serious conflicts among cultures of different religious confessions, a disenchanted world-view is another pre-requisite condition of intercultural understanding.[21]
(e) On the basis of the Merleau-Pontian ontological term of flesh (la chair), we coin the term "cultural flesh" to conceptualize the sensible and material conditions of accessibility to the horizon of other cultures.[22]
(f) The notion of "lateral universal" proposed by Merleau-Ponty is also highlighted as a conceptual tool to give due recognition to the contribution of different cultures to the formation of universals without which intercultural understanding is impossible.[23]

III. Concrete exercise of intercultural understanding with regard to doctrines, theses, concepts or methods in philosophy according to two guiding threads.

(a) In the first place, we have tried to reread Chinese or Eastern traditional philosophy from the phenomenological approach broadly defined. This includes:

(i) reading and understanding of Laozi's concept of *dao* (「道」) as inchoative Nature in the originary sense of the term[24];
(ii) comprehension of the basic theoretical attitude of Buddhist philosophy as a kind of transcendental philosophy which exhibits features bearing affinity with transcendental phenomenology;[25]
(iii) understanding of the theory of the fourfold human faculties or spiritual dispositions (「四端說」) of Mencius (孟子, or Mengzi) as the framework of a descriptive philosophical anthropology;[26]

[21] *C.f.*, "Disenchanted World-view and Intercultural Understanding: from Husserl through Kant to Chinese Culture", *op. cit.*, *infra*, Chap. 7.

[22] *C.f.*, Kwok-ying Lau, "La chair: de l'usage ontologique à l'usage interculturel", paper presented in the International Conference "Être à la vérité – M. Merleau-Ponty 1908–2008" held at the Department of Philosphy, University of Basel, 11–15 March 2008, in Basel; Eng. version "The Flesh: From Ontological Employment to Intercultural Employment", in *Border-Crossing*: *Phenomenology*, *Interculturality and Interdisciplinarity*, eds. Kwok-ying Lau and Chung-Chi Yu, Series "Orbis Phaenomenologicus Perspektiven" (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2014), pp. 25–44; revised version collected in this volume as Chap. 10.

[23] *C.f.*, Kwok-ying Lau, "Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: from Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and their Intercultural Implications", paper presented to *The Third Symposium for Intercultural Phenomenology*: "*Spirit*" *and* "*Co-existence*", organized by The Research Project on Intercultural Phenomenology, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, 3 November, 2011 and published in the Report of the Research Project, June 2013, pp. 41–57; revised version collected in this volume as Chap. 9.

[24] *C.f.*, "To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice To Chinese Philosophy?—Attempt at a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi", *op. cit.*, *infra*, Chap. 3.

[25] *C.f.*, "Husserl, Buddhism and the Problematic of the Crisis of European Sciences", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 3.

[26] *C.f.*, "Patočka's Concept of Europe: an Intercultural Consideration", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 6.

(iv) re-examination of some significant pioneering experiences or events of intercultural understanding which had taken place in the not too far historical past but forgotten by most Western and Chinese philosophers now. Through analyses of the "Chinese Chronology Controversy" and the "Chinese Rite Controversy", two historically dated debates among European intellectuals which took place respectively in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries on the nature of Chinese Culture with special attention to whether she is atheist, the present author has tried to show that the overt Eurocentrism expressed in Husserl's and Hegel's Idea of philosophy is a theoretical projection which ignores or denies that the knowledge of Chinese history and the understanding of Chinese culture had played a constitutive role in the process of the construction of the identity of modern European culture.[27]

(b) In the second place, we have tried to look for alternative to Husserl's Eurocentric Idea of philosophy.

(i) The Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka's resolutely non-Eurocentric effort to think Post-European humanity has received our serious attention.[28] Upon a close reading of Patočka's alternative Idea of philosophy as care for the soul and the conception of philosophical anthropology which underlies this very Idea, we are able to draw a parallel between such a conception and the anthropological conception expressed in the Pre-Qin Confucian philosopher Mencius' theory of the fourfold faculties or spiritual dispositions of man.[29]

(ii) We have also attempted to bridge the gap between contemporary Western and Chinese philosophers as a result of the voluntary mutual distancing among themselves. Through the explanation of the concept of "orientative philosophy" proposed by the above mentioned contemporary Chinese philosopher Lao Sze-Kwang as a practice of self-transformation of the reflective subject guided by a supreme ethical telos, it is argued that the philosophical practices undertaken by the later Husserl, the final Foucault and Lao Sze-Kwang share a common feature: the maxim of "know thyself" is subordinate to the ethical

[27] *C.f.*, "Disenchanted World-view and Intercultural Understanding: from Husserl through Kant to Chinese Culture", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 7.

[28] *C.f.*, Kwok-ying Lau, "Jan Patočka: Critical Consciousness and Non-Eurocentric Philosopher of the Phenomenological Movement", first read at "Issues Confronting the Post-European World: A Conference dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907–1977) on the occasion of the founding of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations", organized by the Center for Phenomenological Research Prague at Charles University and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, November 6–10, 2002, published in *Studia Phaenomenologica*, Vol. VII, 2007, pp. 475–492, revised version included here as Chap. 5, and "Patočka's Concept of Europe: an Intercultural Consideration", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 6.

[29] *C.f.*, "Patočka's Concept of Europe: an Intercultural Consideration", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 6.

principle of "care of the self".[30] Rather than viewing philosophy as "pure thêoria" as proposed by Husserl, the idea of "orientative philosophy" as a reflective practice aiming at self-transformation of the meditating subject can serve as a concrete example to illustrate the concept of "lateral universal" mentioned earlier. This means that on the one hand philosophy can be conceived as a form of reflective activity practiced both in East and West, ancient and modern. Yet the concrete manners of practicing philosophy differ from the Orient to the Occident and from Antiquity to Modernity, and there is no hierarchy between the different forms of philosophical practice.

(c) Last but not least, the structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss' heroic effort to unveil and reconstruct the rationality of the "savage mind"—primitive people without writing—read through the appraisal of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological reading: this also constitutes an important lesson for us in matters relevant to intercultural understanding in philosophy, namely to learn to see what is foreign and unusual to us in others in order to learn to see what is foreign and unusual in ourselves.[31]

The three aspects of work above mentioned are often interwoven. In order to avoid the pitfall of cultural ethnocentrism, intercultural criticism in philosophy and in cultural discussion is necessary. Thus for a philosopher of ethnic Chinese origin, not only the critique of Euro-centrism has been carried out, the critique of Sino-centrism is also a must. For example the Confucian scholar of the Northern Song China Shi Jie (石介) has professed an extremely overt version of Sino-centrism from the ethnic, cultural and geo-political perspectives.[32] Thus mutual criticism among cultures is necessary. But the aim of this criticism cannot be the "overcoming of cultural difference" understood as the suppression of differences among cultures.[33] Without the tolerance of cultural differences there will not be mutual respect

[30] Kwok-ying Lau, "Self-transformation and the Ethical *Telos*: Orientative philosophy in Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl", keynote speech delivered in the International Conference "In Search of the Sense of Life. Transcultural Dialogue in Philosophy of Life", co-organized by Research Center in Interpretation of Classics, Simian Institute of Advanced Studies in Humanities, East China Normal University, Collège International de Philosophie, France, Department of Philosophy, East China Normal University, 24–26 Oct 2012, Shanghai; revised version included in this volume as Chap. 8.

[31] *C.f.*, "Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: from Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and their Intercultural Implications", *op. cit.*; *infra*, Chap. 9.

[32] Shi Jie writes at the very beginning of his *Treatise on China* (《中國論》) in the following terms: "The heaven is up there, the earth is down here; inhabited in the middle of the heaven and the earth is China, inhabited at the peripheries of the heaven and the earth are barbarians of the four corners of the world. Barbarians of the four corners of the world are the exterior; China is the interior." (「夫天處乎上, 地處乎下, 居天地之中者曰中國, 居天地之偏者曰四夷。四夷外也, 中國內也。」)《徂徠石先生文集》, 石介著, 陳植鍔點校 (北京: 中華書局, 1984) (*The Collected Works of Shi Jie*, Beijing: Zhunghua Publishing House, 1984), p. 116.

[33] "To overcome the differences" is the expression of Franz M. Wimmer, "Intercultural Polylogues in Philosophy", Statement submitted to the Panel "Intercultural Dialogue", 29th Wittgenstein-

among different cultures, and intercultural critique will serve only as an instrument of exclusion and deviates from the basic aim of promoting intercultural understanding.

Yet the respect of cultural differences and the talk of tolerance with regard to other cultures cannot remain at the superficial and merely formal level. It is well-known that Gadamer and his followers are fond of talking about the "fusion of horizons". This expression often shows itself as a comfortable alibi for not engaging one-self in any concrete intercultural understanding, that is to say by staying away from the encounter with matters and substances of other cultural horizons which one finds difficult to penetrate from her own cultural perspective. But how would fusion of horizons be possible without attempting to enter into the cultural horizon of the Other? In fact, the lack of understanding of other cultures and even misunderstanding among different cultures are common cultural phenomena. These show that the realization of the ideal behind the slogan "fusion of horizons" is not at all an easy task to accomplish. What kind of attitude should we adopt in order to overcome the lack of understanding of other cultures and misunderstanding among different cultures? On the one hand we should bear in mind that the consciousness of lack of understanding of other cultures and misunderstanding among cultures can have a positive effect: it helps us to become aware of the limit of our own culture and its horizon, and urges us to go beyond the existing cultural border within which we are situated, as well as incites us to try to immerse ourselves in the horizon of other cultures.[34] On the other hand we have to find out the way to enter the cultural horizon of others. This is the prerequisite not only for any possible intercultural polylogue,[35] but also for the establishment of a genuine trans-cultural philosophy to-come capable of transgressing existing cultural borders while respecting and preserving cultural differences. The concept of "cultural flesh" ("la chair culturelle" in French and 「文化肌膚」 (*wenhua jifu* in phonetic transcription) in Chinese) proposed below is the result of some preliminary reflections on the question: how to enter into the horizon of another culture?

Conference of the ALWS, Kirchberg am Wechsel, Aug. 11, 2006. The version consulted by the present author is the one distributed during the "Workshop on Culture, Value and Practice", organized by the Department of Philosophy, Soochow University, Taipei, 18–19 June 2007. The pagination, p. 2, is wrongly printed as p. 4.

[34] On the positive role of lack of understanding of other cultures as an incitation to transgress the existing cultural border, the present author is inspired by the article of his friend Hans-Rainer Sepp: "On the Border: Cultural Difference in and beyond Jan Patocka's Philosophy of History", *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, Vol. III, 2003, pp. 161–177.

[35] This expression is proposed by Franz M. Wimmer. *C.f.*, note 30.

1.4 Cultural Flesh and Its Cultivation: The Way to Enter into the Horizon of Another Culture

We have already pointed out in the discussions above that we cannot be satisfied with the apparent good will of the talk of fusion of horizons and should tackle seriously the problem of factual difficulties in intercultural understanding. At the out set of such a task, we should be aware of the fact that it is a historically common phenomenon that the assimilation of elements of other cultures by a certain culture can be highly successful such that elements belonging originally to foreign cultures become part of that very culture. Sometimes the assimilation is so successful that one simply forgets that some of the cultural elements of her own culture are in fact originated from another culture. As an example, a lot of Chinese musical instruments today are of Central- and West-Asian origin. Tea, which is now one of the daily necessities of most Englishmen, is originated from South Asia. But ethnocentrism of all species, which seems to be inevitable in the construction of cultural identity of a nation or a people, is often an obstacle to the cognition and recognition of the following fact: our own culture has assimilated civilizational elements from other cultures. If our own cultural construction and the cultural identity built upon the former rely often on the assimilation or borrowing of elements from other cultures, what we call our own culture is necessarily in constant debt to other cultures. If one is indebted to others she must return what she owes to others, otherwise she commits injustice. Likewise, we must be aware of the situation of cultural indebtedness of our own culture in order to be able to return effectively what we owe to other cultures.

Every cultural formation is composed of a multiplicity of aspects and components. The components and aspects of a mature culture are even more complex. It is impossible to tackle all aspects of intercultural communication within a single chapter. Our discussions below will be limited to the problem of intercultural understanding in philosophy.

Philosophy is reflective activities of the higher order. One of the first questions that we must tackle in matters concerning intercultural understanding in philosophy is: how to enter into the spiritual world or psychic domain of other cultures from that of our own culture? When the term "spiritual world" is used here, it is not to be understood in the sense of Hegel's philosophy of Spirit, i.e., to understand the actual world as the externalization of the Absolute Spirit. The term "spiritual world" is rather understood according to what Husserl means in the Third Section of *Ideas II*, i.e. the world of the personalistic attitude which is the collective manifestation of the activities of the concrete human subject.[36] We think that the way to go into the

[36] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Zweites Buch*, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, *Husserliana IV* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1952), Dritter Abschnitt, pp. 172 sq.; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Eng. trans. R. Rojcewicz & A. Schuwer (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), Section Three, pp. 181 sq.

spiritual world of another culture can be inspired by Husserl's phenomenological approach toward the constitution of intersubjectivity in the Fifth *Cartesian Meditation*.[37]

It is well-known that the problem tackled by Husserl in the Fifth *Cartesian Meditation* is that of Einfühlung. The English translation of this term "empathy" is not as close to the German original as the French translation by "intropathie" in which the prefix "intro-" captures more directly the prefix "ein-" in German whose equivalent in English is simply "in" or "into". What Husserl wants to examine is: how do we go toward the Other and succeed in entering her psychic domain? In a more plain language: how can we enter the mind of the Other? Like myself, the Other is a thinking subject too. However, we can never have direct access to the psychic domain of the Other. The non-spatial character of this domain forbids us to have direct access to its contents; we can never have first person experience of the mind of the Other and her feelings. When we talk about the "sharing" of experience with others, we expect others to understand us by entering into our own state of thinking and feeling. Yet we are merely trying to imagine, upon our own first person experience and through analogical association, that others can enter our psychic domain if they were in my situation. Since I myself never have direct access to the thoughts of others, mutatis mutandis, I am never sure that others can enter my own train of thoughts. Thus this wish of entering can be realized only indirectly and imaginatively. It is only an imaginative entering, an entering imprinted necessarily by the qualification of "as if". This is because it is impossible for the psychic domain of the Other to appear directly before me. Husserl names the non direct and non immediate manifestation of the psychic domain of the Other by the term "appresentation" (Appräsentation) or "analogical apperception" (analogische Apperzeption).[38]

But how is appresentation or analogical apperception possible? Husserl draws our attention to a point often omitted in classical Western philosophy: every concrete human existence is not merely a pure thinking subject; she is necessarily a bodily existence. In other words, a thinking subject unites herself necessarily with a body in the form of a carnal subject. Husserl uses the term "pairing" (Paarung) to designate this phenomenon of necessary connection between the body and the mind.[39] Starting from the fact that my existence as a subject is a thinking subject with a body, I can infer from the phenomenon of pairing, when I see another bodily existence before my eyes, that this other body must necessarily be a thinking subject too: she is the Other who lives also a psychic life.

Our experiential activities are conducted within the perceptual field in coordination with the five senses of our own body which defines our orientation. Our body

[37] E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, *Husserliana I* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1950), pp. 121–177; *Cartesian Meditations*, Eng. trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960), pp. 89–151.

[38] E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, *Husserliana I*, §50, pp. 138–141; *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 108–111.

[39] E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, *Husserliana I*, §51, pp. 141–143; *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 112–113.

has the five senses. But how come we have each one a unified perceptual field instead of separated sensations according to each sense? It is because we have our flesh and skin (肌膚) distributed over our whole body. What is specific about the sense of touch in contrast to that of sight and audition is that the sense of touch takes place at the contact of the flesh and skin with an object at a localized position. In other words, the sensation of touching is necessarily a localized sensation. It is a certain localized sensation which allows me to say: my body touches something, at the same time my body is being touched by this same thing. If my body is not touched locally by a certain object, I cannot say that my body touches something. To touch and being touched must take place simultaneously and form a reflexive phenomenon. This power of reflexivity inaugurated by the sensation of touch of my body is at the origin of my capacity to say "I".[40] Husserl's phenomenological descriptions reveal us that the ground for us to be able to say "I" resides not in that we are pure thinking subjects, but in that we are carnal subjects with flesh and skin distributed all over our body. The sensations of touch and being touched are at the origin of the distinction between activity and passivity. It is only by virtue of this carnal existence of flesh and skin that I have the basic orientations of "here and there", "up and down", "left and right", "forward and backward", etc.[41] It is only with these basic orientations that everything surrounding me can be put into order and can make sense to me, i.e., can be intelligible. Sometimes we use the expression "something is sensible" to mean "something is intelligible". This shows that sensibility and intelligibility have the same origin: that we are carnal beings of flesh and skin. It is our existence as flesh and skin which constitutes the basis for our ontological character as both sensibility and intelligibility.

The late Merleau-Ponty has tried to provide explication for the basic ontological character of the flesh (la chair) as a being which exhibits a certain duality. He explains that the flesh should neither be understood as pure spirit nor as pure matter, especially not as substance.[42] The terms "spirit", "matter" and "substance" belong to the language of traditional Western metaphysics; they all have reductionist connotations. To Merleau-Ponty, when these terms are used for theoretical construction and formulation, they are derivative in comparison to the term flesh which is

[40] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Zweites Buch*, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, *Husserliana IV*, *op. cit*., §37, p. 150; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, *op. cit*., p. 157.

[41] E. Husserl, *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Zweites Buch*, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, *Husserliana IV*, *op. cit*., §41a, p. 158; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, *op. cit*., p. 166.

[42] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 184; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 139. That is why we think that our Chinese rendition of "*la chair*" by "肌膚存在" transmits better the ontological meaning of this Merleau-Pontian concept than the habitual English translation of "flesh". For "flesh" carries often the connotation of Christian metaphysics in its opposition to "spirit", whereas for Merleau-Ponty *la chair* is on this side of the "spirit-matter" opposition in traditional Western metaphysics.

primordial in the ontological register. The metaphysical expressions of "spirit", "matter" and "substance" forget that at the level of concrete existence, our body as carnal being is "a being of two leaves (un être à deux feuillets)"[43]: our experience of touch tells us that we are at the same time the one who touches (le touchant) and the one being touched (le touché); our visual experience tells us that we are at the same time the seer (le voyant) and the being seen (le visible). That is why we are at the same time a sentient subject (le sujet sentant) and the being sensed, i.e. the sensible. As carnal being, we exhibit the dual ontological character of the sentient and the sensible as well as sensibility and intelligibility.

If the key of accessibility to the psychic domain of the Other resides in the phenomenon of pairing, and our body as carnal existence (flesh) is the common origin of sensibility and intelligibility, and the key to intercultural understanding in philosophy resides in the possibility of "entering into the spiritual world or psychic domain of the culture of the Other", then the condition of this possibility is the possession of a cultural flesh which allows us to do so. Merleau-Ponty has said: "The body is our general medium for having a world."[44] Thus the entrance into the spiritual world of another culture requires the possession of the cultural flesh which leads us into such a world. How is this possible?

If we want a guarantee for the accessibility to the spiritual world of the Other, we must transplant another cultural body, or at least graft upon our habitual body another cultural flesh. In other words, we should cultivate a new cultural flesh capable of accomplishing this task. The body is the key for us to enter into a situation. It is our flesh which gives us the sensible means to let ourselves to be accorded to the situation. The phenomenon of being accorded to the situation is described by the Heideggerian term of "Stimmung", i.e. mood. Evidently it is impossible for us to transplant an entirely new cultural body by discarding completely our original cultural body at the outset. Even the acquisition of a foreign language is accomplished necessarily on the basis of the linguistic capacities acquired first of all through a mother language. Yet if we can cultivate another cultural flesh, we can immerse ourselves in the mood of the subjects of the Other culture. Only in this way we can feel what others feel. If we want to go into the theoretical reflective life of another culture, for sure we have to learn to speak her language, read the texts of this Other culture, especially her philosophical texts. However hermeneutics tells us that every philosophical text has its historical context. For example almost all Nineteenth Century German philosophers were affected by the French Revolution of 1789, while French and German philosophers of the second half of the Twentieth Century are often preoccupied by the "Post-Auschwitz" era as the starting point of their reflections.[45] Likewise, Chinese thinkers of the second half of the Nineteenth

[43] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 180—181; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 137.

[44] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 171; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. Colin Smith (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 146.

[45] This refers to the fact that many leading French and German philosophers think that we should seriously consider the crime of racial extermination committed by the Nazi German regime on the

Century and the first half of the Twentieth Century all received impact from the violent introduction of Western culture into China since the First Opium War (1840). Thus to enter into the theoretical reflective world of the Other culture, we must also learn the history of this Other culture. The knowledge of the history of the Other culture is necessary for the graft of a new cultural flesh qui will facilitate our entrance into its reflective world. We should also try to read the novels of this Other culture, appreciate her dance, movie, drama and opera if they exist, recite her poems and sing her songs, listen to her music, taste her cuisine, try to wear her clothes and accessories. In short, we must cultivate another cultural flesh capable of feeling what people of the Other culture feels in order to be able to immerse ourselves in their cultural situation and share their happiness and sorrows. Only in this way can we develop the cultural sensibility of the Other people, and is more sure of being able to go into the spiritual world of the Other culture.

Is philosophy a purely formal thinking activity? Very unlikely. Though Aristotle is the founder of formal logic in the West, his ethics, politics, metaphysics and even physics are all closely connected to the cultural constellations in which he found himself. All these doctrines have sensible contents. Likewise, the doctrine of Laozi is also culturally related. He has said: "the high and the low compete with each other" ("高下相盈"), "the hard and the soft simultaneously" ("剛柔並濟"), and even "the softest can result in the hardest" ("至柔可達至剛"). Analyzed purely from the view point of formal logic, these sayings of Laozi amount to positing "A equals ~A" which is incomprehensible to a pure mind of conceptual thinking. However, once when we have seen the famous dance piece "Wild Cursive Script" (《狂草》) performed by the celebrated Cloud Gate Dance Theatre (雲門舞集) of Taiwan, a dance piece which is a confluent of dance forms and techniques of China and the West as well as modern and classical choreographic elements, our appreciation of Laozi's sayings will be different. On seeing that the Cloud Gate dancers vary instantaneously from absolute stillness to extremely quick and strong movement and perform gestures which are at the same time immensely powerful and full of lyricism, we immediately understand that what Laozi calls "the hard and the soft simultaneously" and "the softest can result in the hardest" are not results of speculative conceptual thinking, but of intersubjective cultural experience inaugurated by the sensible activities of the body.[46] Only by cultivating a new cultural flesh can we accord ourselves to the situation of another culture, which provides us with the minimum condition of accessibility to other cultural horizons.

Jewish people during the Second World War. As a consequence of this radical awareness, we can no more maintain the naïvely optimistic attitude toward philosophical rationalism. They ask the following common but disturbing question: how to carry on philosophical thinking which can still be claimed as rational from the ruins of the old classical philosophical rationalism?

[46] These lines are inspired by the viewing of a supremely beautiful extract of the dance piece "Wild Cursive Script" performed by the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan. The video of this piece was projected during the presentation of the paper by Mathias Obert in the "International Conference on Philosophy of Culture and Practice" held in Soochow University, Taipei, in June 2007. Thanks to this viewing, the present author has acquired a deeper understanding of the reach of the concept "cultural flesh" after its first formulation.

Chapter 2
Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality

> *"There are some who say, according to Aristotle and Sotion, that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians." – Diogenes Laertius (Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers, Greek text with Eng. trans. by R. D. Hicks (The Loeb Classical Library, London; William Heinemann & Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1925), Vol. 1, pp. 2–3.)*

This chapter presents some preliminary discussions on the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in philosophy from the phenomenological approach. It begins by explaining the double epoché a philosopher of Chinese origin must enact in order to initiate intercultural communication with readers trained in the tradition of Western philosophy. Critical analyses of the Eurocentric nature of Husserl's Idea of philosophy as pure *thêoria* will be followed by appropriation of works of Derrida, Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty in view of securing a guiding method for exercising intercultural understanding in philosophy.

How should we begin, from a phenomenological approach, a philosophical reflection on the theme "Interculturality and Life-World"?[1] May I recall that the founder of contemporary phenomenology Edmund Husserl, at a time when he considered himself to be already in full possession of the means which would enable him to conquer the "promised land" of a genuine philosophy in the concrete form of a phenomenological philosophy, nevertheless admitted repeatedly that he was a mere beginner in philosophy.[2] How then the present author dares to venture on the

[1] This chapter is the further revised version of a paper first presented to the International conference "Interculturality and Life-world" held at the Department of Philosophy, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, in April 1996 and first published in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, special issue of *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth & C.-F. Cheung (Freiburg/München: Verlag K. Alber, 1998), pp. 229–249.

[2] Edmund Husserl, "Nachwort zu den <Ideen I>", first appeared in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Bd. 11, 1930, now in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Drittes Buch*, *Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften*, ed. M. Biemel, *Husserliana V* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1952), p. 161; Eng. trans. by W. R. Boyce Gibson as "Author's Preface to the English Edition" of *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1st ed. 1931, New York: Collier Books Ed., 1962), pp. 20–21; new Eng.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_2

kind of intellectual journey which requires the stature of a Husserl to be qualified as a beginner? And if he does, how should he understand the nature of the work he is undertaking?

According to Eugen Fink, veritable *alter ego* of Husserl during the 1930s,[3] philosophy is to be understood as the kind of intellectual effort which aims at overcoming naïveté in thinking.[4] But at a post-Heideggerian epoch in which the necessity of a "hermeneutic turn" is largely acknowledged in Western Europe and North America, to overcome the naïveté of the pre-philosophical attitude consists no more, in the manner of the early Husserl, in the search for an absolutely apodictic starting point conceived as a concrete way to realize the ideal of "presuppositionless philosophy".[5] Rather, all theoretical understanding is grounded, according to Heidegger, in a series of pre-conditions: those belonging to the "pre-requisite" (*Vorhabe*), the "pre-view" (*Vorsicht*) and the "pre-conception" (*Vorgriff*).[6] Hence, to overcome the naïveté standing in the way to our philosophical reflection we have to ask: what conditions or pre-conditions are at the basis of an intercultural philosophical exchange on the theme of "Interculturality and Life-World"?

---

trans. in E. Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Eng. trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Dorcrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 429.

[3] *C.f.* Husserl's letter to a close friend, Gustave Albrecht, in 1931: "I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to my young collaborator Fink. … [W]ithout the daily discussion with him I could not carry out what I want to do. When my memory wanes, his youth helps me, he masters every turn taken by the many branches in my phenomenological exposition …, and in conversation with him I often get the best ideas, suddenly I see the long-sought connections, the intrinsic order in which everything fits together beautifully." Cited by Ronald Bruzina in "Solitude and community in the work of philosophy: Husserl and Fink, 1928–1938", *Man and World*, Vol. 22, 1989, p. 289.

[4] Eugen Fink, "Philosophie als Überwindung der <Naivität>", in *Nähe und Distanz*: *phänomenologische Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Freiburg u. München: Verlag Karl Albert, 1976), pp. 98–126.

[5] *C.f.* E. Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen*, *Zweiter Band*, *1. Teil* (1st ed. 1901, 6th ed., Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1980), p. 19; *Logical Investigations*, *Vol. I*, Eng. trans. J. N. Findlay (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 263. However, we know that Husserl's later position recognizes that philosophy necessarily passes by naïveté, and that even the kind of philosophical objectivism arising out of modern rationalism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment "is the most general title for this naïveté". See, for exemple, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962, "*Krisis*" hereafter), p. 339; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970, "*Crisis*" hereafter), p. 292.

[6] M. Heidgger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 15th ed., 1979), p. 150; *Being and Time*, Eng. trans. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (New York : Harper & Row, 1962), p. 191.

2.1 A Double Epoché

The above question drives us to enquire about the situation in which an ethnic Chinese, who wishes to initiate some kind of intercultural philosophical exchange with philosophers mostly coming from Europe and North America, finds herself. The person in question must perform a double *epoché* with regard to the language used. First of all she must abandon her native language, at least temporarily, and speak an international language which in most cases is English, just as the author of this article is doing at this moment. Needless to say, English, at its origin, is a national language and the fact that it becomes the most widely used, if not the only, international language is the concrete manifestation of the cultural domination of a certain nation under determinate historical, political and economic conditions.

But if this philosopher of Chinese origin wishes to have a better chance to be listened, not to say understood, she must perform a second *epoché* with respect to the philosophical language through which her thought is expressed. Can we imagine that one can communicate reflections on issues of Chinese Philosophy to a Western philosophical audience without employing or translating, in a philosophical and not a merely linguistic sense, concepts, themes or problematics in their original Chinese context into the kind of concepts, themes or problematics that are supposed to be originated from Western Philosophy?

However, to be able to admit that there exists a genuine Chinese Philosophy is already a sign of generosity within a certain Western philosophical tradition. It is well known that Hegel shows a disdainful attitude toward the Chinese philosophical culture, judging that the latter remains at "the most elementary stage" of philosophical development.[7] Schelling, another giant of the tradition of German Idealism, seems to have spoken some more laudatory words on the Chinese mind. In his lectures on *Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling, referring to the absence of theogonic theory in Ancient Chinese thought, once said that "since the very beginning the Chinese consciousness achieved already the perspective of pure rationality which other peoples had to attain only through the process of mythological thinking."[8]

[7] In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel finished his brief examination of Chinese Philosophy in the following words: "to the Chinese what is highest and the origin of things is nothing, emptiness, the altogether undetermined, the abstract universal, and this is also called Tao or reason. When the Greeks say that the absolute is one, or when men in modern times say that it is the highest existence, all determinations are abolished, and by merely abstract Being nothing has been expressed excepting this same negation, only in an affirmative form. But if Philosophy has got no further than to such expression, it still stands on its most elementary stage. What is there to be found in all this learning?" G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, *Bd. 18* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), p. 147; *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, Eng. trans. E. S. Haldane (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 121.

[8] F.-W. Schelling, *Philosophie de la mythologie*, French trans. Alain Pernet (Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 1994), p. 358. This translation incorporates the pagination of the German edition of Schelling's collected works known as the *Cotta* edtion, *Sämtliche Werke*, 13 vols. (Stuttgart-Augsburg, 1856–1861). The passage in question is found in Band 12, p. 540.

However, this apparent appraisal serves only as an alibi for an overall judgement on the stagnation of Chinese culture. In fact, when Schelling stated that his purpose was "to give you a clear image of the exclusive domination of the State in China, and of the oppressive domination which hinders and holds under the yoke any free evolution since centuries",[9] his judgement on Chinese civilization is as negative as the one professed by Hegel.

2.2 Husserl: Double Exclusion

Considered retrospectively, this kind of pejorative judgement may be explained by the fact that Hegel and Schelling themselves lacked the direct knowledge of the subject matter they were talking about. With the arrival of the planetary or global era in which intercultural exchanges are becoming more common, at least at the empirical level, and that Europeans are less ignorant of non-European cultures than a century ago, we should hope that the situation may have changed. So we now turn to Husserl, thanks to him, historically and theoretically speaking, such an international platform for philosophical exchange as ours can take place today. Paradoxically, the situation for all those who are non-Europeans is even *sans appel* under the eyes of Husserl. To the father of the phenomenological movement, it is simply incorrect to speak of philosophy outside the European-Greek scientific culture. In the famous *Vienna Lecture* of 1935 entitled "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity", Husserl declared that "it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy and science (astronomy, mathematics), i.e., to interpret India, Babylonia, China, in a European way."[10] For Husserl, it is peremptorily clear that European culture has the monopoly over the kind of intellectual activity called philosophy understood in the genuine sense of the term: in spite of the fact that "today we have a plethora of works about Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, etc., in which these are placed on a plane with Greek philosophy and are taken as merely different historical forms under one and the same idea of culture… Nevertheless, one must not allow the merely morphologically general features to hide the intentional depths so that one becomes blind to the most essential differences in principle."[11] Among those essential differ-

[9] *Ibid*., p. 354; *Cotta* ed. Band 12, p. 534.

[10] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 331; *Crisis*, p. 284–285. In the main text of *Krisis* Husserl stresses the essential difference between "European humanity" which "bears within itself an absolute idea", whereas "'China' or 'India'" is "merely an empirical anthropological type", *Krisis*, p. 14; *Crisis*, p. 16.

[11] *Krisis*, p. 325; *Crisis*, pp. 279–280. [After the conference in which this paper was first presented, the author discovered the article "Husserl and Indian Thought" by Karl Schuhmann, well-known for his *Husserl-Chronik* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1977), in the collection of articles *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (ed. D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree & Jitendranath Mohanty, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 20–43). Analyzing the same texts,

ences in principle which not only distinguish but also separate two kinds of "philosophers"[12] (those European and those non-European), comes foremost the purely theoretical attitude originated in the Greeks, and according to Husserl only modern European philosophers and scientists are the legitimated heirs of this Greek philosophical tradition understood as the exclusive search for "pure *thêoria*."[13] Only the kind of scientific culture developed in Europe since the time of Galileo has the exclusive right to call itself philosophy.

This definition of the nature of genuine philosophy as the exclusive search for pure *thêoria* proceeds by a double exclusion: exclusion of the possibility by cultures other than that in Europe to re-appropriate the ancient Greek philosophical tradition in ways other than the modern-scientific one. Exclusion too of the contributions by other cultures in the formation of the Greek philosophical tradition, contributions reportedly admitted by Aristotle and Sotion since probably at least the third century AC.[14] This double exclusion contributes greatly to the forgery of a double myth

---

Schuhmann gives even a stronger reading than the one we propose with regard to Husserl's conception of philosophy as essentially European in nature: "Husserl does not intend to underestimate the importance, validity and greatness of the results … of non-European philosophy… But when measured by the absolute yardstick of philosophy as a *rigorous science*, all these undertakings sink into insignificance. They are no philosophies at all, but simply world-views … 'An imperfect science … is no science at all', such was Husserl's maximalist device. On this view, it was the prerogative of European thought to have stuck firmly to at least the *idea* of philosophy, while all other thought-formations, however close they might have come to real philosophy, must be said to have been simply unphilosophical."(*Op. cit*., p. 34.) In another article contained in *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy*, "Unity and Plurality of Cultures in the Perspectives of Edmund Husserl and Ernst Cassirer", E. W. Orth raises the same concern on the possible ethnocentric implication of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology in the following terms: "In Cassirer as well as in Husserl a problem arises: whether particular symbolic forms – i.e. particular cogitative types in Husserl – are arbitrarily and unfoundedly privileged, or a philosophical relativism of cultures really turns up."(*Op. cit*., p. 241.) But his conclusion is diametrically opposite to that of Schuhmann: "Here it becomes apparent how close Cassirer's philosophy of culture as a philosophy of symbolic forms is to Husserl's late philosophy as an universal anthropology of cogitative types. A presupposition of this concept of philosophy is the assumption that a certain development of culture authorizes considerations which corroborate the unity of the culture of humankind, and which as well respect the plurality of cultural forms of existence of the concrete human being. This means that the consideration does not presuppose a determined culture which is formed in this or that way and which then would be declared absolute in order to measure other cultures by its standards."(*Op. cit*., p. 243.) – Note added in Nov. 1996.]

[12] *Idem*, the inverted commas are those of Husserl himself.

[13] *Krisis*, pp. 325, 331; *Crisis*, pp. 280, 285.

[14] Husserl, anticipating the objection raised against his version of the purity of the Greek philosophical tradition, developed already a counter objection in the *Vienna Lecture* : "Here we encouter an obvious objection: philosophy, the science of the Greeks, is not something peculiar to them which came into the world for the first time with them. After all, they themselves tell of the wise Egyptians, Babylonians, etc., and did in fact learn much from them…" (*Krisis*, p. 325; *Crisis*, p. 279) When Husserl said this, he probably had in mind the opening sentences of Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*: "There are some who say that the study of philosophy had its beginning among the barbarians. They urge that the Persians have had their Magi, the Babylonians or Assyrians their Chaldaeans, and the Indians their Gymnosophists; and among the Celts and Gauls there are the people called Druids or Holy Ones, for which they cite as

about the purity of philosophy: purity in the nature of this activity (philosophy as pure *thêoria*) and purity in its historical origin (philosophy begins only with a certain hard core of ancient Greek thinkers).

Face to this double mystification of the purity of philosophy incarnated by the Husserlian gesture of double exclusion, the present author would like to refer to the work of one of his prominent predecessors Hu Shih (1891–1962) who, some 50 years ago, produced already an energetic response against the kind of Euro-logocentrism in philosophy during the third East-West Philosophers Conference held in 1959,[15] even if the answers provided by him on that specific occasion are not entirely satisfactory. Here we only want to draw some of the consequences of the above double mystification and double exclusion by Husserl in the understanding of philosophy. If we follow the Husserlian gesture, any form of intercultural philosophical exchange is simply impossible. Because Husserl's conception of philosophy entails that from the very beginning there is only one genuine way of philosophizing: the Greek one. With Europe possessing the monopoly over the re-appropriation of the heritage of Greek thinkers, there exists then only one philosophical language in the proper sense: the language of Euro-logocentrism. There is of course no difficulty to concede that non-Europeans are able as well to discourse on European philosophy, but this is only a monologue within the European philosophical culture itself, for the subject matters, the concepts, the languages used (on the double sense of the natural language and the philosophical language) are nothing other than those admitted as being part of European philosophy. Even if we may use an European natural language and/or an European philosophical language to convey some kind of thought contents which are originated in other cultural traditions, from a strictly philosophical point of view (i.e., something belonging to Husserl's Idea of philosophical purity) this is always an intra-European affair: for any thought content to receive or to be conferred some philosophical significance, it has to be expressed in the European philosophical language. Hence there is no real exchange between European and non-European cultures on the philosophical level.

But if we maintain the same kind of attitude throughout, it amounts to saying that there is no exteriority to European philosophy and thus out of place to speak of intercultural understanding in philosophy. Then at the post-Heideggerian epoch that we are now, how can we face the challenge of the "end of philosophy" as diagnosed by Heidegger and take up the task of a possible new beginning of thinking?[16]

---

authorities the *Magicus* of Aristotle and Sotion in the 23rd book of his *Succession of Philosophers*. Also they say that Mochus was a Phoenician, Zamolxis a Thracian, and Atlas a Libyan." (*op. cit*., pp. 2–3) It is commonly held that Diogenes Laertius lived between 200 and 500 A.C. R. D. Hicks, the English translator of the Loeb edition, believes that "there are good grounds for not placing Laertius as late as the fourth century" (*op. cit*., p. xii), whereas Robert Genaille, the French translator of *Vie*, *doctrines et sentences des philosophes illustres*, I, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965, p. 9), thinks that Diogenes Laertius probably lived at the beginning of the third century A.C.

[15] Hu Shih, "The Scientific Spirit and Method in Chinese Philosophy", in *Philosophy and Culture*: *East and West*, ed. Charles A Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1962), pp. 191–222.

[16] M. Heidegger, "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens", in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), pp. 61–80; revised Eng. trans. by Joan

2.3 Derridian Deconstruction: Cultural Transgression Forbidden

Now an objection may be raised against the above diagnosis: the entire theoretical endeavors of the so called "post-structuralism" aren't they exactly aiming at the deconstruction of Euro-logocentrism revealed in our own deconstruction of the Husserlian conception of the supposed very pure nature and origin of philosophy ? In particular the work of Jacques Derrida, inaugurated since his introduction to the French translation of Husserl's manuscript "The Origin of Geometry", pursued, enlarged and deepened in *Speech and Phenomena*, *Of Grammatology*[17] and other subsequent publications, isn't it precisely a brilliant example of deconstruction of the logocentrism inherent in the tradition of Western philosophy understood as the history of metaphysics of presence? Indeed we acknowledge without hesitation that the works of Derrida and some others (especially Michel Foucault) do represent, after Heidegger, admirable attempts to disentangle themselves from the deadlock of monologue within the Modern European philosophical tradition. But behind the generous Derridian gesture tending to break the walls enclosing Euro-logocentrism, we suspect that the same hand may be closing the door which leads toward other cultures.

Let us explain this point in some more details. Claude Lévi-Strauss, known as the father of structuralism in anthropology, was perhaps the first contemporary European thinker who has tried, in his magistral work *La pensée sauvage*,[18] to give a philosophical status to the thinking of peoples living in the so called "primitive societies". The author of the four volumes of *Mythologiques*[19] succeeded amply to demonstrate, by his famous method of structural analysis, that the way of thinking revealed in the myths of American Indians is neither chaotic nor confused. Rather, it is a mode of concrete thinking which always starts from meticulous observations and follows its own rules of mental operation. Lévi-Strauss has convincingly shown

---

Stambaugh, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", in *Martin Heidegger. Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition, ed. by D. F. Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 427–449.

[17] J. Derrida, Introduction et traduction de *L'origine de la géométrie d'Edmund Husserl* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962); *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*: *An Introduction*, Eng. trans. J. Leavy (York Beach: ME, Nicholas Hays, 1978); *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, Eng. trans. D. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Pess., 1973); *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967); *Of Grammatology*, Eng. trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopskins University Pess, 1975).

[18] C. Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962); Eng. trans. *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

[19] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques*, *I*, *Le cru et le cuit*; *II*, *Du miel aux cendres*; *III*, *L'origine des manières de table*; *IV*, *L'homme nu* (Paris: Plon, 1964–1971); Eng. trans. by John and Doreen Weightman as *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); *From Honey to Ashes* (London: J. Cape, 1973), *The Origin of Table Manner*s (London: J. Cape, 1978), *The Naked Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

that the savage mind of these so-called primitive peoples possesses its own categories of distinction, classification, combination and opposition. The savage mind is everything but primitive. Merleau-Ponty summarizes the philosophical significance of the results of Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of myth in the following superb sentence: "We begin by listening to myth, and we arrive at a logical diagram – we could even say an ontological diagram as well."[20] For all those who aspire toward a real intercultural philosophical understanding, the work of Lévi-Strauss should be celebrated as a milestone setting the paradigm for sincere cross-cultural communication at the philosophical level. Lévi-Strauss' heroic encounter with cultures of American Indians can be seen as a certain deconstructive gesture itself which aims at searching for a way out of the enclosure of Euro-logocentrism from a certain point at the exteriority of European culture.[21]

However, for Derrida, in spite of the immense qualities and interests of Lévi-Strauss' pioneering work, the latter simply commits "the faults of empiricism", i.e. the faults of "philosophical naïveté".[22] Because Lévi-Strauss, as an anthropologist, chooses deliberately a way out in the form of an adventure, and any way out of this kind, according to Derrida, is "radically empiricist".[23] But empiricism is a "wandering thinking" ("une pensée errante"), says Derrida, i.e. it is a thinking which commits error easily and which possesses no methodological assurance with regard to its knowledge. Worse, in Derrida's view, "the concept of empiricism destructs itself", it simply proposes "to oppose philosophy by non-philosophy", but is itself "incapable of maintaining thoroughly the coherence of its proper discourse, unable to produce itself as truth at the time when people shatters the value of truth, unable to escape the internal contradictions of skepticism."[24] In short, Lévi-Strauss has not proceeded to deconstruct before hand "the concepts of sign, history, truth, and so forth", i.e. all the operative concepts[25] used in discourses within the tradition of Western philosophy, then what Lévi-Strauss was doing, in the judgement of Derrida,

---

[20] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 152; *Signs*, Eng. trans. R. C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 121, translation modified.

[21] For further discussions on the intercultural implications of Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology and Merleau-Ponty's appraisal of it, *c.f.*, *infra*, Chapter 9: "Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: from Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and their Intercultural Implications".

[22] J. Derrida, "La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines", in *Ecriture et différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967), p. 421; *Writing and Difference*, Eng. trans. A. Bass (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 288.

[23] J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, *op. cit*., p. 232; *Of Grammatology*, p. 162, translation modified.

[24] *Idem*. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty has a very positive evaluation of Lévi-Strauss' method of anthropological research : "Thus research feeds on facts which seem foreign to it at first, acquires new dimensions as it progresses, and reinterprets its first results in the light of new investigations which they have themselves inspired. At the same time, the scope of the domain covered and the precision of factual knowledge are increased. These are the marks of a great intellectual endeavor." *Signes*, p. 157; *Signs*, p. 125.

[25] For the very concept of "operative concept", *c.f.* E. Fink, "Les concepts opératoires dans la phénoménologie de Husserl", first published in *Husserl* : *Cahiers de Royaumont*, *Philosophie no. III*

was condemned to be no more than "the alleged transgression of philosophy into an unnoticed fault within the philosophical realm".[26] Any deconstruction, if it wants to have the least philosophical significance, should imperatively begin within the recognized realm of philosophy, i.e., that of Euro-logocentrism. Any kind of cultural transgression is forbidden. If our understanding of the economy of Derridian deconstruction is correct, the only conclusion is that: there is no way out; we remain either consciously or naïvely within the philosophy of Euro-logocentrism. In spite of his recent renewed critique of Husserl's ethnocentrism,[27] we wonder whether the Derridian gesture is not greeting the Husserlian hand in some secret place.[28]

2.4 Para-deconstruction: Deconstruction and Re-appropriation

The reader may notice that we have repeatedly used the expression "at the post-Heideggerian epoch". Because we do think that only at the post-Heideggerian epoch the above reflection on the situation of intercultural philosophical exchange is possible. We understand the expression "at the post-Heideggerian epoch" in relation to the manifold senses of Heidegger's thinking understood as "epochal thinking". These include Heidegger's *epoché* of the whole Western philosophical tradition as well as Heidegger's effort to rethink the nature of Western philosophy in terms of epochs. All these are sustained with the view (and not the *telos*) to take up again the task of thinking in the present epoch in the most radical manner. How is this to be proceeded? By *Wiederholung* of the Western philosophical tradition, says Heidegger already in *Sein und Zeit*.[29] *Wiederholung*: not to be understood as the superficial repetition, like an epigone, of sayings or ready-made formulas of master thinkers, but as re-appropriation of movements of cultural and philosophical traditions which will enable one to free oneself from the completion, i.e. the enclosure of one's own cultural tradition. Heidegger's re-appropriation of Husserl, Kant, Aristotle and other Greek thinkers are well known and brilliant examples of that endeavor. What we learn from the lesson of Heidegger is: in order to free oneself from the enclosure of one's "proper" tradition, one must feel free to re-appropriate not only moments of

(Paris : Minuit, 1959), pp. 214–230; now as "Operative Begriffe in Husserls Phänomenologie", in *Nähe und Distanz*, *op. cit*., pp. 180–204.

[26] J. Derrida, *Ecriture et différence*, p. 421; *Writing and Difference*, p. 288.

[27] J. Derrida, *De l'esprit. Heidegger et la question* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987), pp. 94–96, n. 2; *Of Spirit*: *Heidegger and the Question*, Eng. trans. G. Bennington & R. Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 120–122.

[28] We share the concern with the possible pitfalls of Derridian and Heideggerian deconstruction expressed by Françoise Dastur in her short but penetrating essay "Three Questions to Jacques Derrida", in *Ethics and Danger. Essays on Heidegger and Continental Thought*, ed. by A. B. Dallery, C. E. Scott & P. H. Roberts, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 25–41.

[29] M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit*., p. 51; *Being and Time*, p. 76.

one's supposed "proper" tradition, but also those originally belonging to the so called "alien" traditions. This freedom is of course not to be mixed up with arbitrariness. Rather, it should be understood as an art of thinking exercised *en connaissance de cause*. It is neither idolatry nor revengeful dismissal, but the patient exercise of a certain form of epochal thinking face to the urgent task of searching for a novel commencement of thinking in the post-Heideggerian epoch. That is why we propose to call the present preliminary considerations on the problem of interculturality "para-deconstruction". We take the two senses of "para-" from its Greek context: "para-" means along side something else, but also in protection against this same thing. Just like a parasol enables us to continue to receive light and heat energy without being sunburned, to undertake a para-deconstruction of the Derridian and/or Heideggerian deconstructive gesture prevents us from being destructed by its possible nihilistic implications and consequences while retaining its power of analysis and the positive suggestions which are susceptible to be re-appropriated.

In more concrete terms, we refuse to let Europeans (in the Husserlian acception of the word, i.e. including "civilized" white North Americans but excluding Eskimos, Indians, Gypsies and the like[30]) to monopolize the right of cultural heritage from the Ancient Greek tradition. In particular, Greek philosophy does not belong to Western, i.e. modern European culture alone, even if the latter is in a privileged position to re-appropriate the former. As the entire intellectual endeavor of Michel Foucault shows, the formation of the cultural identity of the West is historically dated: it is only from the Classical Age onwards that Europe sees itself as a rationalistic culture against all other "barbarian civilizations". However, since the archaeological and genealogical studies of Foucault, what we understand as the Great Rationalism of Classical Europe can no more maintain its habitual, self-projected image of a homogeneous civilization: Modern West built up its identity as a rationalistic culture upon divisions and exclusions.[31] Even if Husserl has criticized Descartes' objectivistic rationalism,[32] his definition of genuine philosophy as pure *thêoria* is basically a re-appropriation of Greek philosophy from the stand point of Modern European rationalism issued from Descartes.[33] This version of rationalism has not only given rise to the metaphysical dualism of Descartes, its philosophical determination of the mathematical as the ultimate paradigm of science and knowledge has also led to the unfortunate result, according to Emmanuel Lévinas, of

[30] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 319; *Crisis*, p. 273.

[31] M. Foucault, *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1st ed. Paris: Plon, 1961; 2nd ed. Paris: Gallimard, 1972; 3rd ed. Gallimard, Collection TEL, 1976). The first English translation by R. Howard, *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1965), covers only one third of the French original, is thus a poor version of the original master work. A full English translation by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa appeared 40 years later as *History of Madness* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

[32] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, §§ 10–21, pp. 60–86; *Crisis*, pp. 60–84.

[33] For a further discussion of Husserl's Idea of philosophy with reference to the ethical *telos* underlying the methodological practice of the phenomenological epoché, *cf. infra*, Chapter 8, "Self-transformation and the Ethical Telos: Orientative Philosophy in Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl".

reducing the relation between the Same and the Other to a position "in which the Other finally finds itself stripped of its alterity".[34] In the light of this, there is no more difficulty to understand that Husserl's definition of genuine philosophy proceeds necessarily by a double exclusion: not only exclusion of the possibility of existence of philosophy in other cultures and other forms, but also exclusion of the contribution by other cultures to the formation of Ancient Greek philosophy.

After so much deconstruction, we now come to the constructive phase of our para-deconstruction.[35] At an age where cultural pluralism can no longer be contested, how should we understand the relation between one's own culture and other cultures? This is the question underlying any philosophical inquiry in intercultural communication.

2.5 Lévi-Strauss: Hybridity of Cultural Formations

To come up with the task of intercultural understanding in philosophy, it is for sure impossible to continue to uphold a position such as that of Husserl in the *Vienna Lecture*. Yet it is still insufficient to recognize cultural pluralism at a purely formal level: the culture(s) of the Other cannot be simply regarded as laying in front of us as an object of pure cognition, or object of curiosity, or even object of consumption, as if each culture has a stable, unique and pure core. It is thus necessary to go beyond a simple juxtaposition of different cultural traditions.

We should have the courage, and not only the knowledge, shown by Lévi-Strauss in his short but beautiful opuscule *Race and History*, to admit the constitutive role played by other cultures during the formation of any single cultural identity: "cultures that have succeeded in realizing the most cumulative forms of history … have never been isolated cultures, but rather cultures which willy-nilly combined their respective games and realized through various means (migrations, borrowings, commercial exchanges, wars)".[36] As a concrete example, Lévi-Strauss points out the fact that the period in which Europe began to establish its cultural identity, i.e.,

---

[34] E. Levinas, "Détermination philosophique de l'idée de culture", in *Philosophie et Culture. Actes du XVIIe Congrès Mondial de Philosophie*, *Montréal 1983* (Montréal: Éditions du Beffroi & Éditions Montmorency, 1986), p. 76, now in Entre nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 1991, Le Livre de Poche, biblio essais n. 4172), p. 186; "The Philosophical Determination of the Idea of Culture", in Entre nous. On Thinking-of-the-Other, Eng. trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), p. 180.

[35] Different from the Derridian deconstruction, Heidegger's deconstruction is understood as one of the three essential constitutive moments of the phenomenological method, the other two being reduction and construction. See Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 24 (Frankfurt-a.-M.: V. Klostermann, 1975), § 5, pp. 26–32; *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 19–23.

[36] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, *Deux* (Paris: Plon, 1973), p. 413; *Structural Anthropology*, *Vol. II*, Eng. trans. M. Layton (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 355.

"at the beginning of the Renaissance, Europe was a place where the most varied influences met and merged, such as the Greek, Roman, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon traditions, and the Arabic and Chinese influences."[37] In short, for any culture which has attained a certain degree of complexity, cultural hybridity is its condition of existence. To insist on the purity of cultural identity is just philosophical solipsism transposed onto the cultural level which forgets simply that intersubjectivity is the pre-condition of any philosophical activity.

2.6 Merleau-Ponty: From the Pre-objective World to Inter-worlds

But how should we transpose the results of Lévi-Strauss' work onto the philosophical terrain and obtain insights for the understanding of our theme: "interculturality"? Again Merleau-Ponty's reflection on the relation of the self and the Other gives us a very important clue. For him the question of the relation of the self and the Other should be posed in terms of "the ones for the others and not only each one for the other" ("les uns pour les autres et non pas seulement l'un pour l'autre").[38] Likewise any philosophical foundation for interculturality requires us to go beyond the simple juxtaposition of different cultures. This means that we should not regard two cultures as "two universes of the In-itself",[39] otherwise there would be no real possibilities of communication. In particular any single culture should not a priori regard other cultures as "a scourge", as the "continued threat of an absolute reversal of pro and con", since in this manner it runs the danger of considering itself as "a judge elevated above all contestation, without place, without relativities".[40] In the latter case, there would no more be question of any genuine reciprocal relationship between cultures; every culture would consider itself as "the sole original of humanity",[41] and this is precisely the attitude which underlies all forms of ethnocentrism.

On the contrary, the relationship between two cultures should be understood as one recognizing the Other as truly the Other, that is in the same manner of that between two carnal subjects. The key to a genuine deconstruction of ethnocentrism is to recognize that the Other "has the power to decenter me, to oppose his centering to my own".[42] This amounts to admitting the following fundamental fact:

---

[37] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*, *Deux*, p. 414; *Structural Anthropology*, *Vol. II*, pp. 355–356.

[38] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, ed. C. Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 113, n.1; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 81, n.14, translation modified.

[39] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 114; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 82.

[40] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 114; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 82.

[41] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 112; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 80.

[42] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 112; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 80.

> that the other's body which I see and his word which I hear, which are given to me as immediately present in my field, *do present to me in their own fashion what I will never be present to*, what will always be invisible to me, what I will never directly witness – an absence therefore, but not just any absence, a certain absence and a certain difference in terms of dimensions which are right away common to us and which predestine the other to be a mirror of me as I am of him, which are responsible for the fact that we do not have two images side by side of someone and of ourselves, but one sole image in which we are both involved, which is responsible for the fact that my consciousness of myself and my myth of the other are not two contradictories, but rather each the reverse of the other.[43]

We apologize for this long citation. Yet it is of utmost importance in understanding Merleau-Ponty's view that the relationship among different cultures is one of reciprocity in essence. Such a view has its ontological foundation, namely: that two cultures, just like two carnal subjects, are "two entries to the same Being, each accessible to but one of us, but appearing to the other as *practicable by right*, because they both belong to the same Being."[44]

But again why? Why this faith in the belonging of two carnal subjects to the same Being or the faith that two cultures are two entries to the same Being? A common sense response would be: we all belong to the same World in the sense of the same Earth. A phenomenological response has already been provided by Husserl himself in a manuscript drafted in 1934, *Umsturzt der kopernikanischen Lehre*: *die Erde als Ur-Arche bewegt sich nicht* ("The Overturn of the Copernican Doctrine: the Earth as Archi-origin does not move"),[45] cited by Merleau-Ponty already in *La Phénoménologie de la perception* and commented frequently afterwards[46]: the Earth as archi-origin, as the topos of a pre-objective Nature, is the ontological origin of any possible form of cultural world.

Merleau-Ponty's vision of Being is not an ontological monism as opposed to Cartesian dualism which is at the origin of modern scientific objectivism. For the author of *Le visible et l'invisible*, the latter has its part of truth, but a certain part only; what is important is to go beyond, or more precisely, to go beneath scientific objectivism, which is only one particular form of cultural world, be it a predominant one at the modern era, and reach back to a more primordial conception of Being: the

---

[43] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 114–115; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 82–83, translation modified.

[44] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 114; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 82.

[45] First published under the title "Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur", in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. M. Farber (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), pp. 307–325; Eng. trans. by F. Kersten, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of Spatiality of Nature", in *HUSSERL. Shorter Works*, ed. P. McCormick & F. A. Elliston (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 222–233.

[46] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 85, n. 1; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. Donald A. Landes (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 73, n. 5 (the content of this note is on p. 512); *Signes*, pp. 223, 227–8; *Signs*, pp. 177, 180; *Résumés de cours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 116; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952–1960*, Eng. trans. J. O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 82–83.

"wild Being", which is not only prior to the objectivistic conception of Being or Nature, but prior to all other possible forms of cultural vision too. It is Merleau-Ponty's effort, in the later part of his philosophical life, to enquire into the idea of pre-objective Nature and its characteristics: reciprocity, interdependence, promiscuity, interpenetration; in short, Being as intertwining and as chiasm.[47]

This conception of Being, which underlies already the ontological thinking of the relationship among the three orders of behaviour (the physical, the vital and the human orders) in *The Structure of Behavior*, accounts for the continuity of Merleau-Ponty's entire philosophical endeavor: the refutation of classical ontological dualism in the *Structure of Behavior*, the positive description of the perceptual world as the basic structure of the pre-scientific everyday human world in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and the effort, in his later works, to understand the ontological conditions of the transition from Nature to Culture. Merleau-Ponty's ontological inquiry is arguably the kind of philosophical interrogation underlying the works of Lévi-Strauss which are pursued in the anthropological field.[48] The thirst for the ontological foundation of the transition from Nature to Culture drives Merleau-Ponty toward the quest for the proper comprehension of the kind of Being which can account for the rise of all possible forms of cultural world out of a "primordial Nature". For Merleau-Ponty, forms of cultural world are nothing other than forms of sensible world and historical world which, properly understood, "are always inter-worlds".[49] Hence, while Lévi-Strauss shows from the anthropological field that cultural identity is always hybrid in nature, Merleau-Ponty provides us with the ontological understanding that cultural worlds are always inter-worlds.[50]

After so much philosophy, we believe that what is crucial is to give up our habitual attitude of ratiocination, so common among philosophers, and let ourselves be immerged in these inter-worlds. Again, Merleau-Ponty's words form the best recommendation:

> This is a remarkable method, which consists in learning to see what is ours as alien and what was alien as our own… Of course it is neither possible nor necessary for the same man to have experiential knowledge of all the societies he speaks about. He only has to have learned at some time and at sufficient length to let himself be taught by another culture. For from then on he has a new organ of understanding at his disposal – he has regained possession of that untamed region of himself which is not incorporated in his own culture, and through which he communicates with other cultures.[51]

In short, intercultural understanding in philosophy in practice is a matter of navigation between inter-worlds. This will is the task and the guiding principle of the following chapters.

---

[47] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 172ff; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 130ff.

[48] *C.f.* the discussion of Merleau-Ponty himself in "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", *Signes*, pp. 143–157; *Signs*, pp. 114–125.

[49] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 116; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 84, translation modified.

[50] For a discussion of the intercultural implications of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, *cf. infra*, Chapter 10: "The Flesh: from Ontological Employment to Intercultural Employment".

[51] *Signes*, p. 151; *Signs*, p. 120, modified translation.

Chapter 3
To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice to Chinese Philosophy? A Phenomenological Reading of Laozi

Preliminary Note

This chapter proposes a phenomenological reading of the ancient Chinese Daoist text *Daodejing* (《道德經》, also Romanized as *Tao Te Ching*) ascribed to Laozi (also Romanized as Lao-Tzu or Lao-Tsu).[1] It begins by a critical discussion of the two diametrically opposite modes of reception of philosophical Daoism by contemporary Western scholars, namely that Daoist philosophy is anti-rationalism on the one hand, and on the other it is one of the hidden sources of Heidegger's later philosophy. After refuting these two extremist readings of philosophical Daoism, we will present the elements of a phenomenological reading of *Daodejing* from our own appropriation of the conceptual constellation developed in the phenomenological movement understood in the very broad sense of the term. This reading will go along the following three lines: (1). The *dao* as inchoative nature; (2). Deployment of the *dao* by the movement of dialectic and retrieval in the sense of hyperdialectic suggested by the last Merleau-Ponty; (3). Characteristics of the *dao* as vacuity and quietude as well as tenderness and weakness. This phenomenological reading of the *Daodejing* is meant to highlight the non-anthropocentric nature and the critical potential of Laozi's philosophical Daoism.

[1] A first version of this chapter was presented to "Phenomenology As a Bridge Between Asia and the West", International Conference on Phenomenology organized by the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Florida Atlantic University, May 7–10, 2002, Delray Beach, Florida.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_3

3.1 Contrasting Attitudes in the Western Representation of Chinese Philosophy

3.1.1 Daoist Philosophy as Anti-rationalism

At a time of multiculturalism, a politically correct attitude toward the problem of philosophical pluralism will admit readily that there are as many possible types of philosophies as there are types of culture. In the West, the time of Hegel, who judges that Chinese philosophy remains at "the most elementary stage" of philosophical development,[2] seems to be over. Yet to the question "does Chinese philosophy deserve the name of genuine philosophy?", the debate seems to remain open. Since Aristotle has presented the origin of philosophy as the development from myth (*mythos*) to reason (*logos*), the yardstick of deciding whether Chinese philosophy is genuine philosophy has always been built upon the judgment in relation to the following question: whether Chinese philosophy has succeeded or not to construct a form of discourse which gives a foundational role to Reason? In other words, the judgment on the existence or non-existence of Chinese philosophy depends on the judgment on whether traditional Chinese culture has developed a philosophical rationalism in a more or less express form. It is well-known that Husserl has judged that it is simply a "mistake and a falsification of sense … to speak of Chinese philosophy."[3] (We shall return to this point later.) Such a position taking would be comprehensible for professional philosophers from the West or for those Chinese who, by cultural prejudice or by a sense of intellectual division of labour too narrowly defined, never seem interested in Chinese philosophy. Yet even someone like A. C. Graham, who has done so much to introduce Chinese philosophy to the Western intellectual audience and produced so many celebrated English translation of classical texts in the Chinese philosophical corpus,[4] cannot escape himself from the overtly simplistic dichotomy of "rationalism and anti-rationalism" in his presentation of the picture of Ancient Chinese philosophy.[5] Although Graham has taken

[2] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, *Bd. 18* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), p. 147; *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, Eng. trans. E. S. Haldane (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 121.

[3] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1954) ("*Krisis*" hereafter), p. 331; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) ("*Crisis*" hereafter), p. 284.

[4] A. C. Graham's English translations include: Chuang-tzŭ, *The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981); *The Book of Lieh-Tzu* (London: Murray, 1962). His authored works include: *Kung-sun Lung's Essay on Meanings and Things* (Hong Kong: University Press, 1955); *Later Mohist Logic*, *Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978); *Disputers of the Tao*: *Philosophical Arguments in Ancient China* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1989); *Two Chinese Philosophers*: *The Metaphysics of the Brothers Cheng* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1992).

[5] Cf. "Rationalism and Anti-Rationalism in Pre-Buddhist China", in A. C. Graham, *Unreason Within Reason. Essays on the Outskirts of Rationality* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1992), pp. 97–119.

the care to draw the distinction between anti-rationalism (taking Zhuangzi (also Romanized as Chuang-tzu) as the prime example for his insistence on spontaneity against reason) and irrationalism (taking Marquis de Sade, Nietzsche and Hitler as exemplars),[6] his final judgement on the overall achievement of Chinese philosophy following such a yardstick will not reserve a great surprise for his readers. In fact according to Graham, "rationalism is no more than a brief episode in the Chinese tradition, and anti-rationalism is limited to philosophical Taoism and its descendant Ch'an Buddhism".[7] In short: there is something special in the Chinese tradition of philosophy, but frankly speaking, not much! Such would be Graham's final verdict.

3.1.2 Philosophical Daoism as One of "Heidegger's Hidden Sources"

Yet, on the other board of the Western philosophical scene, a certain "rush toward the East" has taken place since some two decades or so. There have been attempts to draw the close connection between the thinking of some of the most influential modern and contemporary Western philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger on the one hand and those of the Asian tradition on the other.[8] Some authors, namely Reinhard May and his English translator Graham Parkes, have been going so far as to claim that Chinese Daoism is one of "Heidegger's hidden sources".[9] But anyone who has a non-simplistic understanding of Heidegger's path of thinking and a first hand access to basic classical Chinese philosophical texts will be surprised by such a strong theoretical claim based on the presentation of just some very thin textual evidence.

In May's book, whose main text is in fact quite thin (the German and the English version ends respectively at the page 67 and 57), the primary argument for his claim draws first of all from some apparent textual parallels between the German translations of the texts of Laozi and Zhuangzi consulted by Heidegger (principally those of Victor von Strauss and Richard Wilhelm)[10] and Heidegger's several famous formulations concerning the equation between Being and Nothing. May writes:

---

[6] A. C. Graham, *Reason and Spontaneity* (London & Dublin: Curzon Press, 1985), pp. 156–227.

[7] A. C. Graham, "Rationalism and Anti-Rationalism in Pre-Buddhist China", *op. cit*., p. 109.

[8] *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987); *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[9] Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources. East Asian Influences on his Work*, Eng. trans. Graham Parkes (London & New York: Routledge, 1996). The original German edition bears the title *Ex oriente lux*: *Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluß* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989).

[10] These include: *Lao-Tse*, *Dao Tê King*: *Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und kommentiert von Victor von Strauss* (Leipzig, 1870); *Laotse*, *Daote king*: *Das Buch des Alten vom Sinn und Leben*, übersetzt und kommentiert von Richard Wilhelm (Jena, 1911); *Dschuang Dsï. Das wahre Buch*

> Let us now juxtapose the relevant textual excerpts. First:
>
> … *that one is only through the other*… ([…] *das eine durch das andere erst ist* […]', Laozi 2, commentary of von Strauss).
>
> The Other to it [Being] is simply Nothing (Heidegger, *IM* 79/60) (Das Andere zu ihm <dem Sein> ist nur das Nichts. *EM* 84).
>
> Being and Nothing are not given beside one another. Each uses itself on behalf of the other … (Heidegger, *QB* 97) (Sein und Nichts gibt es nicht nebeneinander. Eines verwendet sich für das Andere. *Wm* 247).
>
> Second:
>
> *Being is none other than nothing*,/*Nothing is none other than being* (*Sein ist nichts anderes als Nichts*, *Nichts ist nichts anderes als Sein*.).
>
> Nothing as 'Being' (Nichts als "Sein") (Heidegger, 'WM?' [*GA* 9] 106, note b).
>
> Nothing and Being the Same (Nichts und Sein das Selbe) (Heidegger, 'WM?' [*GA* 9] 115, note c).
>
> Being: Nothing: Same (Sein: Nichts: Selbes) (Heidegger, 'SLT' 101).[11]

Without undertaking any philological explication and philosophical discussion of the original Chinese and Japanese terms which are translated into German as "nothing" ("Nichts") and "being" ("Sein"), May concludes hastily:

> These passages juxtaposed in this way… allow hardly any doubt to maintain that in Heidegger's non-western understanding of 'Nothing' ('Being'), … he is indebted to Daoist and Zen Buddhist ways of thinking.[12]

On reading these lines, one will certainly have the impression that one and half century after Hegel, a certain "Eastern wind" has blown to the West. Whereas for Hegel the Chinese expression of "Dao" or "nothing" as "what is highest and the origin of things" is just the sign of "emptiness, the altogether undetermined, the abstract universal", and thus reveals a primitive stage of philosophical development,[13] on the contrary for May Heidegger's talk of Nothing as equivalent to Being seems to be the expression of a supreme wisdom whose origin could be found nowhere except in the ancient Far East. However, any philosophically well-trained mind would agree that juxtaposition of texts is a long way from philological elucidation and philosophical interpretation. May has surely drawn some interesting parallels between the latter Heidegger's formulations about the relation between Being and Nothing and those expressed by philosophical Daoism and Zen Buddhism. But

---

von südlichen Blütenland, übersetzt und kommentiert von Richard Wilhelm (Jena, 1912). There is also Buber's selected German translation of Chuang-tzu, *Reden und Gleichnisse des Tschuang-Tse*, hrsg. und übersetzt von Martin Buber (Leipzig, 1910). Cf. R. May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., p. 75.

[11] R. May, *Ex oriente lux*, *op. cit*., p. 44; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., pp. 27–28. *IM* = M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Eng. trans. R. Mannheim (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); *EM* = M. Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Frankfurt a. M.: V. Klostermann, 1953); *QB* = M. Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, Eng. trans. Jean T. Wilde & W. Kluback (New Haven: College & University Press, 1958); *Wm* = M. Heidegger, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a. M.: V. Klostermann, 1967); *GA* 9 = *Heideggers Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 9 (Frankfurt a. M.: V. Klostermann, 1976); SLT = 'Seminar in Le Thor', in *Seminare*, *Heideggers Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 15 (Frankfurt a. M.: V. Klostermann, 1986), pp. 326–371.

[12] R. May, *Ex oriente lux*, *op. cit*., pp. 44–45; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., p. 28.

[13] Cf. note 2.

before we can arrive at any determinate relation between Heidegger's entire path of thinking, which cannot be reduced to a simplistic equation between Being and Nothing, especially after the famous "turn", and the Daoist and Zen Buddhist mode of thought, an in-depth philosophical explication ("*Erörterung*", one of Heidegger's cherished term) is needed. May's book stops precisely on the threshold of philosophical explication.

Apparently May has given a further textual evidence to justify his claim that the later Heidegger has appropriated Laozi's conception of *Dao* in his discussion of language. May proceeds in the following manner in a later chapter:

> Let us now consider, word for word, a longer passage that most likely represents a well-encoded paraphrase of the concluding four lines of *Laozi* 25, and of the last line in particular. In von Strauss' translation they read: 'The measure [*Rechtmass*] of the human is the earth,/the measure of the earth is the heaven,/the measure of heaven is *dao*,/the measure of *dao* is itself'. In the following paraphrase by Heidegger it helps to pay special attention to the word 'Appropriation' [*Ereignis*], which turns out to be an extremely important keyword, here presumably in a special sense with respect to *dao*, and more precisely for *dao fa zi ran* ['the measure of dao is itself'] in the Heideggerian paraphrase: 'Way, the appropriating-using way-making [*die er-eignend-brauchende Be-wegung*]'. Paraphrasing the aforementioned lines from the *Laozi*, Heidegger emphasized the word 'Appropriation'.[14]

After showing the apparent paraphrase of Laozi by Heidegger, May goes on to cite a long passage from Heidegger's article "The Way to Language". The citation begins from the sentence "The productive propriation [*Eignen*] that arouses Saying as shown in its showing may be called 'appropriating' [*Ereignen*]…" to the phrase "What holds sway in saying [*dao*], Appropriation, can be named only by saying: It – Appropriation [*Ereignis*] – propriates [*eignet*]."[15] Then May comes to the following conclusion:

> Drawing on the doctrine of *dao*, especially as exemplified in the relevant chapters of the *Laozi*, Appropriation is naturally for Heidegger 'not a law in the sense of a norm that hovers somewhere above us'. The passage just quoted speaks clearly enough in its detailed paraphrasing the language of the *Dao de jing*, and especially of the last line of Chapter 25 [i.e. *dao fa zi ran*, or 'the measure of *dao* is itself']… With this the circle is closed. Appropriation is It itself, so of itself (*ziran*), 'and nothing besides', just as *dao* is *dao*.[16]

Manifestly, May's "proof" relies entirely on his acceptance of the translation of the last line of Chapter 25 of *Daodejing*, i.e., the translation of the expression "*dao fa zi ran*" as "the measure of *dao* is itself". "*Dao fa zi ran*" is the Romanized phonetic transcription of the four classical Chinese characters 「道法自然」.[17] So the

---

[14] R. May, *Ex oriente lux*, *op. cit*., pp. 60–61; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., p. 40.

[15] M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Verlag G. Neske, 1959), pp. 258–259; *On the Way to Language*, Eng. trans. P. D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 127–8; R. May, *Ex oriente lux*, *op. cit*., pp. 61–62; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., pp. 40–41.

[16] R. May, *Ex oriente lux*, *op. cit*., p. 62; *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, *op. cit*., pp. 41–42.

[17] We consult the most easily available and reliable modern Chinese edition of *Laozi's Daodejing* by 陳鼓應:《老子註釋及評介》,北京:中華書局,1984 (Chen Gou-Ying, *Lao-tzu*, *annotations and commentaries*, Beijing: Zhung-Hua Book Store, 1984), Ch. 25, p. 163. For the English version, we give the pagination of the scholarly translation by D. C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching*, bilingual

key to the problem lies on whether the expression "the measure of *dao* is itself" is a faithful translation of the original Chinese term 「道法自然」. If "the measure of *dao*" is an acceptable translation of the first two words 「道法」, the translation of the expression 「自然」(*zi ran*) by the word "itself" is subject to dispute. This term is composed of a first word 「自」(*zi*) which means the substantive "self" or the preposition "from" and the second word「然」(*ran*) which means "correctness", "happening", "a state of affairs" or "thus". Together, the two words 「自然」(*zi ran*) mean rather "generation from itself", "spontaneous"/"spontaneity" or "nature"/"natural". Thus the expression 「道法自然」("*dao fa zi ran*") can be translated as "the measure of the *Dao* is spontaneity". It can also be translated as "The *Dao* models itself after Nature". And a third option is possible: "The *Dao* models itself after that which is natural", which has the advantage of combining the sense of the two former versions.

If, according to May, Heidegger's appropriation of Laozi is founded basically on his reading of a German translation which, in turn, proves to be philologically inaccurate, his claim that Laozi is one of Heidegger's hidden East-Asian sources is as fragile as the Eiffel Tower-upon-sand. It is probable that Heidegger has projected onto Laozi his own conception of Being as *Ereignis*. But then is such a projection legitimate? Anyhow, before more correct philosophical interpretations based on solid textual evidences have shown their soundness, we have no reason to accept the idyllic version that one of the most ancient Chinese philosophical texts is the secret source of one of the most influential contemporary Western philosophers.

3.2 Is a Phenomenological Reading of Chinese Philosophy Committed to Eurocentrism? Return to Husserl's Eurocentric Conception of Philosophy

Are we necessarily committed to either one or other of the above two seemingly extremist positions? We don't think so. We do think that a middle way is possible. Without exaggerating the role played by Daoist philosophy in the formation of Heidegger's ontological thinking, a phenomenological reading of classical Chinese philosophical texts, in particular that of Laozi, is a tenable experience. What we are trying to do in the following pages is just proposing, by way of a conceptual apparatus familiar to the phenomenological audience, some basic elements of such a

edition (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989 (1st edition 1982)). This edition, which contains both the *Wang-Pi* text and its translation as well as those of the *Ma-wang-tui* silk-texts, is a revised and enlarged edition of an earlier version published in 1963 in the Penguin Classics. It is a literal translation superior to most of other currently available English translations. For Chapter 25, cf. pp. 37–39. In most cases, we have modified D. C. Lau's translation according our own judgement. We also consult the English translation given by Wing-Tsit Chan in his presentation of Laozi in "The Natural Way of Lao Tzu", in Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 139–176.

reading. We have neither the intention of digging into the deep interpretative possibilities of the *Daodejing*, nor carrying it further towards a systematic confrontation with the works of the whole or part of the big family of phenomenologists.

But before undertaking such an attempt, we have to once again settle the uneasy consciousness aroused by the Eurocentrism of Husserl the founder of contemporary phenomenology who refused to accept a legitimate usage of the term "philosophy" outside Europe, even though "Europe" is used "in the spiritual sense" of the term.[18] For Husserl maintains that "only in the Greeks do we have a universal … life-interest in the essentially new form of a purely 'theoretical' attitude, and this as a communal form in which this interest works itself out for internal reasons, being the corresponding, essentially new [community] of philosophers, of scientists (mathematicians, astronomers, etc.). These are the men who, not in isolation but with one another and for one another, i.e., in interpersonally bound communal work, strive for and bring about *theōria* and nothing but *theōria*, whose growth and constant perfection, with the broadening of the circle of coworkers and the succession of the generations of inquirers, is finally taken up into the will with the sense of an infinite and common task. The theoretical attitude has its historical origin in the Greeks."[19] And since in the eyes of Husserl Europe is the only legitimate heir of the Greek science, forgetting the pioneering role played by the ancient Egyptians and the intermediate role played by Persians and Arabs during nearly a whole millennium before the dawn of modern Europe, philosophy, for the author of the famous 1935 Vienna Lecture, is nothing other than "Greek-European science" in contrast to the merely "mythical-religious attitude" of the so-called "oriental philosophies", namely those of India and China.[20] This professed Eurocentrism of Husserl has troubled more than once students of phenomenology of all boards.[21]

However, we can now readily point out that Husserl's Eurocentrism is motivated by a specifically inspired mode of understanding, namely the Cartesian mode, of the whole history of Western philosophy—philosophy as Greek-European science. We can even say that Husserl's reading of the history of Western philosophy is underlined by a scientific conception of philosophy of history of philosophy, though Husserl himself criticizes at the same time Descartes' obtrusive interest in objectivism as the reason for his "self-misunderstanding" leading to the oblivion of the life-world.[22] The phenomenological movement itself has amply shown that there are other possibilities of reading the history of Western philosophy. Scheler, Heidegger,

[18] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 18; *Crisis*, p. 273.

[19] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 326; *Crisis*, p. 280.

[20] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 329–330; *Crisis*, p. 283.

[21] The present author has written an article under the uneasy consciousness aroused by the Eurocentrism of Husserl. Cf. Kwok-ying Lau, "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, special issue of *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth & C.-F. Cheung (Freiburg/München: Verlag K. Alber, 1998), pp. 229–249 (cf., *supra*, Chap. 2). The discussion on Husserl's Eurocentrism is found in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, pp. 233–237.

[22] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, § 19, pp. 83–84; *Crisis*, pp. 81–82.

Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, Ricoeur, Derrida: almost every important figure in the wider phenomenological movement after Husserl has contested in one way or another the scientific conception of philosophy of history of philosophy held by the author of *Krisis*. On the one hand, the phenomenological way of seeing was born quite independently of Husserl's scientific conception of philosophy of history of philosophy. On the other, the legitimate usage of the phenomenological method is established by the possibilities and concrete results shown in the subsequent development of the phenomenological movement rather than by the orthodox formulations of its founder. We can thus say that even if Husserl has expressed a Eurocentric conception of philosophy during a moment in his life-long philosophical endeavor, the practice of phenomenology is not necessarily committed to Eurocentrism.

3.3 Elements of a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi

The whole text of *Daodejing*, the only writing supposed to be left behind by Laozi, is composed of only some 5000 words in classical Chinese. It is divided into 81 short chapters according to the *Wang-Pi* version.[23] Yet the richness of its intellectual contents bypasses probably all texts of comparable size in any philosophical tradition. As is well-known, the thinking in *Daodejing* is deployed around the concept of *Dao*. Some people translates *Dao* by "the Way", whereas we prefer letting it untranslated, just as the now commonly accepted usage for the Greek word *Logos* or the Heideggerian term *Dasein*.

3.3.1 Dao *as Inchoative Nature*

What is the meaning of *Dao*? Some people interprets it as Being in the sense of Parmenides, because the *Dao* is changeless, whereas some others compare it to the Greek term *Logos*, as the literal meaning of the word "*dao*" (道) is "the way" or "to speak". But we suggest to understand the *Dao* as Being in the pre-objective and primordial order, comparable to the meaning conferred to these terms by Merleau-Ponty (we will return to this later). It is motivated by the reading of the following texts:

> The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the constant *Dao*. (「道可道,非常道。」Ch. 1, p. 3)[24]

[23] We will base our discussion on the traditional Wang Pi text. The Ma Wang Tui manuscripts, found in 1973, contain mostly stylistic variants. According to my colleague LIU Xiaogan, specialist in philosophical Daoism and author of an acclaimed book in Chinese on Laozi published in Taipei, 1997 (《老子》,劉笑敢著,台北:東大圖書,1997), these manuscripts do not bring about great difference in terms of interpretative significance.

[24] Chapter number and pagination refer to D. C. Lau's translation of *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*.

> Compare to a thing, the *Dao* is shadowy and indistinct. Instinct and shadowy, yet within it is something that appears. Shadowy and indistinct, yet within it is something substantial. Dim and dark, yet within it is something essential. That essential thing is very real, within it is something that can be experienced. (「道之為物,惟恍惟惚。惚兮恍兮,其中有象;恍兮惚兮,其中有物。窈兮冥兮,其中有精;其精甚真,其中有信。」Ch. 21, pp. 32–32)

> Something undifferentiated is formed, born before heaven and earth. Silent and void, it stands alone and does not change; proceeds in a circular way and does not corrupt, it is capable of being the mother of heaven and earth. I know not its name, thus naming it by the acceptable term of *Dao*. (「有物混成,先天地生;寂兮寥兮,獨立而不改,周行而不殆,可以為天地母。吾不知其名,故強字之曰道。」Ch. 25, p. 37)

> The *Dao* conceals itself and is nameless. (「道隱無名。」Ch. 41, 63)

> The *Dao* is constant and nameless, but simple. (「道常無名,樸。」Ch. 32, p. 49)

The *Dao* is above or beyond the order of physical things but itself does not belong to such an order. It is within the *Dao* and by virtue of it that physical things take shape and appear. These physical things are substantial and undergo changes; they are real and can be experienced. Yet the *Dao* itself is shapeless, does not change, and incorruptible. Expressed in the language of phenomenology, the *Dao* is of the pre-objective order. Furthermore, the *Dao* is at the origin of heaven and earth. As the origin of the world, it is also the principle of generation and corruption. Thus the *Dao* can be understood as Nature. It is of course not Nature in the sense of object of scientific investigation, as the ideational correlate of modern natural sciences. Nor should it be understood as intuitive Nature encountered by us in the everyday life-world and referred to by Husserl in the *Ideas II*.[25] Precisely because Nature at the pre-objective order is not a "natural thing" that we can have direct experience but Nature in the primordial sense, we should understand it as inchoative Nature. By inchoative Nature we mean the Nature that is at the origin of not only all physical objects but also all happenings in the Universe. It is this Nature which provides all kind of products with form and matter at the same time. Understood in this way, this Nature itself is not any product but the principle of productivity. Thus it is a kind of *natura naturans*. This line of thought can be confirmed by the further connection of the *Dao* with the concepts of Being and Nothing understood in the ontological sense of the terms.

> By Nothing(ness), we name the beginning of heaven and earth; by Being, we name the mother of the myriad things. (「無,名天地之始;有,名萬物之母。」Ch. 1, p. 3)

> The myriad things in the world are originated from Being, and Being from Nothing(ness). (「天下萬物生於有,有生於無。」Ch. 40, p. 61)

---

[25] E. Husserl, *Ideen zur einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Philosophie*, *Zweites Buch*, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, hrsg. Marly Biemel, *Husserliana IV* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1954), p. 367; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Eng. tran. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1989), p. 377.

> The *Dao* is vacuous, yet it will not be exhausted by use. Unfathomable, it is like the ancestor of the myriad things. (「道沖而用之,或不盈。淵兮似萬物之宗。」Ch. 4, p. 7)

> The *Dao* gives rise to one; one gives rise to two; two gives rise to three; three gives rise to the myriad things. (「道生一,一生二,二生三,三生萬物。」Ch. 42, p. 63)

From these texts, it is clear to Laozi that the *Dao* is the unfathomable origin of the myriad things. As Laozi says that Being and Nothing are also the origin of the myriad things, this means that Being and Nothing are the other names of the *Dao*. Yet Laozi gives a further explication of the *Dao* in the following manner:

> While the *Dao* gives them life, virtue cultivates them, the things give them shape, the assemble of conditions bring them to maturity. Therefore the myriad things all revere the *Dao* and honour virtue… Thus the *Dao* gives them life and virtue cultivates them, nurses them and educates them, brings them to fruition and maturity, feeds and shelter them. (「道生之,德畜之,物形之,勢成之。是以萬物莫不尊道而貴德。……故道生之,德畜之;長之,育之;成之,熟之;養之,覆之。」Ch. 51, pp. 74–75)

Here it is shown clearly that for Laozi the *Dao* is not only the inexhaustible origin of life phenomena belonging to the realm of nature; the *Dao* is also at the origin of life activities known to us as culture in the sense of activities of cultivation and education. Hence the *Dao* can be understood as *phusis* in the primordial sense of the term. This is the basic consideration which compels us to think that we should understand the *Dao* as inchoative Nature which refers to that primordial order of Nature which acts as the unique and common source of natural beings and cultural activities. Yet the *Dao* itself is prior to the division between natural existences and cultural entities. Thus the thinking of the *Dao* is not the formulation of a naïve naturalism in opposition to any form of humanism or anthropocentrism. It is simply at this side of such a dichotomy. This can be confirmed by the passage in Chap. 25 already cited:

> Man models himself after earth, earth models itself after heaven, heaven models itself after the *Dao*, and the *Dao* models itself after Nature. (「人法地,地法天,天法道,道法自然。」Ch. 25, p. 39)

The *Dao* as inchoative Nature provides the order of natural things and cultural entities with form and substance, thus is in a certain sense immanent to both. But at the same time it is irreducible to natural things and cultural entities, meaning that the *Dao* manifests a certain character of transcendence. Yet in comparison to objects of nature and culture, the *Dao* itself remains undifferentiated and indistinct, because as primordial and pre-objective order of Being it is neither object of direct experience nor does it come forth in the phenomenal world right away. Thus it is impossible for us to have direct knowledge and an entirely distinctive conception of the *Dao*. It is even difficult to give a suitable name to it as names, in our ordinary usage of language, usually apply to objects only. That is why the *Dao* as inchoative Nature remains more or less mysterious to our finite human understanding.

If our reading of the *Daodejing* is textually founded, we will be astonished to find a close resonance of Laozi's *Dao* in Merleau-Ponty's conception of primordial Nature. Because for Merleau-Ponty too, Nature is of the primordial order:

> Nature is not simply the object… It is an object from which we have arisen, in which our preliminaries have been posited little by little until the very moment of tying themselves to an existence, and which continue to support this existence and provide it with its materials.[26]

Thus Nature to Merleau-Ponty is "in one way or another the primordial being which is not yet the subject-being nor the object-being."[27] Yet it is precisely this primordial order of being which launches the most tremendous challenge to our rationally oriented reflective thinking. Merleau-Ponty himself has confessed that there is no ready-made key to solve the problem concerning, if not the mystery, at least the ambiguity of this primordial Being:

> It has neither the tight texture of a mechanism, nor the transparency of a whole which precedes its parts. We can neither conceive of the primordial being engendering itself, which would make it infinite, nor think of it being engendered by another, which would reduce it to the condition of a product and a dead result.[28]

As primordial Being, Nature is neither a simple physical object of pure transcendence, nor a self-producing being of pure immanence. Rather, to Merleau-Ponty, "[Nature] presents itself always as already there before us, and yet as new before our gaze. This implication of the immemorial in the present, this call for Nature at the most recent present, disorients reflective thinking."[29]

The amazement and the perplexity expressed by Merleau-Ponty in this last paragraph sound like a running parallel to Chap. 25 of the *Daodejing*, already cited:

> Something undifferentiated is formed, born before heaven and earth. Silent and void, it stands alone and does not change; proceeds in a circular way and does not corrupt, it is capable of being the mother of the heaven and earth. I know not its name, thus naming it by the acceptable term of *Dao*.

Just like Merleau-Ponty, Laozi thinks that it is not possible to trace further back to the origin of the *Dao*. Yet, in spite of the perplexity vis-à-vis the problem of the primordial Nature, it is a question that we must ask. This is because without a sufficient understanding of the primordial Nature, our understanding of the human order in its essential connection with the cultural world and the historical world will

---

[26] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Résumé des cours*, *Collège de France 1952*–1960 (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 94; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952*–1960, Eng. trans. J. O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 64, translation modified.

[27] Merleau-Ponty, *Résumé des cours*, p. 95; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France*, pp. 65–66, translation slightly modified.

[28] Merleau-Ponty, *Résumé des cours*, p. 95; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France*, p. 66, translation slightly modified.

[29] Merleau-Ponty, *Résumé des cours*, p. 94; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France*, p. 65, translation slightly modified.

not only be insufficient, but simply bizarre. This is also the concern shared by Merleau-Ponty when he said:

> Any Naturalism apart, an ontology which leaves Nature in silence shuts itself in the incorporeal and for this very reason gives a fantastic image of man, spirit and history.[30]

On saying this, it is possible that Merleau-Ponty was referring to Heidegger's ontology in *Being and Time*. For any cultural world and historical world must be rooted upon the soil of primordial Nature. Thus the understanding of the human order must presuppose a certain understanding of primordial Nature. But it is precisely this dimension of understanding which is lacked in the project of fundamental ontology in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.[31] Yet Merleau-Ponty's remarks also apply to the ontological dualism of Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*: nature receives neither any thematization in Sartre's magnum opus.

3.3.2 Deployment of the Dao*: Dialectic and Retrieval*

The *Dao* as primordial Being cannot be assimilated to Being in the sense of Parmenides because the former, in contrast to the latter, is not immobile. Rather the *Dao* is capable of movement and it is by virtue of the deployment of the *Dao* that things come into appearance. Of the deployment of the *Dao*, Laozi says:

> Reversal is the *Dao*'s principle of movement. (「反者道之動。」Ch. 40, p. 61)

The word "fan" (反) can mean: (1) overturn or opposition; (2) return or retrieval. In fact these are the two essential ways in which the *Dao* deploys itself: either by overturning of something into its opposition, or by returning something to its original posture. Thus Laozi says:

> Being and nothing produce each other; the difficult and the easy complement each other; the long and the short contrast each other; the high and the low compete with each other; the sound and the voice harmonize with each other; before and after follow each other. (「有無相生,難易相成,長短相形,高下相盈,音聲相和,前後相隨。」Ch. 2, p. 5)[32]

---

[30] Merleau-Ponty, *Résumé des cours*, p. 91; *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France*, p.62, translation slightly modified.

[31] Nautre in *Being and Time* is presented basically as instrumental being, which Heidegger names by the term "readiness-to-hand" (Zuhandenen), which is far from Nature in the primordial sense. One of Heidegger's earliest students Karl Löwith has expressed his criticism of this lack in *Being and Time*: "In *Sein und Zeit* nature seems to me to disappear in the existential understanding of facticity and throwness." However, "when nature is lacking … the totality of a being in its character as a being is mistaken, and it cannot be brought in supplementarily afterwards." K. Löwith, "The Nature of Man and the World of Nature. For Heidegger's 80th Birthday", in *Martin Heidegger in Europe and America*, ed. Edward G. Ballard and Charles E. Scott (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1973), p. 39.

[32] Here we follow the Ma Wang Tui Manuscripts as the traditional version given by Wang Pi in the 4th phrase 「高下相傾」 ("the high and the low incline towards each other") does not make sense.

All things manifest themselves in contrast or in opposition to one another. Thus knowledge is also acquired by way of juxtaposition of the opposites. Likewise value judgement proceeds by the contrast of the opposite too:

> When the whole world knows the beautiful as the beautiful, there arises the recognition of the ugly; when the whole world knows the good as the good, there arises the recognition of the bad. (「天下皆知美之為美,斯惡已;皆知善之為善,斯不善已。」Ch. 2, p. 5)

Accordingly, a state of affairs always turns into its opposite:

> It is on calamity that good fortune perches; it is beneath good fortune that calamity crouches. (「禍兮!福之所倚;福兮!禍之所伏。」Ch. 58, p. 85)

Thus by recognition of the oppositional nature of things and states of affairs, we can anticipate the course of events:

> That which will shrink will stretch first; that which will weaken will strengthen first; that which will collapse will stand upright first; that which will withdraw will give first. This is called subtle discernment. (「將欲歙之,必固張之;將欲弱之,必固強之;將欲廢之,必固興之;將欲取之,必固與之;是謂微明。」Ch. 36, p. 53)

By opposition and by antithesis: this is the way in which the *Dao* deploys itself. There is a general name for it: dialectic. The movement of the *Dao* also proceeds in a circular manner (Ch. 25): this is a movement of retrieval which constantly comes back to its origin and then recommences again. Thus this is a movement without end:

> Something undifferentiated is formed, …it proceeds in a circular way and does not corrupt. …I name it by the acceptable term of *Dao*, and by exaggeration I would call it 'the great'. Being great, it means that it is receding; once receding, it means that it is remote; being remote, it means that it is retrieving to its origin. (「有物混成,……周行而不殆,……強字之曰道,強為之名曰大。大曰逝,逝曰遠,遠曰反。」Ch. 25, pp. 38–39)

Hence dialectic and retrieval are the two principal ways of deployment of the *Dao*. Yet the dialectic of the *Dao* should be understood neither in the Hegelian sense nor in the Marxist sense, as the term dialectic here serves only a descriptive purpose without any teleological connotation. Rather, in conjunction with the movement of retrieval, it is dialectic without an end, i.e. an open dialectic. We are even tempted to call it, after Merleau-Ponty, "hyperdialectic" or "the good dialectic" in distinction to "the bad dialectic."[33] For the author of *The Visible and the Invisible*, the bad dialectic is a thinking which "is defined apart from the concrete constellation", which proceeds like a powerful "explicative principle" and "imposes an external law and framework upon the content" by the formalism of "thesis, antithesis, and synthesis."[34] By contrast, the good dialectic, i.e. what he calls the hyperdialectic, "is a thought that … is capable of truth because it envisages without restriction the plurality of the relationships and what has been called ambiguity."[35] In short, it is the kind of dialec-

[33] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 129; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 94.

[34] *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 128–129; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 93–94.

[35] *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 129; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 94.

tic which is "the reversal of relationship", which "is the thought of the Being-seen, of a Being that is not simply positivity, the In-Itself, and the Being-posed by a thought, but *Self-manifestation*, disclosure, in the process of forming itself…"[36]

The dialectic of Laozi can be called a form of hyperdialectic precisely because it does not proceed by a formal and all embracing determining law of subsumption, but by respect of the concrete manifestation of what is seen. It is thus a kind of dialectic practiced in a way comparable to reflective judgement in the Kantian sense. It follows a strictly descriptive path without committing any interpretative violence. It lets the multiple to manifest their differences without reducing them to a unique and supreme explicative principle by a metaphysical *tour de force*. Last but not least, it avoids the trap of objectivism because as dialectic it does not stop at a simple positive positioning. It also saves itself from subjectivism because this form of dialectical movement is a process without subject. In close relation to its a-subjectivism, the thinking of Laozi is essentially non-anthropocentric. This can be seen evidently from the following passage:

> Thus the *Dao* is great; heaven is great; earth is great; man is great too. Within the universe that which can be considered as great counts by four, and man is one among them. Man models himself after earth, earth models itself after heaven, heaven models itself after the *Dao*, and the *Dao* models itself after Nature. (「故道大,天大,地大,人亦大。域中有四大,而人居其一焉。人法地,地法天,天法道,道法自然。」Ch. 25, pp. 38–39)

Hence Laozi's Daoism is a kind of a-subjectivism. Laozi's quadruplet--the *Dao*, heaven, earth and man—which is at the basis of his a-subjectivism, is comparable to the quadruplet of the later Heidegger: heaven, earth, God and man.[37] On saving Laozi from anthropocentrism, the Daoist quadruplet also saves philosophical Daoism from the often incorrectly alleged relativism. This is because to Laozi the human subject never occupies a central position in the universe, nor a constitutive role of meaning conferral alone. Philosophical Daoism maintains a positioning in diametric opposition to that which is expressed in Protagoras' famous dictum: "Man is the measure of all things."[38] Thus accusing Laozi of relativism is simply a misunderstanding.

3.3.3 Characteristics of the Dao*: Vacuity and Quietude, Tenderness and Weakness*

The *Daodejing* goes on to describe how the *Dao* functions: by the concepts of vacuity and quietude (虛靜), as well as tenderness and weakness (柔弱). In concordance with the principle of the *Dao*'s deployment ("reversal is the *Dao*'s principle of

[36] *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 125; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 91.

[37] Cf. M. Heidegger, "Das Ding", in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), pp. 145–204; "The Thing", in M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought*, Eng. Trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 163–186.

[38] Reported by Plato in *Theaetetus*, 152 a. Cf. F. M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1935), p. 31.

movement", Ch. 40), the *Dao*, in order to perform a positive or substantial and powerful function, has to show an apparently negative or vacuous and weak characteristics.

> Is not the space between heaven and earth like a bellows? While vacuous, it is never exhausted; when active, it produces even more. (「天地之間,其猶橐籥乎!虛而不屈,動而愈出。」Ch. 5, p. 9)

Why can the cosmos be the vast field of generation of the myriad things and productive activities? Simply because it is essentially vacuous and not occupied. Being never fully occupied, it can exercise its function of productivity which resides precisely in its inexhaustibility. This is in complete agreement with the passage that we have discussed above concerning the dialectical nature of the *Dao*'s principle of movement:

> The *Dao* is vacuous, yet it will not be exhausted by use. Unfathomable, it is like the ancestor of the myriad things. (「道沖而用之,或不盈。淵兮似萬物之宗。」Ch. 4, p. 7)

That is why in contrast to Heraclitus, who sees that *polemos*—the war, the dispute—is the origin of everything, *Laozi* thinks that the productivity of Nature and the generation of the myriad things originate from the *Dao*'s characteristic of vacuity and quietude:

> The myriad things come into being, and I contemplate thereby their retrieval. The variety of flourishing things, each returns to its own root. The retrieval to its root is called quietude, and this means returning to its destiny. (「萬物並作,吾以觀復。夫物芸芸,各復歸其根。歸根曰靜,是謂復命。」Ch. 16, p. 23)

Likewise, Laozi recommends quietism as the principle of practical wisdom. This is because, once again according to the *Dao*'s dialectical principle of deployment, the exercise of a positive and powerful function has to be proceeded from a seemingly negative and weak characteristic of the *Dao*:

> The heavy is the root of the light, quietude is the lord of the hasty. Therefore the gentleman when travelling all day, always remains prudent with his laden carts. Even at the sight of magnificent scenes, he remains leisurely and indifferent. How then a lord with ten thousand chariots should behave in order that he can remain lighthearted in his empire? If imprudent, he will lose his root; if hasty, he will lose his lordship. (「重為輕根,靜為躁君。是以君子終日行不離輜重;雖有榮觀,燕處超然。奈何萬乘之主,而以身輕天下?輕則失本,躁則失君。」Ch. 26, p. 39)

If the gentleman wants to maintain his self-control and easiness, the guiding principle for his practical wisdom is quietism. Likewise, if the lord wants to remain lighthearted in face of all heavy duties of governing his empire, quietude is the motto.

But why quietude is the principle of action? Because force and violence are not the key to success and achievement. On the contrary, it is tenderness and weakness which will bring about positively significant results. Again this is in accordance with the dialectical nature of the principle of deployment of the *Dao*:

> The tender and the weak overcome the hard and the strong. (「柔弱勝剛強。」Ch. 36, p. 53)

> The most tender thing in the world can overcome the hardest thing in the world.(「天下之至柔,馳騁天下之至堅。」Ch. 43, p. 65)

In contrast to our ordinary conception, it is the tender and the weak that will win over the hard and the strong. This is perhaps one of the most astonishing lessons of Laozi. Yet this is the characteristic of the *Dao*: it only functions by way of weakness and tenderness.

> Weakness is the way in which the *Dao* functions. (「弱者道之用。」Ch. 40, p. 61)

According to Laozi, this extraordinary characteristic of the *Dao* has its descriptive basis:

> Human being is tender and weak while living, but hard and stiff while dead. Grass and trees are tender and fragile when alive, but dried and withered when dead. Thus the hard and the strong are companions of death, whereas the tender and the weak are companions of life. Therefore a weapon that is strong will face destruction; a tree that is stiff will face being broken. (「人之生也柔弱,其死也堅強。草木之生也柔脆,其死也枯槁。故堅強者,死之徒;柔弱者,生之徒。是以兵強則滅,木強則折。」Ch. 76, p. 109)

A further descriptive example on how the tender and the weak overcome the hard and the strong:

> In the universe there is nothing more tender and weak than water, yet for attacking the hard and the strong, nothing can surpass it, this is because there is nothing that can take its place. That the weak overcomes the strong, the tender overcomes the hard, everyone in the world knows it, but no one can put it into practice. (「天下莫柔弱於水,而攻堅強者莫之能勝,以其無以易之。弱之勝強,柔之勝剛,天下莫不知,莫能行。」Ch. 78, p. 113)

Water as the most tender and the weakest thing in the universe can overcome the hardest and strongest thing: why are most of us unable to discern this descriptive truth? Because in most cases we are dominated by hastiness, by the spirit of vanity and also by the will to dominate. In advocating the principle of tenderness and weakness, Laozi is in fact undertaking a critique of domination and violence as well as all forms of heroism. It is in this context that the famous Daoist concept of *wu-wei* (無為) should be understood: it is essentially a principle of non-enforcement and non-contention rather than inaction as is commonly explained or translated. *Wu-wei* (無為) means: let goes the way the *Dao* goes. But the complete elucidation of this concept exceeds the limit of this chapter and will be reserved for a later work.

Let go the way the *Dao* goes as non-enforcement and advocacy of the weak: this line of thought has frequently been compared to the "*Gelassenheit*" ("letting-to-be") of the later Heidegger. We can also hear its resonance from a postmodern thinker Gianni Vattimo. The author of *The End of Modernity*,[39] following the path of thinking of Nietzsche and Heidegger, calls for a transformation of modern thinking into a kind of "weak" thinking. This is a call "in response to a demand felt with increasing force and clarity in modern experience for an ontology organized in 'weak' categories."[40]

---

[39] G. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*: *Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, Eng. trans. J. R. Snyder (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

[40] G. Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference. Philosophy after Nietzsche and Heidegger*, Eng. trans. C. Blamires (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 5.

For Vattimo, one of Nietzsche and Heidegger's legacies consists in showing that "the [Western] metaphysical tradition is the tradition of 'violent' thinking. With its predilection for unifying, sovereign and generalizing categories, and with its cult of the *arché*, it manifests a fundamental insecurity and exaggerated self-importance from which it then reacts into over-defensiveness. All the categories of metaphysics are violent categories: Being and its attributes, the 'first' cause, man as 'responsible', and even the will to power, if that is read metaphysically as affirmation or as the assumption of power over the world. They must be 'weakened' or relieved of their excess power."[41]

Of such a new ontology of the weak categories called for by Vattimo, don't we find already some elements in the *Daodejing*, characterized by vacuity and quietude as well as tenderness and weakness of the *Dao*?

3.4 Concluding Remarks

If Vattimo's idea of an ontology of the weak categories serves foremost as a critique of modernity as well as a critique of the Western metaphysical tradition, we will not be surprised to see that embedded in Laozi's thinking of weakness and non-enforcement is a high critical potential: critique of domination, critique of violence, critique of vanity, critique of contention. All these will be themes of a Daoist critical philosophy. But why can the thinking of Laozi carry such a critical potential? Our hypothesis is: Laozi, witnessing the weakening and eventually downfall of the Zhou kingdom[42] which has founded rules, rituals and institutions modeling politically and culturally China in the subsequent two and a half millennia, called for a renewal of life and culture by way of the retrieval of the primordial Nature. "*Dao fa zi ran*" (道法自然): rather modeling Nature after ourselves, we should model ourselves after Nature, just like the *Dao*. For this is the Nature not yet domesticated by the cultural artifices of man. Should we call the Daoist Nature the wild Nature, in the same manner as the later Merleau-Ponty? The author of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, after a long detour by cultural and political criticism, took up anew the work of ontology by once again returning to Husserl, his eternal source of inspiration. Through a close rereading of Husserl's *Ideas II*, Merleau-Ponty concludes that in order to get out of the impasse into which Western knowledge has been led, "the picture of a well-behaved world left to us by classical philosophy had to be pushed to the limit."[43] For Merleau-Ponty it is without doubt that we have to undertake a renewal of the cultural world. Thanks to Husserl, "a wild-flowering world and mind is awaken… This baroque world is not a concession of mind to nature…This

[41] G. Vattimo, *The Adventure of Difference*, *op. cit*., pp. 5–6.

[42] The Zhou kingdom lasted nominally from 1046 BC to 256 BC, but the royal family held political and military control of China only till 771 BC, a period known as the Western Zhou.

[43] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 227; *Signs*, Eng. trans. R. C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 180.

renewal of the world is also the mind's renewal, a rediscovery of the brute mind which, untamed by any culture, is asked to create culture anew."[44]

To what extent can the *Dao* understood as the primordial Nature in Laozi be assimilated to the world of wild being spoken of by Merleau-Ponty? More detailed analysis has to be done. But one thing is sure: if our reading is correct, both Laozi and Merleau-Ponty, vis-à-vis their own classical world in crisis, are aspiring toward a renewal of culture through the unsuspected resources from the order of primordial Being.

If Merleau-Ponty is inspired by the rereading of Husserl, our reading of Laozi is in turn inspired by the rereading of Merleau-Ponty. We have no intention to further relate Husserl to Laozi by the intermediary of Merleau-Ponty. We doubt whether Husserl would accept to dialogue with a so-called "anti-rationalist" Chinese thinker. But we are still thankful to Husserl as the originator of the phenomenological movement, because if our own cross-cultural encounter with all the thinkers mentioned above is possible, it is precisely due to the fact that both Husserl and Laozi teach us that the return to origin is the *Dao* of renewal.[45]

[44] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, pp. 227–228; *Signs*, pp. 180–181.

[45] Husserl has written a series of five articles on cultural renewal in 1922–1923. Known as *the Kaizo* articles, these articles were originally written as contributions to the Japanese Journal *The Kaizo*. Of the five written articles, only the first one was published in German with Japanese translation and the second and the third essays were published in Japanese translation only. The German version of the whole series was published only in 1989 as "Fünf Aufsätze über Erneurung" in *Husserlianna XXVII*, *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (*1922–1937*), hrsg. Thomas Nenon und Hans Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher).

Chapter 4
Husserl, Buddhism and the Crisis of European Sciences

This chapter attempts at a reconstruction of Husserl's encounter with Buddhism.[1] Basing on a short review article written by Husserl in 1925 on the German translation of some Buddhist Scriptures, we will show that the father of phenomenology manifested an initial enthusiasm toward Buddhism rarely seen in his other writings. Husserl praised the Buddhist attitude as a way of overcoming mundane world interests comparable to his own transcendental phenomenological attitude. Thus Husserl had projected the hope on the Buddhist Scriptures as an ethical-religious source of superlative quality for cultural renewal. In a later manuscript, Husserl expressed his further thoughts on Buddhism by comparing the Buddha to Socrates. To Husserl the Buddha advocates a supreme ethical practical ideal—liberation and bliss—by means of ruthless cognition in view of leading an accomplished moral life. This Buddhist attitude is no different from Socrates' pursuit of a coherent life of virtue guided by the Delphic maxim of "know thyself". Husserl seems to suggest that the Buddha is on a par with Socrates by introducing a kind of theoretical attitude which serves a supreme ethical telos. But on further analysis, it will be shown that in Husserl's final judgment on Buddhism, the latter does not satisfy the requirements of a genuine universal philosophy because it does not embrace Husserl's own idea of a universal science. This betrays once again Husserl's fundamental cognitivist conception of philosophy. The last part of the chapter will be devoted to an analysis of the influence of Husserl's brief encounter with Buddhism on the subsequent development of his thought.

[1] The first version of this chapter was presented to the 1st International Conference of P.E.A.CE (Phenomenology for East-Asian CirclE) held May 2004 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and published after revision in *Identity and Alterity. Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, eds. Kwok-Ying Lau, Chan-Fai Cheung and Tze-Wan Kwan (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), pp. 221–233. This version is further revised in consideration of the publication of Husserl's manuscript "Sokrates-Budda" in *Husserl Studies* (2010), 26, pp. 1–17.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_4

4.1 Husserl, Hegel and the Eurocentric Conception of Philosophy

One of the reasons for the success of the phenomenological movement, being one of the most influential contemporary cross-cultural and interdisciplinary intellectual movements, resides probably in Husserl's life-long vocation to establish phenomenological philosophy as a genuine universal science. Yet in spite of the undeniable success of this movement, some of Husserl's public statements on Chinese and Indian philosophies, professed toward the end of his extremely rich thinking life, are overtly Eurocentric. These statements constitute some kind of thorn within the movement itself. They continue to cause considerable embarrassment among researchers of phenomenology, especially those of Asian origin.

It is well-known that in his Vienna lecture delivered in May 1935 entitled "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity", Husserl declared that "it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period, to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy and science (astronomy, mathematics), i.e., to interpret India, Babylonia, China, in a European way."[2] In what way is this statement Eurocentric? Face to a human world whose cultural forms always have pluralist expressions, it seems natural and logical to accept that there exist different forms of philosophy among different cultural traditions. This, however, is not Husserl's opinion. To the founder of contemporary phenomenology there is only one form of philosophy worthy of the name. For Husserl, only that form of intellectual activity which is conducted under the guiding idea of "pure *thêoria*" and which is oriented toward the realization of an absolutely universal science can be genuinely called philosophy.[3] Thus, it is not surprising to find Husserl declaring the following sentences in the same lecture:

> Today we have a plethora of works about Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, etc., in which these are placed on a plane with Greek philosophy and are taken as merely different historical forms under one and the same idea of culture. Naturally, common features are not lacking. Nevertheless, one must not allow the merely morphologically general features to hide the intentional depths so that one becomes blind to the most essential differences of principle.[4]

What, according to Husserl, are "the most essential differences of principle" between Greek philosophy on the one hand and Indian and Chinese philosophies on the other? We can find the answer to this question in the Prague lecture Husserl delivered 6 months after the Vienna lecture, which was later developed into the

[2] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962) ("*Krisis*" hereafter), p. 331; English translation: *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) ("*Crisis*" hereafter), pp. 284–285.

[3] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 325, 331; *Crisis*, pp. 280, 285.

[4] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 325; *Crisis*, pp. 279–280.

book-length master piece *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. In this latter work, which had given a fresh impetus to the subsequent development of the phenomenological movement, Husserl formulates his answer, which is disguised under the form of a question, in the following words: "European humanity bears within itself an absolute idea, rather than being merely an empirical anthropological type like 'China' or 'India'".[5] What Husserl actually means is this: only the form of philosophy developed within modern European humanity can be said to be genuine philosophy, because only European philosophy has inherited the attitude that originates from the Greek way of philosophical thinking as pure *thêoria*. All other forms of philosophy are either derivative or inauthentic. Husserl even presents his juxtaposition between European civilization and all other forms of human civilization by positing the following two possibilities of development of humankind: that it would give rise either to "the spectacle of the Europeanization of all other civilizations (*die Europäisierung aller fremden Menschheiten*) which bears witness to the rule of an absolute meaning, one which is proper to the sense of the world"; or else "to a historical non-sense of the world".[6] In other words, if the path of development of human civilization is derailed from the mode of "Europeanization", the world would lose its sense forever and will fall into an abyss. This is nothing other than positing that European civilization is the bearer of the criterion of meaningfulness of all other civilizations. Likewise, the yardstick of whether China or India can develop a genuine form of philosophy would derive entirely from the Greco-European idea of philosophy.

We can, of course, compare Husserl's statements on Chinese and Indian philosophies with those professed a century earlier by Hegel. We can be pleased that Husserl never placed Eastern philosophy at the lowest step of the ladder of world philosophy, as did the Nineteenth Century official philosopher of the Prussian state.[7] Nor did Husserl make, as Hegel did, some very pejorative judgement on Chinese and Indian philosophies. On Chinese philosophy, Hegel's evaluation could not be worse:

> China remains in the abstract. When they pass onto the concrete, what they call the concrete is, theoretically speaking, only the external connection of the sensible. That is something without [logical, necessary] order, and without fundamental inner intuition…. The expression of imagination of Chinese are strange: state-religion is the expression of their imagination. But the philosophy which is developed in connection with their religion is abstract, because the content itself of their religion is dry. The content cannot provide with thinking a creative kingdom of [determinate] categories.[8]

---

[5] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 14; *Crisis*, p. 16.

[6] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 14; *Crisis*, p. 16.

[7] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I* (G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, Bd. 18) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), pp. 138–170; English translation: *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, Eng. trans. E. S. Haldane (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), pp. 119–147.

[8] Retranslated into English from the Chinese translation of Hegel's *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, by He Lin and Wang Taiqing (Beijing: Commercial Press, 1959), p. 132. This passage is translated from the additions of Hoffmeister's edition, additions neither included in *Hegels Werke in zwanzig Bänden* published by Suhrkamp Verlag, nor in Haldane's English translation, *op. cit*. German pagination of Hoffmeister's edition will be provided upon consultation.

Hegel thought no better of Indian philosophy:

> We have seen that in India the point of main importance is the soul's drawing itself within itself, raising itself up into liberty, or thought which constitutes itself for itself. This becoming explicit of soul in the most abstract mode may be called intellectual substantiality…. Intellectual substantiality [in India] is the opposite of the reflection, understanding, and the subjective individuality of the European…. That intellectual substantiality that thus remaining in abstraction, has as its existence the subjective soul alone. Just as in empty vanity, where the subjective power of negation alone remains, everything disappears, this abstraction of intellectual substantiality only signifies an escape into what is empty and without determination, wherein everything vanishes.[9]

In Hegel's eyes, Oriental philosophy, represented by Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy, has the most serious defect of remaining in the abstract, and is thus unable to attain the veritable objective ground of thinking. The result is that both forms of philosophy are poor and dry in content:

> In the Eastern Philosophy we have also discovered a definite content, which is brought under our consideration; but the consideration is destitute of thought or system because it comes from above and is outside of the unity. On that side there stands intellectual substantiality, on this side it appears dry and barren.[10]

In a word, Hegel regards Greek philosophy as the true beginning of history of philosophy whereas Chinese philosophy and Indian philosophy as representation of the most primitive and most elementary forms of philosophy: this conception of philosophy is explicitly Eurocentric. Likewise, when Husserl places the origin of the "genuine" form of philosophy in ancient Greece and projects onto Europe alone as the bearer of the "absolute meaning" of the future development of the entire human civilization, its Eurocentric character could not be more apparent. The fact that Husserl's declaration was made within the context of his diagnosis of the crisis of European civilization cannot be an alibi of its Eurocentric nature.[11]

4.2 Husserl's Praise of Buddhist Scriptures

Yet to the surprise of most readers, Husserl had pronounced, a decade before the Vienna lecture and the manuscripts grouped around *Crisis*, some very laudatory words on the Buddhist scriptures, the philosophical and spiritual source most shared

---

[9] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, *op. cit*., pp. 167–168; *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, *op. cit*., pp. 144–145.

[10] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, *op. cit*., p. 169; *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1, *op. cit*., p. 146.

[11] On Husserl's Eurocentric conception of philosophy in *Crisis*, cf. Kwok-ying Lau, "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, special issue of *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth & C.-F. Cheung (Freiburg/München: Verlag K. Alber, 1998), pp. 233–237, revised edition collected in this book as Chap. 2, *supra*. For some further reflections on this issue, cf., "Disenchanted World-view and Intercultural Understanding: from Husserl through Kant to Chinese Culture", *infra*, Chap. 7.

across the whole Asia. Such words are not hidden in the little known manuscripts of Husserl's *Nachlass*, but rendered public during Husserl's most productive years in the form of a short review article. This article, entitled "Über die Reden Gotamo Buddhos" ("On the Discourses of Gautama Buddha"), is a review of the re-edition of the celebrated Viennese oriental scholar Karl Eugen Neuman's German translation of various parts of the classical Buddhist texts *Suttapitaka*.[12] The exceptionally passionate tone of this barely known "in praise of Buddha" piece, in sharp contrast to the plain but rather chauvinistic reference to Indian and Chinese philosophies in the Vienna lecture, merits a detour. Below is the English translation of Husserl's full text which the present author would like to share with his readers.[13]

> I have now read the greatest portion of Karl Eugen Neuman's German translation of the main parts of the Holy Scriptures of Buddhism.[14] Once I had begun the reading, I could not rid myself of it, even though I still had other more urgent work to do. In fact, this has also brought an additional marvelous treasure to literature translated into German. Through the organization of this new edition, which from every point of view is exemplary and of the highest taste, of the immortal life work of K. E. Neumann, the publisher has rendered an exceptional service. With these translations, this highest flower of Indian religiosity, whose vision and practical effort are purely directed inward—which, I would say, is not "transcendent", but "transcendental"—will enter the horizon of our religious-ethical as well as philosophical consciousness, and from now on will, without doubt, take up the vocation of the effective co-determination of this consciousness. The perfect linguistic re-creation of the canonical Buddhist Scriptures provides us with the perfect possibility, in a way completely opposite to our European one, to see and to know the world, to take a stand with regard to it, to overcome (*überwinden*) it in an ethico-religious way, to understand it genuinely through the lived-through experience of the world itself, and, out of this understanding, to experience its living effectiveness. For us, for everyone who, in this time of the collapse of our superficial and degenerated culture, looks around with enthusiasm to search for spiritual purity and authenticity as well as the peaceful overcoming of the world, this coming into visibility of the Indian way of overcoming the world is a great experience. For to any devoted reader, it should very soon be clear that Buddhism, as it speaks to us out of its pure original source, is about an ethical-religious method of spiritual purification and pacification of the highest dignity; this method is thought through and practiced with an almost incomparable internal coherence, energy and nobility of the mind. Buddhism can only be paralleled with the highest formations of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture. From now on, it is our destiny to contrast the Indian spiritual way, which is entirely new for us, with our old way; and by virtue of this contrast to re-vitalize and to strengthen our own.

---

[12] E. Hussserl, "Über die Reden Gotamo Buddhos", first published in *Der Piperbote für Kunst und Literatur*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1925), pp. 18–19; now in E. Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (*1922–1937*), *Husserliana XXVII*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 125–126.

[13] Our translation has benefitted from the English version provided by Karl Schuhmann in his article "Husserl and Indian Thought", in *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy*, ed. D. P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree, and Jitendranath Mohanty (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 25–27.

[14] Throughout the review article, Husserl did not state precisely which volumes or which texts among the Newman translations he had read. Yet according to Karl Schuhmann's estimation, Husserl had probably read translations of the Majjhima-Nikāya, the Therigātā and Theragātā, and perhaps also of the Dhammapada, all originally written in Pali. Cf., K. Schuhmann, "Husserl and Indian Thought", *op. cit*., p. 40, n. 29.

> Through the richness of the faithfully marked tradition, the present scriptures can render visible Buddha himself and his most distinguish disciples as representatives of a new type of human "holiness" in an almost tangible way. It is regrettable that there exists no more German translation of the original scriptures of our religion, which has been historically a living religion and is in no way inferior to Buddhism, comparable, with respect to its capacity to refresh our understanding, to this German translation by Neuman of the *Suttapitakam*. This is because the German language has fatally moved away from the language of Luther's translation of the Bible; its "church language" is deprived of the sense of living language immediately flowing out of spiritual activities. Considered from this respect, the breakthrough of this Indian religiosity in our present horizon may have its good sides. In any case it will awaken new forces of religious intuition; hence it will also contribute to the vivification and deepening of Christian intuition, and thus be beneficial to our ability to understand Christian religiosity in a true and internal way. It is sure that the re-edition of these masterly translations by Neuman is of inestimable value to everyone who takes part in the ethical, religious and philosophical renewal of our culture.
>
> I am awaiting with eagerness the appearance of the later parts of the Neuman translations.

Anyone with a first hand understanding of Husserl's work knows that he is always animated by the spirit of scientific vigour such that his phenomenological descriptions are always scrupulous and his writing style sober and distanced. The above passionate recommendation of Neuman's German translation of the Buddhist scriptures as well as the frequent use of superlatives to describe the theoretical attitude and the practical import of Buddhism represent an extremely rare case of Husserl writing in a somewhat flamboyant style. Nevertheless, we must also point out that in this brief review article there is no internal discussion of the Buddhist doctrine. It simply reveals the effect of a sense of freshness conveyed to Husserl at his first discovery of Neuman's German translation of the *Suttapitaka*, as well as the mental pleasure that arose out of this new spiritual stimulation. This results in his projection of the hope that Buddhism can reawaken the life-force of Europeans so as to revivify and deepen the Christian religion. Despite this initial reservation, we do believe that Husserl's exceptionally high esteem of Neuman's translation of the Buddhist scriptures merits some further analysis.

(a) This review article was written in the aftermath of the First World War, during which the whole Europe was the centre of a level of collective violence and rivalry among nations unprecedented in human history. Husserl, suffering from the grief over the lost of a son, was deeply concerned by the downfall of the old European civilization. It seems that he wrote this short review with the intention of promoting the mission of cultural renewal from the ethical, religious and philosophical dimensions. In fact, in the same period, Husserl wrote a series of articles on the method and task of cultural renewal for the Japanese journal published in Tokyo, whose title *Kaizo* means precisely "reform".[15]

[15] There are totally five articles in this series. Three of them were published during Husserl's lifetime in *Kaizo*, namely "Erneuerung. Ihr Problem und ihre Methode", Vol. 5, No. 3, 1923; "Die Methode der Wesensforschung", Vol. 6, No. 4, 1924; "Erneuerung als individualethisches Problem", Vol. 6, No. 2, 1924. These three articles are now collected in E. Husserl, *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (*1922–1937*), *Husserliana XXVII*, *op. cit*., pp. 3–13, 13–20, 20–43. The other two articles

(b) To Husserl Buddhism is not just anyone religion, but the religion whose "ethico-religious method of spiritual purification and pacification is of the highest dignity", to such an extent that through its practice the state of nobility that the mind attains is comparable only to the highest forms of philosophical and religious spirituality in European culture. He understands that the very rich contents of the Buddhist scriptures are able to render visible the "holiness" of the Buddha in the most concrete way. This supreme appraisal of Buddhism is diametrically opposite to Hegel's very pejorative evaluation of Indian and Chinese philosophies. As we have pointed out in the first part of this chapter, Hegel judges these philosophies as "having the most serious defect of remaining in the abstraction", "appearing dry and barren", and thus representing the lowest form of philosophy which is incapable of attaining objectivity.
(c) In Husserl's eyes, Buddhism's contribution is not limited to the ethico-religious aspects; it has its philosophical import as well. On the one hand, Husserl thinks that Buddhism demonstrates an "almost incomparable internal coherence". On the other, Husserl uses the word "transcendental", the term proper to his own phenomenological attitude, and not "transcendent", to describe the theoretical attitude of Buddhism. The use of the word "transcendental", a term philosophically laden with the highest theoretical meaning among Husserl's phenomenological vocabulary, shows that Husserl regards Buddhism as a spiritual and intellectual activity whose theoretical posture can attain a level as high as his own phenomenological philosophy.
(d) At the same time Husserl points out that the Buddhist approach is completely different from the European one. Yet he does not go on to specify in what way the two approaches differ from one another.

4.3 Buddha: The Eastern Socrates?

From the phenomenological point of view, what is interesting in the above review article is of course Husserl's qualification of Buddhism as "not transcendent but transcendental". For this shows that Husserl, as pointed out above, grants to Buddhism a high degree of theoretical significance comparable to his own transcendental phenomenological philosophy. But what are Husserl's underlying reasons for making such a judgment? It is impossible to tell simply from the review article. According to Karl Schuhmann, the most authoritative researcher of Husserl's life,[16]

---

which remained unpublished during Husserl's life-time, entitled respectively "Erneuerung und Wissenschaft" and "Formale Typen der Kultur in der Menschheitsentwicklung", are now collected in *Husserliana XXVII*, *op. cit*., pp. 43–59 and 59-94.

[16] Karl Schuhmann is the author of *Husserl-Chronik*: *Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1977), as well as the editor of the Husserl letters in ten volumes: Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, ed. by Karl Schuhmann and Elisabeth Schuhmann (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994).

there is no evidence that Husserl has ever read other Buddhist scriptures or classics of Indian philosophy thereafter. Schuhmann's investigation shows that Husserl, as do many European thinkers after Schopenhauer, simply identifies Buddhism with Indian thought in general.[17] Thus, always according to Schuhmann, when Husserl mentions Indian thought in his manuscripts, he refers to Neuman's German translations of the Buddhist scriptures.[18] In a manuscript written in 1926 under the title "Sokrates—Buddha", Husserl noted down his further thoughts on Buddhism.[19] He summarizes his understanding of the similarities and the differences between Socrates and Indian thought (i.e. Buddhism) in the following manner:

> What is the position of cognition in *Indian thought*? How this thought relates to *Socratic* thought? Indian thought aims at liberation (Erlösung),[20] at bliss (Seligkeit) by means of ruthless cognition (rücksichtlos Erkenntnis). It assumes therefore that there is also a truth which is valid in itself. Indian cultural life, too, therefore leads to autonomy—to autonomous cognition, by which a true way to bliss in itself can be won, and thereby also a truth in itself for just actions, an autonomous truth in the cognition of ethical and religious norms. In Socrates, theory, i.e. knowledge in the sense of genuine knowledge, has also the function of producing knowledge of a true practice and its norms, and only this.[21]

Why does "ruthless cognition" can lead to liberation and bliss? To Husserl this is the liberating function of consistently pursued theoretical interest face to the burden of life:

> [m]an can free himself from the entanglement of his praxis and his habitual and momentaneous requirements… Such liberation is also achieved in play, in imagination. The tension out of practical concerns is relaxed; man enjoys the tranquility of the play of imagination. Another way of relaxation is to see out of curiosity, to see as a spectator… This relaxation from the concerns of life … is the freedom from the constraints of duties which permeate endlessly our life.[22]

---

[17] On the relationship between Schopenhauer and Indian thought, cf. Jean W. Sedlar, "Schopenhauer and India", in *Asia and The West. Encounters And Exchanges From The Age of Explorations*: *Essays in Honor of Donald F. Lach*, ed. Cyriac K. Pullapilly and Edwin J. Van Kley (Notre Dame, Indiana: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc., 1986), pp. 149–172.

[18] Karl Schuhmann, "Husserl and Indian Thought", *op. cit*., pp. 28–29.

[19] Husserl, MS B I 21/88–94 (21/22 Jan 1926); reported by Karl Schuhmann, "Husserl and Indian Thought", *op. cit*., p. 41, n. 52. According to Schuhmann's investigation, Husserl has discussed Buddhism in a seminar held in the winter semester of 1925–1926. Yet the very sketchy notes left down by Dorion Cairns, the later English translator of the *Cartesian Meditations* and *Formal and Transcendental Logic* whose level of German language at that time was limited, do not constitute a sufficiently solid documentary basis for further analysis. Cf. Karl Schuhmann, "Husserl and Indian Thought", *op. cit*., pp. 28–29 and p. 41, n.41. This manuscript was discussed and partly translated by Debabrata Sinha in his article "Theory and Practice in Indian Thought: Husserl's Observations", *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 21, 1971, pp. 255–264. The full version of this manuscript is subsequently published in *Husserl Studies*, Vol. 26, 2010, pp. 1–17, under the title "Sokrates—Buddha. An Unpublished Manuscript from the Archives", ed. by Sebastian Luft; abbreviated as "Sokrates—Budda" hereafter.

[20] Schuhmann translates "Erlösung" by "salvation", which is a rather Christian term. We prefer the term "liberation", one of the now common Buddhist vocabularies in English.

[21] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., p. 5; the author's English translation.

[22] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., pp. 7–8.

To Husserl both Indian thought and European philosophy, exemplified by the Buddha and Socrates respectively, are knowingly aware of the fact that it is natural life as a whole which is the origin of the general state of unhappiness. Thus the strive for universal happiness cannot be obtained by the satisfaction of particular life interests. Both Buddhism and Greek philosophy are understood by Husserl as practices of universal bearings leading toward autonomy by "the categorical imperative of renunciation (*kategorische Imperativ der Entsagung*)".[23] In other words, both "the European attitude in its transcendental manner", as well as "the Indian attitude, for which there is only one will", are expression of "the will to universal renunciation of the world (*Weltentsagung*)."[24] Thus to the founder of phenomenology there is a strict parallel between the situation of the Buddha and that of Socrates:

> The Indian [the Buddha] is in a practically autonomous attitude, just as in his way the Greek [Socrates] too, who strives for an ultimately valid truth and through it lays the foundation for an autonomous total praxis.[25]

Yet to Husserl, who considers himself the European philosopher par excellence, there is an ultimate difference between the Buddha and Socrates: the absence of a universal science of being in Indian thought.

> Has Indian thought produced a science of being (Seinswissenschaft), or at least envisaged its possibility? Has it considered this science irrelevant and hence has not constituted it? Has it envisaged this science of being as basically and essentially a novelty and already rooted in experience, just as it was the case with the science which leads to bliss? However, for the Indians the doctrine of liberation is not distinguished from natural thought (natürliches Denken) in its form (and logic, so to speak), but only by way of its consistency, its freedom from prejudice (Vorurteilslosigkeit), its resoluteness in the suspension of natural life-interest (Entschlossenheit in der Ausschaltung des natürlichen Lebensinteresses) and its disinterested evaluation of such interests, and in its formulation of evaluations in essential judgements. In Greek philosophy, in contrast, scientific thought and knowledge in particular depart radically from the knowledge of life by principle through a logical form and a method.[26]

The importance of the above passage resides in the following: through a comparison of the Buddha and Socrates, Husserl is able to articulate the similarities and the differences between Buddhism—as far as he could understand—with his own conception of philosophy as transcendental phenomenology. In connection with the analysis of the aforementioned review article, Husserl's understanding of Buddhism can be summarized by the following points.

(a) First of all, for Husserl, the attitude of Buddhism is not an ordinary religious mythical attitude. It is rather an atheist religion, for it does not project a supranatural transcendent being to explain the origin and the genesis of the world. On the contrary, Buddhism advocates a reflective attitude "purely directed inward" by the method of meditative practice which withdraws us away from the mun-

[23] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., p. 17.

[24] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., p. 17.

[25] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., p. 13.

[26] E. Husserl, "Sokrates—Buddha", *op. cit*., p. 5.

dane world so as to lead us back to the thus purified mind. Under the guidance of this reflective attitude we move ourselves away from mundane opinion—doxa, just as what the early Greek thinkers have been doing. This reflective move is already the beginning of the philosophical attitude.

(b) Why is it possible to compare the Buddhist reflective attitude to that of Socrates? For Husserl, the Buddha advocates a supreme ethical practical ideal—liberation and bliss—by means of ruthless cognition. Yet the truth pursued by the Buddha is not of the order of mundane objective knowledge, but the truth of ethical and religious norms. This order of truth serves as a path leading to the realization of an accomplished moral life of oneself. Understood in this way, the Buddhist attitude is no different from Socrates' pursuit of a coherent virtuous life under the guidance of the maxim "know thyself". Such a cognitive attitude, common to both the Buddha and Socrates, is a specific theoretical attitude. It is neither a theoretical attitude which serves the pragmatic interests of everyday life, nor a pure theoretical attitude of the sciences. Rather, it is a theoretical attitude conducted under the guidance of a universal practical interest of the supreme order. This kind of theoretical attitude is comparable to what Husserl later calls in the Vienna lecture "a third form of universal attitude", "namely the synthesis of the two interests accomplished in the transition from the theoretical to the practical attitude, such that the *thêoria* (universal science), arising within a closed unity and under the epoché of all praxis, is called … to serve humankind in a new way…. This occurs in the form of a new sort of praxis, … a praxis whose aim is to elevate humankind through universal scientific reason, according to norms of truth of all forms, to transform it from the bottom up into a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights."[27] This theoretical attitude of third kind in fact serves a supreme ethical telos: to bring about the self-transformation of humanity in view of her moral responsibility toward herself.

(c) The Buddhist meditative method provides a practical guide toward the renunciation of desires and refraining from mundane life-interests. This attitude of absence from interest is comparable to the basic phenomenological attitude of freedom from prejudice and freedom from presupposition. Through meditative practices, we refrain ourselves from any "natural life-interest". Expressed in phenomenological terms, this amounts to the suspension of the natural attitude by the practice of epoché: this constitutes the first step of phenomenological reduction.

(d) Buddhism questions the reality of mundane beings. Its theory of liberation is basically the negation of mundane life. Yet what is implicit in the negation of mundane life is the questioning of meaning of the world in its totality. (Let us recall that in the review article Husserl writes that "the perfect linguistic recreation of the canonical Buddhist Scriptures provides us with the perfect possibility, in a way completely opposite to our European one, to see and to know the world, to take a stand with regard to it, to overcome it in an ethico-religious

[27] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 329; *Crisis*, p. 283.

way".) This attitude of questioning the world's meaning in view of providing it with a new meaning is indeed similar to the transcendental phenomenological attitude: the latter, too, questions the ontological thesis of the world on the whole in order to unveil the otherwise hidden constitutive origin of the meaning and ontological validity of the world in the transcendental consciousness. Thus when the Buddhist attitude questions the meaning of the world in its totality, it likewise neutralizes the ontological thesis of the existence of the world in general. This Buddhist attitude amounts to the practice of transcendental reduction.[28]

(e) Yet if there exists a certain transcendental attitude in Buddhism, it is only a quasi-transcendental attitude and not a genuinely transcendental one. This is because even if Buddhism aims at liberation and its basic attitude is overcoming the world by renouncing mundane life-interests, the Buddhist attitude has its inherent limit. In the eyes of Husserl the Buddhist overcoming of the world remains within a religious-ethical attitude without developing a science of being on the one hand; on the other Buddhism has not developed a kind of cognition "by principle through a logical form and a method" in the same manner as has Greek philosophy. Thus to Husserl Buddhism is unable to provide a logical form to connect all knowledge in view of forming a systemic unity. In this way, Buddhism can never become a universal science, and consequently, can never realize Husserl's own idea of transcendental phenomenological philosophy.

(f) For Husserl, Greek philosophy has to wait for Plato and Aristotle to have made the distinction between épistême and doxa in order that the transition from a banal philosophical attitude to the genuine scientific theoretical attitude can be completed.[29] Under this condition, even Socrates would not be considered the

[28] It is interesting to note that the late Husserl, while explaining in the *Crisis* the sense of the phenomenological attitude and the epoché, has compared it to a religious conversion exercised under an ethical motivation, an approach diametrically opposite to the one adopted here: "Perhaps it will even become manifest that the total phenomenological attitude and the epoché belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion, which then, however, over and above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to humankind as such." E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 140; *Crisis*, p. 137.

[29] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 332; *Crisis*, p. 285. For a discussion of Husserl's view on Greek philosophy, cf. Klaus Held, "Husserl et les grecs", in *Husserl*, ed. Eliane Escoubas and Marc Richir (Grenoble: Editions Jérome Millon, 1989), pp. 119–153. Seen from today, Husserl's conception of Greek philosophy, being modelled on the idea of universal science, may have been the result of the influence of Neo-Kantians such as Natorp who has read Plato from the viewpoint of Kantian transcendental philosophy. In any case such a conception of Greek philosophy is not shared by Heidegger, nor is it shared by some recent specialists of Greek philosophy. For example the famous French scholar Pierre Hadot, a specialist in Greek philosophy whose work has had a decisive influence on the last Foucault, has shown that to the Greeks philosophy is a way of life ("la philosophie comme manière vivre") and a kind of spiritual exercise ("exercices spirituels"). See Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2002); *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, Eng. Trans. Michael Chase (Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1995); *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique*? (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1995); *What*

founder of Greek science. Thus, in spite of the fact that Husserl was comparing the Buddha with Socrates, this does not mean that he would concede that Buddhist philosophy can satisfy the requirement of transcendental phenomenology.

4.4 Husserl's Conception of Philosophy, the Crisis of European Sciences and Buddhism

If the above analyses are correct, they can help us to understand why there is such a great discrepancy in Husserl's previous and later attitudes toward Eastern philosophy: he had published a very laudatory review article on Buddhism in the 1920s, but held some rather chauvinist and Eurocentric statements on Indian and Chinese philosophies a decade later. We can summarize our analyses in the following terms: even though Husserl initially expressed an enthusiasm for Buddhism, thinking that its theoretical position is a transcendental one, upon further reflections, he was of the judgement that Buddhism does not satisfy the requirements of a genuine universal philosophy, because it does not incarnate the vocation of realizing the idea(l) of universal science under the guidance of a pure theoretical attitude.

Did Husserl's encounter with Buddhism, probably relatively brief, bring about any influence on the subsequent development of his conception and practice of philosophy? And if so, to what extent? It is not easy to give a determinate answer. To our limited knowledge, there are manuscripts of Husserl, written during the same period, which express a certain form of "primacy of the practical".[30] For example in a manuscript entitled "The Dissatisfaction of Positive Sciences and <the> First Philosophy", Husserl writes: "The universal theoretical interest was 'originally' only a branch and an organ of universal *practical* interest. Science is force, and science liberates, and freedom through scientific reason is the way of 'bliss', i.e. the way to a truly pacified human life, to a new humanity, who masters her/his world with the force of genuine science and produces around herself/himself a rational world through this force…. The nascent great science produces for the understanding a world that appears to rise to the thinking in movement from practical reason."[31] Here, there is a striking similarity of tone and wording with the above-cited manuscript "Socrates—Buddha": science is the road to freedom and bliss, universal theoretical interest is derivative of universal practical interest. In another manuscript of

is Ancient Philosophy, Eng. Trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

[30] Cf. Gerhard Funke, "The Primacy of Practical Reason in Kant and Husserl", in *Kant and Phenomenology*, ed. Thomas M. Seebohm and Joseph J. Kockelmans (Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology & University Press of America, Washington, D. C., 1984), pp. 1–29.

[31] E. Husserl, "Das Unzureichende der positiven Wissenschaften und <die> Erste Philosophie", *Erste Philosophie* (*1923/24*), *Husserliana VIII*, ed. R. Boehm (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1959), p. 230.

the same period, Husserl writes: "Cognition is a practical activity, and rational cognition, that is to say theoretical cognition, is an activity out of practical reason … directed toward values."[32] Yet upon further clarification, the Husserlian version of "primacy of the practical" reveals itself to be a disguised one: the seemingly axiological turn of Husserl is ultimately subsumed under theoretical knowledge as the supreme value. In the manuscript just mentioned, after recognizing cognition as an activity out of practical reason, Husserl finished his explanation by saying: "But a *theory* is a higher value against all the single truths founding it."[33] If there were a practical turn in Husserl, it would still be dominated by a certain cognitivist tendency. And it is this cognitivist tendency which underlies Husserl's later concept and practice of philosophy, including that of the *Crisis* period. For example, in the Vienna lecture Husserl advocates the way to overcome the crisis of European humanity by "a far-reaching transformation of the whole praxis of human existence, i.e. the whole of cultural life", in such a way that the latter "receives its norms from objective truth", and "thus ideal truth becomes an absolute value that … brings with it a universally transformed praxis."[34] Yet this new praxis is nothing other than that of the philosopher who has "her/his constant and prior resolve to dedicate her/his future life always … to the task of *thêoria*, to build theoretical knowledge upon theoretical knowledge *in infinitum*."[35] Husserl's cognitivist conception and practice of philosophy cannot be clearer here.

However, though paradoxical, it is precisely because of this cognitivist conception of philosophy, which strives towards the realization of the idea of universal science under the banner of pure theoretical interest as its true vocation, that there arises the Husserlian diagnosis of the crisis of European sciences. For it is also precisely these European sciences, submerged in their successful theoretical endeavors, which have lost sight of the fact that they are rooted in the life-world, that their ultimate goal is to serve the supreme moral and axiological practices of humanity. The blindness of the European sciences with regard to their genuine moral duty results in their degeneration to the status of mere technological instruments in the narrow sense of the term. Buddhism, on the contrary, understands clearly that the intellectual cognitions it pursues serve the highest value of spiritual liberation; hence, its cognitive activities will not degenerate into uprooted instrumental rationality. Buddhism, similar to Husserl's conception of philosophy, also quests for radical self-knowledge and self-understanding; yet the latter are channeled toward spiritual self-liberation, which can thus provide the soil for the rootedness of cognitive activities. If European civilization could transplant itself on this soil, a path may be found which may one day led to the overcoming of the crisis of European sciences. This probably is the reason why Husserl had once projected his hope for the renewal of European culture upon Buddhism. Yet Europeans at the aftermath of the First World War had neither listened to the wisdom of the Buddha, nor responded to

[32] E. Husserl, *Husserliana VIII*, *op. cit*., p. 352.

[33] E. Husserl, *Husserliana VIII*, *op. cit*., pp. 352–353.

[34] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 333–334; *Crisis*, *op. cit*., p. 287.

[35] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 332; *Crisis*, *op. cit*., p. 286.

Husserl's pathetic call for cultural renewal by learning from the Buddhist method. Today, at the daybreak of the Third millennium, the crisis of European culture as seen by Husserl seems to be behind us. Yet this crisis seems to have metamorphosed into a crisis affecting humanity as a whole. Is it not our turn, as phenomenological philosophers and as Husserl's spiritual grandchildren, intra- or extra-European, to seriously consider responding once again to our spiritual grandfather's call for cultural renewal by looking for resources from cultural traditions other than the merely European (Western) one?

Chapter 5
Jan Patočka: Critical Consciousness and Non-Eurocentric Philosopher of the Phenomenological Movement

5.1 Introduction: Patočka as Non-Eurocentric Phenomenological Philosopher

This chapter constitutes a preliminary and humble attempt to answer the following question: How to make sense of the vast number of Patočka's writings, themselves dispersed in most cases in the apparently modest form of exegetic exercises on works of classical thinkers, ancient (e.g., Plato, Aristotle) or contemporary (Husserl, Heidegger)?[1] The reply we risk to propose is: Patočka's reflections represent perhaps one of the most fruitful philosophical endeavors within the wider phenomenological movement to confront the crisis of modern civilization which Patočka calls "Over-civilization and its internal conflict".[2] Recapturing and renewing in a new direction Husserl's diagnosis of the crisis of European civilization, Patočka was one of the first European philosophers—a philosopher of the Other Europe—to have emphasized with lucidity the necessity of abandoning the hitherto Eurocentric prop-

[1] The first version of this chapter was presented to the conference: *Issues Confronting the Post-European World*, A Conference dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907–1977) on the occasion of the founding of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations, organized by the Center for Phenomenological Research Prague at Charles University and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague, November 6–10, 2002 and published in *Essays in Celebration of the Founding of the Organization of Phenomenological Organizations*, ed. CHEUNG Chan-Fai, Ivan Chvatik, Ion Copoeru, Lester Embree, Julia Iribarne & Hans Rainer Sepp, Web-Published at www.o-p-o.net, 2003, 19 pp. Since then a number of book length studies on Patočka's works have appeared. The most significant ones include: Edward E. Findlay, *Caring For the Soul in a Postmodern Age*: *Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Renaud Barbaras, *Le mouvement de l'existence. Études sur la phénoménologie de Jan Patočka* (Paris : Les Éditions de la Transparence, 2007); Renaud Barbaras, *L'ouverture du monde*: *lecture de Jan Patočka* (Paris : Les Éditions de la Transparence, 2011); Émilie Tardivel, *La liberté au principe. Essai sur la philosophie de Patočka* (Paris: Vrin, 2011).

[2] Jan Patočka, "La surcivilization et son conflit", in *Liberté et sacrifice. Ecrits politiques*, French trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990), pp. 99–177.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_5

ositions of solution to the crisis—for example Comte's positivism and its variants, Marxism and bourgeois liberalism—when he explicitly raised the problems of a "Post-European humanity".[3] In advocating an understanding of the history of European humanity which is different from Husserl as well as Heidegger, Patočka is able to direct his philosophical reflections on history back to the formulation of a more profound phenomenology of the natural world insufficiently thematized in Husserl and absent in Heidegger (at least the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*).

Such a phenomenology of the natural world includes the themes of the Earth as well as those of movement and human existence as movement. These themes form the basic elements and the ground of the apparition of all inner-worldly beings. Patočka's reflections also bring into light the primacy of the practical over the theoretical within the natural world. Thus the sketch of the structure of phenomenality starting from the phenomenology of the natural world can pave the way for a phenomenology of the cultural world with a more credible universal validity claim in comparison to the Husserlian and the Heideggerian attempts.

The Husserlian attempt, which identifies Greek *thêoria* with European Science as the authentic cultural world of universal significance,[4] is without doubt formed with an explicit Eurocentric bias. As for Heidegger, his National-Socialist engagement as well as his defense of Europe by way of a hostile positioning against America and Russia,[5] make him never entirely unscathed by the suspicion of Eurocentric overtones. By contrast, Patočka's phenomenology of the natural world, by virtue of its emphasis on the structural characteristics of movement, of *dynamis*, of praxis, and of the disclosure of the abyssal, unfathomable nature of human existence and of the original nothingness as the (non-)foundation of the phenomenal world, constitutes an opening toward the reception of Others and other cultures, in particular that of Chinese Daoist philosophy.

[3] J. Patočka, "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *Liberté et sacrifice*, p. 181.

[4] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1954), pp. 327–330; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 281–283.

[5] Below is Heidegger's well-known declaration: "And yet a *question*, *the question*: "Is 'Being' a mere word and its meaning a vapor, or is it the spiritual fate of the West?' This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other. Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man." Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1953), pp. 28–29; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, New Eng. trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 40.

5.2 Patočka's Significance for the Chinese Philosophical Community Today

(a) Patočka's heroic resistance against political persecution under a socialist regime in his home country, by incessantly pursuing independent philosophical research and private philosophical teaching practically under the eyes of state police,[6] is an eminent example showing that it is possible to continue to philosophize under adverse social, political, and institutional conditions (he was allowed to teach philosophy only during 8 years in his whole intellectual life, from 1945 to 1949, and then from 1968 to 1972, and had been under almost total isolation during the 1950s). The way he exercises the freedom of thinking and conducts his moral conscience at the risk of his own existence is an act of affirmation of the basic civil rights prescribed verbally by the law of the socialist state but proscribed in fact under a totalitarian regime. This act comprises not only an educational content directed toward the younger generations of his own country, but also a political message of protestation against institutional violations of these rights under such a regime. Seen from this perspective, Patočka's effort of maintaining independence with regard to the existing political regime and the social situation in which he found himself constitutes an unequaled model for contemporary Chinese intellectuals in their search for and affirmation of independent intellectual personality.

(b) Many of Patočka's writings take the apparently humble form of textual exegesis of classical philosophers (ancient, modern or contemporary). This characteristic is comparable at first glance to the classical Chinese scholastic tradition. In the Chinese philosophical tradition, the exegesis of classical texts is a prevailing mode of exercise of thinking. Yet in most cases, with some rare exceptions (e.g., Wang Pi in relation to Laozi and Guo Xiang in relation to Zhuangzi), traditional Chinese exegesis of classical texts adopts an excessively reverential care with regard to the ancients in such a way that philosophical interrogation rarely comes to the surface.

In traditional China, the work of thinking often identifies itself with pure exegesis of classical texts to such a degree that, for example during the great period of classical studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some allegedly good scholarly work may simply amounts to an accumulation and juxtaposition of a quantity of previous scholars' commentaries of the same text. In the case of Laozi's *Daodejing*, the number of previous scholars' commentaries put side by side can easily be 20 or 30.

By contrast, Patočka's exegesis of classical thinkers, e.g., the emphasis on Socrates' care of the soul,[7] the reinterpretation of Plato's famous concept of

[6] Cf. Henri Declève, "Philosophie et liberté selon Patočka", in *Profils de Jan Patočka*, ed. Henri Declève (Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1992), p. 114.

[7] J. Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, French trans. Erika Abrams (Paris: Editions Verdier, 1983), pp. 23 sq; *Plato and Europe*, Eng. trans. Petr Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 15 sq.

chorismos not as separation between the universal and the particular within the domain of knowledge but as ontological difference, i.e., as experience of distance with regard to the reality and hence the exercise of freedom,[8] or the re-centering of Aristotle away from the scholastic system of hierarchy of beings and values toward a phenomenology of the natural world built around the concept of movement, dynamis, and praxis,[9] is in fact a kind of interrogative dialogue that calls upon the whole European cultural tradition as interlocutor. The result is that the classical thinkers in question (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) speak to us with a freshness and reflective depth seldom seen in the past such that this thinking tradition comes to life again in spite of the unfavourable intellectual climate of the contemporary world.

For the Chinese philosophical community in which there is a constant concern for the possibility of giving fresh life again to classical Chinese texts, Patočka's art of exegesis constitutes a formidable challenge as well as a model of appropriation. Today, we are confronted by the task of finding the way to reread classical Chinese authors such that the latter are not merely objects of reverence but thinkers capable of bringing about the renewal of the Chinese cultural tradition. This task amounts to finding the way to let classical Chinese authors speak to the contemporary world. In front of such a task, Patočka's work constitutes surely one of the best inspirations.

5.3 Patočka as the Critical Consciousness of the Phenomenological Movement

Why does Patočka's work carry posthumously such an exceptional pedagogical and critical potential in spite of the limited audience his work could address to during his lifetime? The answer is that he is animated by the idea of human existence as human freedom.[10] According to Patočka, the transition from the epoch of prehistory to history is characterized by the situation of shock: humanity is under the assault of

[8] J. Patočka, "Le platonisme négatif", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, *op. cit*., p. 86 sq. Patočka's reinterpretation of Platonic Ideas is comparable to that of the contemporary Chinese philosopher Lao Sze-Kwang (1927–2012), author of a 4-volume *History of Chinese Philosophy*. For the latter, Platonic Ideas as universals, in opposition to particulars, can be interpreted, from the point of view of philosophy of culture, as ideals and values in opposition to reality. Cf. Lao Sze-Kwang, 《文化哲學講演錄》("Lectures on Philosophy of Culture"), edited and annotated by Kwok-ying LAU (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2002), p. 6.

[9] J. Patočka, "Notes sur la préhistoire de la science du mouvement: le monde, la terre, le ciel et le mouvement de la vie humaine", "Le monde naturel et la phénoménologie", "Méditation sur *Le Monde naturel comme problème philosophique*", "La conception aristotélicienne du mouvement: signification philosophique et recherches historiques", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, French trans. Erika Abrams (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), pp. 3–12, 13–49, 50–124, 127–138.

[10] J. Patočka, "L'idéologie et la vie dans l'idée", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, p. 46.

problematicity, human being is haunted by the search for meaning.[11] Patočka explains the essential connection between human freedom, man's conscious search for meaning and the emergence of history in the following terms:

> We can speak of history where life becomes free and whole, where it consciously builds room for an equally free life, not exhausted by mere acceptance, where after the shaking of life's "small" meaning bestowed by acceptance, humans dare undertake new attempts at bestowing meaning on themselves in the light of the way the being of the world into which they have been set manifests itself to them.[12]

Freedom, in its primordial sense, is neither arbitrary action nor disinterest. Freedom is rather a function of truth. Yet truth according to Patočka is not a question of the merely theoretical order. Rather, truth is in turn the correlate of freedom:

> Truth is the internal struggle of a human being for her/his essential freedom, for the internal freedom which the human as human possesses in her/his depth, independently of what she/he is at the level of facts. Truth is the question of the authenticity of human.[13]

Understood in this way, human existence, in conformity to its essence, prescribes to itself the responsibility to search for truth; thus freedom is the responsibility for truth. That is why truth understood in its primordial sense is not theoretical contemplation, but an ethical relation to human freedom of the practical order:

> Truth can only be grasped in action, and only a being who acts effectively (which does not simply 'reflect' an objective process) can enter into relation with truth.[14]

Truth is not passive contemplation but active search for sense and its first step consists of critical reflection on the situation in which a human being engages herself/himself. "We cannot attain truth on our situation except by following the course of critique, by way of critical reflection."[15] Thus a human being's responsibility for truth requires her/him to reflect on her/his situation in a critical manner such that she/he will be able "to modify, to transform her/his situation into a conscious and elucidated situation, which as such will be leading a way toward the truth of the situation."[16] In short, freedom for Patočka is the care for truth animated by the critical spirit with regard to the situation in which a human being finds herself/himself with a view to transforming it.

In this connection, it will not be surprising to find that Patočka incarnates the critical consciousness within the entire phenomenological movement. Here the term

---

[11] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, French trans. Erika Abrams with a Preface by Paul Ricoeur (Paris: Editions Verdier, 1981), pp. 85–86; *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, Eng. trans. by Erazim Kohák (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996), pp. 74–75.

[12] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques* …, p. 54; *Heretical Essays* …, p. 40–41.

[13] J. Patočka, "La surcivilization et son conflit", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, p. 160.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 161.

[15] J. Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, p. 10. The Eng. trans. of Petr Lom reads simply: "we will not get to the heart of the matter without reflecting." *Plato and Europe*, p. 2.

[16] J. Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, p. 10; *Plato and Europe*, p. 2.

"critique" can be understood in a threefold manner with respect to three lines of critical thought: in the Kantian sense, in the sense of the Frankfurt School, and in the sense of Foucault's history of the present.

(a) *Critique in the Kantian sense*. One of the well-known results of Kantian critical philosophy is the establishment of the irreducible distinction between the realm of causality and theoretical reason on the one hand, and the realm of freedom on the other. Whereas causality and theoretical reason reign in the this-worldly and objective realm of knowledge, freedom, being the subjective aspiration toward transcendence, is the master in the realm of noumenon. Patočka accepts this part of the Kantian critical heritage. Yet, going against the Neo-Kantian tendency of over-emphasizing the dominance of the theoretical scientific attitude, he reinterprets the duality of theoretical reason and freedom with the emphasis on freedom and on the primacy of the practical. His emphasis on the care of the soul in Socrates, his reinterpretation of Plato's *chorismos* as experience of freedom, and his re-centering of Aristotle's philosophy toward a philosophy of movement and praxis are gestures showing his attitude toward the primacy of the practical.

(b) *Critique in the sense of the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School*. This is a line of critical thought developed from the Marxist critique of political economy. The general feature of the Critical Theory of Frankfurt School is the critique of domination. Its earlier object is the criticism of political domination shown in the critique of authoritarianism and totalitarianism carried out by Herbert Marcuse[17] and Max Horkheimer.[18] During the Second World War, this line of critical thought is radicalized into the critique of domination of instrumental reason in the European modernity. Horkheimer and Adorno are the forerunners of this critical radicalism.[19]

As mentioned above, Patočka has continued lecturing on philosophy in a private manner under the eyes of the police. This act of defiance against the police state is itself an implicit critique of political domination under the totalitarian form of

[17] Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State", first published 1937, republished in *Negations*: *Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 3–42; "The Affirmative Character of Culture", first published 1937, republished in *Negations*, *ibid*., pp. 88–133; H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*: *A Critical Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

[18] Max Horkheimer, "Authority and the Family", first published 1936, Eng. trans. in *Critical Theory*: *Selected Essays* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972), pp. 47–128. Cf. David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*: *Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), Chapter 2, pp. 40–76.

[19] Cf. M. Horkheimer & T. W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (New York: Social Studies Association, Inc., 1944; reissued in Germany by S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1969); *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Eng. trans. J. Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1972); M. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947); M. Horkheimer, *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft* (Frankfurt-am-Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, 1967); *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, Eng. trans. M. J. O'Connell and Others (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974).

government. In the writings of Patočka, the critique of political domination is never as vehement as the Frankfurt School in tone; but the substance of their critique remains close to those of the Frankfurt School.

Yet in Patočka's long article on "Over-civilization and its Internal Conflict", the critique of political domination in the totalitarian state is placed under the critique of the extreme version of modern civilization, which Patočka calls "radical over-civilization" or collectivism. According to him, both forms of over-civilization (the moderate version—bourgeois liberalism—and the radical version—socialism) are animated by a common pair of ideals concerning truth and human freedom. Both versions think that the absolute domination of objective being constitutes the most efficient control over the external world, hence serves best the cause of human freedom. While the moderate version of over-civilization, which practices individualist economic competition as the ultimate means to attain human freedom and to bring about material pleasure, results in the negligence of social justice, its radical-socialist counter-part adopts violent collectivist means in the intention to abolish social injustice. But the result of the latter is disastrous: not only is material pleasure deprived, but spiritual well-being too. Being the object of mechanically planned oppression, individual freedom exists only nominally. The lack of personal initiative results in collective indifference face to social injustice. Under the unity of a totally planned state, autonomous personality is impossible, and the whole collectivity becomes a gigantic non-organic body.[20]

In fact, for Patočka, the radical version of over-civilization reveals the internal conflict of modern civilization. It is this internal conflict which inevitably brings modern civilization to its decline, and his analysis here coincides with Frankfurt School's diagnosis of the domination of instrumental rationality in the modern world and its critique. Yet Patočka proposes a more subtle schema of analysis. For him the reason for the decline of modern civilization resides in its emphasis on the human too human sides, while neglecting entirely the human need to search for depth and to conquer its own interiority.

Both versions of over-civilization adopt the same approach toward the solution of the problem confronting human being: the ever expansion of social technology. Bourgeois liberalism treats human being as atomic being and believes that the reinforcement of economic competition and development of forces of production are the best guarantee for the promotion of individual happiness and social harmony. Yet the results contradict the hope: life becomes extenuated, alienated and dehumanized. Socialism, on the other hand, starts from the diagnosis of the contradiction of bourgeois liberalism: human suffering is caused by exploitation and social injustice. It feels the need to abolish suffering. Like bourgeois liberalism, the unique means socialism employs is to intensify social technology, but in a direction diametrically opposite to that of bourgeois liberalism. What it succeeds to abolish is not suffering, but individuality, interiority, and depth. Human beings are considered as simple moments of objective processes. Individuality is crushed into pieces under the gigantic state machine.

[20] J. Patočka, "La surcivilization et son conflit", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 125–129.

Patočka makes the very insightful critical observation that in a socialist state, one has the feeling of pleasure only during grandiose national festivals in which one has the chance to feel the totality of the state. Yet in daily life, happiness is absent. Humans are as alienated and dehumanized as in bourgeois liberalism. In short, social technology is not the way to regeneration of civilization[21]: Patočka's analysis and critique share those of the Frankfurt School.

(c) *Critique in the sense of Foucault's history of the present*. This sense of critique needs some explanation. It is a kind of critique which is a diagnosis of the crisis of the present time in view of finding a way out capable of leading toward the future. In some places Foucault calls it "history of the present" ("*l'histoire du présent*"),[22] in some others "ontology of the present" ("*l'ontologie du présent*"),[23] or even "critical ontology of ourselves" ("*l'ontologie critique de nous-même*").[24] Foucault declared that what inspired him to undertake such a critique was the late Kant, in particular the way Kant raised the question of "*Was ist Aufklärung*?" in the 1784 article that bears the same title.[25]

Foucault points out that when Kant asked the question "What is Enlightenment?", he directed his question toward the present epoch, the epoch in which Kant found himself and others.[26] The critique emerging out of this kind of questioning is neither animated by a purely theoretical and epistemological interest, as is the case in the anatomy and delimitation of human being's faculty of cognition in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nor is it a critique purely directed toward the social and political order. It is one between the two: in the midst of the present epoch, we ask for a critical understanding of the epoch in which we find ourselves, and the critique follows the guiding thread of the cultural characteristic manifested by the concrete historical situation in which we are found. The critical attitude advocated by Foucault consists on the one hand in refusing to adopt a subjugated attitude toward the explanation or interpretation of the present epoch given by any political, religious or intellectual

[21] *Ibid*., pp. 165–168.

[22] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 35; *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison*, Eng. trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 31.

[23] M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?", in *Dits et écrits*, *IV* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p. 687; Eng. trans. as "What is Revolution?", in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), p. 100. This article bears the same French title as the article mentioned in the next footnote, yet the contents of two versions are quite different.

[24] M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?", *Dits et écrits*, *IV*, p. 577; Eng. version as "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: The Penguin Books, 1984), p. 50.

[25] "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?", in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1902–1938), Vol. VIII, pp. 33–42; "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?', in Kant, *Political Writings*, Eng. trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1991), pp. 54–60.

[26] M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?", in *Dits et écrits*, *IV*, p. 679; "What is Revolution?", in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, p. 84.

authority.[27] On the other hand, this critical attitude requires a kind of critical understanding which does not bear a merely theoretical interest, it also carries within itself practical concerns, namely: through the understanding of the limitation of the present epoch, it strives toward an exit from its impasse and attempts to search for new possibilities in view of the future development of humankind.[28] Foucault even says that critique understood in this sense is the philosophical attitude itself: "it has to be conceived as an attitude, an *ethos*, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[29] In other words, the critique advocated by Foucault is an anticipatory diagnosis on the cultural impasse of the present epoch in the hope of finding new possibilities to go beyond it.

In the light of the above elucidation of critique in the Foucauldian sense, there is no doubt that Patočka's call for reflection on the problems concerning a Post-European humanity is a critique of this kind. In fact, if critique in the Foucauldian sense is sometimes named "history of the present" and sometimes "critical ontology of ourselves", it is precisely because the structure of history bears an essential relationship to the ontological structure of our existence. From Heidegger onwards, we understand that historical happening requires an agent whose ontological structure possesses a temporal character.

While Foucault himself did not explain why he used alternately the terms "history of the present" and "critical ontology of ourselves" to designate the critical attitude he advocated, it was Patočka who, in a lecture entitled "Spiritual Foundations of Contemporary Life" delivered in 1969,[30] i.e., 15 years earlier than Foucault's lecture on "What is Enlightenment?", in effect provided the necessary missing link between Foucault's two expressions. Drawing on Heidegger's existential analytic of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit*, Patočka provides the ontological explication of the possibility of critique as history of the present from the explication of the structure of human existence: it is the ontological structure of ourselves as human being—Heidegger calls it "the Dasein in us"—which is at the basis of the critical attitude rending possible the history of the present in the Foucauldian sense. Patočka says:

> It becomes evident that human being is not simply there, but that she/he has a *mission* and a duty with regard to all those who do not have the privilege acquired from now on: the privilege of the fascination by the totality and by Being, by this primordial interest which is the source of all light. Human being here becomes the one who is sent into the world in order to witness truth, to attest by each of her/his acts and entire behaviour, to help to come to oneself anyone who is in the same manner as her/his, to let human beings to be according

[27] M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que la critique? [Critique et Aufklärung]", *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, Vol. LXXXIV, 1990, p. 39; Eng. trans. as "What is Critique?", in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, op. cit., 31–32.

[28] M. Foucault, "Qu'est-ce que les Lumières?", *Dits et écrits*, *IV*, p. 577; "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, p. 50.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] J. Patočka, "Les fondements spirituels de la vie contemporaine", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 215–241.

> to what they are, in light and in truth, to offer herself/himself to things and to beings as a ground where they can deploy themselves, and not to exploit them brutally for the profit of her/his arbitrary interests.[31]

It is by virtue of the critical understanding of our present historical situation that the possibility of a future is opened to us. Thus Patočka speaks of the possibility of reconquering *hope* (the term "hope" is emphasized by Patočka himself in the text) in the present epoch, an epoch in which the European spirit is dominated by the horror generated by the wars. He declares:

> It is thus certain that the efforts done in order to turn at last our attention away from this terror, to let ourselves be penetrated and supported by the great tasks which call for us, if we listen to the situation of our epoch in the spheres of action, of knowledge and of art, these efforts have a positive meaning, even if we should neither neglect their limits. We see the constitution of philosophies and theologies of hope. Hope is not a simple *relief* of the horror and of the fear which the dangers inspire us, dangers to which our epoch is exposed, but the very possibility of opening us to a future. Generally speaking, the discovery of the future is one of the most important and most characteristic features of our present.[32]

Just as for Foucault, for Patočka Kant is the philosopher who first understands reflection upon the present and on time provides us with the possibility of opening towards the future.[33] Yet time is only the formal, even if ontological, condition of the futuristic character of the history of the present. Where can we search for the historical substances which allow us to hope for the possibility of going beyond the limits of the present epoch? Patočka observes that the present epoch is the age of the end of European domination at the aftermath of the wars. It is comprised of two essential features: the decomposition of the Hegelian conception of the sovereign state—this conception being a doctrine founded upon the modern philosophy of subjectivity—as well as the rapid propagation of planetary technology.

Upon the observation of the end of European domination as well as the possibilities and the dangers of the rapid propagation of planetary technology diagnosed after Heidegger, Patočka projects the hope of filling the formal structure of universal history by "the pluralism … of different historical substances", "a phenomenon which could be revealed to be more profound and more revolutionary than we think today."[34] By the very expression of "the pluralism of different historical substances", Patočka has gone beyond Foucault's merely formal concept of history of the present. But at the same time Patočka's meditations on universal history and its futuristic possibilities draw him into the troubled water of the meaning of history.

---

[31] *Ibid*., pp. 234–235.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 235.

[33] *Ibid*., p. 235.

[34] *Ibid*., p. 223–224.

5.4 Post-European Humanity and the Aporia of the Meaning of History

But would the apparent optimism of Patočka's philosophy of hope diminish its critical potential? He is well aware of this. This is because the hope projected upon "the pluralism of different historical substances" depends on a crucial question: Whether we can still bestow a comprehensible unity of meaning on the history of the henceforth plural and heterogeneous humanity? If the emergence of the concept of universal history since the European Enlightenment is always accompanied by a Eurocentric (because Christian) response to the question of the meaning of history, given that this meaning is lost forever—this verdict was pronounced by European thinkers themselves since Nietzsche and Weber—can we still speak of the meaning of history? Does this term—the meaning of history—still have possibilities of meaning-fulfillment?

This formidable question pushes Patočka to undertake a thorough and painstaking critical reflection on human history of which the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* is the result: "The experience of the lost of meaning leads to the question whether all meaning is not anthropocentric and relative to life. If that were the case, we would be facing nihilism… Such a shaking of meaningfulness can only lead to the stagnation of life unless we can find a way out of the denial of meaning."[35]

In the face of the very real threat of nihilism, Patočka pushes his critical reflection to an extremely radical position. He asks: can we still exercise our responsibility of truth and meaning in the extreme situation of meaninglessness and uprootedness? This is what he writes:

> The possibility of a *metanoesis* of historic proportions depends essentially on this: is that part of humanity which is capable of understanding what was and is the point of history, which is at the same time ever more driven by the entire positioning of present day humanity at the peak of technoscience to accept responsibility for meaninglessness, also capable of the discipline and self-denial demanded by a stance of uprootedness in which alone a meaningfulness, both absolute and accessible to human beings, because it is problematic, might be realized?[36]

The question raised by Patočka is a radical one: while assuming the responsibility of the meaninglessness of the historical past of humanity at the end of the great wars, is human being still capable of giving any meaning to history in the future? Patočka does not give any direct answer to the formal question of the meaning of history. In fact, if he wants to remain faithful to the phenomenological philosopher he always is, he must abstain from giving an answer in a dogmatic manner. But we cannot live without meaning. Thus he reformulates the question and asks it again in relation to the decline of industrial civilization: "Is industrial civilization (as a whole

[35] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques* …, p. 87; *Heretical Essays* …, p. 76.

[36] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques* …, p. 86; *Heretical Essays*…, pp. 75–76.

and in its character as a scientific and technological revolution) decadent?"[37] At first sight the answer to this question should be easy. Patočka's lucidity would drive him to say yes, since we can easily observe that industrial civilization "did not resolve the great, principal human … problem, namely, not only to live but to live in a humanly authentic way, as history shows we can, but that it has actually made the situation more difficult".[38]

Yet at the bottom of this planetary distress with regard to the dehumanization of humanity, Patočka does not want to abandon hope forever. He wants to give hope a last chance:

> On the other hand, it is also true that this civilization *makes possible* more than any previous human constellation: a life without violence and with far-reaching equality of opportunity. Not in the sense that this goal would anywhere be actual, but humans have never before found the means of struggle with external misery, with lack and want, which this civilization offers.[39]

This last reversal of the mind helps Patočka to formulate an answer this time, not to the more concrete question of whether industrial civilization will be in decline, but to the more formal, metaphysical question of the meaning of history: "History is nothing other than the shaken certitude of pre-given meaning. It has no other meaning or goal."[40] In other words, we can only say that history always reserves us a surprise, and this is a delightful version of scepticism. Again, phenomenological lucidity is Patočka's answer.[41]

What enables Patočka to have such lucidity with regard to historical understanding is that he has benefited from the diagnoses of the crisis of European modernity by his two great phenomenological forerunners Husserl and Heidegger. In particular, Patočka has appropriated Heidegger's concept of truth as disclosure with regard to the understanding of crisis: crisis is the situation in which the sense or significance of that historical epoch is veiled to human beings in that very historical epoch.[42] Yet in comparison to both Husserl and Heidegger, Patočka's understanding of history is filled with social, political, and cultural concreteness and diversity. In complete contrast to the later Heidegger's reductionist reading of history as the history of Being, his reading of history is never an alibi of escape from historical reality.

---

[37] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques*…, p. 125; *Heretical Essays*…, p. 117.

[38] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques*…, pp. 125–126; *Heretical Essays*…, p. 117.

[39] J. Patočka, *Essais hérétiques*…, p. 126; *Heretical Essays*…, p. 118.

[40] *Ibid*.

[41] In the last chapter of the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, in an ultimate effort to renew the discussion of the problem of the meaning of history, Patočka invents the expression "solidarity of the shaken" from the experience of those who returned from the front during the great wars. Yet the chapter ends again by an open question concerning the possibility of the meaning of history of western humanity: "Or does something open up to us therein of the meaning of the history of western humanity which will not be denied and which today is becoming the meaning of human history as such?" *Essais hérétiques*…, p. 146; *Heretical Essays*…, p.137.

[42] J. Patočka, "La surcivilization et son conflit", in *Liberté et sacrifice*, pp. 160–162.

5.5 Phenomenology of the Natural World and Its Promise

If Patočka's phenomenological lucidity forbids him an assertive reply to the question of the possibility of a Post-European humanity, will the promise of hope for a non-Eurocentric philosophy of history remain simply an empty promise? It seems so in fact. But the hope lost on this side of Patočka's profound meditations can be gained back on the other side of his reflections—the meditations on a phenomenology of the natural world undertaken since the first book publication of Patočka in 1936: *The Natural World as Philosophical Problem*.[43] The elements of a phenomenology of the natural world worked out by Patočka since then can pave the way for the phenomenological movement, which is originated in the European soil, to encounter other cultures, hence for the hope to break away from the enclosure of Eurocentrism. It is of course impossible to carry out a detailed presentation of Patočka's phenomenology of the natural world in the present chapter. Here we can only sketch out some main points of Patočka's reflections.[44]

(a) Patočka's idea of the phenomenology of the natural world converges with Merleau-Ponty's concept of primordial Nature but is further enriched by a reinterpretation of the ground of Aristotle's philosophy. It goes against the interpretation of the ground of Aristotle's philosophy understood as centered on *Metaphysics*, an interpretation imposed upon the history of European philosophy since the scholastic tradition. He suggests that the ground of Aristotle's philosophy should be re-centered from *Metaphysics* to *Physics*, because it is in *Physics* that is found Aristotle's science of movement and of mobile being. According to Patočka, movement is not only one of the basic elements of a phenomenology of the natural world, but the principle of phenomenality:

> Delimitation and disclosure can be subsumed under the global concept of manifestation. Movement is the ground of any manifestation. Now manifestation for Aristotle is not manifestation of something whose essence would remain in retreat. On the contrary, Being enters entirely into the phenomenon, because "to be" means nothing other than to determine a substrate; the determination of substrate is movement and movement resides precisely, as we just saw, in manifestation. Movement is thus that which grounds the identity of being and appearance.[45]

---

[43] J. Patočka, *Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique*, French trans. by H. Declève and M. Danèk (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1976).

[44] The following lines are largely indebted to the very informative article of Etienne Tassin, "La question du sol: monde naturel et communauté politique", in *Jan Patočka*: *philosophie*, *phénoménologie et politique*, ed. Etienne Tassin and Marc Richir (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992), pp. 167–187. For a more detailed study of Patočka's phenomenology of movement, cf. Renaud Barbaras, *Le mouvement de l'existence. Études sur la phénoménologie de Jan Patočka* (Paris : Les Éditions de la Transparence, 2007); Renaud Barbaras, *L'ouverture du monde* : *lecture de Jan Patočka* (Paris : Les Éditions de la Transparence, 2011).

[45] J. Patočka, "La conception aristotélicienne du mouvement: signification philosophique et recherches historiques", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, pp. 132–133. Patočka's book-length study of Aristotle is now available in French translation by Erika Abrams: *Aristote*, *ses devanciers*, *ses successeurs* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2011).

(b) The cognition of movement as principle of phenomenality brings about the thematization of life and of human existence as movement on the one hand, and of the Earth as the ultimate referent of movement on the other. For if movement in the primordial sense, i.e., a movement lived from within, is the realizing flux of our accomplishing activities, the referent of such a flux is the Earth, which is a permanent and immobile substrate. "Immobility of the Earth belongs to the primordial orientation of the world."[46] "The Earth is the prototype of everything massive, corporeal, material; it is the universal body of which all things are in some sense a part."[47] Here Patočka is evidently inspired by Husserl's late manuscripts entitled "Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum Phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur" in which the founder of phenomenology declares the "Overthrow of the Copernican theory in the usual interpretation of a world view. The original ark, earth, does not move."[48]

(c) The Earth as *physis* and primordial Nature: "Through the aspect of the Earth as the bearer and the referent of all relations we therefore also encounter the Earth as *a force and a power*."[49] The Earth as power and master of life and death is the nutritive Earth.[50] In this sense, the Earth is *physis*, the primordial Nature. As such, the Earth is the principle of *genesis-phthora*, generation and corruption.[51] The Earth as primordial Nature is the inchoative Nature.

---

[46] J. Patočka, "Le monde naturel et la phénoménologie", *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 30; "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka*, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, Erazim Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 255.

[47] *Ibid*.

[48] Edmund Husserl, "Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum Phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur", in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 307; "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature", Eng. trans. Fred Kersten, in *Husserl*: *Shorter Works*, ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press and Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981), p. 231. In a succinct passage Husserl explains that "the 'earth' as the unitary earth-basis cannot be at rest and therefore cannot be experienced as a body which not only has its extension and its qualification but also its 'place" in space, and which can possibly exchange its place and be at rest or in motion. As long as I do not have a presentation of a new basis, as a basis from which the earth can have sense in interconnected and returning locomotion as a self-contained body in motion and at rest, and as long as an exchange of bases is not presented such that both bases become bodies, to that extent just the earth itself is the basis and not a body. The earth does not move… The earth as a whole whose parts … are bodies; but as a 'whole' the earth is not a body." "Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum Phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur", p. 313; Eng. trans. p. 225, translation modified.

[49] J. Patočka, "Le monde naturel et la phénoménologie", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 30; "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka*, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, p. 255.

[50] J. Patočka, "Le monde naturel et la phénoménologie", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 31; "The 'Natural' World and Phenomenology", in *Jan Patočka*, *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, p. 256.

[51] J. Patočka, "Méditation sur *Le Monde naturel comme problème philosophique*", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 103.

(d) Primacy of the practical over the theoretical within the natural world: "That which allows initial access to the natural world is not contemplative reflection, but reflection as integral part of the praxis, as component of action and internal behaviour."[52]

(e) The irruption of human existence as the movement of the human life constitutes an "earthquake". It has neither motivation nor ground. It shows the abyssal nature of human existence and its primordial nothingness.

> The Earth itself has been shaken. If we are grounded to qualify human being as inhabitant of the Earth, the Earth suffers an earthquake from human being. Here human being discovers her/his existence, not as accepted and rooted, but in her/his total nakedness—and she/he discovers at the same time that the Earth and the sky have a *trans*, a beyond. This means also that there is nothing in them which can give existence a final support, a final rootedness, a final goal, a 'why' valid once and for all.[53]

The Earth as inchoative Nature of the primordial order, the emphasis on primordial nothingness and the abyssal nature of human existence, the primacy of praxis: these are themes foreign to the onto-theological tradition of Western metaphysics, but not at all foreign to the Eastern philosophical tradition, in particular to Chinese Daoist philosophy. A phenomenological reading of Laozi's *Daodejing* shows that the *Dao* should be understood as inchoative Nature of the primordial order: the *Dao* is at the origin of myriad things which provides them with form and substance, while the *Dao* itself is not an object of direct experience. Since the *Dao* is beyond the order of things of appearance, it belongs to the order of Nothingness. This line of interpretation can be confirmed by Laozi's own text. In the *Daodejing* we read:

> The *Dao* that can be spoken of is not the constant *Dao*.[54]

> Compare to a thing, the *Dao* is shadowy and indistinct. Instinct and shadowy, yet within it is something that appears. Shadowy and indistinct, yet within it is something substantial. Dim and dark, yet within it is something essential. That essential thing is very real, within it is something that can be experienced.[55]

> Something undifferentiated is formed, born before heaven and earth. Silent and void, it stands alone and does not change; proceeds in a circular way and does not corrupt, it is capable of being the mother of heaven and earth. I know not its name, thus naming it by the acceptable term of *Dao*.[56]

---

[52] *Ibid*, p. 101.

[53] J. Patočka, "Notes sure la préhistoire de la science du mouvement: le monde, la terre, le ciel et le mouvement de la vie humaine", in *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, p. 10.

[54] *Tao Te Ching*, bilingual edition, Eng. trans. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989 (1st ed. 1982)), Ch. 1, p. 3; the original Chinese text reads: 「道可道,非常道」.

[55] *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*., Ch. 21, pp. 32–32; the original Chinese text reads: 「道之為物,惟恍惟惚。惚兮恍兮,其中有象;惚兮恍兮,其中有物。窈兮冥兮,其中有精;其精甚真,其中有信。」

[56] *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*., Ch. 25, p. 37; the original Chinese text reads: 「有物混成,先天地生;寂兮寥兮,獨立而不改,周行而不殆,可以為天地母。吾不知其名,故強字之曰道。」

> By Nothing(ness), we name the beginning of heaven and earth; by Being, we name the mother of the myriad things.[57]
>
> The myriad things in the world are originated from Being, and Being from Nothing(ness).[58]

Since the principle of deployment of the *Dao* is regulative of movement of the physical as well as of the human order, the deployment of the *Dao* is the principle of phenomenality because it is by virtue of *Dao*'s deployment that things come to appearance. On the other hand, to Laozi, the human subject is emerged from and modeled on the world ("Heaven and Earth"), while the world is emerged from and modeled on the *Dao*.[59] Thus Laozi's Daoism is a non-anthropocentric and non-subjectivist philosophy which contains elements for a non-theocentric cosmology.

Though we are not able to give a detailed presentation of Laozi's concept of *Dao* and its related issues here[60] we hope to point out that Patočka's phenomenology of the natural world and movement of existence as a-subjective phenomenology gives resonance to Laozi's Daoist philosophy. Thus the non-Eurocentric character of Patočka's phenomenology lays the ground for the encounter between phenomenology and Chinese philosophy, in particular the Daoism of Laozi.

5.6 In the Place of a Conclusion

We all know that Laozi's conceptualization of nothing or nothingness has been mocked of by Hegel. In the eyes of the nineteenth century Prussian King of philosophy, the *Dao* spoken of by Laozi is void, deprived of any intelligible content. Thus Chinese Daoism is relegated to the lowest position in Hegel's ladder of history of philosophy. With Patočka's thematization of the Earth as primordial Nature, of movement as principle of phenomenality, of the non-foundational nature of human existence as movement—all these being elements of an a-subjective phenomenology which have received attention in Laozi's Daoism—the philosophy of Laozi has a chance to be understood and thus reevaluated by the approach of this phenomenologist of the Other Europe. Patočka's act of phenomenological seeing contributes to avoid the Eurocentric bias of both Hegel and Husserl.

---

[57] *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*., Ch. 1, p. 3; the original Chinese text reads: 「無,名天地之始;有, 名萬物之母。」

[58] *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*., Ch. 40, p. 61; the original Chinese text reads: 「天下萬物生於有, 有生於無。」

[59] "Man models himself after earth, earth models itself after heaven, heaven models itself after the *Dao*, and the *Dao* models itself after Nature." (「人法地,地法天,天法道,道法自然。」 *Tao Te Ching*, *op. cit*., Ch. 25, p. 39.

[60] For a more detailed account of the concept of *Dao* and Laozi's philosophy, cf. our interpretative essay: "To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice To Chinese Philosophy?—Attempt at a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi", *supra*, Chap. 3.

Patočka's act is phenomenologically lucid, morally courageous, and politically heroic. So do the founders of the Patočka Archives, who, under the most risky conditions, succeeded to safeguard the philosophical legacy left behind by one of the most noble European spirits, a philosophical legacy which from then on can be shared by the "plurality of the Post-European Humanity".[61]

[61] This chapter is dedicated to all those who had participated in the gigantic work of the safeguard of the Patočka Archives, foremost of them Professor Ivan Chvatik.

Chapter 6
Europe Beyond Europe: Patočka's Concept of Care for the Soul and Mencius. An Intercultural Consideration

6.1 Introduction

The present chapter is a modest attempt to sketch an answer to the following questions: What is Patočka's concept of Europe? To what extent can his reflections on Europe, as those of a phenomenological philosopher from the "other Europe," avoid the Eurocentric overtones of their Husserlian counterpart? Can Patočka's conception of Europe lead to a non-Eurocentric reformulation of universalizable elements of European humanity, in such a way as to contribute to the enhancement of intercultural understanding?[1]

Patočka's concept of Europe is a philosophical one. In the first place, it is established through neither a geopolitical nor a racial determination of the term, but by way of a philosophical reflection on "the problems of a post-European humanity."[2] Conducting his reflection as dissident European, and probably also as dissident phenomenologist, Patočka was the first philosopher within the wider phenomenological movement to raise such problems at a time when a certain figure of Europe—the Europe bent on "dominating the world"—"ha[d] perished, probably forever."[3] At first glance, such an attempt seems paradoxical, not to say doomed to failure. The

[1] This chapter is the further revised version of a paper presented under the title "Patočka's Concept of Europe: an Intercultural Consideration" to "An International Conference to Commemorate Jan Patočka 1907–2007 and the 37th Annual Meeting of the Husserl Circle", organized by the Center for Theoretical Study, Charles University Prague, Center for Phenomenological Research, Charles University Prague, and Institute for Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, held 22–28 April, 2007 in Prague and published in *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology. Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatik and Erika Abrams (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 229–244.

[2] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas," *Perspektiven der Philosophie*, Vol. 20, 1994, p. 241; quoted from the French translation: "Réflexion sur l'Europe," in *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. and French trans. Erika Abrams (Grenoble: Millon, 1990), p. 181.

[3] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, ed. E. Abrams and J. Němec, French trans. E. Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), p. 99; *Plato and Europe*, Eng. trans. P. Lom (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 89.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_6

purpose it hopes to serve is prospective—seeking ways to promote intercultural understanding in the era of post-European humanity—whereas its method of inquiry is retrospective—trying to reformulate elements of a European humanity belonging to the historical past. To engage oneself in quest of the meaning and significance of a figure of humanity that has perished, probably forever—is this not wholly illusory? Yet according to Patočka, the experience of the loss of naively accepted meaning—a phenomenon the author of the *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* calls "problematicity"—is precisely what calls us into question and challenges us so sharply that we respond, by necessity, to that challenge by inquiring after the meaning concealed in a more profound, not immediately apparent level.[4] Thus, it is at the very moment when the meaning of Europe as a visible and tangible power, dominating the world through religious-ideological and technical-instrumental rationalities, is going into eclipse that the question of the "true" and profound meaning of Europe can be raised.

Patočka's concept of Europe is philosophical also in a second, historical-philosophical sense: Patočka closely followed the steps of Husserl in his seeking for the profound meaning of Europe. It is well known that in his last great work, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl gave a diagnosis of the spiritual crisis in which European humanity was immersed, and attempted to reactivate the profound meaning of Europe vis-à-vis her situation of loss of meaning. Patočka's own endeavor to reconquer the meaning of Europe was accompanied by a critical discussion of Husserl's reflections. Aware of Husserl's Eurocentric attitude, Patočka proposes, in one of his late private seminars, *Plato and Europe* (1973), a more radical backward questioning: going back not only to the idea of Greek philosophy, as did Husserl, but further beyond, to the situation in which Greek philosophy was born: its pre-reflective mythical environment.[5] If Patočka still understands the task of philosophy as the self-responsibility of humanity, he conceives of it no more in the Husserlian terms of universal rational science, but in terms of care for the soul. By a heroic interpretive effort Patočka invites us to go back to the Greek mythological framework which is at the root of the practice of philosophy as care for the soul. His backward questioning leads him to outline the philosophical anthropology underlying the Greek mythological framework which understands human existence as capable of truth and justice. Such an anthropological sketch has a double merit. Vertically it can serve as the basis for an ontology of the phenomenalization of the world. Horizontally it can provide elements for a dialogue with the conception of human existence of Mencius Confucianism, one of the most representative and influential schools of the Chinese tradition of moral and political philosophy. For Mencius, the defining elements of being human are nothing other than the faculties of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom. These four terms are arguably Chinese variants of the concepts of justice and truth.

[4] Jan Patočka, *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, French trans. E. Abrams with a Preface by P. Ricœur (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1981), pp. 87–88; *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. J. Dodd, Eng. trans. E. Kohák (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), pp. 76–77.

[5] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, p. 51; *Plato and Europe*, p. 42.

Expanding upon these observations, I hope to show that Patočka's concept of Europe is non-Eurocentric and contains elements which may throw some kind of intellectual bridge between the Greek and the Ancient Chinese philosophical cultures.

6.2 Patočka's Critical Reading of Husserl's Diagnosis of the Crisis of European Humanity

Having organized, as Czech secretary of the *Cercle philosophique pour les recherches sur l'entendement humain*, Husserl's November 1935 Prague lecture, which was to form the basis of the later *Crisis* work, the young Patočka was very attentive to the old Freiburg master's diagnosis of the crisis of European humanity. In an essay published as early as 1936, he summarized this diagnosis in a clearly articulated passage:

> Husserl believes to have pinpointed the source of the spiritual crisis [of Europe] . . . [T]he idea of science, of theory is, according to Husserl, so to say, the teleological idea of European humanity, that in the name of which Europe has lived culturally, and politically as well, for more than two millennia, that which ensures European man the content and meaning of his existence . . . In short, Husserl's solution to the crisis is a rebirth of Europe out of the spirit of radical theory. This rebirth, then, is possible only because the course of history is governed by teleological ideas which ultimately structure the flow of events, and because the idea of knowing, of a *thêoria* free from all prejudice, is such an all-embracing teleological idea whose bearer, European humanity, is called, thanks to it, not only to become the master of the earth and of the world, but also to institute and interpret all its ideals. The European spirit is the great rationalizer of all ideals; all are placed in a new light through the European idea of an autonomous and unprejudged theory which brings clarity and coherence to all orders of life.[6]

Without further discussing Husserl's teleological idea of European humanity, nor analyzing the related idea of scientific rationality, Patočka concluded, toward the end of the article, that "we cannot depend on the teleological idea of European culture."[7] It is doubtless premature to affirm that Patočka, in 1936, was already aware of the Eurocentric (did this term even exist then?) overtones of Husserl's idea of European humanity. Yet he disagreed openly with Husserl's teleological approach to the determination of European culture and the solution to her spiritual crisis.

More than 30 years later, Patočka renewed his reflections on Europe by resuming a critical discussion of the late Husserl's attempt at a refoundation of the philosophical

---

[6] Jan Patočka, "Masaryk's and Husserl's Conception of the Spiritual Crisis of European Humanity," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, ed. and Eng. trans. E. Kohák (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 148. See also French translation: "La conception de la crise spirituelle de l'humanité européenne chez Masaryk et chez Husserl," in Jan Patočka, *La crise du sens*, t. 1: *Comte*, *Masaryk*, *Husserl*, ed. and French trans. E. Abrams (Bruxelles: OUSIA, 1985), pp. 24–25.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 155/37 (English/French).

rationality of Europe—seeing a way to overcome the crisis of European civilization in the realization of the idea of philosophy as the self-responsibility of humanity. On the one hand, Patočka thinks that Husserl's phenomenological practice of philosophy—his intentional-historical approach to unveiling the original sources of European science in the *Crisis*—represents something new in terms of philosophical method and doctrinal contents, "new insofar as it refuses construction and refers back to the more original sources of experience which can, through prejudice, be misinterpreted and go systematically unrecognized in their own essentiality."[8] On the other hand, he holds Husserl's idea of philosophy and philosophical rationality as universal scientific knowledge to be a typically old European one. This conception of knowledge posits as the supreme paradigm the intellectual vision of the knowing subject's radical self-understanding. It motivates the knowing subject to assume self-responsibility for this knowing activity as such. That is why, for Patočka, "Husserl's entire enterprise is founded upon the idea of the self-responsibility of knowledge."[9] But this intellectualist idea of philosophy is not free from presupposition: "It presupposes the self-responsibility of the thinker who relates to himself. The will to self-responsibility would have no sense, however, if there were not the possibility of irresponsibility which comes to light, e.g., in the purely technical conception of science."[10]

According to the intellectualist idea of philosophy, the only way for the knowing subject to avoid losing itself in the things of the external world is to reconquer its own subjectivity. But since subjectivity is not a thing, the perceptual intuitive method cannot be directly applied to it. Husserl's novelty in terms of method is to have invented the famous procedure of the reduction. Patočka patiently reconstructs Husserl's two ways to the operation of transcendental reduction which assures the reconquering of subjectivity as the ultimate source of legitimacy for the intellectual vision. These are respectively the well-known Cartesian way and the ontological way through the life-world as practiced by Husserl in the *Crisis*. The Cartesian way encounters more than one serious difficulty. (1) The subject, as absolute consciousness, is presented as a "residue" cut off from the world: this idealist approach makes it difficult to rescue the intersubjective world which is supposed to be the habitat of the community of transcendental egos. (2) As the living-body of the subject is always a Being-in-the-world, the corporeal status of transcendental subjectivity, once cut off from the world, becomes doubtful. (3) The self-givenness of the intuitive content of a thing (*Sache*) is not guaranteed; what can be assured is only the ontological status of the thing given in terms of meaning.[11]

In contrast to the Cartesian way, the ontological way to reduction via the life-world has the merit of suspending the metaphysical positing of the natural world

[8] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas", *op. cit*., p. 247; "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *op. cit*., p. 188.

[9] *Ibid*., p. 248/188 (German/French).

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] *Ibid*., pp. 249–250/189–190 (German/French). Patočka's explanation of these three difficulties is extremely succinct; we have therefore somewhat elaborated on his own presentation.

without suspending our original belief (*Urglaube*) with regard to this world. Thus, this way to reduction makes visible our intrinsic relation with the world; it has the great advantage of enabling the thematization of "the world-appearance, the world as framework of appearance."[12] What this reduction brings before the eye is not the sphere of pure immanence, but the entire realm of exteriority. It is a horizon of infinite possibilities, an inexhaustible abundance within which each appearing thing can manifest itself. This is what we call the "world," within the framework of which everything appears and every kind of experience takes place. Itself "unconditioned," it is thus the condition of possibility of all appearance and experience. The world is "this whole, since always familiar, yet never known in its proper essence."[13]

Patočka, however, does not hesitate to point out that Husserl's concept of world is not exempt from ambiguity. The world has a double sense. "The world is first of all for [Husserl] the sum of experientiable beings, the '*universum*' of all there is."[14] Husserl himself says in the *Crisis* that the world is there for those naively absorbed in ongoing life as "*Universum der Vorhandenheiten*."[15] But as the sum of beings, the world itself can never be experienced originally. Husserl is of course well aware of this: "The world, on the other hand, does not exist as *an* entity, as an object, but exists with such uniqueness that the plural makes no sense when applied to it."[16] This is why Husserl always says that the world itself is a "world-horizon" (*Welthorizont*).[17] But to Patočka even the term world-horizon is not univocal. "We are conscious of the world simply as the horizon of every singular experience, in the sense that each such experience means an occurrence within this framework of the whole of being (which it, then, implicitly presupposes)."[18] Corresponding to every appearing object and every explicit act of consciousness there is a particular, multiply articulated consciousness of horizon. Yet, "the most encompassing horizon, the horizon of horizons, is . . . designated as *the world itself*; it means nothing other than an ever inadequate *intention* of totality."[19] In other words, what can be experienced are horizons of appearance of singular objects, whereas the horizon of horizons, the world itself, can never be directly experienced. It comes to the fore only as the intention of the world, i.e., as the objective, but empty intentional pole of subjective conscious experience. To Patočka, the thematization of the world as horizon by Husserl is paradoxical inasmuch as:

---

[12] *Ibid*., p. 250/190 (German/French): "die Welterscheinung, die Welt als Erscheinungsrahmen."

[13] *Ibid*., p. 252/192 (German/French).

[14] *Ibid*., p. 253/193 (German/French).

[15] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1962 [1954]), p. 151; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 150.

[16] *Ibid*., p. 146/143 (German/English).

[17] *Ibid*., pp. 141/138, 146/143 (German/English).

[18] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas", *op. cit*., p. 253; "Réflexion sur l'"Europe", *op. cit*., p. 193.

[19] *Ibid*.

1. By thinking the world as horizon, in particular as horizon of horizons, Husserl succeeds in avoiding the difficulties of the Kantian antinomy about the world. In fact Kant is unable to provide a positive determination of the meaning of the world.
2. Yet the thematization of the world as horizon goes against the principle of original givenness, so essential to Husserl's phenomenological method. Admittedly, the world is primordial, but it can never be represented after the fashion of an object. Thus it cannot be understood according to the method proper to intentional objects of the conscious subjectivity. For example, the world as horizon of horizons cannot be assimilated to the horizon of a perceptual object. Since the world as horizon of horizons can never be given, it cannot be thematized either. Its thematization is but a quasi-thematization.

According to Patočka, Husserl, in interpreting (and not describing) the world as horizon, reduces it to the status of "mere 'horizonal intentionality.' The world is thus subjectivized and leveled to a present anticipation."[20]

Patočka's critical examination of Husserl's failure to truly thematize the world as horizon of horizons implies a no less critical judgment on the failure of the veritable thematization of the life-world in the *Krisis*. Although Husserl attempted to delineate the formal general structures of the life-world, every single life-world is particular: it is the ground of a particular community having experienced a particular history.[21] Thus life-worlds are always plural, one can never speak of *the* life-world.[22] Confronted with the difficulty faced by Husserl in the thematization of the life-world, Patočka directs his reflections toward a more profound depth underlying the life-world which he calls the "world-mystery" (*Weltgeheimnis*):

[20] *Ibid*., p. 255/195 (German/French).

[21] It is precisely the historical nature of the life-world that renders its thematization difficult and complicated. Cf. the in-depth treatment of this problematic by Ludwig Landgrebe in his two articles, "The Problem of a Transcendental Science of the A Priori of the Life-world," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl*: *Six Essays*, ed. D. Welton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 176–200; "The Life-world and the Historicity of Human Existence," in *Phenomenology and Marxism*, ed. B. Waldenfels, Jan M. Broekman and A. Pažanin, Eng. trans. J. Claude Evans, Jr. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 167–204.

[22] Just as Husserl was well aware of the non-givenness of the world as world-horizon, he was also completely cognizant of the non-givenness and, hence, the non-thematization of the "full universal being of the life-world": "But now the paradoxical question: Can one not [turn to] the life-world, the world of which we are all conscious in life as the world of us all, without in any way making it into a subject of universal investigation, being always given over, rather, to our everyday momentary individual or universal vocational ends and interests—can one not survey it universally in a changed attitude, and can one not seek to get to know it, as what it is and how it is in its own mobility and relativity, make it the subject matter of a universal science, but one which has by no means the goal of universal theory in the sense in which this was sought by historical philosophy and the sciences?" (E. Husserl, *Die Krisis* …, op. cit., p. 462; *The Crisis* …, op. cit., p. 383.) For a further discussion, cf. Werner Marx, "The Life-world and its Particular Sub-worlds," in *Reason and World*: *Between Tradition and Another Beginning*, Eng. trans. T. Yates and R. Guess (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), pp. 62–76.

> From the historical point of view, there are only life-*worlds*; all contain an ungraspable component which is *no doxa*, but which we interpret, through the *doxa*, as a sort of hyper-*doxa*. This ungraspable component is the world-mystery which embraces and penetrates each and every historical world as a whole, and which fundamentally determines even our modern . . . world, precisely in the guise of that which is never given as present in person, but always only as to be projected as present from out of this world.[23]

The world-mystery is the deepest and most hidden stratum of the life-world. It never comes to the surface as manifest. It provides, however, the basis on which the various life-worlds project their possibilities. In the case of Western Europe, the modern techno-scientific, "more and more technicized" world is the result of the projection of the possibilities of its particular world-mystery.[24] The life-worlds of other civilizations, each containing its own particular world-mystery, have not produced this projection.

Now if we try to reconstruct or regain contact with the so-called "primordial life-world," starting out from the scientific, technicized world of modern Europe and giving no heed to its particular world-mystery; if we think on the one hand that the universal rationality of modern natural science (European science) is self-evident, on the other that the life-worlds of all other civilizations, not having projected universal science, do not deserve consideration; if, disregarding thus their particular world-mystery, we believe to be enacting our self-responsibility, then what we are actually demonstrating is precisely the Eurocentric essence and reality of Europe.

Thus Patočka concludes that Husserl's theory of the life-world, thematized in the sense of self-responsibility as presented above, represents "one of the last links in the chain of typically European perspectives on foreign cultures and their worlds. That which is 'European' is placed above all other conceptions for seemingly 'objective' reasons, on the basis of its 'universal rationality'; the higher validity of the European principle, its necessity as opposed to the contingency of the other paths followed by human development, is naively presupposed, rather than proved."[25] In fact, it is well known that in the *Crisis* Husserl treats other great civilizations, e.g., those of India or China, as a "merely empirical, anthropological type." In his opinion, only "the Europeanization of all other civilizations" could avoid "a historical non-sense of the world."[26] Patočka was quite aware that such an attitude, full of Eurocentric overtones, "cannot provide the basis of understanding between different human worlds, cannot pave the way to universal human contact, but only to the destruction of the fundamental humanities through a generalized evacuation [*Entleerung*] of the world-mystery."[27]

---

[23] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas", *op. cit*., p. 256; "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *op. cit*., p. 196.

[24] *Ibid*.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 257/197 (German/French).

[26] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis* …, op. cit., p. 14; *The Crisis* …, op. cit., p. 16.

[27] Jan Patočka, "Die Selbstbesinnung Europas", *op. cit*., p. 257; "Réflexion sur l'Europe", *op. cit*., p. 197.

Patočka's critical analyses of the crisis of European civilization show both similarities and differences compared to those of Husserl. Patočka agrees with Husserl that: (1) the crisis is the loss of meaning of the world as the original ground of human existence; (2) the crisis is deeper precisely in those respects where Europeans themselves are not aware of it.[28] At the same time, however, he departs from Husserl in more than one important way: (1) If it is true that Europe is different from other civilizations by virtue of her universal scientific rationality, that the latter is her specificity, "it is impossible to prove her supremacy on the basis of this specificity."[29] (2) Whereas Husserl thinks that "the Europeanization of all other civilizations" is the solution to the loss of meaning of the world, for Patočka the rise to hegemonic power of Europe is itself "the curse of the European spirit." The many efficient means invented by this spirit with a view to dominate the whole of humanity also serve the ends of self-destruction, as the recent history of the fall of Europe amply shows.

> The generalization of this spirit harbors universal dangers of which the most recent history of Europe offers an eloquent sample. This generalization appears today as an incontrovertible fact. The extra-European peoples all seem eager to appropriate this spirit in the hope of finding help against their poverty, privations, and need.[30]

Husserl is optimistic about the saving potential of Europe's universal scientific reason, whereas Patočka remains skeptical to the possibility of solving the crisis through universal, rational science: "Is it possible to accept the benefits without falling victim to the very worst misery, ending in massive repression and destruction of life? Without letting life itself be emptied for the sake of the means to maintain it?"[31]

When Patočka criticizes the thought underlying Husserl's idea of "the Europeanization of all other civilizations", when he points out that the path leading back from European scientific rationality to the life-world is still far from a return to the world itself in the original sense, he is already thinking on the grounds of intercultural understanding.

> The problematic of life-world calls for the same critique addressed by Husserl himself to the "true world" of natural science: it has forgotten its foundation. As long as this foundation, common to all forms of humanity, however diverse, is not exhumed from its long oblivion, no real dialogue between "cultures" and "humanities" will be possible, for the "conversation," instead of aiming at that which is common, presents as universal its specific and particular starting-point. . . . Husserl himself falls into this temptation in presenting the ideal of the European *ratio* as the universal entelechy of humanity.[32]

Against Husserl, Patočka emphasizes "humanities" in the plural and calls for dialogue among them.

---

[28] Cf. *ibid*., pp. 271–272/210 (German/French).

[29] *Ibid*., p. 272/211 (German/French).

[30] *Ibid*.

[31] *Ibid*.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 273/212 (German/French).

But how can intercultural dialogue truly begin? On a more primordial common ground: this is Patočka's reply. What Patočka suggests is to regress further, to the world-mystery underlying the life-worlds. This is the level upon which any rational world is built. This is also the pre-reflective level of the world which can ground an original reflective understanding of being human. Only on the common ground of the world-mystery is intercultural dialogue possible.

> Everywhere here [in the extra-European cultural traditions] there remains a lively sense of the world-mystery, a consciousness of the pluri-dimensionality of simple, yet inexhaustible life. The question now is to ground a spirit, a conception of humanity that will allow this originality, this 'self-value,' this independence to once again become effective—i.e., to give new life to these forgotten traditions, now re-emerging amid the generalization of a Europe shaken in her hegemony.[33]

Laying out the common ground for intercultural dialogue on the world-mystery: Patočka understands this as one of the tasks awaiting humanity in the post-European era.

6.3 Care for the Soul and the Philosophical Anthropology Underlying the Mythical Framework of the Greeks

It is in the 1973 seminar *Plato and Europe* that Patočka presents his reflections on the common ground of the world-mystery. This is done through an explication of the idea of care for the soul, in contrast to Husserl's pure *thêoria*, as the philosophical heritage of Greek philosophy which is also a European heritage.[34]

Patočka begins by presenting a tragi-heroic vision of human existence in Ancient Greece. What distinguishes humans from all other beings is their consciousness of being capable of truth: man is aware of his capacity for discovering and disclosing truth. Man is conscious that one of the conditions of possibility of the appearance of things, of all phenomena, resides precisely in this capacity, inherent in the human being as such, though he is also cognizant that neither the phenomenal field nor the beings appearing within it are of his own creation. The tragedy of human existence consists in the fact that, while conscious of himself as capable of truth, man is also conscious of his precarious situation in the universe of all there is, namely that the human being is finite and mortal. This consciousness puts man in a situation of fundamental distress, which is also a situation of accursedness.[35]

---

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] The very concept of care for the soul is also employed by Edward E. Findlay as a strategic concept to support his overall interpretation of Patočka as a phenomenological philosopher of history and politics in his book length study: *Caring For the Soul in a Postmodern Age*: *Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patočka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002). Yet this fine study is unaware of the intercultural implications of Patočka's attempt.

[35] Jan Patočka, *Platon et l'Europe*, p. 43; *Plato and Europe*, p. 35.

According to Patočka, what is heroic in the Greeks, and the Europeans after them, is that they succeed in transforming this situation of fundamental distress into an active and positive project of life. The Greeks achieve this through a philosophical programme: to subject everything in the world, and the world itself, to the examination of the soul, so as to clarify and bring all things to light. This project concerns not only our thought, but also our praxis. To think and to act always with clarity: this is a philosophical project.[36] Thinking and acting always with clarity is, of course, no more than a possibility of human existence, there is no guarantee that humans will necessarily realize this potential. In their project of life, humans (Greeks or—later—Europeans) believe they can realize it. Though clearly human, this Greek vision of life, transforming ordinary life into a philosophical life, is not essentially different from that of the gods.[37] It is, therefore, heroic. "*Given certain circumstances*, *man would be capable of making at least the human world a world of truth and justice*. How this can be achieved is precisely the object of the care for the soul."[38] In other words, the Greeks practice the care for the soul as a philosophical project which aims at transforming man from an accursed being into a being capable of truth and justice.

Patočka's philosophical explication of the Greek vision of human existence brings into elements from both Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenologies. The understanding of the human being as a being of truth is common to both Husserl and Heidegger. The two giants of German phenomenology also share an understanding of the human being as the being who cares for his own Being as capable of truth. Husserl however emphasizes the way in which this concern of the human being for his own Being takes the form of self-responsibility through radical self-reflection (acting as "functionary of humanity"), whereas Heidegger defines man as a being of truth by bringing into view his fundamental situatedness: it is because man is thrown into the world that he is close to things and, hence, capable of truth. Human distress is the consequence of our awareness of our thrownness. Patočka takes this non-rational element from Heidegger in the understanding of human existence. Seeking anew to comprehend the meaning of the Greeks' philosophical life project, he describes as follows human situatedness in relation to the present-day situation of Europe:

> [O]ur task [in these lectures] concerns the *supratemporal within the temporal*; we have been asking how to *get our bearings in our situation*, in the situation of our present world . . . characterized as one of fall, of a decline evident in all things and which has eminently manifested itself in our times inasmuch as our entire spiritual sphere, built over a period of two thousand years and materialized in state, legal, and cultural structures that lived and ruled the rest of the world from the European territory, has within a very short space of time collapsed. We are living after this collapse . . . We wish here to orient our reflections in such a way that philosophy will not be for us solely that which it always has been and remains . . . Metaphorically speaking, we are not concerned with the Platonic ascent from the cave, but on the contrary, with Plato's second step—the *return to the cave*.[39]

---

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 44/36 (French/English).

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 50/41 (French/English).

If the first act of Platonic philosophizing is an act of conversion, turning our gaze toward a realm of clarity, what Patočka proposes to do now is a conversion of this conversion: a backward questioning (or *Zurückfragen* in the Husserlian manner) which delves beneath the world of philosophical clarity, back to its pre-philosophical mythical environment, so as to reactivate the sense of the emergence of the philosophical spirit in man. Insofar as Patočka understands the human being as a being of justice as well, he brings something new in relation to both Husserl and Heidegger, yet old in respect to the Greek philosophers, and in particular to Plato.

We see here that Patočka shares Husserl's view on the importance of Greek philosophy as bringing about a decisive transformation of humanity (at least for Europeans after the Greeks): from the Greeks on, man considers the pursuit of truth and justice as his vocation. This sense of vocation comes from his self-understanding as a being capable of truth. Yet Patočka differs from Husserl in the way in which he considers the pre-philosophical origin of Greek philosophy. What is important for Husserl is the lineage Socrates-Plato-Aristotle and the Idea of philosophy as pure *thêoria*, though he never explains where this idea of philosophy comes from. Patočka, unlike Husserl, sees the birth of Greek philosophy in its mythical framework. Just as the late Husserl traces the birth of science back to the ground of the pre-scientific life-world, Patočka puts the Greeks' first experience of truth, as hinted at in the lines quoted above, back into its pre-reflective mythical framework: "man cannot live without myths, because *myths are true* … Insofar as man lives in truth … the first, radical, and still *unreflected apparentness* expresses itself in the *form of myth*."[40]

Unlike most rationalists, Patočka does not oppose myth to knowledge, on the contrary. For the author of *Plato and Europe*, "*myth* is no consolation, it is no stimulus, it is no shot of irrationality; it is the harsh awareness, or if you like, the *harsh uncoveredness of our uncoveredness*."[41] The human being lives in a situation of exposure to the whole of being and the disclosure of the world. If the vocation of Greek philosophy is the uncovering of the world as a whole, this vocation has been handed down to it from the mythical environment of archaic Greece.[42] Patočka describes a mythical framework composed of three essential parts, or moments, two of them arose prior to the Greeks.

1. The Biblical myth of the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. According to this myth, man is transformed after eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, passing from the state of ignorance to the state of knowledge which distinguishes him from all other beings. Knowing from then on the distinction of good and evil, man loses his innocence forever. The price to pay is his original sin. He is forever accursed.
2. The Babylonian myth of Gilgamesh: myth of the search for eternal life following on the knowledge of human mortality.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 52/43 (French/English).

[41] *Ibid*., p. 57/48 (French/English).

[42] *Ibid*., p. 58/49 (French/English).

3. The Greek myth of Oedipus. Oedipus is originally the incarnation of human uncoveredness. He represents the man of justice, who knows the difference between good and evil. Yet his own past has been concealed from him, bringing him subsequently to commit the crimes of parricide and incest by marrying his own mother. Precisely these acts are the epitome of evil and injustice. Oedipus is thus, at the same time, the symbol of erring and blindness to truth. "What this myth shows is the exact opposite of uncoveredness in uncoveredness itself: error about good and evil."[43] In other words, this myth uncovers the unsurpassable duality of human existence: man is a being of uncoveredness and error, at once cursed and sacred.[44]

It is clear that Patočka uses these myths to outline some basic elements of a philosophical anthropology: the duality of human existence.

1. Man is a being of uncoveredness capable of truth, yet at the same time a being of error and ignorance.
2. Man commits evil despite the fact that he can tell right from wrong and endeavors to search for what is good.
3. Man, aware of his mortality, yearns for eternal life.
4. Man has the sense of justice and wants to be just, yet commits greater injustice because much remains concealed.

In comparison to Husserl, who never explicitly raises the question of the origin of the universalist vocation of Greek philosophy, Patočka has the merit of providing us with a clue to understanding the rise, in this framework, of the passion for universal knowledge, later to become the defining characteristic of European humanity. Patočka helps us to understand how a particular cultural ground and mythical environment was transformed and elevated into a universal motivation and movement of human civilization. There are then several questions which must be answered: If the universalist vocation is rooted in a particular cultural environment, how can it overcome its relativism? How can the philosophical-anthropological outline sketched above lay claim to universal validity? In other words, how can it escape the critique of Eurocentrism?

Husserl too draws his understanding of the task of humanity from a certain conception of what it means to be human: man is a being capable of using his reason and freedom to search for truth, such is his manner of exercising self-responsibility. This means that the human being is not purely factual, but also a being in search of meaning and significance. If Husserl's idea of humanity is criticized for its Eurocentric accents, it is because Husserl equates the idea of humanity with the idea of pure theory as the sole manner of exercising our self-responsibility. Pure *thêoria* is a particular vocation born in the life-world of the Greeks (and, subsequently, of the Europeans). How can it, with no further proof, lay claim to universal validity?

Patočka proceeds differently. As we have attempted to show above, his starting-point is a different idea of philosophy, also originating in the world of the Greeks:

[43] *Ibid*.

[44] *Ibid*.

the idea of the care for the soul, which is a philosophical project based on the understanding that man is a being capable of truth and justice. Tracing the birth of this idea back to its pre-reflective mythical environment, Patočka presents the outline of a philosophical anthropology: the human being has a dual ontological structure. He is a being capable of truth, but who can at the same time find himself in a situation of concealment. He has a capacity for and a will to good, yet he errs. He cares for justice, yet he can commit injustice. Last but not least, the human being is aware of his mortality, yet he strives for eternal life. The ontological duality of human existence is a sign of its finitude.

For Patočka, the idea of philosophy as care for the soul is what singles out European humanity from humanities in the plural.

> That is the peculiar thing about Europe: *only in Europe* was philosophy born in this sense, as man's awakening from out of tradition to the presence of the universe, only in Europe, or better said, in what was the germ of Europe—Greece. After the catastrophe of the Greek polis, the important thing became the living *heritage* of thought about a state where philosophers would be able to live, a state of justice founded not on mere tradition, but rather on insight.[45]

Patočka not only describes the essence of this European tradition, but clearly prides himself on his feeling of sharing its heritage:

> … this heritage is preserved throughout all the catastrophes, and that is why I believe it is possible—perhaps—to advance the thesis that *Europe*, especially Western Europe, but also what we call the "other Europe," arose out of *the care for the soul*.[46]

Can we say that Patočka, like Husserl, evinces some sense of Eurocentrism in raising too high the flag of the philosophical uniqueness of the European heritage? Is this Patočka's own version of the "Europeanization of all other civilizations"? Before making any decision, we have to examine not only the form but also the content of this assertion. We can already say at least this much: the content Patočka puts into this assertion is not the idea of universal science, as in Husserl, but rather that of the care for the soul, with its underlying conception of man as capable of truth and justice. This is a philosophical-anthropological framework which has a reach beyond the Ancient Greeks and the Europeans as their spiritual heirs. For in the light of Patočka's explication, we can show that the Ancient Chinese Confucian philosopher Mencius' famous doctrine of the four spiritual dispositions of man is arguably the Chinese counterpart of the philosophical-anthropological framework which underlies the birth of philosophy in the Greeks. Thus paradoxical enough, the philosophically determined cultural uniqueness of the European heritage understood by Patočka, namely the philosophical-anthropological framework which gives raise to the birth of Greek philosophy, is a cultural universal which has its variant in Ancient China. If this philosophical-anthropological framework is a cultural universal, not only it is not Eurocentric, it can even serve the purpose of intercultural understanding, for it can play the role of a bridge of communication between Greek philosophy as the European heritage understood by Patočka and Pre-Qin

[45] *Ibid*., p. 98/88 (French/English).

[46] *Ibid*., p. 99/89 (French/English).

Chinese Confucian philosophy, especially that of Mencius. In the following section, I shall show briefly in what sense there is such a philosophical-anthropological framework in the Confucian philosophy of Mencius (372–289 B.C.).

6.4 The Philosophical-Anthropological Framework of Mencius' Theory of the Fourfold Human Spiritual Disposition: A Chinese Counterpart to the Idea of Care for the Soul?

In this final section, I would like to introduce briefly Mencius' famous theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions or the four human faculties which is in fact based on a philosophical understanding of the essential characteristics that define the human being. It is impossible, in the limited framework of this chapter, to undertake a deeper, contrasting analysis of Mencius' anthropological conception with respect to the idea of care for the soul as understood by Patočka. I shall, therefore, content myself with emphasizing the following point: if it is true that there is not in Ancient China a conscious and clearly articulated idea of philosophy comparable to that of the Greeks, the Pre-Qin Chinese thinkers show in practice that they do have a sense of philosophical reflection when by creating concepts such as the "*Dao*" (in many ways the Chinese equivalent of the manifold senses of the Greek term "*logos*") and the "*hua*" (change, arguably the Chinese equivalent of the Greek term "*phusis*") in order to understand events of the physical, cosmological, and metaphysical orders, as well as by introducing concepts such as "*ren*" (benevolence or humanity) and "*yi*" (righteousness or justice) in order to understand the human and moral-political order. While the Daoist philosophers Laozi and Zhuangzi belong to the first category of such thinkers, Mencius belongs to the second of these two categories. A disciple of the grandson of Confucius, Mencius develops the Master's situational reflections into well-structured and argued treatises.

Now the Pre-Qin Chinese Confucians have their own reflections on the elements of the philosophical-anthropological framework underlying the Greek idea of care for the soul as presented by Patočka. This framework comprises of the following essential elements: (1) human mortality, and (2) man as a being of truth and justice. The following passage reports a well-known dictum of Confucius on the importance and relative autonomy of the human order:

> Ji-Lu [one of the disciples of Confucius] asked about serving ghosts and divinities. The Master said, 'As yet unable to serve the human, how can you serve ghosts?' Ji-Lu said, 'May I ask about death?' The Master replied, 'As yet not understanding life, how can you understand death?'[47]

[47] Confucius, *The Analects*, a New Bilingual Edition, Eng. trans. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1992), Book XI, Chap. 12, p. 99, translation modified. The original Chinese text reads:「季路問事鬼神。子曰:未能事人, 焉能事鬼。曰敢問死。 曰:未知生,焉知死。」

The quest for eternal life is not the concern of the Great Master, nor that of other great Pre-Qin Chinese thinkers such as Laozi and Zhuangzi. This quest comes much later in the development of Chinese culture in the form of Daoist religion which, from the strictly philosophical point of view, is diametrically opposite to the Pre-Qin Daoist philosophers in their vision of life and death. What is important in Confucius' position which shows a relative indifference toward the question of human death is his understanding of the distinction between the human order and the divine order. Through his apparent indifference toward death, the Great Master wishes to emphasize the priority of the human order, which has its relative autonomy. This is the manifestation of at least the germs of a rational spirit. The following is reported to have been said of Confucius:

> The topics the Master did not speak of were strange things, force, chaos, divinities.[48]

Do we not see here the germination of a rational mind, essential to the emergence of the kind of spiritual exercise called philosophy by the Greeks?

Let us turn now to Mencius' theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions or the "Four Beginnings" (四端說). In the frequently quoted translation from Chapter VI of the works of Mencius given by Wing-Tsit Chan, it reads as follows:

> All men have the mind which cannot bear [to see the suffering of] others. The ancient kings had this mind and therefore they had a government that could not bear to see the suffering of the people . . . When I say that all men have the mind which cannot bear to see the suffering of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: Now, when men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they all have a feeling of alarm and distress, it is not to gain friendship with the child's parents, nor to seek the praise of their neighbors and friends, nor because they dislike the reputation [of lack of humanity if they did not rescue the child]. From such a case, we see that a man without the feeling of commiseration is not a man; a man without the feeling of shame and dislike is not a man; a man without the feeling of deference and compliance is not a man; a man without the feeling of right and wrong is not a man. The feeling of commiseration is the beginning of humanity [*ren*]; the feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of justice [*yi*]; the feeling of deference and compliance is the beginning of propriety [*li*]; and the feeling of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom [*zhi*]. Men have these Four Beginnings just as they have their four limbs. Having these Four Beginnings, but saying that they cannot develop them is to destroy themselves. . . . When they [the Four Beginnings] are fully developed, they will be sufficient to protect all people within the four seas [the world]. If they are not developed, they will not be sufficient even to serve one's parents.[49]

Mencius begins by a phenomenology-like description to establish his theory of the four types of spiritual dispositions. His theory is actually a theory of the fourfold elements of the essence of man, namely, humanity or benevolence (*ren*), justice (*yi*), propriety (*li*) and wisdom (*zhi*). He maintains that man's vocation is to develop these four spiritual dispositions or human faculties. With this fourfold elements of

---

[48] *Ibid*., Book VII, Chap. 21, p. 61, translation modified. The original Chinese text reads:「子不語怪力亂神」.

[49] "The Book of Mencius," 2A:5, in *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. and Eng. trans. Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 65, translation slightly modified.

spiritual disposition, a human being is able to distinguish between the good and the evil, between the just and the unjust, between the proper and the improper, and between the right and the wrong or the true and the false. Mencius builds his moral theory—that a human being has the innate capacity to achieve moral good by developing his/her fourfold spiritual disposition—and political theory—a good government is a humane government who listens to the call of his people from their heart—upon his phenomenology-like theory of the fourfold faculty or disposition of the human mind.

Even though Mencius is predominantly a moral and political philosopher, he never undermines the role of the faculty of wisdom or cognition (*zhi*) in the formation of our judgment of the just and the unjust. If it is true that in formulating his moral and political theories Mencius does not have a theory of *eidos* as in Plato which serves as their epistemological and metaphysical foundation, Mencius always emphasizes the importance of cultivation of our faculty of wisdom or cognition in the formation of a sound moral and political judgment. For example, Mencius says:

> He who exerts his mind to the utmost knows his nature, he who knows his nature knows the Celestial order. To preserve one's mind and to cultivate one's nature is the way to respond to the [call of the] Celestial order… This is the way to establish one's vocation.[50]

If living a moral life is our vocation, not only we have to know our own nature, we also need to have knowledge of the Celestial order. This means that both knowledge of the human mind and knowledge of the metaphysical order are necessary conditions for establishing our moral vocation. Thus the development of our faculty of cognition and our faculty of benevolence and justice are of equal importance in the self-cultivation which guides a moral life. To Mencius, this is exactly what a sage succeeds in achieving:

> A man of wisdom knows everything, but he considers urgent only that which demands attention. A benevolent man loves everyone, but he devotes himself to the close association with good and wise men. Even the Sage Yao and the Sage Shun did not use their wisdom on all things alike; this is because they put first things first.[51]

Thus to Mencius, the faculty of wisdom which is at the basis of the distinction between the right and the wrong and the true and the false operates in close association with the faculty of benevolence and justice. Mencius even says that moral action is motivated by moral knowledge (良知).[52] Thus without pretending that the four elements in Mencius' theory of the human spiritual disposition are the exact equivalent of the elements of the anthropological framework underlying the Greek idea of the care for the soul as understood by Patočka, we can arguably say that Mencius' theory represents the Chinese version of elements constitutive of the conception of being human that Patočka values so much, namely, the human being as a being of truth (rooted in the spiritual disposition of *zhi*) and justice (rooted in the

[50] *Ibid*., 7A:1, p. 78, translation modified.

[51] Mencius, *Mencius*, *A Bilingual Edition*, Eng. trans. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, revised edition 2003), 7A:46, p. 309.

[52] *Mencius*, Eng. trans. D. C. Lau, 7A:15, p. 290.

spiritual disposition of *yi*). In other words, the theory of the fourfold elements of the human mind in Mencius is the Chinese version of the philosophical-anthropological framework at the basis of the birth of philosophy in Ancient Greece cherished by Patočka. In fact, Mencius is well-known for his insistence on the priority of justice over biological life.

> I like fish and I also like bear's paw. If I cannot have both of them, I shall give up the fish and choose the bear's paw. I like life and I also like justice. If I cannot have both of them, I shall give up life and choose justice. I love life, but there is something I love more than life, and therefore I will not do anything improper to have it. I also hate death, but there is something I hate more than death, and therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger.[53]

Mencius' sense of justice is acute: he will confront danger in order to preserve justice, at the risk of losing his own life. Thus Mencius is not a philosopher of the "golden mean" in search of a life of tranquillity. On the contrary, he advocates a vocational life of realizing moral virtues and preserving justice which puts his biological life at risk. Mencius is not fearful face to the danger of risking his biological life, because living through his moral and political vocation is a response to the call of the Celestial order which is higher than the mundane human order. Thus this aspiration toward the transcendent Celestial order through realization of moral good and justice constitutes the specifically human component of the human being. The realization of moral good and preservation of justice are rendered possible by the fourfold element of the human mind, yet they are not a given fact, but rather a project of life which goes beyond both the biological and the merely mundane orders of life. This project of life is to live a vocational life of morality and justice. It is a project of surpassing mundane life interests toward an order of the transcendence. To Mencius, it is precisely and paradoxically this project of transcendence which manifests the proper "nature" of a human being.

What is interesting in Mencius' understanding of a proper human life as living a vocational life of morality and justice is that it finds echo in Patočka's concept of care for the soul as the philosophical heritage of Europe. In a manuscript entitled "Europe and After" written in the same period as the seminar on *Plato and Europe*, Patočka gives an alternative presentation of care for the soul as Europe's heritage.[54] Care for the soul as a philosophical project is a threefold project: an ontological project, a critical and political project, and a project of life.[55] Patočka makes use of Plato's concept of "*thumos*" to explain the care for the soul as a critical and political project. The manuscript of Patočka reads as follows:

> In view of its tendency to surpassing, it [the *thumos*] presupposes something of non-immediate, something which deserves one surpasses for it, that is to say *one exposes himself to risk*. This is a natural surpassing of the instinct of conservation at all cost, a surpassing

[53] *Ibid*., 6A:10, p. 57, translation slightly modified.

[54] Jan Patočka, "Europe et après", in *L'Europe après l'Europe*, French trans. Erika Abrams, etc. (Paris : Verdier, 2007), pp. 37–136.

[55] Marc Crépon, "Postface: Histoire, éthique et politique : la question de l'Europe", in *L'Europe après l'Europe*, *op. cit*., pp. 292–295.

> of life. The orientation of the *thumos* toward the high consists precisely of this. The feeling of our proper value which protects itself against all apparent threat and justifies itself by exposing oneself to risk: this is *thumos*.[56]

Thumos is the desire of surpassing the merely biological instinct of conservation of life, of surpassing banal life interests toward the higher order, namely the order of morality and justice. Is this not the message imparted by Patočka's whole life? Patočka himself was well aware of his destiny when he wrote these moving lines, a mere 2 months before his death as a result of prolonged and intensive police interrogation:

> We need something that in its very essence is not technological, something that is not merely instrumental; we need a morality that is not merely tactical and incidental, but *absolute*. . . . The point of morality is to assure, not the functioning of society, but the humanity of humans. Humans do not invent morality arbitrarily, to suit their needs, wishes, inclinations, and aspirations. Quite the contrary, it is morality that defines what being human means. . . . Not simply or primarily fear or profit, but respect for what is higher in humans, a sense of duty, of the common good, and of the need to accept even discomfort, misunderstanding, and a certain risk, should henceforth be our motives.[57]

This philosophical testimony of Patočka, which can be read as a resumé of his life action, is it not the best illustration of Mencius' attitude as regards the primacy of justice over biological life? Is it not celebrating, in a way parallel to Mencius, the pre-eminence of morality in what constitutes the human being's being human?

[56] Jan Patočka, "Europe et après", *op. cit*., p. 124.

[57] Jan Patočka, "The Obligation to Resist Injustice," in *Philosophy and Selected Writings*, *op. cit*., pp. 340–343.

Chapter 7
Disenchanted World-View and Intercultural Understanding: From Husserl Through Kant to Chinese Culture

How is intercultural understanding possible? This chapter is the results of some reflections which take into account the post-September-11 global situation.[1] By this we refer to the undesirable intensification of conflict of civilizations and the extremist ways in which these conflicts are expressed, namely terrorist or quasi-terrorist acts of violence, be them of state, organizational or individual nature. Educated by the wider phenomenological movement, we have paid particular critical attention to the Eurocentric declarations of the father of the movement Husserl. Yet our reflections on the conditions of cultural plurality drive us to rediscover a universalizable moment in Husserl's Idea of philosophy as rigorous science which is essential to intercultural understanding: the disenchanted world-view as a necessary correlate of the idea of rigorous science. The latter is a result of the disenchantment of the world conceptualized by Weber at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, diagnosed by Nietzsche prior to the invention of this term in the second part of the Nineteenth Century, and philosophically worked out in its essential ingredients by Kant's critical philosophy at the high time of European Enlightenment in the late Eighteenth Century. Yet the growth of the disenchanted world-view in Europe, we hope to show, is not a purely European affair. An important cultural factor had come into play, namely the reception of Chinese culture and the debate, since the end of the Seventeenth Century, among European philosophers and intellectuals around the history and nature of this cultural Other of Europe and its compatibility with the Christian world-view. Views and positions of selected representative figures who have taken part in the debate (Malebranche, Leibniz, Wolff and Voltaire) will be discussed to show how intercultural understanding around a concrete issue has been taking place in Europe and how Eurocentrism has been repudiated by avant-guard thinkers in Europe some three centuries ago.

Dedication: For Elmar Holenstein

[1] This chapter is a revised version of a paper first presented to the *International Conference on Philosophy of Culture and Practice*, organized by the Department of Philosophy, Soochow University, Taipei in June 2007.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_7

7.1 Disenchanted World-View and Intercultural Understanding: Eurocentrism of Husserl's Idea of Philosophy and Rediscovery of Certain Moment of Its "Rational Kernel"

To phenomenological philosophers of non-Western origin, their feelings toward Edmund Husserl would probably be a mixture of admiration and bitterness, or even inspiration and frustration. On the one hand, the phenomenological maxim "Zu den Sachen Selbst!" ("Direct to the things themselves!") advocated by Husserl urges us to suspend all unexamined prejudices and unverified conclusions and direct our investigating eyes to the subject matters themselves. The cultivation of this sober attitude is an advantage for intercultural understanding as it helps to safeguard us from cultural bias. In addition, Husserl's critical diagnosis of the state of mere technical instrumentality into which modern sciences are degraded, a diagnosis undertaken in his last important work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, has contributed to rebuff the unilaterally over-estimation of the role of scientific culture in the modern world. While Husserl succeeds in pointing out that the crisis of modern science consists precisely in the forgetting of her rootedness in the pre-scientific life-world which is cultural and historical in nature, cultures which are relatively advanced in science and technology have no more claim of unconditional priority or privilege over cultures which are scientifically and technologically less developed. Husserl's diagnosis of the crisis of modern science and thematization of the life-world have thus provided important theoretical assistance toward the self-reevaluation and self-positioning of cultures which are scientifically and technologically less advanced than the West.

On the other hand, philosophers from the East, especially from China and India, would probably be embarrassed or even irritated by Husserl's overtly Eurocentric idea of philosophy and culture. For it is well-known that Husserl has declared in his famous 1935 Vienna Lecture that "it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period, to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy and science (astronomy, mathematics), i.e., to interpret India, Babylonia, China, in a European way."[2] Husserl even went on to affirm that if "Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, etc., … are placed on a plane with Greek philosophy …, the merely morphologically general features [would] hide the intentional depths so that one becomes blind to the most essential differences of principle."[3] In fact, what Husserl means by "the most essential differences of principle" between Indian philosophy and Chinese philosophy on the one hand and Greek philosophy on the other consists in the following:

[2] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI,* ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962), p. 331; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 284–285.

[3] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis …, Husserliana VI*, p. 325; *The Crisis …*, pp. 279–280.

Greek philosophy is a reflective intellectual enterprise conducted under the guiding idea of "pure *thêoria*" and orientates itself toward the realization of an absolutely universal science. Only philosophy animated by this leitmotiv can be called philosophy in the genuine sense. Indian and Chinese philosophies neither share the idea of "pure *thêoria*" nor have the ambition of realizing the ideal of an absolutely universal science. They can never claim to be philosophy in the genuine or original sense of the term. To Husserl, only Europeans have inherited the Greek Idea of philosophy which, as he reformulates it, is the Idea of "philosophy as rigorous science". This Idea of philosophy has been blossomed in Europe since the Seventeenth Century scientific revolution brought about by the remarkable discoveries of Galileo, Descartes and Newton. Husserl even thinks that there is only two mutually exclusive possibilities in the future development of the entire human civilization: either there will be "the spectacle of the Europeanization of all other civilizations (die Europäisierung aller fremden Menschheiten) which bears witness to the rule of an absolute meaning, one which is proper to the sense of the world", or else the world itself will be degraded to a stage of "historical non-sense".[4] In other words, either all extra-European civilizations have to take Europe as the absolute yard-stake in their future development, or else human history will simply be a non-sense. This is a line of thought which situates itself between the extremes of "Europe or nothingness". It excludes the possibility of all other possibilities, precisely those between or beyond "Europe or nothingness". The Eurocentric nature of the Husserlian view of the development of human civilization cannot be more apparent.

The question of the Eurocentrism of Husserl's position has already been raised by attentive and critical readers, notably by Jacques Derrida.[5] The present author himself has devoted critical discussions to the issue more than once.[6] However, our recent reflections on the problem of the "clash of civilizations" and the difficulties of intercultural understanding in the post-September-11 global situation drive us to consider anew Husserl's words "the spectacle of the Europeanization of all other civilizations". We would like to ask: is it possible to unveil underneath the apparently chauvinist expression of Husserl a certain "rational kernel", to paraphrase the famous remarks of Marx with reference to Hegel's dialectics? For if we examine more closely the possible content of what Husserl means by the "Europeanization of all other human civilizations", it is possible to see that under such an expression

[4] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis …, Husserliana VI*, p. 14; *The Crisis*, p. 16.

[5] Cf. Jacques Derrida, *De l'esprit. Heidegger et la question* (Paris : Éditions Galilée, 1987), pp. 95–96.

[6] Cf. Kwok-ying Lau, "Para-deconstruction: Preliminary Considerations for a Phenomenology of Interculturality", in *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world*, special issue of *Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth & C.-F. Cheung (Freiburg / München: Verlag K. Alber, 1998), pp. 233–237, *supra*, Chap. 2; "To What Extent Can Phenomenology Do Justice To Chinese Philosophy?—Attempt at a Phenomenological Reading of Laozi", *supra*, Chap. 3; "Husserl, Buddhism and the Problematic of the Crisis of European Sciences", *Identity and Alterity: Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, eds. Kwok-Ying Lau, Chan-Fai Cheung, and Tze-Wan Kwan, series "Orbis Phaenomenologicus Perspektiven" (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann, 2010), pp. 221–233, *supra*, Chap. 4.

is embedded some desirable ingredient of the future development of human civilization which, with reference to the task of intercultural understanding, could be universalizable and, we would even say, should be universalized. To put it in more simple words: in the conception of the "Europeanization" of all other human civilizations there is an element which can be and should be universalized, namely the disenchanted world-view brought about by modern science. As heritage of Modern European culture, the scientific revolution is in principle universalizable and in fact constantly in the process of being universalized since four centuries. The disenchanted world-view is the cultural component which must be universalized because it is one of the most basic elements of the mental attitude essential for intercultural understanding in the era of globalization (the other element being the recognition of the right of the Other—individual or collective—to exist and to enjoy freedom and autonomy).

But why do we think that the disenchanted world-view is not only a desirable but also a necessary universal element in the future development of human civilization? Because it is easily observed that some cultures, especially those with fundamentalist intent, do not accept the disenchanted world-view. An un-disenchanted world-view is the mental attitude which supports and glorifies, if not brings about directly, suicidal killing attempts as acts of martyrdom. We all know that these attempts are among the most efficient, but also the most disastrous, acts of terrorism. We think too that we need not argue here that these acts of violence, improvised or well organized, constitute a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of intercultural understanding.

Our reflections are inspired by the reading of a journalistic report entitled "A Martyr, or a Murderer?"[7] It contains essentially the interview of a 26-year old Palestinian woman living in the West Bank. The young woman was recruited by Fatah's military wing to carry out a suicide bombing in the heart of Jerusalem, the present capital of Israel. Shortly before her mission in May 2002, she was captured by the Israeli authorities. In the interview, the young woman declared that she voluntarily took part in the suicidal bombing attack. Her motivation is simple: in revenge for the numerous innocent victims—Palestinian children, women and civilians killed by Israeli soldiers. She did not feel sorry for her possible Israeli victims. In explaining further her motivation, she said:

> According to the Qur'an, God promised the martyrs a reward of 70 virgins, and those who die a martyr's death will be kept alive and sustained by God. Women martyrs are promised they will become the purest and most beautiful form of angel at the highest level possible in heaven.[8]

The young woman added that, in case of success of her mission, "this is something that would bring honour to my family and to everyone."[9]

---

[7] "A Martyr, or a Murderer?", *Newsweek*, February 23, 2004, p. 56.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] *Ibid*. We found out later that in fact there was a book study by Barbara Victor about six Palestinian women who took part in suicide bomb attacks, entitled *Army of Roses. Inside the world of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (London: Robinson Books, 2003). It reports in great details

It is evident that the primary motivation for this Palestinian young woman to engage herself in voluntary suicide bomb attacks against Israeli targets resides in her indignation toward the large number of victims among her compatriots who had fallen under Israeli military actions. While the latter were deprived of their life and properties, the aggressors were never judged before their responsibility. Since justice has never been done with regard to these victims, the young woman decided to act an eye for an eye—by means of suicide bombing. Yet her religious faith is evidently one of the great inner forces of her action which sacrifices her own life in revenging for her compatriots. She believes that the sacrifice of her mundane life is to be rewarded by a superior gain in the post-mortal heavenly existence. The religious faith in question projects an order of heavenly existence beyond the mundane world: a post-mortal life in a transcendent, supra-natural or supra-sensible world. It presupposes that true knowledge of this world of beyond is possible, that there is a supra-sensible power dominating the fate of everyone and everything, in particular serving as the guarantee of the principle of the victory of good over evil and the realization of justice and happiness for virtuous deeds and behaviours.

If "the disenchantment of the world" is the expression used by Max Weber to conceptualize the mental attitude underlying the modern world, he means by this the coming into awareness by people that "principally there are not mysterious incalculable forces that come into play … One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed."[10] In contrast to this, the mental attitude underlying

---

the joyful reactions throughout Palestine after the successful mission of the first female Palestinian martyr (*shahida* in Arabic language) Wafa Idris, reactions which are horrible to us: "On the afternoon of January 27, 2002, Wafa Idris, a 26-year-old Palestinian woman, blew herself to pieces in a downtown Jerusalem shopping mall, killing one Israeli man and wounding 131 bystanders. Although Idris is the only female suicide bomber not to leave a video taped confession of her impending-martyrdom, within 48 h of the attack the al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade, the military arm of Arafat's Fatah movement, had claimed responsibility of the bombing. As word spread, mourners gathered at the Idris house in the middle of the al-Amari refugee camp in Ramallah, where leaders of al-Aqsa arrived with candy and posters emblazoned with Wafa's image. There was an atmosphere of joy, 'a wedding with eternity', one neighbor described it, as Mabrook Idris, Wafa's mother, distributed the sweets to the neighborhood children in celebration of her daughter's death." (pp. 20–21).

[10] Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf (1911)", Eng. Trans. "Science as a Vocation", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge, 1948), p. 139. According to H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, editors of *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Weber's expression "the disenchantment of the world" (die Entzauberung der Welt) is borrowed from the great eighteenth century German poet Friedrich Schiller (p. 51); yet they provide no further explication. In the works of Weber, the term "die Entzauberung der Welt" is first introduced in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. At the outset it is of a more specific usage. It refers to the fact that during the millennium development of the Christian religion in the West, there was a progressive renounce of the use of magical means to attain salvation. This was particularly true of the various branches of Protestantism such as Calvinism, Baptism and the British Puritans after the Reformation. That is why Talcott Parsons, the English translator of *The Protestant Ethic* …, used the expression "elimination of magic from the world" or "rationalization of the world" to translate "die Entzauberung der Welt" (see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Eng. trans. Talcott Parsons, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958,

the religious faith of the Palestinian woman taking part in suicide bombing is an un-disenchanted attitude. Her world-view is an un-disenchanted world-view. It is precisely under the domination of this un-disenchanted world-view that the Palestinian young woman believes in the realization of justice by sacrificing her own life in suicide bomb attack. Yet considered from the point of view of the innocent victims of violent or even terrorist acts of this kind, the latter is far from achieving the end of rendering genuine justice; it results simply in causing more victims. It also fails to recognize the right to existence and autonomy of the Other—other individuals or other collectivities, a right that the Palestinian female martyr aimed to fight for. Borrowing Charles Taylor's favourite term "politics of recognition"[11] to express our line of thought, we believe that the politics of recognition is the premise of intercultural understanding. Yet the un-disenchanted world-view is an obstacle to the knowledge, understanding and practice of the politics of recognition. If we recognize that one of the urgent tasks of humanity today is the promotion of intercultural understanding, the disenchanted world-view is one of the necessarily universalized and normative elements of our civilizational content.

7.2 Modern Science and the Disenchanted World-View: From Weber Through Nietzsche Back to Kant

For Weber, the disenchantment of the world is "a long process of intellectualization" which has been undergoing for thousands of years in the West. Scientific progress is a driving force, and even the most important driving force, of this process.[12] Yet Weber's observation made at the very beginning of the twentieth century had already been pinpointed by Nietzsche a quarter of a century earlier. When in *The Gay Science* (*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, first edition 1882) Nietzsche borrowed the mouth of the madman in the market place to announce that "God is dead!",[13] he

pp. 105 and 117). When Weber talked about the disenchantment of the world in the Conclusion of *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, he was still using it in the sense of "liquidation of magic" (M. Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, Eng. trans. Hans H. Gerth, New York: The Free Press, 1951, p. 226). It was only in the later writings of "Wissenschaft als Beruf" and "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions" (*From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit*., p. 350) that Weber employed an extended usage of the term to mean the whole cultural process of the disenchantment of the world in the West through intellectualist rationalization, in particular through scientific knowledge and scientifically oriented technology. Cf. Catherine Colliot-Thélène, *Max Weber et l'histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), pp. 64–66. For a book-length study of the problem, see Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde: une histoire politique de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985).

[11] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25–73.

[12] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, *op. cit*., pp. 138–139.

[13] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §125, ed. Bernard Williams, Eng. trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 120.

already anticipated Weber's conception of the disenchantment of the world. Even though Nietzsche has not coined this very expression, his description of the process of secularization of the European society and mentality is based on his observation of the phenomena of the substitution of scientific atheism to the faith in Christian God as well as the lost forever of the status of the Christian Church as the absolute authority of truth and morality in the eyes of European intellectuals and the general educated mass. In fact this process of secularization is the achievement of the process of disenchantment of the world in Europe. Below is how Nietzsche describes this process:

> The decline of the faith in the Christian God, the triumph of scientific atheism—is a pan-European event in which all races had their share and for which all deserve credit and honour … One can see *what* it was that actually triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken ever more rigorously; the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and care of a god; interpreting history in honour of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of salvation of the soul—that is *over* now; that has conscience against it; every refined conscience considers it to be indecent, dishonest, a form of mendacity, effeminacy, weakness, cowardice.[14]

In this succinct paragraph, Nietzsche announces the end of Providence and theodicy, if not in Europe in general, at least among the European intellegentsia: discourses trying to explain by the will of God the values and criteria of truthfulness and falsity, good and evil, beauty and ugliness will no more be accepted in their face value. The end of discourse of Providence and theodicy is precisely the beginning of the disenchanted world-view. Nietzsche charges Hegel for delaying the growth of atheist consciousness in Germany, while he praises Schopenhauer as the first one to have admitted himself as an uncompromising atheist among the Germans.[15] But can we infer from Nietzsche's judgment that Schopenhauer is the philosophical founding father of the disenchanted world-view? We tend to say no. If we can affirm that the author of *The World as Will and Representation* is the pioneer of atheism in the German philosophical tradition, the German who provides the philosophical foundation for the disenchanted world-view is nobody other than Kant.

It is well-known that Kant's critical philosophy has brought about the famous Copernican Revolution in the history of Western philosophy. Kant has brought new lights on the nature of human cognition. In her cognitive activities human being's relation to Nature is much more complicated than previously thought: human being is not a purely passive and receptive agent, but manifests active and spontaneous aspects. However, the domain of cognition of human being, as finite rational being, can be nothing other than the domain of her experiential activities, namely the realm of phenomenon. The realm of noumenon, which is out of reach of human experience, is beyond human cognition. The distinction between appearance and

[14] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, *op. cit*., §357, pp. 218–219.

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, *op. cit.,* §357, p. 219.

thing-in-itself, between the realms of phenomenon and noumenon, and the limitation of the range of rational human cognition within the realm of phenomenon allow Kant to elucidate the origin of some cardinal errors of the Western tradition of dogmatic metaphysics. These errors arise out of the transgression by human Reason herself of the boundary of possible human experience to give assertive answers to the questions concerning the existence of God, the origin of the world, the knowledge of the totality of the world and the immortality of the soul. Answers of this sort are impossible precisely because the subject matters to which these questions belong are beyond the possibility of finite human experience. Kant's critique of all forms of dogmatic metaphysics (namely rational theology, rational cosmology and rational psychology) has contributed to laying the foundation for the philosophical explication of the disenchanted world-view. Not only the existence of God is not an object of human cognition, we can neither explain the origin or the final destiny of the world by projecting a supra-natural or supra-sensible creator in the form of first cause or final cause. Likewise we cannot have knowledge of "life after death" (is this not an oxymoron?). After Kant's critical philosophy, we can no more have recourse to Providence as the key to every puzzling issue. Theodicy and philosophical theology possess no more the unquestioned status they once had before. In fact, Kant himself is very lucid about his own mission of disenchantment, even though he neither has forged the Weberian concept of the disenchantment of the world. In the Preface to the Second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant expresses in no clearer terms the task of critical philosophy he is undertaking:

> Criticism alone can sever the root of *materialism*, *fatalism*, *atheism*, *free-thinking*, *fanaticism*, and *superstition*, which can be injurious universally.[16]

A vigilant reader will immediately ask: how can we affirm that Kant's critical philosophy can be understood as undertaking the task of disenchantment of the world, while Kant himself declared that the aim of criticism is to sever the root of atheism? Why the task of disenchantment of the world in Kant cannot be done in the way of a Schopenhauer or a Nietzsche, namely to raise as high as possible the flag of atheism? In fact one of the famous passages of Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is the following: "I have … found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*."[17] As a philosopher animated by the mission of the disenchantment of the world, why is Kant not an atheist but rather emphasizes the necessity of making room for faith? Nineteenth Century thinkers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche might be puzzled by Kant's position. But in the post-September-11 era of the Twenty-First Century, we might well understand the prospective significance of Kant's declaration from the perspective of intercultural understanding.

In the multiple cultural traditions of humankind today, it seems that none is deprived of religious background. The conflicts between different cultures or civilizations show themselves often in the form of conflicts between different religious

[16] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Eng. trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1929), B xxxiv, p. 32.

[17] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxx, *op. cit*., p. 29.

traditions, even though political and economic interests are also commonly involved. The well-known dissident Swiss Catholic theologian and pioneering promoter of the movement of world ethics (Weltethos) Hans Küng has made the following remarkable observation: "No world peace without religious peace".[18] This shows the importance of the reconciliation among different religious cultures for the pursuit of world peace. Advocating crusade or jihad (holy war) is evidently an attitude diametrically opposed to the promotion of reconciliation between conflicting religions. On the other hand, if atheists always consider church- or temple-goers as their ideological enemies, they can neither promote the cause of intercultural communication. On the contrary, in order to enhance intercultural understanding, not only followers of a certain religion should no longer regard practitioners of other religions as heresy, atheist themselves should also come to the awareness that the disenchanted world-view can be mutually tolerant with regard to religious faith, such that mutual respect can be generated between atheists and church- or temple-goers. The prospective significance of Kant in regard to religion resides precisely in the following: while his critical philosophy makes room for faith, he proposes to limit "religion within the boundaries of mere reason". In so doing, there is a platform for mutual communication between people of different religious believes as well as between theist and atheist. Only by doing so can we hope to "sever the root of *fanaticism*, and *superstition*", yet at the same time accord autonomy to every religious believer and avoid an autonomous religious subject from being uprooted from her cultural and historical tradition. Intercultural understanding in the genuine sense of the term should be based on mutual understanding among autonomous subjects who have not been cut off from their own cultural and historical tradition. Intercultural communication in the genuine sense of the term is never unilateral cultural domination, indoctrination and conquest by a cultural hegemony with regard to other dominated cultures.

In his project of world ethics, Hans Küng not only proposes the reconciliation of different religions by way of the establishment of "an ecumenical strategy",[19] but also emphasizes the importance of the "coalition of believers and non-believers" as well as the "mutual respect" among them.[20] For without such an ecumenical strategy there will not be "a real contribution to peace among the religions and nations."[21] Yet Küng reminds us that "self-criticism" is "the presupposition for an ecumenical strategy", and that "a criticism of the other position can … be justified only on the basis of resolute self-criticism."[22] Thus it is not difficult to see that Küng's project of world-ethics and ecumenical strategy are proposed on the basis or under the influence of Kant's critical philosophy and his conception of "religion within the boundaries of mere reason".

---

[18] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*, Eng. trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1991), p. 75.

[19] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*, *op. cit*., p. 81.

[20] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*, *op. cit*., pp. 36–38.

[21] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*, *op. cit*., p. 81.

[22] Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*, *op. cit*., p. 81.

However, Kant's vision of "religion within the boundaries of mere reason" is formulated in view of the establishment of a complete system of morality, i.e. the guarantee of the possibility of the pursuit of the supreme good and the desirable necessary combination of virtue and happiness. It is for this reason that "through religion it [morality] extends itself to the idea of a mighty moral lawgiver outside the human being, in whose will the ultimate end … is what can and at the same ought to be the ultimate human end."[23] Here religion serves the purpose of morality and not vice versa. In other words, the premise of Kant's vision of "religion within the boundaries of mere reason" is the ultimate end advocated by Kant's system of morality: every individual human being is an autonomous lawgiver, every individual herself ought at the same time to be an end in itself and not merely an instrument. In Kant the postulate of the existence of God as the all mighty moral lawgiver serves the purpose of the establishment of the "kingdom of ends".[24] This amounts to setting the ultimate moral goal of the long term development of human civilization in its entirety: namely arriving at the kingdom of ends as the final stage of the ethical commonwealth[25] formed by the voluntary participation of autonomous subjects of humankind as a whole. Humankind has to be aware of and set for herself this ultimate goal of moral development in order to be able to claim and demonstrate her maturity, i.e. she arrives finally at the self-conscious stage of autonomy. On the other hand, humankind has to strive for the attainment of this ultimate goal of moral development in order to be able to claim any progress in the development of human civilization. This self-projected and self-imposed goal of moral development by humankind can be understood as the projection of "the moral image of the world".[26] It is a reasonable projection of the image of human being herself as spontaneous and autonomous rational being.

Thus the disenchantment of the world also comprises the following moment: not only the "Genesis" of the *Holy Bible* cannot be taken as the unquestioned authority of the explanation of the origin of the world, the biblical eschatology can neither be served as the model of the ultimate goal of development of human civilization. For Kant, if human civilization dares claim any progress, she cannot be satisfied with progress in terms of mere accumulation of knowledge and techniques; she has to realize progress in the moral domain too. To Kant this is the real sense of Enlightenment. Now we can also understand why, when Kant undertakes the task of disenchantment of the world, does he sever not only the roots of fanaticism, superstition and atheism, but also that of fatalism. For fatalism is the denial of freedom of

[23] Immanuel Kant, "Religion within the boundaries of mere reason", in *Religion and Rational Theology*, Eng. trans. and ed. by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 59–60.

[24] Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals", in *Practical Philosophy*, Eng. trans. and ed. by Mary Gregor (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 83.

[25] We borrow the term "ethical commonwealth" from Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 58–64.

[26] Dieter Henrich, "The Moral Image of the World", in *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 3–28.

the will and autonomy, the most precious and cherished component of every human individual. Kant's critical philosophy helps to clarify the domain of exercise of human freedom and autonomy: it is not the epistemological domain of natural phenomena, but the axiological domain of moral actions. This is the awareness that the origin of the creation and realization of moral value can reside in human being herself. Thus it is no more necessary to ascribe this origin to Providence or supranatural forces. This constitutes another important moment of the disenchanted world-view.

7.3 Chinese Culture's Contribution to the Disenchanted World-View: The Chinese Chronology Controversy and the Chinese Rites Controversy in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Europe

In our preceding discussion, we have pointed out that the historical and cultural context of the disenchantment of the world includes, among others, the abandon of the "Genesis" chapter of the *Old Testament* to explain the origin of the world as well as the biblical eschatology to foretell and interpret the ultimate goal and sense of development of human civilization. Kant arrived at such a disenchanted world-view at the high time of European Enlightenment in the later part of the Eighteenth Century. During this long process of disenchantment, the reception of Chinese culture and the debate around its history and nature among European intellectual elites have played a significant role. We are even tempted to say: China as a unique cultural Other has played, to a non-negligible degree, a decisive role in Europe's way to a disenchanted world-view. We will provide a concise presentation below.

The reception of Chinese culture in Modern Europe took root by way of the Jesuit Missionaries in China in the late Sixteenth Century. To facilitate their pastoral work, the Jesuits in China not only learned the Chinese language and gave themselves Chinese names, they even served at the Chinese Imperial Court of the late Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty (mid-Seventeenth to early Eighteenth Century). Some of the Jesuits recorded what they had lived-through, heard and seen on the Chinese soil in the form of letters sent back to their colleagues remaining in Europe.[27] These documents became first hand accounts by Europeans on China brought back to Europe since Marco Polo. Some Jesuits even had begun the translation of Ancient Chinese classics, especially Confucian texts, into Latin, the common intellectual language in Europe of the time. The most legendary of these translations is without doubt that undertaken by Matteo Ricci, the Italian Jesuit who reportedly had finished in the last decade of the Sixteenth Century the translation

[27] Part of the most widely diffused letters are collected in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine par des missionaries jésuites 1702–1776*, ed. Isabelle et Jean-Louis Vissière (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1979).

into Latin of the *Four Books* (《四書》), the four Confucian canonical classics (the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Analects* and the *Mencius*).[28] Though no record of the Ricci translation is preserved today,[29] some contemporary researchers believe that Ricci's manuscript-translation of the *Four Books* was the primary basis and nucleus of the work *Confucius Sinarum philosophicus* published by the Jesuits in Paris in 1687,[30] the corpus commonly thought to be responsible for the early diffusion of Chinese thought in Europe. But what had caused direct impact on and challenge to the European consciousness was the knowledge of ancient Chinese history diffused by Jesuits who had read the *Book of History* or *Annals* (《史記》) authored by Sima Qian (or Sze-ma Ch'ien, ca. 145-ca. 86 B.C.) (司馬遷). They were not only stupefied by the very early beginning of ancient Chinese history, but also by the accuracy and continuity of the early Chinese historical records. From the mid-Seventeenth to the mid-Eighteenth Century, Europe's reception of Chinese culture and the knowledge of this first intellectual contact have aroused twice a pan-European controversy which, the present author believes, had directly or indirectly influenced the later development of the process of disenchantment of the world in the West. These are successively the Chinese chronology controversy[31] and the Chinese rites controversy and the debate around the nature of Chinese culture.[32]

---

[28] Cf. David E. Mungello, "The Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Translation Project of the Confucian *Four Books*", in *East meets West: the Jesuits in China, 1582–1773*, eds. Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B.C. Oh (Chicago, Ill. : Loyola University Press, 1988), pp. 252–273; here p. 253.

[29] Part of Ricci's manuscript-writings on China had later been compiled and published in 1615 by the French Jesuit Nicolas Trigault as *De christiana expeditione apud Sinas suscepta ab Societate Jesu*; French trans. Matthieu Ricci, S.J. and Nicolas Trigault, S.J., *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine 1582–1610*, ed. Georges Bessière (Bellarmin: Desclée de Brouwer, 1978); *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583–1610*, Eng. trans. from the Latin by Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953).

[30] Cf. David E. Mungello, "The Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Translation Project of the Confucian *Four Books*", *op. cit*., p. 269, n. 5.

[31] Cf. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1932; Genève : Slatkine Reprints, 1971), pp. 189–279; Edwin I. Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (1971), pp. 358–385.

[32] Cf. Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., pp. 71–140; Étiemble, *L'Europe Chinoise, I, De L'Empire romain à Leibniz* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), pp. 280–307; André Robinet, "Introduction" to Malebranche, *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu*, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Tome XV (Paris: Librairie J. Vrin, 1958), pp. XXVIII–XXXI; D. E. Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800* (Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), pp. 59–61; 李天綱:《中國禮儀之爭: 歷史、文獻和意義》 (Li Tiangang, *The Chinese Rite Controversy : History, Document and Significance*) (上海:上海古籍出版社) (Shanghai : Ancient Texts Press of Shanghai, 1998); 張西平,《中國與歐洲早期宗教和哲學交流史》(Zhang Xiping, *Early History of Religious and Philosophical Exchange Between China and Europe*) (北京:東方出版社) (Beijing : Oriental Press, 2001), pp. 274–295.

7.3.1 The Chinese Chronology Controversy

The Chinese chronology controversy refers to the debate among European intellectuals aroused by the knowledge of the early beginning of ancient Chinese history which antedates the commencement of the human history inferred from the Book of *Genesis* in the *Old Testament*. As a consequence, it also brought about the dispute in relation to the writing of Universal History: if the history of ancient China is earlier than the beginning of human history revealed by the Christian Holy Script, from then on how should we (Europeans) tell the story of the holy creation? Where and when did human history veritably begin?

Until the Seventeenth Century, Universal History written by Europeans is generally composed of two essential parts: sacred history and profane history. The writing of sacred history relies entirely on the *Old* and the *New Testaments* and is continued by the history of the Christian Church. The writing of profane history has other documentary sources. Sacred history is usually subdivided into three periods: (1) the period of the law of nature, i.e., from Creation of the world to Moses; (2) the period of the written law, from Moses to Jesus Christ; and (3) the period of grace, i.e. from Jesus Christ to the day of the writer. Profane history has more than one schema of subdivision. But one of the basic schemas adopted from the historiographical point of view is the periodization according to the reliability of sources. The first is the mythological time, extending from the Creation to the appearance of the earliest Greek fables. The Second is the fabulous or heroic time, up to the organization of the Olympic Games in the Pan-Greek world. The third is historic time proper. Episodes such as the calling of Abraham, the fall of the city of Troy, the exodus from Egypt lead by Moses, and the founding of the city of Rome were among the common constituents of early human historical narration.[33] In spite of the division into sacred and profane histories, we can see that the early stages of both are more or less the same, because they depend on the same source: the Holy Bible. Thus human history in Europe begins necessarily by the Creation of the world and then the first man Adam, and then again by the story of Noah and his three sons after the universal flood. The accounts of the Old Testament, which has the status of revealed truth, were considered the indubitable documentary source of the beginning of early human history. The centre of historical narration was without doubt Europe as Christendom.

The Chinese chronology controversy was aroused first by the publication in 1642 of *L'Imperio de la China* by the Portuguese Jesuit Alvarez Semedo in Castillian,[34] a language spoken in the middle part of the Hispanic peninsula. According to Semedo's account, Chinese has diligently kept chronological records since 3000 years. This observation greatly puzzled European intellectuals of the time: if

[33] Our account follows mostly the ones given by Edwin I. Van Kley in "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History", *op. cit*., pp. 359–360, and Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., pp. 189–279.

[34] Alvarez Semedo, *Histoire universelle du Grande Royaume de la Chine*, French trans. Jean-Pierre Duteil (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1996).

the account given by Semedo was correct, Chinese history would have begun earlier than that "recorded" by the Old Testament. A greater impact on the question of the origin of human history came from *Sinicae historiae decas prima* published in 1658 by Father Martino Martini. Martini disregarded as mythological the long periods before Fu Hsi (伏羲) which were still believed to be true history by the Chinese of that time. He considered Fu Hsi to be the first Chinese emperor, and chronicled without interval all the Chinese emperors thereafter and the main achievements and important events of each one during their reign until the birth of Christ.[35] On the other hand, Martini indicated that the reason for the Chinese to be able to record with a high degree of accuracy the chronology of the life and actions of their early emperors resides in their early invention of the 60-year cycle method.[36]

What troubled the consciousness of European intellectuals was Martini's fixation, by calculation based on the Chinese 60-year cycle method, of the beginning of the reign of Fu Hsi in the year 2952 B.C., earlier than the year 2349 B.C., the year hitherto held to be that of universal flood calculated from the indication of the Old Testament.[37] The findings of Martini showed an immense difference between the Chinese chronology and her European counterpart: Chinese history began earlier than Universal History "recorded" in Europe by about 600 years. Compared to the age of the earth calculated from *Genesis* which is about 4000 years old, the 600 years difference shows that Chinese history is considerably older than Universal History. If the Chinese chronology is correct, how to reconcile between the two? How is one connected to the other? If it is impossible to connect the two, does it mean that human history has more than one origin? Why has human history more than one origin? Does it imply that history could begin and had begun outside Europe? If so, the historical truthfulness of *Genesis* becomes doubtful, its status of revealed truth would also be shaken. As a consequence, the writing of Universal History can no longer be centred on Europe, nor on Christendom.

In fact, in 1659, a year after the publication of *Sinicae historiae*, a Dutch scholar Issac Vossius reacted favourably to Martini's findings. He praised the accuracy of the Chinese chronology and thought that if it enters into conflict with the *Old Testament*, there is no more reason to believe that the great flood at the time of Noah was a universal event. Vossius' conclusion was that the story of the great flood in *Genesis* was only a local event.[38] This implies either that that part of the world was not the unique centre of the world, or the history as told by the Old Testament did

[35] Cf. Edwin I. Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History", *op. cit.*, pp. 362–363; Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., p. 200.

[36] Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., p. 200.

[37] Cf. Edwin I. Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History", *op. cit.*, p. 363; Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., p. 201.

[38] Issac Vossius, *Dissertatio de vera aetate mundi* (The Hague: 1659). Cf. Edwin I. Van Kley, "Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the Writing of World History", *op. cit.*, pp. 363–364, and Virgile Pinot, *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)*, *op. cit*., pp. 202–204.

not have the status of Universal History. Less than a century later, Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire no long considered the account given by *Genesis* as the necessary beginning of human history.[39] As for the German philosopher of history Herder, though he still spoke of Providence, he nevertheless agreed that the great flood told in *Genesis* was not a universal historical event, but only an event experienced by Jews and geographically limited to the areas of Asia Minor, North Africa and the Eastern Coast of Europe. Herder also denied the universality of the genealogy of the human race described in *Genesis*.[40] As to Herder's teacher Kant, he used the term "conjecture" to talk about the beginning of human history.[41]

The Chinese chronology controversy touches on many other themes. Considered from the perspective of its impact on the process of disenchantment of the world in Europe, it contributed to shaken the hitherto unquestioned status of *Genesis* as true and authoritative historical record. It also provided subject-matter for the Chinese rites controversy which followed immediately.

7.3.2 The Chinese Rites Controversy and the Debate Around the Nature of Chinese Culture

7.3.2.1 Malebranche: Chinese Philosophy Is Atheist and Heresy

The Chinese rites controversy was sparkled by the conciliating and tolerant strategies of Jesuit Missionaries toward the Chinese who were converted to Catholicism. In contrast to the authorities of the Roman Church, the Jesuits in China had first hand understanding of Chinese culture which shapes their positive assessment of this big Far-Eastern nation. The Jesuits thought that the Chinese were not only materially but also intellectually the equal, if not superior, of Europe. In order to convert them, the Chinese have to be approached by sophisticated arguments showing that Christianity was in harmony with some of their most basic beliefs. Jesuits allowed Chinese Catholics to perform rituals in honour of their ancestors and Confucius, as well as let them do their prayers in Chinese language. All these lenient policies were condemned by the Catholic authorities in Rome. Starting from disputes on the strategy facilitating the conversion of Chinese, the rites controversy moved gradually on to the terrain of the nature of Chinese culture. Is Chinese culture, represented by Confucianism and incarnated by the great intellectual and moral figure of Confucius, an atheist culture? This is a philosophical dispute. The Catholic priest and Cartesian philosopher Malebranche published in 1708 *Entretien*

[39] Voltaire, *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome I, "Introduction" (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1990), pp. 3–193; Eng. trans. *The Philosophy of History*, Preface by Thomas Kiernan (London: Vision Press, 1965).

[40] Herder, *Idées pour la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité*, French-German bilingual ed., ed. Max Rouché (Paris: Éditions Montagne, 1962), p. 168.

[41] Kant, "Conjectures on the beginning of human history", in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, Eng. trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1991), pp. 221–234.

d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu (*Conversations between a Christian philosopher and a Chinese philosopher on the existence and nature of God*). Relying on the translation and interpretation of the doctrine of *Li* (principle) and *Qi* (matter) (理氣說) of the Thirteenth Century Chinese Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi (朱熹) provided by the Chinese speaking Catholic priest Longobardi, Malebranche judged that both Confucian philosophy and Chinese culture in general are atheist. For he thought that what the Chinese philosopher called "*Li*" is an entity which "consists of nothing other than the diverse figures that the bodies have which compose the universe, and that the *Li* is nothing other than the order and arrangement between them."[42] And if the Chinese philosopher hold that "the *Li* does not subsist in itself but only in matter",[43] the doctrine of *Li* is materialist, thus atheist. In the eyes of Malebranche "atheist" is very pejorative. For the Roman Catholic Church and other orthodox orders atheism is the synonym of worship of idols and heresy. But since the mid-Seventeen Century, there were a lot of Sinophiles among European intellectuals and open-minded clergymen; this gave rise to a lot of counter attacks against Malebranche's pejorative judgment on Chinese culture. Yet what rendered the controversy remarkable was the defense of Chinese culture by Leibniz, one of the philosophical leaders of Europe at the time.

7.3.2.2 Leibniz Sinophile: Chinese Philosophy as Natural Theology

Leibniz was well-known for his appreciation of the mathematical and symbolic system of *I-Ching* (《易經》). He once hoped to realize his idea of universal language based on the semiotics of *I-Ching*.[44] That is why he was very attentive to the reports sent back to Europe on China by the Jesuits. He himself had personal contacts, through correspondence or meeting in person, with some Jesuits who had been in China. Leibniz was a prolific writer, but he seldom published during his life-time. Yet he decided to publish in 1697, at the height of the Chinese rites controversy, a Preface to *Novissima Sinica*, a collection of reports sent by the Jesuits written in Latin. Right at the beginning of the Preface to this collection Leibniz wrote:

> I consider it a singular plan of the fates that human cultivation and refinement should today be concentrated, as it were, in the two extremes of our continent, in Europe and in Tschina (as they call it), which adorns the Orient as Europe does the opposite edge of the earth.[45]

---

[42] Nicolas Malebranche, *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu*, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Tome XV, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[43] Nicolas Malebranche, *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu*, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Tome XV, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

[44] G. W. Leibniz, *L'harmonie des langues*, traduit et commenté par Marc Crépon (Paris: Éditions Seuil, 2000); Cf. David E. Mungello, "Leibniz's interpretation of Neo-Confucianism", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 21 (1971), pp. 3–22, especially pp. 15–20.

[45] G. W. Leibniz, "Préface des <*Dernières nouvelles de la Chine*>", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, ed. Christiane Frémont (Paris: Éditions de L'Herne, 1987), p. 57; "Translation of Leibniz' Preface", in Donald F. Lach, *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica. Commentary, Translation, Text* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1957), p. 68.

Leibniz pointed out that even though China was not as advanced in "contemplative sciences" (theoretical philosophy and mathematics) as Europe, their "practical philosophy" can provide extremely good common rules for ethical and political life of the present world. In this aspect, Chinese were not only more advanced than Europeans, but were simply the best.[46] Leibniz even reasoned from the point of view of intercultural communication: Europeans should not unilaterally teach the Chinese the mathematical arts and the essence of European philosophy and religion, "it is desirable that they in turn teach us those things which are especially in our interest: the greatest use of practical philosophy and a more perfect manner of living, to say nothing now of their other arts."[47]

Other than highly appraising the practical philosophy of the Chinese, Leibniz wrote in 1715–1716, a year before his death, a long letter to Nicolas de Rémond on Chinese Philosophy to express his ideas on "the Natural Theology of the Chinese". In this letter, Leibniz took the defense of the doctrine of *Li* and *Qi* of Zhu Xi, contrary to what had been done by Malebranche a decade earlier. Even though Leibniz identifies "*Li*" as "*mind*" ("esprit") and "*Qi*" as "primary matter" ("la matière première"),[48] yet he did not think that "*Li*" and "*Qi*" together form a dualism. On the one hand, it is impossible for the mind to be completely separated from the body,[49] on the other hand Leibniz situates "*Li*" at the origin of "*Qi*", because the former is a kind of "first cause".[50] Leibniz said:

> The first principle of the Chinese is called *Li*, that is, reason, or the foundation of all nature, the most universal reason and substance; there is nothing greater nor better than *Li*. This great and universal cause is pure, quiet, subtle, without body or shape, and can be known only by the understanding. From *Li* as *Li* emanate five virtues: piety, justice, religion, prudence and faith.[51]

---

[46] Leibniz, "Préface des <*Dernières nouvelles de la Chine*>", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 59; *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica. Commentary, Translation, Text*, *op. cit*., pp. 69–70.

[47] Leibniz, "Préface des <*Dernières nouvelles de la Chine*>", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p.64; *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica. Commentary, Translation, Text*, *op. cit*., p. 75.

[48] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 100; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1992), p. 106.

[49] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 79; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 89.

[50] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 95; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 103.

[51] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 82; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment.*

Leibniz asked: "if this *Li* has dominion over all; it is present in all things, governing and producing all as absolute master of Heaven and Earth",[52] "after this can we not say that the *Li* of the Chinese is the sovereign substance that we worship under the name of God?"[53] Understood in this way, the Chinese doctrine of *Li* resembles Christian theology, thus Chinese philosophy is not atheist. Leibniz thought that Chinese philosophy was even closer than Greek philosophy to Christian theology:

> In consequence of this production of prime matter by the first principle or primeval form, by pure act, by the operation of God, Chinese philosophy more closely approaches Christian theology than the philosophy of the ancient Greeks who considered matter as a principle coeval with God, a principle which he does not produce and to which he only gives form.[54]

Though a true Sinophile, Leibniz reserved for Christian theology the supreme position in the hierarchy of philosophical systems. Because for Leibniz, if *Li* gives rise to *Qi* and both *Li* and *Qi* are at the origin of myriad things, "therefore one is as eternal as the other".[55] But then *Li* would not have the supreme position of the Christian God as the absolute Creator. In fact, Leibniz was well aware that the Chinese were "apparently ignorant of the one revelation that alone can explain to us the beginning of the universe."[56] Being ignorant of revelation, could the Chinese have the idea of the Creation of the universe? In order to be consistent with himself on the declaration that Chinese philosophy is closer to Christian theology compared to Greek philosophy, Leibniz tried his last effort to defense Chinese philosophy from the point of view of Creation: "although the ancient Chinese expressly state that the *Qi* never perishes, they do not explicitly state that it has no beginning. And there are those who believe that because of the beginnings of the Chinese empire occurred during the time of the Patriarchs, they could have learned about the creation of the world from them."[57] While the *Li* has the metaphysically supreme posi-

---

Leibniz and Wolff on China, *op. cit*., p. 91. The five virtues (五德) piety, justice, religion, prudence and faith correspond grosso modo to仁、義、禮、智、信 in Chinese.

[52] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., pp. 82–83; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 92.

[53] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 85; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 94.

[54] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 99; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 105.

[55] *Ibid*.

[56] G. W. Leibniz, "Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond", in *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, *op. cit*., p. 99; "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 106.

[57] *Ibid*.

tion comparable to the Christian God, the Chinese people herself has no revealed truth and is uncertain of the knowledge of Creation: Chinese philosophy, being unable to match Christian theology, is only a natural theology. It is in this way that Leibniz refuted Malebranche's attack of Chinese philosophy as atheism.

7.3.2.3 Wolff Sinophile: Atheist and Moral Superiority of the Chinese

The case is different in another German Sinophile Christian Wolff, who was Leibniz' follower. Even though inheriting the general metaphysical position of his master, Wolff defended Chinese philosophy from the diametrically opposite position. In his celebrated lecture *Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese* delivered in 1721,[58] Wolff, like Leibniz, declared his high esteem of the superiority of the Chinese doctrine of moral practice. But contrary to Leibniz, Wolff thought that Chinese were no natural theologist: "The ancient Chinese … knew no Author of the Universe and had no natural religion, even less a revealed one. Only the strength of nature—free from every religion—could conduct them to the exercise of virtue."[59] Though Wolff did not use expressly the term "atheism", from what he wrote, it is evident that he thought that Chinese were atheist, or at least theologically agnostic.

In contrast to both Malebranche and Leibniz, when Wolff talked about Chinese philosophy his central figure of reference was not the Southern Song philosopher Zhu Xi, but Confucius and his Pre-Qin disciples.[60] Wolff had immense esteem toward the distinguished virtues and uncommon learning of Confucius, and thought that this Chinese Saint was "raised up by Providence".[61] To Wolff, what deserves admiration and praise in the Chinese is the total devotion by their spirit and wisdom to the moral practice. "The Chinese took … as the first principle, that one should carefully cultivate his reason, in order to reach a distinct knowledge of good and evil and therefore become virtuous by choice and not from fear of a superior or hope for recompense."[62] In other words, to Wolff the morality of the Chinese is a morality of autonomy. The Chinese not only practice the cultivation of self-advancement in

[58] Christian Wolff, *Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen* (Lateinisch-deutsch), ed. Michael Albrecht (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1985); Eng. trans. "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., pp. 145–186.

[59] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 162.

[60] The texts consulted by Wolff were the Latin version of the six Confucian classics translated by the French Jesuit François Noël and published in Prague in 1711. They include the *Great Learning*, the *Analects*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Book of Mencius*, the *Classic of Filial Piety*, and the *Elementary Learning*. Cf., "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 175, note 77.

[61] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 152.

[62] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 173.

morality, they even assist one another on the road to moral progress and aim at attaining "the highest point of perfection".[63] Wolff himself approves the pursuit of the highest good as the supreme principle of morality: "The sovereign good of human beings … consists in making continual and uninterrupted progress toward perfection… [the Chinese philosophers] have taught that the human being, in advancing daily in perfection, advances also in happiness."[64] In the conclusion of the lecture, Wolff admits that the principle of wisdom of the ancient Chinese is in conformity with his own principle.[65] This is evidently an extremely high appreciation of Chinese moral philosophy modeled on Pre-Qin Confucianism. In other words, Wolff, issued from the Leibnizian school who was an ardent defender of Christian theodicy, has declared that there exists an ancient culture outside Europe, the Chinese culture incarnated by Confucius and Pre-Qin Confucianism, which possesses supreme wisdom and moral virtues but is atheist in nature. To a lot of common Europeans of the time, this judgement is extraordinary but incredible.[66] Wolff's public lecture caused immediately an immense choc to the German Christian community. It antagonized in particular orthodox theologians of the Christian Church. Wolff was accused of promoting atheism and was ordered to leave immediately the University of Halle in which he was teaching, otherwise he would be sentenced to death. Wolff had no other choice than complying to this order to avoid the death sentence.[67]

7.3.2.4 Voltaire: Chinese Culture Is Pluralist, Tolerant and Rational

The Chinese rites controversy took a new turn toward the mid-Eighteenth Century when one of the French Enlightenment leaders Voltaire joined the debate. As Sinophile and admirer of Confucius, Voltaire had more knowledge on China. His defense of Chinese culture is multi-dimensional and his arguments more refine and sophisticated. From the Jesuits, Voltaire knew that the popular religions in China are Buddhism and Daoism, whereas the intelligentsia serving the Imperial court worships Confucius and are followers of Confucianism. Voltaire does not think that Chinese are atheist in general, yet they neither practice cult of idols. This is because

[63] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 177.

[64] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 178.

[65] C. Wolff, "Discourse on the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese", in *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*, *op. cit*., p. 183.

[66] The fact that the letters sent back to Europe by Jesuits in China were published under the title *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine par des missionaries jésuites* ("Edifying and curious letters of China by Jesuit Missionaries") betrays precisely the general feeling of incredulity and incomprehension of the European intellectual public toward the contents of those letters.

[67] This event was recorded by Voltaire in his articles on China: *Dictionnaire philosophique*, ed. Étiemble (Paris: Classique Garnier, 1967), pp. 106–107; *Philosophical Dictionary*, ed. and Eng. trans. T. Besterman (Harmondswordth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 112–113.

from ancient times on Chinese worship the Heaven and the Chinese Emperors perform rituals to show their respect to the Heaven twice every year. This shows that for the Chinese "Heaven" is the supreme existence, equivalent to what the Europeans called "Supreme Being" at that time.[68] Thus according to Voltaire, Chinese had religious beliefs and are not atheist. Yet the Chinese, foremost of them Confucius, engaged themselves in religious practice not from the metaphysical point of view, but from the consideration of the perfection of morality or the system of law.

When Voltaire defended Chinese culture, he no more considered it from the point of view of the promotion of Christianity in China as did the Jesuits. Rather, he emphasized the pluralism of religious practice in China. Voltaire wanted to point out that Chinese culture deserves to be praised for her practice of religious tolerance. For Voltaire, Confucianism cultivates rational thinking and turns away from superstition ("The topics the Master did not speak of were strange things, force, chaos, divinities."[69]). Below is how Voltaire describes Confucius:

> Confucius framed neither new opinions nor new rites. He neither pretended to be an inspired man, nor a prophet. He was a magistrate, who taught the ancient laws. We sometimes say, very improperly, "the religion of Confucius", he had no other than that of all the emperors and all the tribunals; no other than that of the first sages; he recommends nothing but virtue, preaches no mysteries.[70]

Voltaire never declared that Confucius was atheist; he even refuted Malebranche's denunciation of the atheist nature of Chinese culture. But what is of significance is that, even though Voltaire thought that China was inferior to Europe in terms of science and military power, he accorded importance to the state of advancement of Chinese people in the domain of government. He even declared that China was never a military state but in the Seventeenth Century, China had constructed the best government in the whole world.[71] At the same time China had produced the emperor who was at that time the most intelligent, the most virtuous, the most tolerant, and the most respectful toward learning in the whole world in the person of the Emperor Kang-Xi (康熙帝) of the Qing Dynasty.[72] Under his reign Chinese people lived a peaceful but wealthy life. The culture of the Chinese intelligentsia who serves the imperial court incarnates the Confucian culture of propriety, virtue and justice;

---

[68] Voltaire, *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome I, *op. cit*., pp. 69–70; Eng. trans. *The Philosophy of History*, *op. cit*., 1965, p. 86.

[69] Confucius, *The Analects*, a New Bilingual Edition, Eng. trans. D. C. Lau (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1992), Book VII, Chap. 21, p. 61, translation modified. The original Chinese text reads:「子不語怪力亂神」.

[70] Voltaire, *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome I, *op. cit*., p. 69; *The Philosophy of History*, *op. cit*., p. 86. Cf. also: "Le philosophe ignorant. XLI. De Confucius", in Voltaire, *Mélanges*, ed. Jacques Van Den Heuvel (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961), pp. 903–904.

[71] Voltaire, *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome II, *op. cit*., p. 78.

[72] The French Jesuit J. Bouvet, who had served in the court of the Qing Emperor Kang-Xi, has published a pamphlet *L'Histoire de l'Empereur de la Chine* (The Hague, 1699) on his return to France. This celebrated pamphlet, which portraits Kang-Xi as the most intelligent and most virtuous monarch in the world at that time other than King Louis XIV of France, was reported to have exercised a great influence on Sinophiles such as Leibniz, Wolff and Voltaire.

these are ingredients of a rationalist culture. In short, Chinese society is advanced materially and morally; China is a country of religious tolerance; Chinese Confucianism is a rationalist philosophy with a pale religious colouration.[73] This shows that not only a theologically agnostic and even atheist society is possible, it is even ideal and desirable to have such a society, because it is the incarnation of a high degree of civilizational development. It even shows the direction toward which human society should move. The extremely positively appraisal of Confucian culture as an atheist or agnostic culture by one of the most respected leaders of European Enlightenment contributed without doubt to the process of disenchantment of world in Europe.

7.4 Conclusion

We hoped to have shown that the discovery of Chinese history and the reception of Chinese culture by Europeans in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries have contributed to the formation of their modern world-outlook, one of the essential elements of which is the disenchanted world-view. From the early Jesuits through Malebranche to Leibniz, European intellectuals had judged Chinese culture from the yard-stake of Christian theology, though they had arrived at different conclusions. From Wolff onwards, European avant-guard thinkers were able to appreciate Chinese culture as an atheist or agnostic culture. Both Wolff and Voltaire were impressed by and appreciated the advancement of practical philosophy and moral wisdom of ancient Chinese culture. Voltaire in particular emphasized, in addition to the material and moral acquisitions of Chinese culture in comparison to Europe of the time, the rationalist nature of Confucianism due to its thin religious character, as well as the tradition of religious pluralism and religious tolerance practiced in China. The conclusion he drew is full of significance: atheist or agnostic culture is rationalist culture; it should be the goal of development of human civilization. Through their debate on the nature of Chinese culture, Leibniz, Wolff and Voltaire not only showed their very positive esteem toward this great cultural Other, they also contributed from the perspective of intercultural understanding to the process of disenchantment of the world which was on the way to take shape in European Enlightenment. They are thus the great pioneers of anti-Eurocentrism and promoter of intercultural communication.

[73] Voltaire, *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome I, *op. cit*., p. 71; *The philosophy of history*, *op. cit*., pp. 87–88.

Chapter 8
Self-Transformation and the Ethical *Telos*: Orientative Philosophy in Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl

8.1 Introduction: Hegemony of "Cognitive Philosophy" and the Rise of "Orientative Philosophy" in Contemporary West

Is philosophy essentially a purely cognitive and theoretical enterprise? This is one of the central issues in the recent debate around the so-called "problem of the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy" in the academic community of Cultural China.[1] Those who contest the legitimacy of the expression "Chinese philosophy" argue mainly from the observation that traditional Chinese thought is basically ethical and practical in orientation. Such standpoint is grounded on a determinate Idea of philosophy which prescribes that philosophy is essentially a cognitive and theoretical enterprise. Thus traditional Chinese thought, owning to its overwhelming ethico-practical interests, does not have the right to claim to be philosophy. This is a position in echo with that of Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, who declared in his famous Vienna Lecture of 1935, "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity", that "it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period, to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy."[2] Husserl's judgement is based on his own predetermined Idea of philosophy as "pure *thêoria*", which is in turn based on his own understanding of the philosophico-scientific attitude of the Greeks as a "purely

[1] Since the every beginning of the Twenty-First Century, there is a vast debate among intellectuals and philosophers in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong around the problem of "the Legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy". Some of the most important contributions to the debate are translated into English and published in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, Vol. 37, No. 1–3, 2005–2006.

[2] E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962, "*Krisis*" hereafter), p. 331; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970, "*Crisis*" hereafter), pp. 284–285.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_8

theoretical attitude".[3] Any form of thinking which does not conform to this Idea cannot be claimed to be genuine philosophy. Such a position is obtained by making a determining judgment in the Kantian sense.[4] This is a judgement operated in a top-down way out of a certain idea which has a quasi a priori status, thus rendering it undisputable. In consequence it has a strong tendency to exclude and exhibits a somewhat hegemonic character.

However, such a narrow and exclusive Idea of philosophy—philosophy as pure *thêoria*—is not only unable to understand the particularity of philosophies in Eastern cultures such as India and China, it will also deny a significant number of works by influential contemporary Western thinkers as philosophical works. Such will be the fate of the works of the "ethical turn" of the final Foucault and the later Derrida. It will also be the destiny of the entire mature works of Lévinas which advocate "Ethics as First Philosophy" over against traditional metaphysics or ontology as first philosophy.[5] Needless to say, under the yardstick of pure *thêoria*, many of the writings of Richard Rorty after his Neo-pragmatic turn will also be ruled out as philosophical writings. All these works share the common feature of reversing the primacy of the cognitive-theoretical interest in favour of the ethical-practical concern. In order to map this new cultural-philosophical constellation in which the "primacy of the practical" has to be taken into account, a new Idea of philosophy is needed.[6]

In this chapter, we will introduce the idea of "orientative philosophy" (「引導性哲學」) proposed by Lao Sze-Kwang (勞思光, 1927–2012), one of the most respected and influential contemporary Chinese philosophers and author of a monumental *History of Chinese Philosophy* in three volumes,[7] to understand the basic characteristics and interest of Chinese philosophy on the one hand, and on the other to serve as a supplement to the essentially cognitively and theoretically oriented idea of philosophy in traditional Western philosophy. By using the terms "self-transformation" and "transformation of the world"[8] to capture the basic function of Chinese philosophy as orientative philosophy, Lao argues that though the primary concern of Chinese philosophy is not theoretical cognition in itself, it is still

[3] Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 325, 331: *Crisis*, pp. 280, 285.

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Eng. trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 67.

[5] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Éthique comme philosophie première* (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1998).

[6] The thesis of the "primacy of the pure practical reason" not only appears in of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, but also already in the "Transcendental Doctrine of Method" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A798/B826-A801/B829) which serves as a transition to the Second *Critique*. Cf. the explanation of Richard Kroner in his classic work *Kant's Weltanschauung*, Eng. tran. John E. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

[7] Lao Sze-Kwang (勞思光), 《新編中國哲學史》三卷四冊(台北:三民書局) (*History of Chinese Philosophy*, *New Edition*, 3 Vol., Taipei: San Min Press, 1984–86).

[8] LAO Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy: An Inquiry and a Proposal", in *Understanding the Chinese Mind. The Philosophical Roots*, ed. Robert E. Allinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 277.

philosophy as it is reflective thinking mediated by theorization and justification through argumentation. Lao's characterization of orientative philosophy as reflective thinking which aims at bringing about "self-transformation" and "transformation of the world" has the advantage of providing a key to understand the famous ethical turn of Foucault as shown in the later volumes of his *History of Sexuality* and in the lecture course *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* delivered at the Collège de France in the same period. In fact, the last Foucault uses precisely the terms "transformative test of the self" ("épreuve modificatrice de soi-même"),[9] "self-transformation into moral subject" ("se transformer soi-même en sujet moral"),[10] or "transformation of the subject" ("transformation du sujet"),[11] all these terms being close to Lao's "self-transformation", to bring to a new light the essence of philosophical activity in Greek and Roman Antiquity. Subsequent to Pierre Hadot's qualification of Ancient Western philosophy as "spiritual exercises",[12] Foucault even proposes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* to characterize the form of philosophical activity in Western Antiquity as "spirituality" in distinction to philosophy in its modern form since Descartes.[13] (We shall come back to this point again in the later part of this chapter.)

Yet a further scrutiny of the concept of spirituality or spiritual exercise will show that this form of philosophical activity is not unique to Western Antiquity, on the contrary. In the twentieth century, Husserl's practice of phenomenology, in particular the basic methodological procedures of phenomenology invented by him—epoché and reduction—share features of spirituality as understood by Foucault. For Husserl also understands epoché and reduction as acts leading to the self-transformation of the philosophizing subject. It is on the basis of the self-transformation of the human subject, through which she discovers and comes to terms with her own subjectivity, that the phenomenological philosopher is engaged in an act of radical responsibility toward herself, enabling her to carry out the mission of being "functionaries of humankind" as prescribed by Husserl in his last great work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*.[14] Motivated by this supreme ethical telos, the basic attitude underlying the phenomenological attitude is arguably also ethical and practical in nature.

---

[9] Michel Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, *Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 14. The English version provided by Robert Hurley "the test by which one undergoes changes" (*The Use of Pleasure*, Vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p. 9) cannot convey the sense of "self-transformation" embedded in the French original.

[10] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 34; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 27.

[11] Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France*, *1981–82* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2001), p. 17; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France*, *1981–82*, Eng. trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), p. 14.

[12] Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1st ed. 1993, 3rd. ed. Paris: Albin Michel, 2002); *Philosophy as a Way of Life*: *Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, Eng. trans. Michael Chase (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1995).

[13] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, pp. 16–18; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, pp. 14–16.

[14] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 15; *Crisis*, p. 17.

While this discovery will invalidate Husserl's own declared Idea of (European) philosophy as pure *thêoria*, it will also relativize Foucault's distinction between spirituality as the antique mode of philosophical praxis and philosophy in its modern form from Descartes onwards, as Husserl's philosophical practice is in fact also a kind of spiritual exercise. We are then grounded to ask: are the Idea(s) of philosophy and their mode(s) of practice so far away from one another between the East and the West as have been thought of by Lao Sze-Kwang and Husserl, and between the Greco-Roman Antiquity and the Modern West as has been presented by Foucault? Can the idea of orientative philosophy serve as a bridge between Ancient and Modern philosophies on the one hand, and Eastern and Western philosophers on the other?

8.2 Lao Sze-Kwang's Concept of "Orientative Philosophy" with Zhuangzi and Mencius as Examples

A common way to introduce the discussion of "what is philosophy" begins often by a philological analysis of the etymological origin of the Greek word "philosophia". Such an etymological approach always defines philosophy as the love of wisdom on the one hand, and takes Greek philosophy as the prototype of philosophical activities on the other. This approach leads naturally to consider the systems of Plato and Aristotle, the two giants of Greek philosophy, as models of the subsequent development of any philosophical endeavor. Traditionally, the metaphysical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle are presented as the essence of their philosophical systems, and since metaphysics is a doctrine of pure theoretical speculation, the supreme interest of philosophy is understood as pure speculative theoretical thinking in the manner of metaphysics. Thus, the Greco-etymological approach to the question of what philosophy is will result in determining the characteristics and function of philosophical activities as motivated by the purely cognitive-theoretical interest. Such an approach to philosophy, excluding other possible forms and functions of philosophical activity, betrays a self-enclosed mind set. The Idea underlying such practice of philosophy is a narrowly defined Idea. It looks down upon, mocks of, negates or excludes other possible forms of philosophy. Those who declare the talk of "Chinese philosophy" as "illegitimate" or "a falsification of sense" speak from a self-enclosed and narrowly defined conception of philosophy.

Some 20 years before the outbreak of the controversy around "the problem of the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy", Lao Sze-Kwang has made known to the Chinese public that we have to adopt an approach other than the etymological one in order to understand the particularity of Chinese philosophy. We may call Lao's approach a "functional approach", as he suggests to understand the characteristics of a given form of philosophy by considering the function such form of philosophy is meant to fulfill. According to Lao, the function of philosophy within the Western tradition is

basically "to understand the world" (「了解世界」).[15] Whether a philosophical theory is successful has to be measured by its "explanatory power" with regard to the world.[16] However, the main currents of Chinese philosophy are the confluent of moral and political philosophy. Different from the Western tradition, the function of philosophy within traditional Chinese Culture is "to provide orientation and direction in moral and political life".[17] Thus Lao thinks that we have to create a new concept of philosophy in order to understand the specific task Chinese philosophy aims to fulfill, namely to provide "orientative power" to a philosophical theory.[18] This term is meant to supplement the term "explanatory power" which is used to understand the function of Western philosophy. The terms "orientative power" and "explanatory power" together will form the basis of a new meta-philosophical language. With such a conceptual pair, not only we can provide a more correct understanding of Chinese philosophy, but also highlight the most valuable part of the Chinese philosophical tradition and "work toward the further development of a philosophy of orientation".[19] In this way, Chinese philosophy may develop into "an important part of the world philosophy of the future".[20] In other words, Lao advocates a new Idea of philosophy of open character. It can serve on the one hand as a bridge between Chinese and Western philosophies, and on the other as the new starting point for the quintessence of Chinese philosophy in such a way that its further development will enable it to occupy a place in the world philosophy to come.

In a study published several years later, Lao Sze-Kwang put forward a more mature formulation with respect to the characteristics of Chinese philosophy, namely "orientative philosophy": "Chinese philosophy as a whole is primarily orientative in character. There have been many philosophical schools in the Chinese tradition. But, with very few exceptions, they are all orientative philosophies".[21] As orientative philosophy, the function of Chinese philosophy is different from the cognitive function of Western philosophy. The problem orientative philosophy tackles is "where should we go", instead of "what it is", the main question of cognitive philosophy.[22] Its aim is to bring about "self-transformation" of the reflective subject and "transformation of the world" as mentioned above. Though it fulfills a function different from cognitive philosophy, orientative philosophy is still philosophy

[15] 勞思光Lao Sze-Kwang:<中國哲學研究之檢討及建議>("Review and Suggestions on Research in Chinese Philosophy"), in《虛境與希望 — 論當代哲學與文化》 (*Illusion and Hope*: *On Contemporary Philosophy and Culture*), 劉國英編 (ed. Lau Kwok-ying) (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003), p. 15. This essay was originally presented as a keynote speech in a conference on "History of Chinese Thought" held in the University of Wisconsin, USA, in 1983.

[16] Lao Sze-Kwang, *ibid*., p. 20. In Lao's text, the English term "explanatory power" is included after the Chinese expression 「解釋效力」.

[17] Lao Sze-Kwang, *ibid*., p. 21.

[18] Lao Sze-Kwang, *ibid*., p. 20. In Lao's text, the English term "orientative power" is included after the Chinese expression「指引效力」.

[19] Lao Sze-Kwang, *ibid*., p. 20.

[20] Lao Sze-Kwang, *ibid*., p. 21.

[21] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 277.

[22] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 290.

because it is also reflective thinking on specific subject matters.[23] In addition, it comprises the three essential structural components of a theoretical doctrine, namely:

> (a) Selecting a purpose and establishing it as the right goal of wisdom. (b) Giving some justification to the above decision. (c) Offering practical maxims to show how this purpose can be achieved.[24]

Lao takes Zhuangzi's Daoist philosophy and Mencius' Confucian philosophy as examples to illustrate the characteristics of orientative philosophy.

According to Lao, Zhuangzi's purpose is to build up his doctrine of *Xiaoyao* (逍遙). This is shown in the opening chapter of the *Inner Chapters* of Zhuangzi, *Xiaoyaoyou* (<逍遙遊>) ("Free and Easy Wandering").[25] In everyday language "*you*" in Chinese means "wandering" which refers to movement of the physical order. However, Lao points out that as "*xiaoyao*" means "absolutely unburdened and unbound freedom", in the context of Zhuangzi it refers to "the natural operation of the movement of the mind".[26] Put in modern philosophical language, Zhuangzi's theory of *xiaoyao* is a doctrine calling for the realization of one's "transcendent freedom" in the sense that "this freedom is not supposed to exert any influence upon objects or the objective world in any active way."[27] In other words, in order not to encounter obstacles in the world, we should not intervene in events of the world and just let things follow their natural courses. In this way we can enjoy transcendent freedom.

The principle of *xiaoyao* forms the core of Pre-Qin Daoist philosophy. Zhuangzi advances his justification through the concept of *hua* (化) in the sixth of the *Inner Chapters* entitled *Da Zong Shi* (<大宗師>) ("The Great and Venerable Teacher"). *Hua* means change and in ordinary usage it refers to the coming and going of events in the phenomenal world. Again Zhuangzi gives a particular meaning to *hua* by ascribing to it an ontological dimension as an essential principle governing all beings: every phenomenal being is subject to change. With the term *hua* Zhuangzi further puts forward the concept of *zao hua* (造化) which means literally "making change". Thus *zao hua* is the "Change-making principle" which is a power in the worldly setting.[28] Lao reminds us that to understand the world as ever changing and that all worldly beings are governed by the principle of change is nothing particular;

---

[23] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 290.

[24] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 278.

[25] "Free and Easy Wandering" is a plain language translation given by Burton Watson in his classic translation of *Zhuangzi*: *Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003). A. C. Graham, in his English translation of *Chuang-Tzŭ*: *The Inner Chapter*s (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001), renders it as "Going rambling without a destination". The version given by Wang Rongpei in *Zhuangzi* (Library of Chinese Classics, Chinese-English, Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House & Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999) is "Wandering in Absolute Freedom".

[26] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 278.

[27] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 278.

[28] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 279.

this is a view shared by the ancient Greek Heraclitus and Indian primitive Buddhism. What is particular in Zhuangzi is the theoretical consequence he draws from this basic observation about the ever-changing phenomenal world: the human body or the physical self existing in the phenomenal world is everywhere under determined conditions and thus cannot enjoy true freedom.[29] Lao quotes a lengthy passage from Zhuangzi's *Da Zong Shi* (the 6th of the *Inner Chapters*) to illustrate this point. This famous passage begins by telling the story about the friendship between four friends Zi-Si, Zi-Yu, Zi-Li and Zi-Lei who share the wisdom of understanding the internal unity of life and death; thus none of them shows any fear nor regret before death. The day when Zi-Lei was seriously ill and about to die while his wife and children were standing around and weeping, Zi-Li came to see Zi-Lei and said to the latter's wife and children:

> Oh, keep away! Don't interrupt the *hua* (change)… It's great the Change-making principle! What is it doing to you and where is it carrying you? Is it making you the liver of a rat, or a limb of an insect?

Zi-Lei responded with tranquility to Zi-Li:

> The cosmic power gives me the body, burdens me with the life process, reduces my burden by rendering me old, provides me with rest by giving me death. Thus one who sees life rightly sees death also rightly.[30]

What Zhuangzi wants to illustrate through this story, always according to Lao, is the following truth: as the physical body is composed of decomposable elements, it is as illusory as other physical things. If the physical body is no more than the combination of physical elements which happen to be formed by the cosmic power and will disintegrate when the elements, governed by the cosmic power, react to form other physical things, there is obviously no reason to consider the physical body as the true self.[31] If our purpose of inquiry is to acquire transcendent freedom, this can never be achieved through our physical body. Lao further notes that in response to the question "what is the true self?", we cannot give the answer by using predicates of empirical objects, for it is ruled out that the true self belongs to the order of the physical world. If the true self is not determined by any conditions of the physical world, it is freedom itself. Here Lao reasons according to the Kantian dichotomy between natural causality and freedom. Since the true self does not fall within the realm of conditionality of physical nature, it belongs to the realm of noumenon, and is thus freedom. The purpose of pursuing transcendent freedom is a self-purpose: it is not subject to any instrumental conditionality. But the pursuit of freedom as an end-in-itself can never be inferred by physical causality. This can only be grasped by reflective thinking.[32]

---

[29] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 280.

[30] *Zhuangzi*, *Inner Chapters*, Ch. 6, "Da Zong Shi". The Chinese text reads: 「子犁往問之,曰:「叱,避,無怛化。」倚其戶與之語:「偉哉造化!又將奚以汝為?將奚以汝適?以汝為鼃肝乎?以汝為蟲臂乎?」……子來曰:「夫大塊載我以形,勞我以生,佚我以老,息我以死。故善吾生者,乃所以善吾死也。」 English translation provided by Lao Sze-Kwang in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy…", *op. cit*., p. 280; slightly modified by the present author.

[31] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 281.

[32] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 281.

Lao further explains Zhuangzi's concept of freedom in contrast to Fichte's doctrine. According to Lao, the freedom of the Ego in Fichte can extend to the whole realm of the Non-ego. Thus a world of spiritual values could be created by the conscious activity of the Ego. Fichte's thesis, Lao explains, "depends upon the optimistic supposition that creating values in the phenomenal world is basically possible."[33] However, Zhuangzi neither adheres to this optimism nor accepts this possibility. To Lao, since nothing resists change and nothing endures, including things supposed to incarnate value, under the rule of the cosmic power, Zhuangzi rather thinks that "there is really nothing valuable to be done in the physical world, in which the cosmic principle operates eternally and all beings follow their courses… To see the matter in a reversed way, we can also point out that the mind, when trying to engage itself with cognitive and moral efforts, is only seeking the impossible and creating all kinds of trouble for itself and the world."[34]

What Lao wants to emphasize is the anti-cognitivist and non-moralist attitude underlying Zhuangzi's doctrine of transcendent freedom: Zhuangzi is well-known for his arguments and metaphors against the authentic value of cognitive activities and moral norms. The best illustration of this can be found in *Qi wu lun* (<齊物論>) ("Discussion on Making All Things Equal"),[35] the 2nd of the *Inner Chapters*, in which Zhuangzi ridicules the Confucians and the Mohists as having no more than "petty achievements":

> How does the Principle get covered and the true/false bifurcation arise? How does language (the genuine function of language) get covered and the affirmation/denial bifurcation arise? How is it that the Principle is moving away and not staying (within the human mind)? How is it that language is right there but loses its proper function? The Principle is covered at the moment when there are petty achievements; language is covered where extravagance prevails. Therefore, the Confucians and Mohists both have advocated their criteria of right and wrong, to affirm the right in their own sense, and deny the wrong in their own sense. In order to see the limitation of such affirmations and denials, we must appeal to the enlightened mind. Everything can be seen in That (way, system). Everything can also be seen in This (way, system). The limitation is not seen there (in the systems), but is known by wisdom… When an affirmation is being made, a denial is, at the same time, being made. And vice versa. The right and wrong depend upon each other. Therefore, the sage (the enlightened mind) never follows this path (the relative and limited way of thinking) but mirrors the reality with original wisdom. That is also true for right (in a higher order).[36]

Many commentators infer from this key passage that Zhuangzi is advocating a relativist position. But a careful reading of it shows that Zhuangzi is not adhering to

---

[33] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 281.

[34] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 281.

[35] "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" is the translation provided by Watson (*Zhuangzi*: *Basic Writings*, *op. cit*.) whereas Graham renders it as "The sorting which evens things out" (*Chuang-Tzŭ*: *The Inner Chapters*, *op. cit*.).

[36] *Zhuangzi*, *Inner Chapters*, Ch. 2, "Qi wu lun". The Chinese texts reads: 「道惡乎隱而有真偽?言惡乎隱而有是非?道惡乎往而不存?言惡乎存而不可?道隱於小成,言隱於榮華,故有儒墨之是非,以是其所非,而非其所是。欲是其所非而非其所是,則莫若以明。物無非彼,物無非是,自彼則不見,自知則知之……因是因非,因非因是。是以聖人不由,而照之以天,亦因是也。」 Lao Sze-Kwang's English translation in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 282.

relativism. In fact Zhuangzi is describing the contradictory opinions of the mortals, including the Confucians and the Mohists, on every issue. He questions their limited and relative usage of the faculty of moral and cognitive judgements. We know today that whether a proposition is true depends on the axioms and principles which govern and regulate the related domain of knowledge to which the proposition in question refers. Thus the criterion of truth is always relative to a given system of principles in a specific domain. But a position or a system always gives rise to a counter position or a counter system. As the structuralists have shown, our thinking operates by a conceptual system of binary oppositions. The two sides of the oppositional pair tend to negate each other, but in fact they depend on one another. This state of affairs is almost a universal characteristic across different cultures. Thus it is also an undeniable fact that disputes from holders of opposing positions go on indefinitely as each one believes in her own "petty achievements". For Zhuangzi, only a sage knows how to go beyond the apparent relativities and place her eyes on the height where reality lies, which is certainly beyond the empirical world of the mortals. From the perspective of a sage, it doesn't make sense to seek knowledge or to establish moral norms in the empirical world. For the true self does not coincide with the physical self of the empirical world.

On the basis of such understanding, Lao affirms that "the Self of Zhuangzi must only stand on its own freedom."[37] To realize one's true self is to pursue transcendent freedom which is situated beyond the empirical world and hence is unlimited by it. But then what should we do with regard to the world? A brief answer is: do not seek any goal in the world, just maintain a kind of aesthetic attitude toward the events and changes in the world. That is why Zhuangzi's philosophy is an important source of inspiration of artistic and poetic creation in the subsequent development of Chinese culture. At the same time, Zhuangzi does not give any answer to the following questions: what is the content of the *Dao* or enlightenment? Or, what is transcendent freedom of the self? Zhuangzi's reflections are not cognitivist in nature. Thus Lao concludes that in Zhuangzi's philosophy, the quest for transcendent freedom is the only value which is worth pursuing. "His teachings thus become orientative in character. What he really wanted to do is to lead people to this freedom or enlightenment."[38]

Lao further illustrates the concept of orientative philosophy with reference to Mencius' Confucian philosophy. As a successor of Confucius whose teachings center on providing moral guidance in human life, Mencius sets for himself the purpose of giving theoretical justification and solution to problems in connection to moral transformation. According to Lao, problems related to moral transformation include: "How can human beings achieve a moral order? Why should we pursue the right or the moral? Why should we create a cultural order for society?"[39] Mencius' answer is that the human being has a moral faculty which distinguishes her from beast. Only in unfolding her moral faculty can the human being claim herself to be human. Below is how Mencius describes the special capacity of the human mind:

---

[37] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 283.

[38] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 283.

[39] Lao Sze-Kwang, "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 285.

> What is common to the mind is the *logos*, the right. The sage only achieves what is common to all of our minds. Therefore the *logos* and the right satisfy the mind just as good food satisfies the mouth.[40]

The capacity to adhere to the *logos* and to distinguish the right from the wrong is a universal capacity inherent to all human beings. This basic affirmation of Mencius can be seen more clearly in his famous doctrine of "the four beginnings" (「四端說」) which means "the four basic human faculties" or the "four spiritual dispositions":

> Every human being has a sense of commiseration in his mind… What I mean can be illustrated in this way: when a man suddenly sees a child about to fall into a well, he immediately feels alarmed and worried; this is not because he wants to make friends with the parents, nor because he wants to get a good reputation among his acquaintances, nor because he dislikes the crying. (This response to human suffering belongs to his *xing* [nature]). Seeing it in this way, a human being who has no sense of commiseration is not a human being at all. Similarly, a human being without the sense of shame and abhorrence (of evils), or without the sense of unacceptability (of improper things), or without the sense of right and wrong, ceases to be a human being. The sense of commiseration is the beginning of *ren* [humanity], the sense of shame and abhorrence is the beginning of *yi* [righteousness], the sense of unacceptability is the beginning of *li* [propriety], and the sense of right and wrong is the beginning of *zhi* [wisdom]. Every human being has the four beginnings in his mind, just as he has the four limbs in his body. One possessing these four beginnings but saying that he cannot achieve these virtues is self-destroying.[41]

Since the human being possesses the above four basic faculties or spiritual dispositions which are innate, the way to moral transformation is to develop these innate faculties or spiritual dispositions. What one has to do is to maintain the mastery of the mind over the physical body.[42] Here Lao observes that Mencius and Zhuangzi hold in common that the physical body is not where the real self resides. However, in sharp contrast to Zhuangzi, the place of morality is central to the concerns of Mencius. To the successor of Confucius the moral mind is not transcendent to the world. "The moral mind is, on the contrary, the origin of the proper order of the world."[43] That is why the core of Mencius Confucianism is moral and political philosophy. To Mencius, to be worthy of the name human, human being should develop her capacity of self mastery of the mind over her desires, emotions and inclinations in order to achieve moral transformation of the self. Understood in this

---

[40] *Mencius*, Ch. 6, Part I, "Gaozi, I"(<告子上>). The Chinese text reads: 「心之所同然者何也?謂理也,義也。聖人先得我心之所同然耳。故理義之悅我心,猶芻豢之悅我口。」 English translation by Lao Sze-Kwang in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 286.

[41] *Mencius*, Ch. 2, Part I, "Gungxun Chou, I" (<公孫丑上>). The Chinese text reads: 「人皆有不忍人之心。……所以謂人皆有不忍人之心者,今人乍見孺子將入於井,皆有怵惕惻忍之心;非所以內交於孺子之父母也,非所以要譽與鄉黨朋友也,非惡其聲而然也。由是觀之,惻忍之心,仁之端也;羞惡之心,義之端也;辭讓之心,禮之端也;是非之心,智之端也。人之有是四端也,猶其有四體也。有是四端而自謂不能者,自賊者也。」English translation by Lao Sze-Kwang in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 287; slightly modified. An alternative English translation can be found in "The Book of Mencius", Ch. 2A:5, in *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy*, ed. and Eng. trans. Wing-Tsit Chan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 65.

[42] Lao Sze-Kwang in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 286.

[43] Lao Sze-Kwang in "On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …", *op. cit*., p. 286.

way, the practical maxim which leads to moral transformation in Mencius, according to Lao, is nothing other than “the purification of the will”.[44] Purification of the will is the road to moral enlightenment and self-transformation. Lao’s interpretation has a strong Kantian resonance: in Kant’s discussion of the pure practical reason, moral conduct is carried out through the pure will which is the rational will. This is the will to good in its pure state.

After surveying in a concise way the doctrines of Zhuangzi as representative of Pre-Qin Daoist philosophy and of Mencius as representative of Pre-Qin Confucian philosophy, Lao concludes that though their teachings manifest sharp contrast, their common traits are clear, namely providing an answer to the practical question of “where should we go” instead of the cognitive question of “what it is”. Thus both Zhuangzi’s Daoism and Mencius’ Confucianism are Chinese orientative philosophies.

Lao has given more detailed analysis of other forms of orientative philosophy, namely the moral philosophy of the Ming Confucian Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and his followers. These studies concern the celebrated “gonghu lun” (「工夫論」): the theory of *askēsis* or spiritual exercise in the Chinese context. Wang Yangming’s contribution can be seen as further developing the moral inquiry of Mencius: while accepting Mencius’ affirmation of the self-mastery role of the moral mind, Wang Yangming inquires into the practical maxims which could lead to the unfolding of the faculty of moral judgment (「致良知」). The complete unfolding of the faculty of moral judgment will enable the moral subject to attain the state of pure and rational will which is the state of supreme moral autonomy. According to Lao, Wang Yangming’s theory of *askēsis* is the foremost example of orientative philosophy in classical Chinese culture.[45]

8.3 “Self-Transformation” and Orientative Philosophy in the Final Foucault: Ethical Turn and Self-Transformation of the Subject

8.3.1 Contribution and Insufficiency of Archaeology of Knowledge and Genealogy of Power in the Earlier Foucault

Since the publication of *Histoire de folie à l’âge classique* by Foucault in 1961, whether this study of the history of modern European thought belongs to philosophy has been a subject of dispute inside and outside France. If we consider the question from a certain dominant perspective issued from the history of Western

[44] Lao Sze-Kwang in “On Understanding Chinese Philosophy …”, *op. cit*., p. 290.

[45] *C.f.* 勞思光Lao Sze-Kwang:〈王門功夫問題之爭議及儒學精神之特色〉(“The Controversy on the Problem of Askēsis among the Followers of Wang Yangming and the Characteristics of Confucian Spirit”), in 《新亞學術集刊》(*New Asia Academic Bulletin*), Hong Kong, 1982, Vol. 3, pp. 1–29; later in 《思辯錄》 (*Philosophical Essays*) (台北:東大圖書) (Taipei: Dong Da Press), 1996, pp. 55–97.

philosophy, Foucault's studies will easily be denied as philosophy. This is because the Western philosophical tradition since Parmenides regards metaphysics as its principal discipline. Though the term "metaphysics" was not invented by Aristotle, he named the subject matter of metaphysics "first philosophy" to which all other disciplines are subordinated. Until the time of Descartes, this situation remained more or less unchanged. It was not until Kant, whose earlier dogmatic sleep was awaken by Hume's skeptical spirit, that the first radical critique against the domination of metaphysics in the Western philosophical tradition was attempted. Kant's critical enterprise contributed a great deal to laying the philosophical foundation of modern scientific knowledge. However, though ground-breaking, Kant's epistemology was established against the background of the natural scientific revolution of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe without reference to other domains of human knowledge, which emerged successively as various branches of the human sciences in the following two centuries. In addition, the Kantian approach is a-historical and cannot provide any explanation with regard to the historical conditions under which the birth of modern scientific knowledge is possible. A third short-coming of Kantian epistemology is its formal character: it limits itself with explanation of the formal conditions of possibility of natural scientific knowledge, but never touches on the rich varieties of knowledge about the concrete human subject. In this regard, the contribution of the phenomenological movement since Husserl has been far more concrete and rich. For example, phenomenological philosophers' clarification of the intentional structure of all kinds of mental activities, in particular perception as the basis of deployment of all kinds of human experience, the human subject as carnal subject, as the speaking subject, as sexual being, as mortal being, and as communal being, etc.: all these rich thematizations are far beyond the reach of the formal epistemology of the Kantian type. However, the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl and his followers suffers from the similar defect as Kantian transcendental philosophy: both are a-historical in nature, hence both are unable to provide the key to understanding the historical dimension underlying the constitution of human knowledge.

The contribution of the earlier Foucault consists in overcoming the a-historical approach of transcendental philosophy, be it of Kantian or phenomenological orientation. Foucault is able to lead back to the historical setting of European culture to understand how knowledge about the concrete modes of being of the human subject is constituted. These concrete domains of knowledge include: how Europeans since the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries appear as mentally normal or pathological subjects (the task of *History of Madness at the Classical Age*),[46] as physically healthy or ill subjects (the work of *The Birth of the Clinic*),[47] as subjects obeying the

[46] Michel Foucault, *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1st ed. 1961, Paris: Plon; 2nd ed. 1972, Paris: Gallimard & 3rd ed. 1979, Paris: Gallimard, collection TEL); *History of Madness*, Eng. trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

[47] Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*: *une archéologie du regard médical* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); *The Birth of the Clinic*: *An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Eng. trans. A. M. Sheridan (London: Tavistok Publications, 1973).

law or as criminals (the work of *Discipline and Punish*).[48] These new domains of knowledge can be seen as disciplines providing us with concrete ontological knowledge about the being of human subject in a particular historical epoch of a given culture, namely that of modern Europe. At the same time these disciplines provide us with concrete knowledge about the historical and social conditions of the birth of various domains of human sciences in modern Europe such as psychiatry, clinical medicine, criminology, criminal psychology and criminal law, etc. All these domains of human sciences are objective knowledge about the human subject; they were born within relevant social institutions in a given historical epoch under a given social-cultural setting. If there were no asylums for the insane or psychiatric hospitals, there would be no psychiatry as a science; if there were no clinics or modern hospitals, there would be no pathology or clinical medicine as a science; if there were no incarceration centres or prisons, there would be no criminology or criminal psychology as a science. All these social institutions and their relative concepts and discourses fulfill a double function. On the one hand they provide the representational space for the descriptions of the concrete modes of being of the human subject, rendering possible all propositions bearing truth values about the concrete modes of being of the human subject. On the other hand, they prescribe our experience of the concrete modes of being of the human subject. Psychiatric hospitals, clinics and prisons are places which prescribe activities and conducts of psychiatric and physical patients as well as prisoners on the one hand, and their relationship with doctors and prison guards on the other. These institutions condition our experience and knowledge of the above mentioned concrete modes of being of the human subject. Hence the various studies of the earlier Foucault can be understood as an inquiry around the following central question: in what way does a certain domain of knowledge about the human subject (her concrete mode of being) interact with the relevant rules and normative conditions in a given historical epoch and within a given social-cultural setting in such a way that a corresponding mode of subjectivation takes a concrete historical shape?[49] In the history of modern European culture, knowledge about madmen, patients and prisoners reveal modes of subjectivation which are more or less particular. Foucault has also studied the more basic, thus more universal modes of subjectivation of modern Europeans. These modes of subjectivation throw light on the following aspects of the ontological constitution of the human subject: how the human being constitutes and understands herself as the speaking subject, as the subject of labour, and as the living subject? These three basic modes of subjectivation in modern Western culture are constituted, as shown in *The Order of Things*, respectively by linguistics, political economy and biology,

[48] Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*: *naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975); *Discipline and Punish*: *the Birth of the Prison*, Eng. trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

[49] Foucault explains the meaning of the study of the mode of subjectivation with reference to the human being as subject of sexual desire in the following terms: "What I planned was a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity in a particular culture." *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 10; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 4.

with general grammar, analysis of wealth and classification of living beings as their historical and scientific antecedent forms.[50]

Foucault's study of the modes of subjectivation is at the same time a study of the modes of objectivation of the human subject. For it focuses on how a human subject becomes object of knowledge of the human sciences on the one hand, and how the subject falls under a net work of power relations while she obeys rules and subjects herself to norms. Thus Foucault's work, which is at the same time an epistemological and ontological study (called archaeology), as well as a study of power relations (called genealogy), has the great merit of combining the study of ideas and discourses with the study of social institutions under given historical and cultural conditions in an articulated way. By never isolating the study of ideas nor power relations, Foucault avoids the criticism of either promoting a certain kind of ideology (thus without critical function), or neglecting the truth interest embedded in phenomena of power domination (thus without hermeneutic significance).[51]

Yet due to the overlapping of the study of modes of subjectivation with that of modes of objectivation, an important aspect of the concrete mode of being of the human subject remains untouched by the earlier Foucault, namely the human being as subject of desire. As being of volition who enjoys freedom, how can the human subject manifest herself as an autonomous subject through the realization of her desires in concrete social historical situations? The mode of subjectivation at this level is no more in coincidence with the mode of objectivation of the human subject as object of certain modes of scientific knowledge or power relations. It rather shows the human being as moral or ethical subject: through the relations with other humans and with herself, a human being manifests herself as an autonomous and sovereign subject, that she is a subject of freedom. Though the problem of freedom was always one of Foucault's main concerns, this aspect of subjectivation remains unthematized in his earlier studies.

[50] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*: *une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Eng. trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1970).

[51] Foucault has given a summary of the overall achievement of his earlier works in the following terms: "[T]he work I had undertaken previously—having to do first with medicine and psychiatry, and then with punitive power and disciplinary practices—provided me with the tools I needed. The analysis of discursive practices made it possible to trace the formation of disciplines (*savoirs*) while escaping the dilemma of science versus ideology. And the analysis of power relations and their technologies made it possible to view them as open strategies, while escaping the alternative of a power conceived of as domination or exposed as a simulacrum". *L'usage des plaisirs*, pp. 10–11; *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 4–5.

8.3.2 *Foucault's Ethical Turn:* Askēsis *(Techniques of the Self) and the Formation of the Autonomous Ethical Subject*

It is now well-known that Foucault's ethical turn came to surface through the second volume of his late work *The History of Sexuality*. Why an ethical turn has to be operated through the study of sexuality? Is sexuality not simply the biological aspect of human life? Does it have any bearing on morality? Is it not something at the antipode of our moral concerns, as witnessed by the following precept of the Chinese Sung Confucians: "Save the celestial *logos*, get rid of human desires (存天理, 去人欲)"?

However, the above precept betrays only an entirely negative attitude toward sexuality. Sexuality is rather one of the most universal positive constituents of human existence. Thus it constitutes one of the most basic phenomenological givenness for any philosophical anthropology. Prior to Foucault, Merleau-Ponty has already thematized human sexuality in his *magnum opus Phenomenology of Perception*: human being is necessarily a sexual being. The sexual life and sexual experience of a human being is an important part of her personal history, and has a close connection to his individuality. In addition, Merleau-Ponty has shown that human sexuality manifests the basic metaphysical structure of human existence in the purest way: the dialectics of autonomy and dependence.[52] This is because the practice and accomplishment of sexual activities are necessarily dependent on others. In sexuality, we encounter the other in the most direct and naked way. Through this intimate relation of the highest degree with the other, a state of perfect communion with the sexual partner as well as sublime voluptuous pleasure is attained. This is a mode of human existence unable to be attained by other activities of the human order, thus sexual activity is an end-in-itself, a purposive activity. Since sexuality is a practice which must be undertaken and accomplished through the partnership with a concrete other, it is a purposive activity involving the relation with an other. Through sexuality I accomplish on the one hand a purposive activity and exist as a being of end-in-itself and not as a mere instrument, and on the other I assist my partner to accomplish the same purposive activity which enables her to exist as a being of end-in-itself too. Thus sexuality has a moral character. It is shown through the fact that it is a practice with another which enables both oneself and the other to exist as a being of end-in-itself by accomplishing a unique purposive activity. In sexuality I exist both as an ethical subject—I help myself to accomplish a purposive activity—and a moral subject—I help the other to accomplish this same purposive activity. But without the other, neither myself nor the other can fulfill or realize the desire to lead a purposively autonomous existence. The moral character of sexuality is precisely shown through the fact that it is purposive activity engaging at the same time myself and the other.

---

[52] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), pp. 194–195; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. Donald A. Landes (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 170–171.

In the Second volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault points out the two senses of the term morality in ordinary usage. As a kind of normative activity, morality exists most often and first of all as a moral code.[53] It is a set of prescriptive rules and value principles with respect to human conduct. They are recommended to individuals and groups explicitly or implicitly through social institutions such as the family, educational institutions, churches and the working place, etc. However, morality can also denote phenomena belonging to "the morality of behaviours".[54] If we consider moral behaviours from the perspective of one's attitude or response toward moral code, they can be understood as obeying moral rules or resisting to moral precepts, complying with moral recommendations or transgression of moral prohibitions. Transgression of moral prohibitions may bring about legal consequence. Since jurisprudence represents a coercion with respect to individual behaviour, morality as moral code often appears as constraints to our conducts, rather than what Kant considers to be the domain of activities in which we can accomplish ourselves as existence of end-in-itself and autonomous subject.

Yet to Foucault a third sense of morality exists. It refers to another sense of moral conduct which is "the manner in which one ought to form oneself as moral subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code."[55] Face to the same set of moral code, we can have different ways of response to it. Through the different ways of reaction to moral code, we can show ourselves as subject of moral conduct. For example, the observation of conjugal fidelity is a moral code common to most cultures. Different modes of practice can be derived from it, for example strict observance of interdiction, moderation, or practice of austerity, etc. Foucault points out that there are different ways of practicing conjugal fidelity. One way is to observe it as an external constraint. Another way is to control one's own desires and try hard to resist temptations such that one can attain "mastery of desires".[56] In other words,

> There are also possible differences in the forms of elaboration, of ethical work (*travail éthique*) that one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt at self-transformation into moral subject of one's behavior. Thus, sexual austerity can be practiced through a long effort of learning, memorization, and assimilation of a systematic ensemble of precepts, and through a regular checking of conduct aimed at measuring the exactness with which one is applying these rules. It can be practiced in the form of a sudden, all-embracing, and definitive renunciation of pleasures; it can also be practiced in the form of a relentless combat whose vicissitudes … can have meaning and value in themselves; and it can be practiced through a decipherment as painstaking, continuous, and detailed as possible, of the movements of desire in all its hidden forms, including the most obscure.[57]

---

[53] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 32; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 25.

[54] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 33; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 26.

[55] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 33; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 26.

[56] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 33; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 26.

[57] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 34; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 27, translation slightly modified.

This ethical work implies a certain relation with one-self (rapport à soi). It is thus already a relation of reflection on oneself. But this reflective relation to oneself "is not simply a 'self-consciousness', but self-constitution as 'moral subject', a process in which the individual delimits that part of herself that will constitute the object of this moral practice, defines her position relative to the precept she will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as her moral goal. And in order to do so, she acts on herself, undertakes to know herself, monitors herself, goes through tests, improves herself, transforms herself."[58] This kind of moral behaviours is no mere response to moral code. It is an ethical work which constitutes the practitioner as an ethical subject. The ethical work in question is "ascetics" or "practices of the self" ("pratiques de soi"),[59] through which the process of subjectivation is accomplished.

The ethical work through ascetics and practices of the self is a practice involving knowledge of the self and reflection on the self. Its aim is self-transformation of the subject in order to constitute oneself as moral subject. Since this ethical work includes the subject's self knowledge and reflection on the self, it is also a kind of philosophical activity. However, this kind of self-knowledge and reflection on one-self is not guided primarily by a purely theoretical interest. On the contrary, it aims at achieving self-transformation as moral subject. This kind of philosophical activity is not cognitive philosophy, but orientative philosophy in the sense suggested by Lao Sze-Kwang.

8.3.3 Techniques of the Self in Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy: Morality of Autonomy and Aesthetic of Existence through Self-Mastery and Askēsis (Orientative Philosophy in Twofold Sense)

Foucault's inquiry into the mode of subjectivation as moral subject through sexual practices in Western Antiquity leads to the following discovery: thinkers of the Hellenistic-Roman period practiced a kind of autonomous morality through the pursuit of *aphrodisia*, sexual pleasure. Foucault admitted that he had not found a systematic discourse on the morality of autonomy through sexual practice from any single Hellenistic-Roman philosopher. However, this autonomous morality is a basic feature of the thought of Greco-Roman philosophers from the Fourth Century BC to the Second Century AD, in particular in the Stoics. Foucault concludes the ethical significance of his study of the sexual experience of this period of Western Antiquity in the following terms:

> We have seen how sexual behavior is constituted, in Greek thought, as a domain of ethical practice in the form of *aphrodisia*, of pleasurable acts situated in an agonistic field of forces difficult to control. In order to take the form of a conduct that is rationally and morally

[58] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 35; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 28; translation modified.

[59] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 35; *The Use of Pleasure*, p. 28.

> admissible, these acts require a strategy of moderation and timing, of quantity and opportunity; and this strategy aims at an exact self-mastery—as at its point of perfection and culmination—whereby the subject will be 'stronger than himself' even in the power that he exercises over others. Now, the requirement of austerity that is implied by the constitution of this self-mastering subject is not presented in the form of a universal law, which each and every individual would have to obey, but rather as a principle of stylization of conduct for those who wish to give their existence the most graceful and accomplished form possible.[60]

By returning to the Greek world as the source of Western thinking, Foucault finds that the attitude of the Greeks toward sexuality is very different from Europeans of the Victorian age in the Nineteenth Century who has already stepped into modernity. Europeans under the Victorian age adopted an attitude of totally unconditional submission to the moral code of their times; it is a state of sexual repression. While the Greeks did not take a repressive attitude toward sexuality, they endorsed neither the attitude of laissez-faire. On the contrary they adopted an attitude of moderation and self-mastery in their pursuit of sexual pleasure. Sexuality is one of the important domains of techniques of the self for the Greeks. Through techniques of the self in the domain of sexuality, the Greeks aimed at achieving self-mastery; and this is the place where the moral character of sexuality resides, as we have indicated above. When sexual relation is meant to be moral conduct, techniques of the self in the domain of sexuality is a road leading to morality of autonomy, for the subject of sexual experience accomplishes the state of perfection and culmination of individual existence through the practice of self-mastery on the basis of good exercise of techniques of the self. At its point of culmination, what moral conduct succeeds in bringing about through sexual pleasure is also a state of aesthetic existence. Since a state of aesthetic existence is a state of pleasure, the state of sexual pleasure is itself a state of aesthetic existence. On the other hand, the subjects engaging themselves in sexual relation with their partners are not just obeying some kind of rules or prescriptions received from outside; they observe the principle that sexual activity should be accomplished in a stylistic way to obtain the optimal result in terms of sexual pleasure while not transgressing any rules. This mode of existence mediated by the self-mastered pursuit of sexual pleasure is an aesthetic mode of existence. In other words, techniques of the self in the domain of sexuality enable the Greeks to actualize themselves as subject of autonomous morality as well as subject of aesthetic existence. This is a double mode of subjectivation through a single form of practice because two different modes of subjectivation, moral and aesthetic, can be distinguished from this unique experience. This means two forms of self-transformation are actualized through techniques of the self in the domain of sexuality: the emergence of an ethical subject on the one hand and of a subject of aesthetic existence on the other. Understood in this way, the philosophy on the techniques of the self and their cultivation is an orientative philosophy of a twofold sense: it provides guidance to the question "what should we do" in a double direction—be an

[60] Foucault, *L'usage des plaisirs*, pp. 274–275; *The Use of Pleasure*, pp. 250–251, translation slightly modified.

autonomous moral subject and lead a stylistic way of existence—through a single form of practice.

In *The Care of the Self*, volume 3 of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault calls this kind of practices of the self which is reflective exercise of the self on oneself "cultivation of the self" (culture de soi).[61] It is a form of practice which establishes a relation with oneself. Its ultimate purpose is to accomplish an ethics of self-mastery.[62] In the eyes of Foucault, among all the Hellenistic-Roman philosophers, Seneca is the one who explains most clearly the meaning of cultivation of the self:

> This is the only part of our life that is sacred and inviolable, put beyond the reach of human mishaps, and removed from the dominion of fortune, the part which is disrupted neither by poverty, fear, nor attack of disease; this can neither be troubled nor snatched away—it is an everlasting and calm possession.[63]

Foucault draws our attention to the fact that the Hellenistic-Roman philosophers found that once when we are engaged in this kind of reflective attitude toward oneself, not only we can exercise self-master over oneself, we can also accept ourselves. This brings about a tranquility of the mind in such a way that it generates a sense of pleasure toward oneself and in oneself ("se plaît à soi-même").[64] This view is shared by Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.[65] Yet Foucault points out immediately, and in a rather solemn ton, that this kind of pleasure toward oneself is different from the kind of sensuous pleasure denoted by the term *voluptas*. The pleasure brought about by *voluptas* depends on the stimulation from something outside. Though it has a strong intensity, it is violent, unstable, without guarantee, of short duration; in short it is out of our own control.[66] Foucault cites Seneca again to illustrate how much the Stoics recommend the serenity of this kind of pleasure toward oneself and in oneself:

> '*Disce gaudere*, learn how to feel joy', says Seneca to Lucilius: 'I want you to be never deprived of gladness. I want it to be abundant in your house. It will be abundant on condition that it is inside you… It will never come to a stop when once you will have found its source… Look toward the true good; rejoice only in that which comes from your own reserve [de tuo]. But what is this reserve? Yourself and the best part of you.[67]

The understanding that the Stoics emphasize the accomplishment of autonomous morality through ascetics and practices of the self is not the personal discovery of Foucault. Yet what is particular in Foucault is that he has supplemented the autonomous morality of the Stoics with a reading of aesthetics of existence.

---

[61] Michel Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, *Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 51–85; *The Care of the Self*, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, Eng. trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), pp. 39–68.

[62] Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 82; *The Care of the Self*, p. 65.

[63] Seneca, *De la brièveté de la vie* (*On the Shortness of Life*), X, 4 and XV, 5; cited from Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 83; *The Care of the Self*, p. 66, translation modified.

[64] Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 83; *The Care of the Self*, p. 66.

[65] Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 83, note 2; *The Care of the Self*, p. 245, note 69.

[66] Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 83; *The Care of the Self*, p. 66.

[67] Seneca, *Lettres à Lucilius* (*Letters to Lucilius*), 23, 3–6; cited from Foucault, *Le souci de soi*, p. 84; *The Care of the Self*, pp. 66–67, translation modified.

8.3.4 *Ancient Western Philosophical Practice as Spirituality or Spiritual Exercise*

A hurried reader of Foucault's later writings would probably form the opinion that the author of *The History of Sexuality* regards the Greek's sexual practice as the prototype of techniques of the self leading to the accomplishment of autonomous morality. A closer reading of Foucault's other late writings will show that the contrary is true. To Foucault, there are other forms of practices of the self in the Hellenistic-Roman period which aim at the transformation of the self into an autonomous moral subject. In a study entitled "L'écriture de soi" ("Writing of the Self"),[68] Foucault shows that thinkers and a whole cultivated public of this period used correspondence with relatives and friends on the one hand, and on the other *hupomnēmata* which are individual notebooks serving as memory aids to practice the cultivation of the self. Through these kinds of writings of oneself on her own self, the subject cultivates the techniques of memorization, self-examinations, meditations, silence and listening to oneself and to others. So correspondence and *hupomnēmata* as writing becomes a kind of *askēsis*, a reflective spiritual exercise on oneself, a cultivation of relation with oneself. On the other hand, exchange of letters with others is a kind of writing both for oneself and for others. It is an act of opening of oneself toward others, and thus can serve the function of caring for oneself and for others. Foucault explains that the Stoics' abundant use of exchange of letters (e.g. Seneca with Lucilius, Marcus Aurelius with Fronto) for the purpose of self-examination and advice to others reveals that writing can serve as a mode of subjectivation in the formation of autonomous ethical subject.

Foucault's discovery of the various modes of subjectivation through *askēsis*, i.e. bodily or spiritual exercise of different forms in the Greco-Roman era leads him to a new understanding and a new definition of philosophical practice in Western Antiquity in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. Traditionally the maxim "know thyself" ("*gnōthi seauton*") was supposed to be the maxim of the Greek philosophical practice. Foucault thinks that this understanding is the result of the restriction brought about by the Cartesian approach since the Modern era. In fact, for the Greeks the "know thyself" is valid only on condition that it is subordinate to the maxim of "care of the self" ("*epimeleia heautou*") as the supreme maxim of philosophical exercise.[69] Thus Foucault proposes a new definition of the term "philosophy", which is a rather straight forward but limited approach to truth without the need of spiritual exercise to bring about the necessary preliminary transformation of the philosophizing subject.

> We will call 'philosophy' the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject's access to truth.[70]

---

[68] Michel Foucault, "L'écriture de soi", in *Dits et écrits*, IV (Paris : Gallimard, 1994), pp. 415–430; "Self Writing", in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, *vol. 1*, *Ethics*: *Subjectivity and Tru*th, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, The New Press, 1997), pp. 207–222.

[69] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, pp. 15–16; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 14.

[70] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, p. 16; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 15.

In contrast to philosophy as the modern form of search for truth, Foucault proposes to call "spirituality" the form of quest for truth practiced in Western Antiquity. Spirituality is

> the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on herself in order to have access to the truth. We will call 'spirituality' then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc., which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.[71]

In other words, the knowing subject must first of all transform herself into a subject of responsibility with regard to herself as the precondition of truth inquiry. It is a long reflective exercise of the self on the self which is "a progressive transformation of the self by the self for which one takes responsibility in a long labour of ascesis (*askēsis*)".[72] Thus the ancient form of philosophical practice is neither a naïve approach to the quest for truth nor a mundane way of life, but an exercise of self-responsibility conditioned by self-transformation. The philosophizing subject must become an ethical subject before she can become a knowing subject. The act of knowing must subject itself under certain disciplinary exercise of self-examination, it is thus an act of self-responsibility. The quest for truth is part of the whole process of cultivation of the self in which cognitive interest is subordinate to ethical concern: for Foucault this is the profound sense of the primacy of the maxim "care of the self" over the maxim "know thyself".

We know now the ethical turn of the final Foucault was made under the influence of the studies of a number of historians and philosophers of Western Antiquity in France.[73] The role played by the work of Pierre Hadot, French specialist of Hellenistic-Roman philosophy, on Foucault's ethical turn was particularly significant.[74] In a now well-known article, Hadot points out that "one of the fundamental aspects of philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman eras is: … philosophy was a way of life. This is not only to say that it was a specific type of moral conduct… Rather, it means that philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life."[75] However, when Hadot says that philosophy is a way of life, he does not refer to daily life. Rather, he refers to a kind of life which is far away from mundane life; what he means is a radical transformation of our mode of existence.

---

[71] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, p. 16; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 15.

[72] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, p. 17; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 16.

[73] Foucault's own indication is found in *L'usage des plaisirs*, p. 14 (*The Use of Pleasure*, p. 8) and *Le souci de soi*, p. 57, note 1 (*The Care of the Self*, p. 243, note 3.).

[74] See Pierre Hadot, "Réflections sur la notion de «culture de soi»", in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1st ed. 1993, 3rd. Ed. Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), p. 323; "Reflections on the Idea of Cultivation of the Self", in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*: *Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold Davidson, Eng. trans. Michael Chase (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1995), p. 206, and Foucault's own indication as reported in note 72.

[75] Hadot, "La philosophie comme manière de voir", in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, p. 290; "Philosophy as a Way of Life", in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 265.

Hadot further explains this by the examples of Socrates and Plato as the author of *Symposium*: "Philosophy thus took on the form of an exercise of the thought, will, and the totality of one's being, the goal of which is to achieve a state practically inaccessible to humankind: wisdom. Philosophy was a method of spiritual progress which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being."[76] To many Western philosophers today, wisdom is a pre-theoretical, i.e., pre-philosophical state. Yet to Hadot, the history of Ancient Western philosophy shows that "wisdom was a way of life which brought peace of mind (*ataraxia*), inner freedom (*autarkeia*), and a cosmic consciousness."[77] This is a state of sublime in both the ethical and aesthetic senses of the term. In other words, the state of wisdom which requires a prerequisite spiritual progress of self-transformation is the superior state of philosophy. But philosophy understood in this way could not be purely cognitive philosophy; it can only be orientative philosophy, because spiritual exercise and self-transformation are the basic operative characteristics of this form of philosophical practice.

If our analysis above is correct, we can say that Foucault's ethical turn is the turn from an essentially cognitive philosophy of his early years to orientative philosophy of his final years. This took place under the influence, at least partly, of the works of Hadot, who understands precisely Ancient Western philosophy not as purely cognitive philosophy. Taking Socrates, some of the Platonic dialogues and Stoicism as prime examples, both Hadot and Foucault emphasize the characteristics of spiritual exercise and reflective practices leading to self-transformation of the philosophizing subject in Greco-Roman philosophy. But this characterization of Ancient Western philosophy fits well into Lao Sze-Kwang's concept of orientative philosophy understood as reflective exercise which brings about self-transformation guided by the ethical telos, though neither Hadot nor Foucault has used the very term of orientative philosophy.

8.4 Phenomenological Epoché: Husserl's Philosophical Practice as Orientative Philosophy?

In this last section, we would like to attempt a new understanding of Husserl's philosophical practice in the light of the above discussions around Lao Sze-Kwang's concept of orientative philosophy and the common traits it shares with Hadot and Foucault's characterization of Ancient Western philosophy as spirituality or spiritual exercise. The guiding terms of our discussion will be the philosophizing act as act of self-transformation and the philosophizing subject as subject of self-responsibility.

---

[76] Hadot, "La philosophie comme manière de voir", in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, p. 290; "Philosophy as a Way of Life", in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 265.

[77] Hadot, "La philosophie comme manière de voir", in *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, p. 291; "Philosophy as a Way of Life", in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 265.

It is well-known that phenomenological philosophy distinguishes itself from other currents of philosophical thought by its pronounced attention to methodological considerations. Upon the examples of the Stoics and Descartes, Husserl has invented the method of phenomenological epoché and reduction as the basic operative prerequisite for any phenomenological inquiry. As the gateway to philosophical reflection, the phenomenologist must first of all perform the epoché with regard to any unexamined opinion or judgment relative to the subject matter of study, even though the judgment bears with itself a scientific appearance. This first level understanding of the function of the epoché is rather psychological, because attention is drawn to the particular object under inquiry only and we suspend our belief in any judgment about it. There is a second and deeper level of understanding of the function of epoché, namely the ontological level. In order to go directly to the subject matter of inquiry and let the things themselves show themselves as they are under our observing eyes, we must avoid ourselves to be distracted by any mundane interest which is often the source of our prejudice. Thus Husserl explains the performance of epoché as a change of attitude toward the entire mundane world: we adopt a neutral position with regard to any value judgment and judgment of ontic validity not only with reference to the specific object of study in question, but even with reference to the whole natural world. The natural world and all objects within it still exist, but we adopt a disinterested attitude toward them in order to conduct our observation and inquiry without prejudice. Because of this disinterested attitude toward the mundane world, Husserl has described the practice of epoché as "comparable to a religious conversion" in the *Crisis*.[78] What the practice of the universal epoché brings about, by turning away from the natural attitude with regard to the world, is "at first a complete personal transformation … which however, over and above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to humankind as such."[79]

In other words, to Husserl the effect of epoché is the self-transformation of the subject which practices this radical act of reflection. Just as Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Hadot have emphasized on self-transformation as the basic characteristic of the philosophizing act, to Husserl epoché is an exercise resulting in the self-transformation of the subject engaging herself in self-reflection as an act of self-responsibility. And the self-transformation takes its course in two times. At the first instance, self-transformation occurs at the personal level:

> Human personal life proceeds in stages of self-reflection and self-responsibility from isolated occasional acts of this form to the stage of universal self-reflection and self-responsibility, up to the point of seizing in consciousness the idea of autonomy, the idea of the resolve of the will to shape one's whole personal life into the synthetic unity of a life of universal self-responsibility.[80]

[78] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 140 *Crisis*, p. 137.

[79] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 140; *Crisis*, p. 137.

[80] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 272; *Crisis*, p. 338.

At a later instance, the transformative effects of the epoché extend to a more universal level: a whole community of new persons is formed, the community of philosophers acting in self-responsibility with regard to the entire humanity.

> There is an inseparable correlation here between individual persons and communities by virtue of their inner immediate and mediate interrelatedness in all their interests … and also in the necessity of allowing individual-personal reason to come to ever more perfect realization only as communal-personal reason and vice versa.[81]

Hence philosophy as activity of self-reflection and self-responsibility is not only a personal vocation, but the vocation of the whole philosophical community too: "Thus philosophy spreads in a twofold manner, as the broadening vocational community of philosophers and as a concurrently broadening community movement of educational formation [*Bildung*]."[82] This vocational movement cannot stop at the border of any national soil. It aims at the birth of "a new humanity" ("ein neues Menschentum"): "human beings who [live] the philosophical life, who create philosophy in the manner of a vocation as a new sort of cultural configuration".[83] In short, philosophy as an "immense cultural transformation" is an affair of the entire humankind.

Epoché as birth of a new humanity: this line of thought appeared in Husserl's remarks to his young assistant Eugen Fink's 6th *Cartesian Meditation*: "Man, becomes phenomenologist, has overcome his naive humanity; but even in the phenomenological change of stance he finds himself 'as man in the world', now, however, as 'new' man."[84] The same line of thought appeared again in the Vienna Lecture of 1935 cited earlier in which Husserl spoke of three kinds of new attitude brought about by the performance of the epoché.[85] All these three kinds of new attitude are characterized by Husserl as "reorientation" (Umstellung) of the attitude of original natural life.[86]

---

[81] Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 272–273; *Crisis*, p. 338.

[82] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 333; *Crisis*, p. 286. Husserl's thinking of two levels of philosophical responsibility—both individual and communal—can be found in a manuscript entitled "Meditation über die Idee eines individuellen und Gemeinschaftslebens in absoluter Selbstverantwortung", collected as Annex No. 1 in *Erste Philosophie* (*1923/24*), *Zweiter Teil*: *Theorie der phänomenologischen Reduktion*, *Husserliana VIII*, ed. Rudolf Boehm (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1959), pp. 193–202; "Méditation sur l'idée d'une vie individuelle et communautaire dans l'absolue responsabilité de soi-même", French trans. Laurent Perreau, *Alter*, No. 13, 2005, pp. 279–289.

[83] Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 332–333; *Crisis*, p. 286.

[84] E. Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil I. Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*, Hrsg. Hans Ebeling, Jann Holl und Guy van Kerckhoven, *Husserliana-Dokumente Bd. II/I* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 214; *Sixth Cartesian Meditation. The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*, Eng. trans. Ronald Bruzina (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 189.

[85] Husserl, *Krisis*, pp. 328–329; *Crisis*, pp. 282–283.

[86] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 326; *Crisis*, p. 280. In the course of explication of the characteristic of the new attitude generated by epoché, Husserl spoke of "reorientation" (Umstellung) or "to reorient oneself" ("sich umstellen") seven times in just two pages. Cf., *Krisis*, pp. 326–327; *Crisis*, pp. 280–281.

(i) The first kind of new attitude is meant to serve the interests of natural life such as the practical attitude of the politician. This is a higher level practical attitude in comparison to the attitude of the daily life. But since it still serves natural interests, it is still natural praxis and belongs to the natural attitude. This kind of interests does not bear with it an absolutely universal vocation.
(ii) The second kind of new attitude is the purely theoretical attitude of the philosopher. This attitude is a voluntary epoché of all natural praxis. It brings along with itself a universal vocation, disregarding practical interests of any form and is an end in itself.
(iii) The third kind of new attitude is "the synthesis of the two interests accomplished in the transition from the theoretical to the practical attitude, such that the *thêoria* (universal science), arising within a closed unity under the epoché of all praxis, is called … to serve humankind in a new way."[87]

The third kind of new attitude is a new practical attitude. It has a new sort of praxis in view: by undertaking the critical examination of all life goals, cultural products and cultural systems, it aims at elevating humankind through universal scientific reason to "transform it from bottom up into a new humanity made capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights."[88] This new attitude is a philosophizing attitude which has a vocation in view: by reorienting the universal critical cognitive stance against any unquestioned prevailing opinion or tradition in view of the quest for unconditioned truth, it brings about "a far-reaching self-transformation of the whole praxis of human existence, i.e. the whole of cultural life."[89] This is precisely the task of the historically oriented transcendental phenomenological philosopher whose former disinterestedness toward mundane human affairs serves now a supreme ethical goal: self-transformation of unreflective naïve human existence into a new humanity conscious of her self-responsibility.

It is in view of this supreme ethical *telos* that Husserl speaks of philosophers as "functionaries of humankind" in the plural:

> In our philosophizing, then … we are *functionaries of humankind*. The quite personal responsibility of our own true being as philosophers, our inner personal vocation, bears within itself at the same time the responsibility for the true being of humankind; the latter is, necessarily, being toward a *telos* and can only come to realization, *if at all*, through philosophy—through us, *if* we are philosophers in all seriousness.[90]

In the modern world of crisis, philosophers as a community have the vocation of reorienting the whole of human existence by bringing about the necessary self-transformation of humankind toward cultural renewal.[91] Otherwise the whole

[87] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 329; *Crisis*, p. 283.

[88] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 329; *Crisis*, p. 283.

[89] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 333; *Crisis*, p. 287.

[90] Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 15; *Crisis*, p. 17.

[91] Husserl has written a whole set of five essays on cultural renewal in the post World War I years, the famous *Kaizo* articles published mostly first in Japan in the 1920s. They are now collected in *Aufsätze und Vorträge* (*1922–1937*), *Husserliana XXVII*, *op. cit*., pp. 3–93.

human civilization will degenerate into barbarianism. Seen under this optic, Husserl's vision of philosophy can be nothing other than orientative philosophy in the sense that we have discussed above.

While the last Foucault has criticized modern European philosophers since Descartes for limiting philosophy to a straight forward and naïve approach to the quest for truth, it is quite probable that he counted Husserl as belonging to what he called the "Cartesian moment" of philosophy.[92] On the one hand, we have amply explained above that the phenomenological attitude advocated by Husserl requires the enactment of the epoché which brings about the complete personal transformation of the reflective subject as a pre-requisite to a truly philosophical attitude. Thus Husserl cannot be presented as limiting philosophy to a straight forward and naïve approach to the quest for truth. On the contrary, Husserl's invention of the method of epoché serves precisely to overcome this naïveté. On the other hand, if we consider the fact that Husserl has always declared that his entire philosophy was found in his manuscripts which count by several tens of thousands of sheets, and that Husserl has maintained a rich correspondence, philosophical and non-philosophical, with his family members, colleagues, friends and students during his adult life (ten volumes published to this date), is this the evidence that not only Hellenistic-Roman thinkers practice "l'écriture de soi"—writing of the self and on the self, but Husserl the contemporary Western philosopher is also a keen practitioner of this kind of *askēsis*? That Husserl self-consciously considers philosophy as a kind of techniques of the self in the sense of Foucault can be best seen in the following passage from a letter he wrote to Dorian Cairns on 21 March 1930:

> Please consider my writings as follows: they do not bring you results as learning formulas, but foundations for building *oneself*, methods for working *oneself*, problems to be solved *oneself*. This self is you, if you want to be a philosopher. However, one is a philosopher only by becoming and willing to become a philosopher.[93]

Thus not only the performance of the epoché is an act of self-transformation as a pre-requisite of phenomenological reflections in Husserl, his very practice of philosophical writing is a kind of writing of the self and on the self in the sense of Foucault.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

Though Husserl himself has declared that philosophy in the genuine sense is *pure thêoria* in the manner of Greek philosophy in terms of scientific rigour, this is not his ultimate vision of philosophy. For as *pure thêoria* philosophy cannot carry out the mission of "functionaries of humankind". While assigning to philosophy the

[92] Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, p. 19; *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, p. 17.

[93] Husserl's letter to Dorian Cairns, 21 March 1930, in Edmund Husserl, *Briefwechsel*, *Bd IV*, *Husserliana Dokumente*, Bd III, Teil 4, hrsg. Elisabeth & Karl Schuhmann (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), p. 24.

vocation of "functionaries of humankind", Husserl has placed *pure thêoria* at a position subordinate to its supreme ethical function, in a way parallel to the re-adjustment of the maxim of "know thyself" under the principle of "care of yourself" by Hadot and Foucault with respect to Hellenistic-Roman philosophy. Doesn't such move by Husserl the phenomenologist show that the philosophy he practices is orientative philosophy in actuality? The cultural conditions under which Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl work as philosopher are very different. The self-conscious representations of the Idea of philosophy which guide their own philosophical work are quite different between them too. But are they as diametrically opposite to each other as they have imagined? Is the idea of orientative philosophy invented by Lao Sze-Kwang not a way to bridge the self-conscious distance among them in regard to their actual and concrete philosophical practice?

Chapter 9
Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: From Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and Their Intercultural Implications

It is well known that at the beginning of the 1960s there was a rigorous debate between two leading intellectuals in France, namely Lévi-Strauss the structural anthropologist and Sartre the existential phenomenologist turned Marxist. While Sartre criticized Lévi-Strauss' structural method of neglecting the entire historical dimension of human culture, the father of structural anthropology retorted that Sartre's philosophy of consciousness, like all philosophy of subject, is unable to account for the structurally unconscious dimension of human and cultural life. The present chapter does not aim at a historical reconstruction of this famous debate. It aims rather at re-articulating the philosophical issues at stake. We will focus on the theoretical question raised by Lévi-Strauss, namely the question of the distinction between nature and culture, and examine in what way his structural approach constitutes a severe challenge to phenomenology as a contemporary form of philosophy of subject. We will then explore in what way Merleau-Ponty's late ontology, while questioning also the nature-culture distinction by returning to the pre-reflective and pre-objective order of brute being and savage spirit, is a mode of genetic phenomenology which shares some important insights of Levi-Strauss' structural anthropology and hence can accommodate the challenge from the latter. After this anthropological-ontological confrontation, we will try to draw its implications for intercultural understanding from a phenomenological perspective on the following four aspects: (1) psychoanalysis as myth and the primitive side of Western civilization; (2) distance and other cultures as co-constitutive of total Being and total truth; (3) broadening of Reason by lateral universals; (4) Indian and Chinese Philosophies as other relationships to Being that the West has not opted for.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_9

9.1 Nature, Culture and History: Lévi-Strauss' Challenge to Phenomenology as Philosophy of Consciousness

9.1.1 What Is Nature?

One of the most important impacts of modern science on humankind consists in the revolutionary understanding of Nature it succeeds to bring about. When Galileo declared that we should not read Nature by means of letters and words but by means of numbers and geometric figures,[1] he had initiated the process of what Husserl later called "the mathematization of Nature", a process in which Nature is to be determined by the method of idealization of the exact sciences.[2] From then on Nature is understood as an enormous spatial-temporal system comprising of the totality of existing things which fill up this very system. These existing things can be determined in terms of their mass, the position they occupy within the geometric space, as well as the speed and trajectory of their movement. The most significant change in the mode of understanding which the mathematization of Nature brings about is the substitution of the Aristotelian teleological world-view by a mechanical view of the universe. This change in world-view prepared what Weber later called the disenchantment of the world experienced by Western humanity in the centuries to come: Nature and all the phenomena falling under its registry no longer need to be explained by any supra-natural agencies or forces. Through its laws expressed in exact mathematical terms, modern science is not only able to determine but also dominate Nature such that the latter is no longer a mystery to the human mind. In the eyes of the natural scientist, all unknown entity in Nature can ultimately be determined by the continuously improving technical and instrumental cognitive devises. Nature is in principle under the entire grasp of human cognition.

But are things as simple as this? Galileo's mathematization of Nature never considers the role played by the human subject, in particular the community of natural scientists of which Galileo himself is a member. How is this scientific community formed? Under what conditions, subjective and objective, can modern scientific knowledge be acquired and accumulated and be communicable to us within this historically formed scientific community? Galileo's mathematization of Nature is enacted through a particular mode of language use, namely the formal language of mathematics, with the result of accomplishing a certain philosophical determination of all natural beings. However, this specific philosophical determination of Nature by a particular mode of language use is rendered possible only within a set of determined cultural and historical conditions, namely that of European culture of the

[1] Galileo Galilei, "The Assayer (1623)", in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, Eng. trans. Stillman Drake (New York: Double Day Anchor Book, 1957), pp. 237–238.

[2] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, *Husserliana VI*, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1954) ("*Krisis*" hereafter), §9, pp. 20–60; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) ("*Crisis*" hereafter), pp. 23–59.

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. In other words, Galileo's mathematization of Nature succeeded in giving rise to different disciplines of exact natural sciences based on the model of geometry and mathematical physics. But the price to pay for this success is the oblivion of the historical and cultural conditions which render possible this self-conscious collective cognitive activity. How is it possible for human beings, in particular natural scientists, to acquire, to communicate and to transmit knowledge on Nature across the human community? The Galilean mode of inquiry can never give a concrete answer to this question which belongs to the historical and cultural order.

The problem of inquiring into the concrete conditions of the origin of natural scientific knowledge in terms of exact laws is not only a problem of philosophy of natural science in the narrow sense of the term. For if modern natural science was born within a concrete historical and cultural situation, the quest for its conditions of birth drives us necessarily into the domains of history of scientific thought and history of technology, both being part of the vast domain of history of Western civilization. We know that the Ancient Greeks had their own idea of Nature—the Greek term φύσις denotes the generation and corruption of things themselves—and their own conception of science (ἐπιστήμη). However they did not develop any mathematically determined conception of Nature as do the modern Europeans. Thus the Idea of Nature of modern science has its own historical and cultural determinations. The mathematical-formal mode of inquiry proper to Galileo bars us precisely from entering into the historical and cultural dimensions relevant to the rise of modern natural science.

9.1.2 The Nature-Culture Distinction

The above discussion reveals a problem the modern natural scientist is unaware of: is "Nature" a self-evident concept? Does it merely refer to the material universe? In our ordinary usage the term Nature entails a wider meaning than nature in the sense of object of study of modern mathematical physics. It is neither limited to beings of the purely physical order, nor that of the vegetative and animal order. For vegetation and animals can be products of agriculture. In other words, they can be products of human civilization. And what we mean by human civilization is the state or way of organization of human life in which human beings no longer follow strictly the order of fact as imposed by Nature. In contrast, human beings are able to develop a variety of modes of life which go beyond the factual order. Under this state, understood as state of culture, human beings, while struggling to preserve their biological existence, have developed certain modes of behavior exhibiting their choice and preference. Under the state of culture, the human mode of life is no longer merely instinctive responses to conditions of the natural environment. Such modes of living and patterns of behavior are conducted under the guidance, entirely conscious or not, of a certain mode of axiological consciousness. In such modes of life human beings may choose not to do something they can do, and strive to do something they

are incapable of accomplishing. In other words, what the transition from the state of nature to the state of culture signifies is that human beings, while facing the factual order imposed by natural conditions, choose to live according to an order of norms, or at least come to terms with the former by introducing their own principles of preference. Thus what distinguishes the state of culture from the state of nature is the birth of the normative consciousness and the introduction of the principle of preference in human practices. Human life accompanied by the consciousness of norm is arguably the end of the state of nature and the beginning of the state of culture.

What is paradoxical about the history of Modern Western Culture is it gave birth at the same time to mathematical natural science as well as different forms of philosophy of subjectivity, in particular philosophies of consciousness. They are apparently incompatible with one another, as Galilean science is forgetful of the subject. Yet they both share the characteristics of being the result of high order intellectual activities of idealization. It is difficult for philosophies of subject and philosophies of consciousness to be exempt from their idealist outlook. It is difficult for this approach to philosophical thinking to face the challenge from historical facts about humankind and Nature unveiled with the help of modern scientific discoveries: it is only through an extremely long and slow process of changes and evolution that human beings succeeded in her transition from the state of nature to the state of culture. Nearly all forms of idealist philosophy or philosophy of subject give priority to the spontaneously productive or constitutive role of the individual human mind or consciousness in the genesis of human civilization. Yet they are all unable to answer the basic question concerning the origin of human civilization: how is the transition from the state of nature to the state of culture possible? This is both a historical question and a philosophical question. In order to understand how humankind emerges from the state of nature into the state of culture, we have to understand the changes in the living environment (e.g. the spatial configuration and the ecological conditions on Earth) undergone by prehistoric humanity. We also have to understand what kind of changes in the brain and the body and other physiological formations prehistoric human beings had gone through in such a way that human beings could begin a mode of living essentially distinct from the purely animal way. For example, other than the invention and usage of instruments, how did prehistoric human beings arrive at the invention and usage of signs and languages, in a word symbolic activities, such that they could engage themselves in communicative activities and develop the consciousness of norm and the sense of preference which serve as regulative principles of their mode of life? It is with these changes that human life is distinctive from animal life and enters the state of culture. These changes involve immense structural transformations within collective human life and can neither be performed nor apprehended merely through reflections undertaken by individual consciousness. On the contrary, these immense structural transformations intervene necessarily first of all at the unconscious level, in particular at the level of the linguistic unconscious. To put things in clearer terms: since language is the primordial cultural instrument, language acquisition at the collective level is the necessary precondition of high level reflective activity in the form of philosophy.

Face to the task of probing the secret of linguistic activities at their structural and unconscious basis, philosophies of consciousness or philosophies of spirit which take the individual subject's reflection as their methodological starting point are poorly equipped.[3]

We can never return to the prehistoric origins of the human species by undertaking positivistic historical studies since the archival documents and archaeological evidences upon which such studies are based are themselves products of human civilization and thus posterior to the state of nature. Instead of speculating on the beginning of human history in the manner of Kant,[4] Lévi-Strauss proposes to study the transition from the state of nature to the state of culture in the anthropological field by the structural method. Such approach is neither a positivist nor a speculative mode of inquiry into history (the latter is essentially historical conjecture guided by idealist philosophy). Rather, he attempts at the reconstruction of the basic structural model of human society in view of answering the historical-philosophical question of the origin of the distinction between nature and culture. For if societal life is the starting point and the basis of cultural life, we can find the key to understanding how human beings left the state of nature and entered the state of culture by comprehending human beings' most basic model of social organization.

Lévi-Strauss undertakes his inquiry into the distinction between nature and culture in his 1949 master work *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*.[5] The theme he chooses to begin his inquiry is a universal phenomenon in human societies, namely the prohibition of incest.[6] Since the prohibition of incest is a rule observed by every society and every human culture, it exhibits universality without exception. It is a basic and universal fact of human society which Lévi-Strauss calls "the *fact of being a rule*" ("le *fait de la règle*").[7] As a universal fact this basic rule seems to be an innate mode of behavior of human beings, so it belongs to the realm of nature. Yet the prohibition of incest, being a prohibitive rule, is at the same time expression of the consciousness of a norm. It is the manifestation of the normative consciousness which is anti-natural in this "fact of being a rule". Thus it belongs to the state of culture too. To Lévi-Strauss, the double character of the prohibition of incest shows that it is at the junction of the dividing line between nature and culture. A close consideration of the phenomenon of prohibition of incest can help us to understand

[3] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale, Deux* (Paris: Plon, 1973), pp. 23–24; *Structural Anthropology, Vol. II*, Eng. trans. Monique Layton (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 14.

[4] Immanuel Kant, "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History", in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, Eng. trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 2nd enlarged edition), pp. 221–234.

[5] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1st ed.1949, 2nd ed. Paris: Mouton & Co. & Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1967); *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, ed. Rodney Needham, Eng. trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer and Rodney Needham (revised ed. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969).

[6] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, *op. cit*., Ch. II, pp. 14–29; *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 12–25.

[7] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, *op. cit*., p. 37; *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, p. 32.

how humanity had gone through the historically decisive moment of passing from the state of nature to the state of culture.

Lévi-Strauss points out that the prohibition of incest forbids marriage between close family members and gives rise to exogamy instead of endogamy.[8] The practice of this rule obliges a family or a clan which searches for union through marriage to communicate with another family or another clan without any kinship relation. The basic stratum of social relation is thus built up by exogamy. Humanity's mode of collective organization is thus extended from a family or a clan to a social group as its basic unit. Exogamy is essentially the kinship system based upon the marriage of a daughter or a sister to a man exterior to the family or the clan and the acceptation of a woman as wife from another family or clan. It is a system of exchange of women with the function of ensuring the reproduction of descendents and thus the preservation of the family or the clan. Through the exchange of women a whole series of other exchange activities is involved, including the exchange of goods (e.g. the exchange of gifts between the two families or clans) and the exchange of blessings. The latter are exchange activities in the economic and the linguistic realm. Hence, by virtue of exogamy, a family or a clan undergoes exchange and communicative activities with a foreign or even rival family or clan at the following three levels: (1) exchange at the level of kinship (exchange of women among allied families or clans); (2) exchange at the economic level (exchange of goods and services among producers and users); (3) exchange at the linguistic level (exchange of information and messages among speaking subjects).[9] These three levels of exchange activities amount to the three domains of family life, economic life and cultural-political life respectively in civilized societies. And what means by a social organization is a vast system of communication connecting together different individuals and different groups of people through exchange activities of different sorts. It enables and even forces rival families or clans to establish friendly or cooperative relations. If the state of nature is the state of war (Hobbes), then exogamy enforced by the prohibition of incest, by obliging rival families or clans to establish friendly or cooperative relations, is the end of the state of nature and the beginning of the state of society, i.e. the state of culture. The contribution of Lévi-Strauss in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* consists in achieving something unable to be attained neither by a positivist historian nor a philosopher of subject: namely the unveiling of the secret of human beings' passage from the state of nature to the state of culture.

[8] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, *op. cit*., Ch. IV, pp. 49–60; *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, pp. 42–51. Lévi-Strauss makes the distinction between two types of endogamy: "functional endogamy", which expresses the conceptual opposite of exogamy and conveys only a negative reality, and "true endogamy", which exists in connection to exogamy. Our discussions will not go into these details.

[9] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale, Deux*, p. 84;*Structural Anthropology, Vol. II*, p. 66.

9.1.3 *Structural Method's Challenge to Philosophies of Subject*

Through his structural method, Lévi-Strauss has raised the task and theoretical ambition of anthropology to a degree which had never been so high before. His approach has caused uneasiness among historians and philosophers: structural anthropology not only substitutes historical studies with structural studies, its inquiry into the basic unconscious level of the collective human mind also constitutes an immense challenge to all forms of philosophy of subject and philosophy of consciousness since Descartes, as the unconscious stratum of the collective human mind is the unfathomable abyss of the philosophizing subject whose conscious reflections are never able to join. Lévi-Strauss defended his methodological preference of structure over history and collective unconscious as the ground of individual consciousness by reference to the breakthrough of contemporary structural linguistics, in particular that of phonology. For phonology integrates diachronic study within synchronic study, and conceives the study of the possibility of conscious linguistic expression as founding upon the basis of phonological study at the unconscious level. In particular, it is the phonological system of binary oppositions functioning at the unconscious level which provides the basis for self-conscious articulation of the speaking subject at the level of verbal expression. The introduction of structural method in anthropology by Lévi-Strauss paved the way to a whole series of structuralist revolution in the human sciences in France of the 1960s. It encouraged a whole new generation of younger philosophers' revolt against all forms of philosophy of subject, in particular philosophy of consciousness of the phenomenological school. The structuralist Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser declared that human history is a process without subject. The archaeology of knowledge practiced by Michel Foucault priorities epistémè instead of the knowing subject as the primary condition of knowledge production. He even envisaged the imminent arrival of the age of the "death of man".[10] Jacques Derrida's practice of deconstructive reading of text and thematization of différance also aim at the deconstruction and marginalization of the identity of a self-conscious subject. This whole generation of French philosophers emerging in the 1960s shares the common position of attacking the primordial constitutive role ascribed to the subject. They all came to the foreground of the French philosophical scenery as the result of the structuralist wave lead by Lévi-Strauss.

[10] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966), pp. 396–398; *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 385–387.

9.2 Merleau-Ponty's Response to Lévi-Strauss: From the Nature-Culture Distinction to Brute Being and Savage Spirit

9.2.1 Structural Anthropology as a Mode of Thinking Close to Phenomenology

Would the assault on philosophies of subject lead by Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology constitute a threat to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological philosophy? We all know that in contrast to most other phenomenological philosophers, Merleau-Ponty never hided himself behind the paravent of pure philosophy. He always welcomed field work studies which offer a good starting point for phenomenological description. To an existential phenomenologist like Merleau-Ponty, an anthropologist, by engaging herself in the field work study of a foreign culture, never practices a bird's eye-view's thinking (la pensée de survol). Just as Merleau-Ponty himself, an anthropologist is thus far away from the position of a transcendental philosopher of the classical type. Nor a structural anthropologist shares the naturalism of empirical scientists, for she never considers that the meaning of her object of study is fully given to her naked eyes. In philosophical terms, a structural anthropologist practices a kind of hermeneutics as she searches for meaning through structures which can be deciphered only through diacritical reading of elements of binary opposition within a certain system of signifiers embedded in rules of marriage, myths and rituals, etc. Thus methodologically speaking, a structural anthropologist is close to an existential hermeneutic phenomenologist.

But how can the structural anthropologist obtain such significant results in her search for meaning? To Merleau-Ponty, the method practiced by an anthropologist is a "remarkable method, which consists in learning to see what is ours as alien and what was alien as our own."[11] By turning her eyes away from the society which she is at home with, an anthropologist suspends every preconceived way of comprehension with regard to the alien society she proposes to study. In order to learn to look at a foreign culture, an anthropologist must first of all put into brackets what seems to be a matter of evidence in her habitual mode of seeing. This scrupulous attitude of the anthropologist amounts to the attitude of a phenomenological philosopher who practices the method of epoché.

The second step of the structural anthropological method consists in putting under its eyes of scrutiny not the cultural objects of primitive societies in the material sense of the term, but the various forms of exchange activities (exchange of women, exchange of goods and exchange of messages) as these so-called primitive

[11] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, Eng. trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 120.

peoples have lived-through (vécu).[12] By decoding the rules which regulate these exchange activities, the structural anthropologist tries to read the hidden meaning underlying these activities. For although these rules may not be object of conscious awareness of the people who engage themselves in these exchange activities, the latter nevertheless carry with themselves some determined meanings.[13] Thus these exchange activities are not merely read at their surface level but taken as signifying activities at a deeper but unconscious level. Lévi-Strauss himself has once claimed that anthropology "is undoubtedly the only science to use the most intimate kind of subjectivity as a means of objective demonstration. For it is indeed an objective fact that the same mind, which gave itself to experience and let itself be molded by it, becomes the theatre of mental operations which do not abolish the preceding ones—but which yet transform the experiment into a model, rendering possible other mental operations."[14] This means that the object of study of Lévi-Strauss is the structural invariants (models) of the way in which a primitive mind operates through different domains of experience. In phenomenological terms, a structural anthropologist proceeds by eidetic reduction and approaches her description and analysis at the level of operative intentionality which takes place at the pre-reflective stratum. She is carrying out something like intentional analysis at the level of anonymously functioning subjectivity by a correlative approach specific to the method of structural analysis. What differs a structural anthropologist from a phenomenological philosopher here is that the philosopher fixes her eyes on the intentional life of an individual, whereas the anthropologist thematizes operative intentionality at the collective, i.e. intersubjective, level.

Thus Merleau-Ponty does not see structural anthropology as an empirical discipline threatening phenomenological philosophy from the outside. Rather, the author of *Phenomenology of Perception* understands structural anthropology as a mode of thinking with close affinity to phenomenology. The phenomenologist is guided by the motto "Zu den Sachen selbst"—"back to the things themselves": she adjusts her seeing according to the specificity of the givenness of the object of inquiry. This is precisely the way, Merleau-Ponty thinks, anthropology works: "Ethnology is not a specialty defined by a particular object, 'primitive societies'. It is a way of thinking, the way which imposes itself when the object is 'different', and requires us to transform ourselves."[15] In short, Husserl has invented the methodological terms of epoché, reduction and intentional analysis; a structural anthropologist put them into practice in their field work studies.

---

[12] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 149; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 119.

[13] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 152; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 121.

[14] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale, Deux*, p. 25;*Structural Anthropology, Vol. II*, p. 15.

[15] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 150; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 120.

9.2.2 *Savage Mind and the Emergence of Culture and History: Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty's Ontological Search for Brute Being and Savage Spirit of the Primordial Order*

Understanding that the mode of thinking of structural anthropology has a close affinity to phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty is able to appreciate correctly the results of Lévi-Strauss' structural analyses. Through the comparative studies of the myths, kinship systems and rituals of primitive peoples without writing, Lévi-Strauss can render comprehensible the mind of these primitive tribes. Under the tremendous effort of deciphering undertaken by Lévi-Strauss, the mind of these primitive peoples is no longer just a "pre-logical mentality", as Lévy-Bruhl (1857–1939), a French anthropologist of the earlier generation, had once ascribed to them, but rather a savage mind. Without knowing Aristotelian formal logic, the savage mind of primitive societies still has a sense of the logos of this savage world and has her own logic: it is the logic of the concrete.[16] Through the structural analysis of their myths, Lévi-Strauss is able to demonstrate that the savage mind of the primitive peoples possesses a set of categories to name the things and existents in their environmental world and to put them into order under which these existents are intelligible. Merleau-Ponty uses the following laudatory words to describe the stunning results of Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis: "We have listened to something about myth, and we arrive at a logical diagram, and we could equally say, an ontological diagram."[17] In other words, Merleau-Ponty sees in Lévi-Strauss not only a logician of the primitive mentality, but also almost an ontological philosopher of the savage mind, a mind which is not domesticated by scientific rationality, but follows its own logic articulated in close contact with the concrete world of the primordial Nature.

More importantly, Merleau-Ponty sees in the work of Lévi-Strauss as successfully piercing the mystery around the birth of human civilization. Through a some what comprehensive study of rules of marriage in both endogamy and exogamy across the globe, Lévi-Strauss figures out the two basic attitudes humankind adopts face to the rules of nature. Exogamy is the attitude which respects strictly the rule of prohibition of incest imposed by nature. This results in a mode of social organization which maintains a rather close relationship with nature, characterized by primitive cultures without writing. On the other hand, endogamy adopts a more cunning attitude in regard to nature. It searches for ways to bypass the rules of nature with respect to the prohibition of incest. Endogamy exists in India; consanguineous or collateral marriage is practiced in Egypt, Iran and by some Arabic peoples. The Egyptian, Iranian and Arabic cultures are all important representatives of human civilization which have developed writing and later advanced technology of their times. These forms of culture "are just the ones which have made scientific

[16] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale, Deux*, p. 83; *Structural Anthropology, Vol. II*, p. 65.

[17] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 152; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 121, English translation modified.

knowledge and a cumulative and progressive social life possible."[18] They lay the foundation for the subsequent development of human civilization.

By distinguishing the two basic attitudes of humankind face to nature which correspond to the two basic models of cultural forms, Lévi-Strauss has offered an important key to understanding the nature-culture distinction and the emergence of history. The invention of writing which makes scientific knowledge and technology possible is a model of culture which renders possible a cumulative and progressive social life. This is one of the basic conditions of the emergence of human history, though it is not history understood as chronological history discussed by Sartre and professional historians.

At the same time, Lévi-Strauss helps us to arrive at the understanding that the emergence of culture is not the simple departure from nature, but rather a way of transformation of nature. Civilization would be those forms of culture which introduce the most efficient ways of transformation of nature such that history is born. Structural anthropology thus throws important light on the conditions of the emergence of culture in the sense of civilization and thus the birth of history. Merleau-Ponty presents his own exegesis of Lévi-Strauss' great discovery by the following terms: "How to name it, if not history, this milieu in which a form laden with contingency suddenly opens a cycle of future and commands it with the authority of an established institution?"[19]

Culture is the transformation of nature and not the radical separation from it: this means that there is no more a clear and net line of division between nature and culture.[20] More precisely: from the epistemological perspective the nature-culture distinction might have to be maintained; but on the ontological ground nature and culture are inseparable, they are intertwined. This line of thought is shared by Lévi-Strauss and the last Merleau-Ponty on his way to formulating a new ontology of flesh.

In fact, what renders Merleau-Ponty enthusiastic about Lévi-Strauss' anthropological research is the latter's inquiry into the conditions of birth of history. Merleau-Ponty calls it "structural history".[21] It is not chronological history of particular events. Chronological history belongs merely to the ontic dimension of history. Structural history is rather history understood from the ontological dimension, i.e. "that history which is well aware that myth and legendary time always haunt human enterprises in other forms, which is seeking either on this side of or beyond

[18] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 154; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 123.

[19] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 154; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 123, English translation modified.

[20] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 154; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 123.

[21] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 155; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 123.

fragmentary events."[22] In more concrete terms, structural history (we are even tempted to say: ontological history) consists in the inquiry into the way a certain collectivity gives rise to a series of possibilities on the basis of a particular environmental facticity. From the state of undifferentiated nature, such collectivity is able to realize certain forms of transcendence, developing its possibilities with consistency such that it exhibits vigor and an internal logic. In short, it gives rise to certain teleology.

Is Lévi-Strauss' search for structural history not close to the goal of genetic phenomenology attempted by the last Husserl and pursued by Merleau-Ponty himself in the inquiry into the phenomenon of institution? In fact Merleau-Ponty has explained that what he understands by the concept of institution "are those events in experience which endow it with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will acquire meaning, will form an intelligible series or a history—or again those events which sediment in me a meaning, not just as survivals or residues, but as the invitation to a sequel, the necessity of a future."[23] Merleau-Ponty's investigation into the phenomenon of institution as concrete structural a priori of history echoes very much Lévi-Strauss' search for structural history.

If we understand the philosophical and cultural motivation underlying the ontological search of the later Merleau-Ponty, we will not be surprised to see that the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* was rather at ease face to Lévi-Strauss' challenge to philosophies of subject. It is well known that the ontology of the flesh attempted by the last Merleau-Ponty is a genetic phenomenological search for the origin of the division between matter and spirit, nature and culture, subject and object. His search for brute being and savage spirit is an attempt to return to the preobjective order of the world, which is sometimes understood as the primordial nature. It is from the primordial nature that life begins: life not only in the biological sense but also in the human sense of the term. Engaged in different sorts of symbolic activities, human life is intentional life invested by an immanent teleology. It can give meaning to itself by its own activities such that it emerges from the undifferentiated state of general existence. Merleau-Ponty calls being of this order brute being and spirit of this sort savage spirit because they are not molded according to any specific cultural formation. Rather, brute being and savage spirit belong to the primordial nature and exhibit a freshness and potentialities unknown to different forms of well-developed human civilization. This is an order of things which traditional transcendental and idealist philosophy not only never could have attained, but simply never would have imagined.

Merleau-Ponty has projected his hope of cultural renewal on the potentialities of brute being and savage spirit which the old Modern European culture has covered

[22] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, pp. 154–155; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 123.

[23] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours. Collège de France 1952–1960* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p. 61; "Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France, 1952–1960", in *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 108–109.

up. "This renewal of the world is also the renewal of spirit (*renouveau de l'esprit*), a rediscovery of that brute spirit (*l'esprit brut*) which, untamed by any culture, is asked to create culture anew."[24] Merleau-Ponty does not opt for a direct transposition or substitution of our too civilized mind by the savage mind rendered accessible by Lévi-Strauss' anthropological discovery. By exposing ourselves to the culture of the savage mind, he only hopes for the repossession or re-appropriation of that savage region of our mind which is not yet invested by our own culture, and is thus still untamed.[25] With the possibility of new cultural development from a new set of potentials secreted by the still savage part of our mind, a new history is possible.

9.3 Intercultural Implications of Structural Anthropology: Merleau-Ponty's Reading

Merleau-Ponty's appreciation of the results of Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology throws important light on problems concerning interculturality. We can only point out some of them here.

9.3.1 Psychoanalysis as Myth and the Primitive Side of Western Civilization

Psychoanalysis as therapy and as discipline of knowledge is born in Western culture at her mature stage. This science of the unconscious, new in the eyes of Freud and his followers, is considered an important breakthrough in the self-understanding of Western Culture. Yet Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of the myths around the prohibition of incest provides another reading of the myth of Oedipus, the myth which plays a foundational role in Freud's psychoanalysis. Lévi-Strauss finds out that while the American-Indian myths about prohibition of incest are built around love affairs between brother and sister, they are variants of the Oedipus myth as the latter is also about the same subject matter, namely the prohibition of incest; the only difference is that the Western version is built around the relationship between mother and son.[26] So with the help of Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of myth, the myth of Oedipus which forms the core of psychoanalysis can be read as just a variant of the universal myth around the prohibition of incest. The structural analysis of myth

[24] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 228; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, p. 180.

[25] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss"; in *Signs*, p. 120.

[26] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale, Deux*, pp. 31–32; *Structural Anthropology, Vol. II*, pp. 21–22.

enables us to see that Western civilization at her advanced stage maintains her mythical component and primitive side.

Face to this discovery, Merleau-Ponty thinks that Western culture has no reason to be self-indulgent. From the perspective of structural analysis, the psychoanalyst is the shaman in Western culture. For the method of transference practiced by psychoanalysis is not a purely objective method. Rather, by playing on the symbolic level and not on the level of givenness, it adopts a highly interpretative approach. The precondition of the efficiency of the psychoanalytic method is that we believe in the validity of the interpretative model of the deep structure of our psychic life it suggests. Thus before it can heal us, psychoanalysis persuades us to believe without resistance in its power of healing. It fashions its patients in order that they are conform to its interpretative theory of the human being. To Merleau-Ponty, structural anthropology provides us with a critical alternative to the dogmatic tendency of psychoanalysis:

> According to the ethnological method's rule of reciprocal criticism, we must be equally concerned with seeing psychoanalysis as myth and the psychoanalyst as a witch doctor or shaman. Our psychosomatic investigations enable us to understand how the shaman heals, how for example he helps in a difficult delivery. But the shaman also enables us to understand that psychoanalysis is our own witchcraft.[27]

Psychoanalysis as myth and the psychoanalyst as a witch doctor or shaman: this is a primitive aspect of Western civilization, or even of European modernity, which is brought to knowledge by Western culture herself at her mature stage through the ethnological study of primitive societies.

9.3.2 Distance and Other Cultures as Co-constitutive of Total Being and Total Truth

If we admit that the universal myth around the prohibition of incest is the truth, or at least part of the truth, about the myth of Oedipus and psychoanalysis, it bears an important message for our conception of truth. Truth is no more understood as full positivity under the light of reason. Truth always has its hidden sides for us. These hidden sides are inaccessible to the most radical act of the self-reflecting subject; they can be made known to us only through the eyes of a foreign culture. Thus no single culture holds the key to all aspects of truth. There are always some blind spots inherent to the perspective of any single culture. And these blind spots are revealed only when she encounters other cultures:

[27] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 153; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 122.

> At the point where two cultures cross, truth and error dwell together, either because our own training hides what there is to know from us, or on the contrary because it becomes, in our life in the field, a means of incorporating other people's differences.[28]

This means that we have to admit that the self-reflective knowing subject is never self-sufficient; she needs necessarily the help from other subjects in matters of self-knowledge. This is a banal truth. Yet we must know how to apply it to the relationship between philosophy and other disciplines, and further more to the relationship between cultures. But that means too that truth needs a negative moment—*écart* and distance—which plays a positive role in the process of revelation of the total truth. The role of other cultures is co-constitutive in the manifestation of the total Being or the total truth. This implies that no form of ethnocentrism is tenable, not to say Eurocentrism or Occidentocentrism.

9.3.3 Broadening of Reason by Lateral Universals

However, recognizing the co-constitutive role of other cultures in matters of truth does not mean that we should adopt a diametrically opposite position against Western culture and say that only primitive cultures hold the key to truth. To Merleau-Ponty, the lesson to be taken is that we should always take the position of the in-between, though it is an uncomfortable position. This consists of enlarging or broadening the existing concept of reason such that the perspectives of the civilized (the so-called rational) and the primitive (the so-called mythical) can both find their place. And philosophy can only achieve this goal by close cooperation with anthropology:

> On a deeper level, anthropology's concern is neither to prove that the primitive is wrong nor to side with him against us, but to set oneself up on a ground where we shall both be intelligible without any reduction or rash transposition. This is what we do when we take the symbolic function as the source of all reason and unreason. For the number and richness of significations man has at his disposal always exceed the circle of definite objects which warrant the name 'signified', because symbolic function must always be ahead of its object and finds reality only by anticipating it in imagination. Thus our task is to broaden our reason to make it capable of grasping what, in ourselves and in others, precedes and exceeds reason.[29]

To broaden our reason means first of all that we recognize the existence of universals, without which no intercultural understanding is possible. But at the same time we understand that our existing reason, be it in this or that particular form, is not broad enough to include all forms of universality. Yet the way to broaden our reason does not consist in subsuming other minority cultures under a dominant

---

[28] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 120.

[29] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, pp. 153–154; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 122.

culture in a top-down manner. Merleau-Ponty has invented the term "lateral universal" to name this form of universality which is embedded in principle across different cultures. In order to broaden our reason Merleau-Ponty recommends us another way to look for universals:

> No longer the overarching universal obtained by a strictly objective method, but a sort of lateral universal which we acquire through ethnological experience and its incessant testing of the self through the other person and the other person through the self. It is a question of constructing a general system of reference in which the point of view of the native, the point of view of the civilized man, and the mistaken view each has of the other can all find a place—that is, of constituting a more comprehensive experience which becomes in principle accessible to men of a different time and country.[30]

Merleau-Ponty himself never gave any example to illustrate the concept of lateral universal he proposed. We think that we can use the example of traditional Chinese medicine to serve this purpose. Traditional Chinese medicine is a vast system of medical knowledge which, unlike modern Western medicine since the late Eighteenth Century, is not built on histological or physiological evidence understood in the positivistic way. Yet through some 2,500 years of practice traditional Chinese medicine has developed its own theoretical understanding of the normal functioning of the human body (based on the system of meridians organized into a dynamic structural whole through which the different organs of the human body are connected to one another), its own concept of health and illness, its own procedures of diagnosis of the normal or pathological state of the human body (by listening to the system of pulse and observing the tongue, the face and the eyes), its own methods and techniques of cure (acupuncture is one of its specific techniques), its own classification of medicinal plants and substances, and its own canonical texts, the most famous among them are the *Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon* (《黃帝內經》), *the Treatise on Cold Damage* (《傷寒論》), the *Shennong's Materia Medica* (《神農本草經》), and the *Compendium of Materia Medica* (《本草綱目》), etc. There are areas of diseases and health problems in which modern Western medicine is unable to treat nor to understand, yet traditional Chinese medicine not only can give theoretical explanation but also efficient therapy. That is why traditional Chinese medicine is widely used as an alternative medical approach to complement modern Western medicine not only in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, but also in Europe and North America. Thus the concept of medicine as a universal should not be understood only with reference to modern Western medicine built on anatomical basis, it should also be extended to include the body of knowledge and techniques of therapy developed by traditional Chinese medicine since two and a half millennia. Such an enlarged concept of medicine is a lateral universal.

In short, the lateral universal is an intercultural system of reference comprehensive enough to accommodate the most divergent experiential types which ever have existed in human history. It must include mechanism of mutual criticism in order to foster mutual understanding among different cultures.

---

[30] M. Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 150; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss"; in *Signs*, p. 120; English translation slightly modified.

9.3.4 *Indian and Chinese Philosophies as Other Relationships to Being That the West Has Not Opted for*

Where can we find this lateral universal? Here Merleau-Ponty is sensibly different from Husserl. For Husserl, the only way to true universal is the Europeanization of all other cultures.[31] In matters of philosophy, Husserl never recognizes its existence outside of the Greek-European tradition. Philosophies of the Indians and the Chinese, who for Husserl are only empirical anthropological specimens without access to the essential structure of reason, are not philosophy in the genuine sense of the term. The attitude of Merleau-Ponty is much more nuanced and subtle. He shares the starting point of the last Husserl who admitted that all thought is part of an historical whole and is founded on its life-world. But Merleau-Ponty turns this principle against Husserl's conclusion: since every life-world has its particular historicity, "in principle all philosophies are 'anthropological specimens', and none has any special rights."[32] If it is true that the West has invented the idea of universal truth by virtue of which she elevates herself above her particularity in terms of historicity and locality, it remains that this idea—to Husserl it is embedded in the idea of philosophy as rigorous science—is just a presumption and an intention whose fulfillment is still to be awaited and never assured in advance. On the road to the fulfillment of this idea, the West has to understand other cultures from the inside and to concede that these other cultures form and provide other aspects of a total truth that the West may not have access. Thus to have just the formal idea of a universal truth is not enough. We have to penetrate into the inside of each life-world in order to understand them as constituents of the total truth.

Ignorant of the life-worlds of other cultures, Occidentals always find the thought of Orientals impenetrable. In order to pierce the so-called mystery of Oriental philosophies, Merleau-Ponty recommends that "we should have to apply to the problem of philosophical universality what travellers tell us of their relationship with foreign civilizations."[33] It is a way to see other cultures not merely with our own cultural schemas. Beyond exoticism, we must look into the life of other cultures through their peoples' act of living together. Animated by such a view, Oriental philosophies would no more be impenetrable because it would allow Occidentals to discover, deep inside apparently different acts of life, variants of human's relation to Being which supports any form of life. In the manner of universal structures dug out by Lévi-Strauss from myths of American Indian, Merleau-Ponty discovers in Oriental philosophies variants of human's relation to Being. The latter is a form of lateral universal mentioned earlier. Here, in a slightly different context, Merleau-Ponty gives them the name of "oblique universality":

---

[31] E. Husserl, *Krisis*, p. 14; *Crisis*, p. 16.

[32] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes*, p. 173; "Everywhere and Nowhere"; in *Signs*, p. 137.

[33] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes*, p. 175; "Everywhere and Nowhere"; in *Signs*, p. 139.

> If we were able to grasp in their historical and human context the very doctrines which seem to resist conceptual understanding, we would find in them a variant of man's relationship to being which would clarify our understanding of ourselves, and a sort of oblique universality.[34]

With the historical and human contexts of traditional Indian and Chinese thoughts in mind, Merleau-Ponty is able to see that "Indian and Chinese philosophies have tried not so much to dominate existence as to be the echo or the sounding board of our relationship to being."[35] This means that instead of domesticating Being, Indians and Chinese have chosen to live in resonance or in harmony with Being, or even as its spoke-person. This latter attitude is more practical, often understood in the West as "wisdom", than scientific. Indian and Chinese philosophies represent a relationship to Being which these peoples have initially opted for. Understanding how Indians and Chinese had made this initial option could help Occidentals to understand why and how these options were shut off to Occidentals when they had chosen to become themselves. And perhaps even to reopen theses options.

But we can immerge ourselves in the historical and human context of other philosophies only by giving up our own cultural prejudice. By virtue of the methodological practice of the epoché, phenomenology, compared to other attitudes which is either too naïve or too indulgent, is more vigilant and more ready to get rid of our own cultural prejudice.

Western culture itself is the product of history; its success rendered it oblivion of its origin. The understanding of other cultures would on the contrary reopen some common structural origins of human cultures. Thus to Merleau-Ponty, the relationship between East and West is not the Hegelian image of the child to the adult, ignorance to science, and non-philosophy to philosophy. "Unity of the human spirit will not be constructed by simply rallying and subordinating 'non-philosophy' to true philosophy. It already exists in each culture's lateral relationships to the others, in the echoes one awakes in the other."[36] More precisely, the unity of human spirit cannot be constructed by the subsumption of all non-Western cultures under the Greek-European culture, which is the philosophical culture par excellence in the eyes of Hegel and Husserl, in a Eurocentric hierarchy of cultural forms. Unity of the human spirit cannot be built by a speculative philosophy of Spirit. It can be achieved only through intercultural understanding aiming at the search for lateral universals. In short, to Merleau-Ponty phenomenology and structural anthropology are engaged in the same battle against ethnocentrism on their road to understanding the unity of the human spirit.

---

[34] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes*, p. 176; "Everywhere and Nowhere"; in *Signs*, p. 139.

[35] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes*, p. 176; "Everywhere and Nowhere"; in *Signs*, p. 139.

[36] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Partout et nulle part", in *Signes*, p. 175; "Everywhere and Nowhere"; in *Signs*, p. 139.

9.4 Conclusion

Structuralism is a fatal challenge to phenomenology as a form of philosophy of the subject. If this is a general consensus in the Western intelligentsia of the 1960s, this is not true in the eyes of Merleau-Ponty. Our discussions above serve to show rather that to Merleau-Ponty there is connivance between his phenomenological ontology and Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology. Our judgment can be attested by Lévi-Strauss' own confession. In an article in commemoration of Merleau-Ponty's death, Lévi-Strauss wrote that "I imagine that, for Merleau-Ponty, we play the role of travelling companions (compagnons de route)."[37] The father of structural anthropology has well understood that the unfinished ontology sketched by the final Merleau-Ponty proposes "an access to this savage or pre-objective being … in order to give an ontological foundation to this savage vision of the painter … such as *Eye and Mind* describes it in a manner so fluid and so penetrating,… which is at the same time the same thing and entirely another thing of what I should call myself the savage mind."[38] In other words, Lévi-Strauss admitted that his structural anthropology and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology share same basic features in terms of their ontological vision, yet they are not the same thing. There is at most some sort of identity in difference. What Lévi-Strauss sees as the most important lesson of Merleau-Ponty is the latter's vigilant warning against an attitude which expresses satisfaction of oneself too quickly, be it from the standpoint of a philosopher or an anthropologist: "His work … invites us never to freeze any image of ourselves, of the world and of their relations, to accept and to use the notion of structure only in another sense: that of a road offered to overcome the artificial opposition between subject and object, the structure being situated at their articulation, which is more real."[39] Our lived experience is always in excess of our knowledge, anthropological or philosophical. If the one and the other work to together to throw light on our common ontological situation with some success, neither anthropology nor philosophy will have a definitive advantage. The task of one another will be unfinished. This applies also to the work of intercultural understanding. The more we understand another culture, the deeper we understand our own culture in the sense that we know how much we do not yet know ourselves. There is no definitive advantage of one culture over another culture in matters concerning intercultural understanding.

[37] C. Lévi-Strauss, "De quelques rencontres", *L'Arc*, no. 46, 1971, p. 45.

[38] C. Lévi-Strauss, "De quelques rencontres", *L'Arc*, no. 46, 1971, p. 45.

[39] C. Lévi-Strauss, "De quelques rencontres", *L'Arc*, no. 46, 1971, p. 47.

Chapter 10
The Flesh: From Ontological Employment to Intercultural Employment

> We cannot have truth without risks. If we begin our search for truth with an eye for conclusions, there is no more philosophy. The philosopher does not look for shortcuts: she goes all the way.[1]
>
> The philosopher is marked by the distinguished trait that she possesses *inseparably* the taste for evidence and the sense of ambiguity. When she limits herself to passively accepting ambiguity, it is called equivocation. But among the greatest [philosophers] it becomes a theme; it contributes to establishing certainties rather than threatening them. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish a bad ambiguity from a good ambiguity.[2]
>
> [T]here is a 'good ambiguity' in the phenomenon of expression, a spontaneity which accomplishes what appeared to be impossible when we observed only the separate elements, a spontaneity which gathers together the plurality of monads, the past and the present, nature and culture into a single fabric. The observation and ascertaining of this wonder would be metaphysics itself and would at the same time give us the principle of an ethics.[3]

---

[1] "On ne peut avoir la vérité sans les risques. Il n'y a plus de philosophie si l'on regarde d'abord aux conclusions; le philosophe ne cherche pas les raccourcis, il fait toute la route." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 230; *Signs*, Eng. trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 183.

[2] "Le philosophe se reconnaît à ce qu'il a *inséparablement* le goût de l'évidence et le sens de l'ambiguïté. Quand il se borne à subir l'ambiguïté, elle s'appelle équivoque. Chez les plus grands elle devient thème, elle contribue à fonder les certitudes, au lieu de les menacer. Il faudrait donc distinguer une mauvaise et une bonne ambiguïté." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Éloge de la philosophie et autres essais* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 10; *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays*, Eng. trans. John Wild, James Edie, and John O'Neill (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 4–5; translation modified.

[3] "[I]l y a, dans le phénomène de l'expression, une 'bonne ambiguïté', c'est-à-dire une spontanéité qui accomplit ce qui paraissait impossible, à considérer les éléments séparés, qui réunit en un seul tissu la pluralité des monades, le passé et le présent, la nature et la culture. La constatation de cette merveille serait la métaphysique même, et donnerait en même temps le principe d'une morale." M. Merleau-Ponty, "Un inédit de Maurice Merleau-Ponty", in *Parcours deux*, *1951–1961* (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 2000), p. 48; "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work", Eng. trans. Arleen B. Dallery, in *The Primacy of Perception And Other Essays*, ed. James E. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 11; translation modified.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_10

10.1 Introduction

It is well-known that Merleau-Ponty presented the article "The Philosopher and His Shadow" to a conference celebrating the centenary of Husserl's birth in 1959. In this now classic article in the literature of the phenomenological movement Merleau-Ponty paid homage to the founder of contemporary phenomenology in an unusual way. The author of *Phenomenology of Perception* did not act like an epigone who was just repeating the well-known theses of Husserl, the transcendental philosopher who had already occupied a comfortable place in the history of Western philosophy. Nor did Merleau-Ponty take up the role of a so-called objective critique of Husserl's doctrine by subjecting it "to analytic observation or out-of-context thinking".[4] This latter attitude is a positivistic one which "requires the meaning of [a man's] work to be wholly positive and by rights susceptible to an inventory which sets forth what is and is not in those works".[5] By adopting such an attitude one will end up destroying the heritage of Husserl the thinker. So how to avoid destroying the precious heritage of a classic thinker like Husserl from whom we never stop learning? Merleau-Ponty drew our attention to some common experience of apprenticeship in philosophy. When one is still at the stage of apprentice of philosophical thinking, she always wants to follow the master as closely as possible. She is happy and even proud to be the witness of the ebb and flow of the master's thinking, which brings about breakthrough almost day by day. But once becoming adult philosophically, it is not easy for the former apprentice to make full sense of her past trajectory when she tries to show her spirit of independence, and in particular when she engages herself on the road to discovering new horizons. In order to maintain a critical attitude toward the path of her distant youth, it is not rare that a philosopher who has attained the age of maturity shows herself to be severely critical not only of her past journey, but also of the heritage of her past master. Merleau-Ponty rightly pointed out the risks of denying without reserve the meaning of one's own past in matters of philosophical apprenticeship:

> As the result of having put the whole of philosophy in phenomenology to begin with, do they not now risk being too hard on it at the same time they are too hard on their youth? Do they not risk reducing such and such phenomenological motifs to what they were in their original contingency and their empirical humility, whereas for the outside observer, these motifs retain their full relief?[6]

Whom did Merleau-Ponty refer to when he wrote these lines? If one replies by giving the name of Heidegger, this is a rather logical response for it is no secret that there are a lot of veiled criticisms against Husserlian phenomenology in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, though these criticisms are neither always correct nor justified. However, the present author is of the opinion that here Merleau-Ponty probably

[4] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 202; *Signs*, p. 160, English translation modified.

[5] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 202; *Signs*, pp. 159–160.

[6] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 203; *Signs*, p. 161.

aimed more at Eugen Fink than at Heidegger.[7] We all know that the young Fink had been a close assistant of the old Husserl. After finishing his doctoral dissertation under the direction of the Freiburg master, Fink published in 1933 a long article defending Husserl's phenomenology against some common misunderstandings shared by the German philosophical community of the time. Fink's article, which contains some point-by-point retorts to current criticisms of Husserl's phenomenology, is prefaced by Husserl himself in which the old master affirmed without reservation Fink's explanations.[8] However, some 20 years later, the now mature Fink published a series of immensely critical articles on Husserl's phenomenology.[9] And it was precisely Fink and not Heidegger who was present in the conference commemorating Husserl's centenary at which Merleau-Ponty first presented his article "The Philosopher and His Shadow".[10]

What is the situation today half a century after Merleau-Ponty paid his homage to Husserl? It is interesting as well as surprising to see how some French phenomenologists, who had benefitted greatly from Merleau-Ponty's works and reflections during their own formative years, used very pejorative terms when they talked about Merleau-Ponty's philosophy in their maturity. The first of such French phenomenologists who comes to the present author's mind is Michel Henry (1922–2002), who is widely regarded today as one of the most original phenomenological philosophers in contemporary France. While without explicitly mentioning the name of

[7] For a more detailed treatment of the problem, see Kwok-ying Lau, "Who is the Philosopher Whose Shadow Merleau-Ponty is Facing?—'The Philosopher and His Shadow' (Re-)revisited" paper presented at "OPO III, World Conference on Phenomenology: Nature, Culture and Existence", co-organized by The Department of Philosophy, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Edwin Cheng Foundation Asian Centre for Phenomenology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Organization of Phenomenological Organizations, 15–20 December 2008, Hong Kong.

[8] E. Fink, "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik", published first in *Kant-Studien* XXXVIII (1933): 321–383; now in *Studien zur Phänomenologie* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1966), pp. 79–156; "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism", Eng. trans. R. O. Elveton, in *The Phenomenology of Husserl*: *Selected Critical Readings*, ed. R. O. Elveton (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), pp. 73–147.

[9] E. Fink, "Die intentionale Analyse und das Problem des spekulativen Denkens"/"L'analyse intentionnelle et le problème de la pensée spéculative"(1951), "Welt und Geschichte"/"Monde et Histoire"(1956), et "Operative Begriffe in Husserls Phänomenologie"/"Les concepts opératoires dans la phénoménologie de Husserl"(1957). All these three articles are now collected in Fink's *Nähe und Distanz* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber GmbH, 1976), pp. 139–204. The last mentioned article is translated into English by William McKenna as "Operative Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology", in *Apriori and World. European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, ed. and trans. William McKenna, Robert M. Harlan, and Laurence E. Winters (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1981), pp. 56–70.

[10] The article presented by Fink to this conference is entitled "Die Spätphilosophie Husserls in der Freiburger Zeit", first appeared in *Edmund Husserl*, *1859–1959* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1959), pp. 99–115; republished in *Nähe und Distanz*, pp. 205–227. In this article, Fink is highly laudatory with regard to the heroic effort of Husserl the old thinker. However, in the last article collected in *Nähe und Distanz*, "Reflexionen zu Husserls Phänomenologischer Reduktion" (pp. 229–322), Fink was again very critical to his former mentor.

Merleau-Ponty, Henry stigmatized that the proper nature of phenomenology of perception is "monstrous" ("monstrueux").[11] On the other hand, Renaud Barbaras, a French phenomenologist of the later generation who has gained notoriety by his works on Merleau-Ponty, has shown a somewhat different attitude. In an early and critically acclaimed book, Barbaras, while giving an immensely positive appraisal on the ontological thinking of the final Merleau-Ponty, affirmed in a massive and violent manner "the failure of *Phenomenology of Perception*".[12] In his later writings, Barbaras criticizes even the last Merleau-Ponty. He emphasizes that the concept of "flesh" (*la chair*) proposed by Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* is ambiguous. According to Barbaras, the ambiguity of the very concept of the flesh, commonly understood as the most original concept forged by the last Merleau-Ponty, is proof of the failure of the entire philosophical itinerary of the author of *The Visible and the Invisible*.[13] If the flesh is the core concept of the new ontology the last Merleau-Ponty was on the way to formulating, and if Barbaras the specialist of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy affirms that the very concept of the flesh is itself a failure, it is logical to conclude that the whole philosophical itinerary of Merleau-Ponty is destined to be a complete bankruptcy. Then one cannot hold herself from asking: is the very notion of the flesh, instead of being hailed as one of the most important conceptual innovations of twentieth-century ontological thinking in the West, not simply a stillborn concept?

10.2 Has the Notion of Flesh Any Theoretical Validity?

In order to examine whether the criticism of Barbaras is justified, we have to answer a preliminary question: does the notion of flesh have any theoretical validity? In other words, can such a notion serve to understand some basic phenomena of our life and our existence? In fact the word "flesh" has already been used in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. However in this work of 1945 the term flesh does not yet carry the specific ontological meaning conferred to it by the later Merleau-Ponty; it is used simply in the most ordinary way as the equivalent of "meat", for example, "[f]or objective thought…that consciousness which is hidden in so much flesh and blood is the least intelligible of occult qualities."[14] A second example is,

[11] Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie matérielle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), p. 153.

[12] Renaud Barbaras, *L'être du phénomène. Sur l'ontologie de Merleau-Ponty* (Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 1991), pp. 51–58.

[13] Renaud Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", in *Merleau-Ponty*: *figures et fonds de la chair*, *Chiasmi International*, *nouvelle série* no. 4, ed. R. Barbaras, M. Carbone and L. Lawlor (Paris: Vrin, 2002), p. 21.

[14] "[P]our la pensée objective … cette conscience qui se cacherait dans un morceau de chair saignante est la plus absurde des qualités occultes." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 401; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. Donald A. Landes (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 365.

"[t]he right hand as an object…is a system of bones, muscles and flesh brought down at a point of space."[15] At this stage of Merleau-Ponty's thinking, "flesh" is a term which denotes something which has merely the status of an object, whereas in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "flesh" bears the meaning of "the Sensible in general" (*le Sensible en general*)[16] or "the Sensible in itself" (*le Sensible en soi*).[17] It serves to go beyond the traditional dichotomy of subject and object, spirit and matter, interior and exterior, or even nature and culture. All these latter notions belong to the traditional philosophical language which remains trapped within a framework of metaphysical dualism. With the notion of flesh, the last Merleau-Ponty aims at going back to the pre-objective layer of existence and to draw our attention to the most basic ontological element prior to any dualistic division. The flesh bears the characters of a certain thickness, of luminosity, elasticity, and flexibility. It also exhibits the character of smoothness or roughness. Thus it is vulnerable, but it also resists pressure. With such characters the flesh is at the basis of the fabric of an incarnate being. But with flesh as the term denoting the ontological character of an exemplary being, namely that of the incarnate human subject, Merleau-Ponty coins the further expression of "the flesh of the world" (*la chair du monde*) to denote the basic constitutive element of the Being of the sensible world (we shall return to this point later). Thus the term "flesh" has an extended usage: from a restrained ontological usage (denoting the ontological character of an exemplary ontical existence) to a general, de-subjectivized ontological usage (denoting the ontological characteristics of the being of the Sensible in general). For this reason, some commentators think that the notion of flesh, in its ontological employment, is the result of Merleau-Ponty's steadfast effort in philosophical reflections.[18] In connection with this, the concepts of reversibility (*réversibilité*) and transitivity (*transitivité*) are also used by the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* to articulate and to demonstrate the theoretical validity of the notion of flesh.

However, to some other commentators, the notion of flesh carries with it the unfortunate character of ambiguity in the bad sense of the term.[19] According to this view, the final Merleau-Ponty has been trapped in a theoretical dilemma. If the flesh is understood from the framework of the phenomenology of perception, the incarnate consciousness will be served as the starting point to understand the flesh. Following

[15] "[L]a main droite objet … est un entrelacement d'os, de muscles et de chair écrasé en un point de l'espace." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 108; *Phenomenology of Perception*, *op. cit*., p. 94.

[16] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 187; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 142.

[17] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 182; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 138.

[18] For example, Richard A. Cohen, "Merleau-Ponty, the Flesh and Foucault", in *Rereading Merleau-Ponty. Essays Beyond the Continental-Analytic Divide*, ed. Lawrence Hass and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Humanities Books, 2000), pp. 277–291.

[19] Renaud Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", pp. 19–26; French version: "L'ambiguïté de la chair. Merleau-Ponty entre philosophie transcendantale et ontologie de la vie", in *Merleau-Ponty aux frontière de l'invisible* (*Les Cahiers de Chiasmi International*, no. 1), ed. M. Cariou, R. Barbaras, and E. Bimbenet (Milano: Associazione Culturale Mimesis, 2003), pp. 183–189.

such an approach Merleau-Ponty will be imprisoned by a kind of "transcendental anthropomorphism", and in the last analysis, by a metaphysical dualism of interiority and exteriority.[20] The only way to escape from this dualism is to regard the flesh from the order of visibility and not according to the paradigm of perceptual consciousness which considers consciousness as the constitutive origin of the ontological order. If visibility is thought of as the source of vision and of the perceptual consciousness, our flesh—the organic body—would then be thought not only as the incarnate consciousness, but also as the pivot from which the distinction between materiality and sensitivity could be made. Our carnal existence would then be the witness not only of the continuity between materiality and sensitivity, but also of the profound unity between them. Thus the duality between pure matter and pure consciousness could be overcome. However, while emphasizing the continuity or even the profound unity between materiality and sensitivity, Merleau-Ponty would risk injecting too strong a dose of interiority into exteriority. According to Barbaras, if exteriority already comprises a kind of interiority, "there is no longer an ontological difference between matter and organic beings".[21] In other words, Barbaras suggests that while Merleau-Ponty aimed at avoiding metaphysical dualism by introducing the notion of flesh, he nonetheless fell back on metaphysical monism which is unable to account for the ontological difference between matter and organic beings. According to this line of reasoning, the notion of flesh cherished by the last Merleau-Ponty is untenable, hence a sign of his failure, because this very notion shows that the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* remains undecided between, on the one hand, the approach of phenomenology of perception which privileges the perceptual consciousness, and on the other the ontological way which takes its starting point from the primacy of the organic body.[22] This analysis has prompted Barbaras to the following final judgment: "The flesh is not a positive concept… It is a problematic concept."[23]

But it seems that this critical reading of the notion of flesh has precisely followed the positivistic mode of "analytical observation or isolated thinking" pinpointed by Merleau-Ponty himself, the mode of thinking the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* wanted precisely to avoid. It seems that this criticism forgets that we have to understand the notion of flesh in conjunction with other notions suggested by the last Merleau-Ponty, such as intercorporeity (*l'intercorporéité*) and interworld (*l'intermonde*). In this chapter, the present author attempts a thought experiment: to understand the concept of flesh not only from the ontological perspective, but also from the perspective of intercultural understanding. We will try to show that without a certain dose of ambiguity inherent to the notion of flesh, intercultural experience would be impossible. However, we think that this is a good ambiguity. We will even propose the concept of cultural flesh (*la chair culturelle*) to explicate our experience of intercultural

[20] Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", p. 20.

[21] Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", p. 23.

[22] Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", p. 21.

[23] Barbaras, "The Ambiguity of the Flesh", p. 21.

understanding. We will try to show that from the perspective of intercultural understanding, the flesh would be a promising concept in the age of globalization.

10.3 Going Beyond Metaphysical Dualism While Taking into Account Ontological Duality: The Flesh as Two-Dimensional Being

Barbaras is certainly right to emphasize that if the notion of flesh asserts not only the continuity but also the profound unity between materiality and sensitivity, there will be the risk of abolishing the ontological difference between matter and organic beings. This difference is a cardinal one established by Husserl in the *Ideen II*, which Merleau-Ponty knew well and was among the first to have made good use of. Now, pointing out the ontological difference between matter and organic beings amounts to admitting that the one and the other belong to two different orders of being. This is to observe and ascertain that there exists an ontological duality. However, to take into account this ontological duality does not imply necessarily that we should construct a metaphysical dualism upon it.

What is then the distinction between ontological duality and metaphysical dualism? Let us take Descartes' philosophy as an example. In Descartes' metaphysical dualism, the thinking substance and the extended substance are two heterogeneous substances. They are understood as first principles which play the basic constitutive and defining role with regard to all other beings and their essential properties. These two substances are not only irreducible to one another, they are, as substances, mutually exclusive and without connection; they cannot interpenetrate into one another, and are always independent of one another.[24]

Everyone can observe that extended being occupies physical space in its essence while thinking being does not. Thus extended being and thinking being form an ontological duality; they represent two different characters of being. But this doesn't mean that these two characters of being do not communicate with one another. It is well known that in the *Sixth Meditation* Descartes draws our attention to the phenomenon of the human body: "Nature also teaches me, by these sensations of pain, hunger, thirst and so on, that I am not merely present in my body as a sailor is present in a ship, but that I am very closely joined and, as it were, intermingled with it, so that I and the body form a unit… For these sensations of hunger, thirst, pain and

[24] Descartes explains in *Principles of Philosophy* that the distinction between the thinking substance and the corporeal substance is a "real distinction", as we can perceive that the two substances "are really distinct simply from the fact that we can clearly and distinctly conceive one without thinking of the other", and that this distinction is so real that "it is much easier for us to have an understanding of extended substance or thinking substance than it is for us to understand substance on its own." (R. Descartes, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Tome III, ed. F. Alquié, Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1973, pp. 128, 132; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. I, Eng. trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 213, 215) This means that from the metaphysical point of view, it is practically impossible to conceive of substance in general terms.

so on are nothing but confused modes of thinking which arise from the union and, as it were, intermingling of the mind with the body."[25] Thus in Descartes already, the phenomenon of the living-body shows that the two moments of ontological duality, those of soul and body, are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they interpenetrate into one another.

On this distinction between ontological duality and metaphysical dualism, one cannot help but ask: has Barbaras mixed up ontological duality with metaphysical dualism in relation to Merleau-Ponty's concept of the flesh? In any case, when Merleau-Ponty proposes the concept of flesh, he attempts to go beyond metaphysical dualism without falling back on monism: any viable ontological thinking must take into consideration the ontological duality between materiality and organic beings. Merleau-Ponty is inspired by the fact that there is connivance between our flesh and the world: our flesh brings us into close contact with the world while the world brings the things therein to us. The world is the milieu in which the relation of intertwining and interpenetration between us carnal beings and the things takes place. Instead of understanding the relation between us and the world in the traditionally oppositional schema of subject and object, Merleau-Ponty suggests, with respect to the concept of flesh, to understand the world as universal flesh to which our flesh bears witness. By virtue of our flesh, we as carnal existence are always already in the world and to the world and thus have a foothold in the order of things in the pre-objective sense of the term. As such, our flesh has a distinguished capacity in that it "unites directly with the things through its own ontogenesis, by welding to one another the two sketches of which it is made, its two lips (*ses deux lèvres*)".[26]

Why does our flesh possess such a magic power? To Merleau-Ponty, the answer should not be looked for from traditional metaphysical dualism but from the phenomenological observation of ontological duality:

> Because it [the flesh] is a two-dimensional being, that can bring us to the things themselves, which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth, inaccessible to a subject of bird's eye-view (sujet de survol), open to him alone that, if it is possible, would coexist with them in the same world.[27]

"The flesh is a two-dimensional being": this means that it has a double ontological character. That is to say it is a being of intertwining and interpenetration instead of homogeneous composition. Only in this way our flesh can be a being of depth instead of just a flat being. Only in this way our flesh can communicate with things of the world, which are not flat beings themselves but beings of depth. As

---

[25] R. Descartes, "Les Méditations", *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Tome II, ed. F. Alquié (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1967), p. 492; *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II, Eng. trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 56.

[26] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 179; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. Trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 136, English translation modified.

[27] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 179; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 136, English translation modified.

two-dimensional being, the flesh is thus neither of pure materiality (things of the world under the perspective of objective scientific thinking), nor of pure spirituality (from the perspective of transcendental idealism), but the Sensible in itself and the Sensible for itself (le *sensible pour soi*). Or, more precisely, the flesh is the Sensible in general because it provides us with the key to understand the basic character of sensible beings. Thus the flesh is an *exemplar sensible*. Merleau-Ponty explains this term in the following manner:

> [A]n *exemplar sensible* … offers to him who inhabits it and senses it the wherewithal to sense everything that resembles himself on the outside, such that, caught up in the tissue of the things, it draws it entirely to itself, incorporates it, and, with the same movement, communicates to the things upon which it closes over that identity without superposition, that difference without contradiction, that divergence [*écart*] between the within and the without that constitutes its natal secret.[28]

The flesh is an *exemplar sensible* because it has the specific ontological character of having an internal distance—*écart*—*w*ith itself such that when it is sensed or touched, it can draw the sensing being or the touching being into itself and transform itself into a sensing or touching being, yet without losing its difference with the originally sensing or touching being. The flesh as the sensible in general is thus a being of identity in difference without complete coincidence. There is a reflective movement generated by the flesh. But this movement is not generated by the perceptual consciousness as the purely sensing subject, but as the result of the sensitivity and affectivity of the flesh.

Understanding the flesh in this way, the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* relinquishes the primacy of the perceptual consciousness. He does not ask for help from a subject of the bird's-eye view and is thus not a prisoner of transcendental anthropomorphism. At the same time, he deepens his reflections on the carnal phenomenon which have begun in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. The body is still one of the foci of the last Merleau-Ponty's attention. However, the body should no longer be understood as "a permanent object of thought, but a flesh that suffers when it is wounded, hands that touch".[29] By saying this, Merleau-Ponty means that the body should neither be thought simply as object nor uniquely as incarnate perceptual consciousness. If he still reflects on the body, his attention is being drawn to the most basic phenomenon of sensibility in general. He wants us to understand what is at the basis of the phenomena of reversibility: those of the visible-seeing (*le visible-voyant*), the being touched-touching (*le touché-touchant*), and the sensible-sensing (*le sensible-sentant*).

As mentioned above, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that the relation of the body to the world is not that of the perceptual subject to the things perceived as if the latter are simply lying in front of her like a pure spectacle. The perceptual subject, by virtue of her body, must lend herself to the world by occupying a place in the world and becomes visible in order to perceive. That is to say, in order to deploy her perceptive powers, my body must be localized and expose herself to being seen, being

[28] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 179; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 135–136.

[29] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 180; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 136.

touched and being affected; thus she is neither a mere stranger to the world nor to the things. In commenting on Husserl's thematization of the phenomenon of reversibility between the being touched-touching in the *Ideen II*, Merleau-Ponty points out that this very phenomenon reveals a singular ontological character of the body in relation to itself: there is a transmutation from the body as a "physical thing" to the body as an ipseity, i.e., something which is capable of designating itself a "self" through some sort of reflection. And it is this singular ontological character of the body which assures its status as the vinculum between the body as a self and the things of the world. Merleau-Ponty describes the phenomenon of reversibility of the hand being touched to become the touching hand with admirable brilliance:

> When my right hand touches my left hand, I feel it as a "physical thing". But at the same moment, I can say that an extraordinary event takes place: here my left hand begins also to feel my right hand, *es wird Leib*, *es empfindet* [*it becomes flesh*, *it feels*]. The physical thing becomes animate. Or, more precisely, it remains what it was (the event does not enrich it), but an exploratory power comes to rest upon it or inhabit it. Thus I touch myself touching; my body accomplishes 'a sort of reflection'. In my body, through my body, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who feels to what he feels. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body—that the body is a 'sensing thing', a 'subject-object'.[30]

The phenomenon of reversibility between the being touched-touching reveals that the body is a "subject-object". That is to say, the body has a twofold ontological character. The concept of flesh is forged to account for this state of affairs:

> We say therefore that our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and on the other hand the one who sees these things and who touches them; we say, since it is evident, that it unites these two properties within itself, and its double belongingness to the order of "object" and to the order of the "subject" reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders. It cannot be by incomprehensible accident that the body has this double reference; it teaches us that each calls for the other.[31]

"Each calls for the other": this is the specific ontological character of the flesh. It is not a side-by-side juxtaposition, but interpenetration and intertwining (*entrelacs*) of two different properties within itself. Sometimes Merleau-Ponty calls it simply chiasm, and explains it by the movement of coiling over (*enroulement*) of the sensible upon the sensing body (cf., *infra*).

Barbaras criticizes the concept of flesh by saying that "it abolishes the ontological difference between materiality and organic beings" (*supra*). But can this criticism apply to Merleau-Ponty? It seems that the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* has already anticipated, if not the criticism formulated by Barbaras as such, at least the

---

[30] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 210; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, p. 166; Eng. translation modified. Here Merleau-Ponty comments on Husserl's famous descriptions of the phenomenon of double sensation of touching in §36 of *Ideen* II. Cf., infra.

[31] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 180–181; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 137, English translation modified.

misunderstanding about this new ontological concept: we should not use the traditional term of matter to understand the flesh:

> Once again, the flesh we are speaking of is not matter. It is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in particular when the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things, such that simultaneously, *as* tangible it descends among them, *as* touching it dominates them all and draws this relationship and even this double relationship from itself, by dehiscence or fission of its own mass.[32]

"The coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body": this is another expression employed by Merleau-Ponty to describe the phenomenon of reversibility. It is a movement of dehiscence, of digging a distance with regard to itself and within itself in order to return to itself. The faithful description of the phenomenon of reversibility, inaugurated by Husserl in the *Ideen II*,[33] overthrows the positivistic understanding of the world and the things in the world: the world is not a world of full presence, nor the things are objects of pure positivity. At this pre-objective level, the things reveal themselves as "only half-open before us, unveiled and hidden".[34] They are punctuated by "*écart*" and "a certain absence".[35] Only in this way can the world be a world of depth and not of flat being. The concept of matter at the basis of the mode of thinking of objective science is unable to understand the ontological character of such a world revealed, nor the things being found there at the pre-objective layer. Merleau-Ponty calls being at this pre-objective layer brute being, that is, being not yet domesticated by objective thinking, a mode of thinking shared by objective sciences and intellectualist philosophy. This layer of brute being is not materiality, but sensibility: "the sensible (*le sensible*) is the universal form of brute being."[36]

---

[32] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 191–192; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 146.

[33] Cf. Husserl's marvellous descriptions in the *Ideen II*: "The touch-sensings, the sensations which … lie on the surface of the touching finger, are, such as they are lying there spread out over the surface, nothing given through adumbration and schematization. They have nothing at all to do with the sensuous schema. The touching-sensing is not a *state* of the material thing, hand, but is precisely the *hand itself*, which for us is more than a material thing, and the way in which it is mine entails that I, the 'subject of the Body', can say that what belongs to the material thing is its, not mine…. *On* this surface of the hand I sense the sensations of touch, etc. And it is precisely thereby that this surface manifests itself immediately as my Body." Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zur reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*, *Zweites Buch*, *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, Hua IV, ed. Marly Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1952), p. 150; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Eng. trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), p. 157.

[34] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 212; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, p. 167.

[35] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 217; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, p. 172.

[36] Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes*, p. 217; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, p. 172.

Not only matter, but mind too, its conceptual opposite, is neither a proper term to understand the flesh. Both these terms belong to the categories of substance, which is inapt in providing a correct understanding of the flesh:

> The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term "element", in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being.[37]

Thus it is clear that to Merleau-Ponty the flesh, a term for describing brute being, is not matter, a term of objective thinking. The mystery of the flesh does not reside in that matter has become sensitivity, as Barbaras would have wrongly believed. What Merleau-Ponty suggests is: do not understand sensibility according to matter or materiality as banal materialism does. On the contrary, we should understand materiality according to sensibility. We should note that there is never pure materiality without sensibility. For example, a layer of red colour is never a layer of pure matter without any sensible character; it always conveys to us at the same time some emotion and thus affects us. A colour can even provoke our imagination. In his *Theory of Colours* (*Zur Farbenlehre*) published first in 1810, Goethe has already shown that colour is not of pure materiality, but exhibits some sensible and affective characters. Thus colours can generate not only aesthetic but also moral effects.[38] To understand matter as inanimate Nature and attribute to it the origin of life and meaning is only the result of physicalistic reductionism, and this latter is the consequence of the modern mechanico-scientific vision of the world introduced by Galileo's mathematization of Nature.[39] It is evident that if matter is understood as inanimate Nature, it can render comprehensible neither the genesis of meaning nor the genesis of intelligence from materiality. The concept of flesh serves to understand the origin of meaning, i.e., to understand the genesis of intelligence and idea from sensibility and not from materiality. Merleau-Ponty has introduced the concept of flesh as a way to deepening his genetico-phenomenological research since the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

---

[37] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 184; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 139.

[38] Goethe explains the aesthetic and moral effects of colour in the following terms: "Since colour occupies so important a place in the series of elementary phenomena, filling as it does the limited circle assigned to it with fullest variety, we shall not be surprised to find that its effects are at all times decided and significant, and that they are immediately associated with the emotions of the mind… that in combination, [colours] may produce an harmonious, characteristic, often even an inharmonious effect on the eye, by means of which they act on the mind… Hence, colour considered as an element of art, may be made subservient to the highest aesthetical ends." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, Eng. trans. Charles Locke Eastlake (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), p. 304. Goethe finds that colour even has healing effects: "People experience a great delight in colour, generally… That healing powers were ascribed to coloured gems, may have arisen from the experience of this indefinable pleasure." *Ibid*, p. 305.

[39] Cf. Husserl's powerful deconstructive demonstration in §9 of *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie*, Hua VI, ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1954), pp. 20–60; *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Eng. trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), pp. 23–59.

The flesh should be understood as the coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, the visible upon the seeing body, and the tangible upon the touching body. This movement of coiling over institutes a magical relation between our body and the things in such a way that from then on there exists a "pact between the things and me according to which I lend them my body in order that they inscribe upon it and give me their resemblance".[40] The coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, the visible upon the seeing body, and the tangible upon the touching body "form a closely connected system that I count on, define a vision in general and a constant style of visibility from which I cannot detach myself".[41] This vision in general and this constant style of visibility—expression of the tacit "pact between the things and me"—guarantee that there is correspondence and communication between the exterior and the interior, between the things of the world seen and our body as agent of seeing. A true vision of the things and of the world is thus possible even if such or such particular vision turns out to be illusory or laconic.

It is important to emphasize that in virtue of the flesh understood as the movement of coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, there is no privilege granted neither to the side of matter nor to the side of spirit, likewise neither to the side of exteriority nor to that of interiority. However, thanks to the movement of coiling over of the flesh, an ipseity is born: the coiling over of the flesh is a movement of dehiscence and of (re-)turning to oneself which gives birth to selfhood. "The flesh (of the world or my own flesh) is not contingency, chaos, but a texture that returns to itself and conforms to itself."[42] With the flesh it is possible to speak of selfhood; but the latter is instituted rather than constituting.

Now we can better understand why the flesh of the world is prior to the division between subject and object: it is because the position of subject is acquired only from the moment of the birth of selfhood, and there is object only with reference to the subject. Since selfhood, and in consequence its positioning as subject, is instituted by the flesh as coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, it is not wrong to speak of subject. But the subject, and in consequence the subject-object dichotomy, is secondary or derivative in relation to the flesh. However, it is wrong to understand the flesh as substance, because substance is static and of homogeneous composition while the flesh, heterogeneous in nature and understood as coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, is at the root of the dynamic movement which brings about the genesis of meaning and intelligence. That is why Merleau-Ponty warns us not to think the flesh from the standpoint of substance:

> We must not think the flesh by starting from substances, from body and spirit—for then it [the flesh] would be the union of contradictories—but we must think it, as we said, as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being.[43]

[40] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 192; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 146.

[41] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 192; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 146.

[42] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 192; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 146.

[43] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 193–194; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 147.

The language of substance is too crude to understand the world because such a language remains on the surface of the things. To understand the flesh as element allows us to descend into the depth of the things in order to measure the heartbeat of the world.

Here we can also understand why Merleau-Ponty's extension of the usage of the term flesh is justified: from flesh as the ontological character of a carnal subject (restrained ontological usage) to flesh as the ontological character of the Sensible in general (general ontological usage) witnesses the necessity to understand the flesh of the world as prior to the division between subject and object.

10.4 The Flesh or Thinking the Domain of the In-between: Interpenetration, Interdependence, Intertwining, Encroachment, Intercorporeity, Interworld

With the explanation above, we do not pretend to be able to dissipate all the ambiguities and mysteries around the concept of flesh. In fact, it is not the intention of Merleau-Ponty to dissipate entirely the enigma of the world by introducing such a concept. On the contrary, he wants to bring us as close as possible to the enigma of the world before we can pretend to clarify it completely. The very terms of intertwining, encroachment, and of chiasm proposed by Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* to think the flesh as texture of the world serve more as indication toward reflections on the pre-objective order than as explanation which claims to have scientific value. This is precisely because the flesh belongs to the pre-objective order: not only we cannot have precise determination of the notion of flesh in the same way as propositions of objective sciences, the latter are simply unable to descend to the level of the pre-objective order of beings. The task of descending to the depth of the pre-objective order of brute being is by definition unable to be accomplished by objective sciences.

In fact Merleau-Ponty has already traversed the pre-objective terrain in his prior works, and the terms of interpenetration, interdependence, and integration were used. These terms, like those of intertwining, encroachment, and chiasm, are evoked to understand the transition from one domain to another, or more precisely, the transition between two domains apparently heterogeneous: between soul and body, idea and matter, interior and exterior, and nature and culture. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty remarks that the world of nature always trans-appears (*transparaît*) through the human world, that is, the world of culture.[44] This means that nature and culture are two orders of beings which interpenetrate into one another and form an integrated whole. Likewise, in Merleau-Ponty's earliest work *The Structure of Behavior*, the most important part of the book serves to articulate

[44] Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. 339; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. D. A. Landes, p. 307.

the interpenetration, reciprocity, and integration of the three structural orders of things: the physical order, the vital order and the human order.[45] If the first two orders correspond to the lower stratum of the world (physical and biological nature), the human order, which is situated already in the cultural world, is established necessarily upon the first two orders which serve as the natural and sensible support of the human order. However, the genius of the young Merleau-Ponty resides in the fact that he suggested already in this first work the idea of primordial Nature which belongs to the pre-objective order. In a long note summarising the contribution of modern psychology to the understanding of the a priori structure of experience and, furthermore, of the a priori structure of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty speaks of the necessity to refer to Nature in the complete explication of experience and to go beyond "the word Nature in the sense of the sciences of nature" in order to "apperceive that primordial Nature, that *pre-objective sensible field* in which the behavior of other persons appears, which is prior according to its meaning to the perception of other persons just as it is prior to the Nature of the sciences, and which transcendental reflection could discover".[46] The key terms of the last ontology—pre-objective and sensible—found their first expression already in this early work written in 1939 and first published in 1942. We now know that Merleau-Ponty took up again his reflections on the primordial Nature in his lecture courses delivered at the Collège de France from 1956 to1960 as part of his meditations leading to the formulation of his new ontology of the sensible.[47]

Let us return to *The Visible and the Invisible*. In this unfinished work Merleau-Ponty advises us to go beyond the bifurcation of the constitutive subject and the constituted object as well as of pure consciousness and inert matter, because all meanings come into play in the domain of the in-between. It is from this understanding that Merleau-Ponty suggests the concepts of intercorporeity and interworld. The world of carnal subjects is the world of intercorporeal beings; this world is an interworld. These two terms, intercorporeity and interworld, are essential for understanding the new ontological conception built upon the notion of flesh as the coiling over of the sensible upon the sensing body, the visible upon the seeing body, and the tangible upon the touching body. The limited scope of these pages does not allow us to pursue further explications. We confine ourselves to draw the reader's attention to certain passages which highlight the close relationship between the ontological concept of flesh and that of intercorporeal being.

> With the reversibility of the visible and the tangible, what is open to us is…an intercorporeal being, a presumptive domain of the visible and the tangible, which extends further than the things I touch and see at present. There is a circle of the touched and the touching, the

[45] Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement* (1942; Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1949, 2nd ed.), chap. III, pp. 139–199; *The Structure of Behavior*, Eng. trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 129–184.

[46] Merleau-Ponty, *La structure du comportement*, p. 180, note; *The Structure of Behavior*, p. 245, n. 82; the present author's highlight.

[47] M. Merleau-Ponty, *La Nature. Notes*, *Cours du Collège de France*, ed. and annotated Dominique Séglard (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995); *Nature*: *Course Notes from the Collège de France*, Eng. trans. Robert Vallier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

> touched takes hold of the touching; there is a circle of the visible and the seeing, the seeing is not without visible existence; there is even an inscription of the touching in the visible, of the seeing in the tangible—and the converse; there is finally a propagation of these exchanges to all the bodies of the same type and of the same style which I see and touch—and this by virtue of the fundamental fission or segregation of the sentient and the sensible which, laterally, makes the organs of my body communicate and founds transitivity from one body to another.[48]

It is then the flesh as coiling over of the sensible on the sensing body (the sentient) which renders possible intercorporeity which is the transitivity from a body to another body. And for Merleau-Ponty, intercorporeity is simply the carnal basis of the intersubjective world.[49]

If the character of being carried through by the concept of flesh is to be understood from the notions of interpenetration, interdependence, intertwining, and encroachment, then the world can no more be understood as being displayed before our eyes in a straightforward way and in a homogeneous manner; it is rather a world of promiscuity. To name such a world, Merleau-Ponty invents the term "interworld":

> With the flesh of the world … integral being is not before me, but at the intersection of my views and at the intersection of my views with those of the others, at the intersections of my acts and at the intersection of my acts with those of the others, that the sensible world and the historical world are always interworlds.[50]

The world is an interworld. This means: there is not first of all my own world and then the world of others. We find ourselves always already in a world which is at the crossroads of myself and the others. On the one hand, without the others, there is simply no world. On the other hand, things of the world are only partially unveiled to us. We always need other perceiving subjects to unveil those things or parts of things still hidden. This means that the unveiling of things of the world can never be completed nor exhausted by a single subject; it always needs the assistance of others. That is also why the world is always a world to share and to be shared.

10.5 Interworld: Explication by Intercultural Experience

Once again, the concept of interworld is unusual. Is it only the result of Merleau-Ponty's speculation? Or is it proposed on the basis of phenomenological evidence? Let us call upon some intercultural experiences to illustrate this concept. Why some East-Asian and Indian conductors can perform authoritative interpretations of Western orchestral works and are recognized as acclaimed conductors in the world

---

[48] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 188; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 142–143.

[49] Cf. Kwok-ying Lau, "Intersubjectivity and Phenomenology of the Other: Merleau-Ponty's Contribution", in *Space*, *Time*, *Culture*, ed. David Carr and Chan-fai Cheung (Dordrecht/ Boston/ London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), pp. 135–158; especially p. 146.

[50] Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 116; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 84.

of Western classical music since several decades? Why a young Korean violinist can win the grand prix of the Paganini competition? Why a young Chinese pianist can get the first prize in the Chopin competition in Warsaw? Why *The Orphan of the Zhao Family* (《趙氏孤兒》), a famous Chinese drama composed in the Yuan dynasty (Thirteenth–Fourteenth Centuries) could have been performed in Europe since the Eighteenth Century?[51] Why Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Titus Andronicus* can be represented in Cantonese Chinese by a Hong Kong-born drama director and gained critical acclaims from European spectators? Why, last but not least, East-Asians whose mother language is never any current European language can translate phenomenological works into Japanese, Korean or Chinese and at the same time discuss these same works in one or more European languages? To give a short-cut answer, we would say: this is intercultural experience. Intercultural experience is never pure experience but experience of interpenetration, intertwining, encroachment, promiscuity and hybridity.

But what is the key to intercultural experience? Merleau-Ponty gave his reflections when he expressed his appreciations of the work of his anthropologist friend Lévi-Strauss who is well-known for having left Europe to meet people of the "savage mind" in the Amazon forest in the 1930s. First of all, the method:

> Remarkable method, which consists in learning to see what is ours as alien and what was alien as our own.[52]

In fact this amounts to the phenomenological attitude of epoché which consists of suspending our habitual beliefs and what is already familiar to us and try to incorporate into ourselves what is foreign and unusual to us in order to learn to see both what is foreign to us and foreign in us.

Then the practical procedure on the terrain of investigation:

> He only has to have learned at some time and at sufficient length to let himself be taught by another culture. For from then on he has a new organ of understanding at his disposal—he has regained possession of that untamed region of himself, unincorporated in his own culture, through which he communicates with other cultures.[53]

This includes not only learning a foreign language but also acquiring new cultural sensibilities through the graft of a new cultural flesh (cf. *infra*).

And in the end what we can gain by this method and procedure:

> At the point where two cultures cross, truth and error dwell together, either because our own training hides what there is to know from us, or on the contrary because it becomes, in our life in the field, a means of incorporating other people's differences.[54]

---

[51] The French Jesuit missionary to China Joseph Henri Marie de Prémare (1666–1736) translated this play into French with the title *L'orphelin de la maison de Tchao*, *tragédie Chinoise*, in 1735. Upon this first French translation other versions in English and French were produced, including the one by Voltaire entitled *L'orphelin de la Chine* in 1755.

[52] Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 120.

[53] Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 120.

[54] Merleau-Ponty, "De Mauss à Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signes*, p. 151; "From Mauss to Claude Lévi-Strauss", in *Signs*, p. 120.

This will change not only our usual criteria of truth but also our usual conception of truth: truth is not pure light but a hybrid formation of truth and error, of familiarity and strangeness.[55]

In short, intercultural experiences teach us by way of practice that the new ontological conception understood according to the flesh of the world has its validity, because intercultural experience is nothing other than interpenetration, intertwining, encroachment, promiscuity and hybridity.

10.6 Cultivation of a Cultural Flesh as Condition of Possibility of Intercultural Understanding

In the era of post September-11, we think that one of the most urgent tasks of intellectuals of different cultural horizons who care for the present state and the future of our world is to promote intercultural understanding. To achieve this we have to first of all enter the cultural world of the others. In the language of Heidegger, it is to accord oneself to the cultural mood (*Stimmung*) of the others. But the key to according oneself to the cultural mood of the others is to graft a new cultural flesh on oneself in order to have the cultural sensibility of the others. The cultural flesh is not the object of description of exact sciences. It is rather a state of mind and of carnal dispositions through which our flesh can have the sensibility of other cultures. A new cultural flesh enables us to feel the heartbeat of people of other cultures. In intercultural understanding, what is important is to cultivate a cultural savage mind which is at this side of scientific knowledge, because we have to go underneath the universalism of scientific knowledge and technological know-how in order to penetrate into a more particular, more secret, more mystic region of another culture. In the terms of the last Merleau-Ponty, it is by the coiling over of the cultural flesh of the others upon our original cultural flesh such that we will have the chance to penetrate into a foreign culture. It is in this way that we will have the possibility to understand why people of the other culture think in this way and not otherwise, and why they feel happy in such situations and hurt in other occasions.

In order to graft the cultural flesh of the others on our own cultural flesh, we certainly have to learn the language of the others such that we can read canonical works of another culture. We should also acquire knowledge of their history, literature and myths, appreciate their works of art, music and dance, savour their food, drinks and wins. We should even try to put their clothes and accessories on our own body, etc. In short, we have to lend our own cultural flesh to the cultural world of the others in order to have the sensibility of the others by the coiling over of the cultural sensibility of the others upon our cultural sensibility. We think that it is our obliga-

[55] For a more detailed discussion of the intercultural implications of the anthropological studies of Lévi-Strauss from a Merleau-Pontian perspective, see the same author: "Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty: From Nature-Culture Distinction to Savage Spirit and Their Intercultural Implications", *supra*, Chap. 8.

tion today to cultivate such a new cultural flesh, in the hope of but also with the joy of reinforcing our existence and anchorage in the world which is always already an interworld.

10.7 In the Place of a Conclusion

In the pages above we hope to have clarified the theoretical motivation behind the coinage of the concept of flesh by the final Merleau-Ponty as well as some ambiguities surrounding this concept. By suggesting the distinction between metaphysical dualism and ontological duality, we hope to have shown that the term flesh as two dimensional being serves to give an account of the ontological difference between materiality and organic beings without falling back onto the theoretical difficulties of metaphysical dualism or metaphysical monism. With the concept of flesh as the Sensible in general, Merleau-Ponty's last ontology aims at thematizing the pre-objective world which is an order of existence characterized by interpenetration, intertwining, encroachment and chiasm. In other words, the pre-objective world is a world of intercorporeity and promiscuity; in short an interworld. On the one hand, this line of thought is in conformity with Husserl's insight that ideas and the existence of the intelligible order are formed only on the basis of the sensible order. On the other hand, it is only with the concepts of chiasm and interworld that we can come to terms with experiences of intercultural understanding. For intercultural experiences are nothing other than experiences of chiasm and hybridity in an interworld. Toward the end of the present essay, we risk proposing the concept of cultural flesh as the basic bodily and spiritual dispositions in the formation of our cultural sensibilities. We suggest that the cultivation of a new cultural flesh is the condition of possibility of intercultural understanding. "Cultural flesh" is another extension of usage of the term flesh. It is still at the stage of preliminary consideration which needs further reflections. However, if we admit that cultural imperialism or cultural chauvinism is one of the major obstacles to intercultural understanding, and that an essential way to clear these obstacles is to cultivate the sensibility toward other cultures, we want to emphasize that we need certain bodily and spiritual dispositions foreign to our own culture to enable the transplantation of sensibilities of other cultures onto our culture of origin. The concept of cultural flesh and the call for its renewal serve to remind us of this.

Chapter 11
Conclusion: Toward a New Cultural Flesh

11.1 Recapitulation

Our aim is to promote intercultural understanding in philosophy. In the precedent chapters we have undertaken a threefold task. Firstly, we have to clear off obstacles standing on the road to intercultural understanding. That is why we have undertaken the critique of Eurocentrism as a form of ethnocentrism in philosophy (*c.f.*, Chaps. 1, 2, 4, and 6). We think that its theoretical significance can be extended to critical reflections on other forms of ethnocentrism. In the case of the particular concern of the present author, this critique will be relevant to reflections on the resurgence of different modes of Sinocentrism which had remained in a latent state in the last century but have come up to surface again since a decade or so.

Our second task is to enquire into the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in philosophy. We have pointed out at the very beginning of Chap. 2 that we have to carry out a double epoché. The first epoché is directed against the mother language of every author who is not a native English speaker. In the case of the present author whose mother tongue is the modern Chinese of Meridional China, he has to shift his language of communication into English (or more precisely, North American English). Other than suspending the vernacular language, namely Cantonese Chinese, with which and in which he used to think in a daily manner, he also has to perform a second epoché with regard to the philosophical language used. If the present author wants to communicate with another philosopher who has received training uniquely in the Western tradition, be it continental or analytic, but who is a laymen of Chinese philosophy or Oriental philosophy in general, he must try to translate in one way or another, among all the philosophical vocabularies which animate his thinking, those which are of Chinese origin into some sort of standard philosophical vocabularies of the Western tradition in order to be understood.

We have also found out that a disenchanted worldview is also an essential element underlying the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3_11

philosophy. Religion is one of the most shared cultural phenomena across the most divergent forms of human culture. The question is thus not whether one is a theist or atheist in terms of philosophical standpoint, but whether one is committed to religious fanaticism to a degree which substitutes religious faith to truth in the philosophical sense of the term. A non-disenchanted worldview which adheres to a religious dogma without reflective distance is at the antipode of any philosophically critical attitude; it will not enhance intercultural understanding in philosophy. Historically speaking, it is on her way to modernity that European culture has acquired her disenchanted worldview. We have shown, in Chap. 7, that the two famous debates among European intellectuals around Chinese culture in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, namely the Chinese Chronology Controversy and the Chinese Rites Controversy, had contributed to shaken the hithertho authoritative status of the Book of *Genesis* of the *Old Testament* as a document which had been accepted as giving an unquestionably authentic account of the beginning of human history. These two controversies around the intelligibility of the birth of ancient Chinese people prior to the so-called "historical" narration provided by the Christian *Holy Bible* (namely, how to make sense of the existence of the Chinese people earlier than the beginning of the "Sacred History" told in the *Old Testament*) and the nature of Chinese cultural practices (whether it is religious or secular) had contributed progressively to the disbelief with regard to the status of "holy history" as true history. They had thus contributed to the establishment of the disenchanted worldview in Modern Europe.

On our way to understand the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding in philosophy, we have also proposed the notion of cultural flesh in order to conceptualize the way to enter into the horizon of another culture (*c.f.* Chaps. 1 and 10). The term cultural flesh is an extension of the ontological term "flesh" ("la chair") first adopted systematically by the late Merleau-Ponty. It serves to capture the basic characteristics of intercultural experiences, namely interpenetration, intertwinement, encroachment, promiscuity and chiasm on the one hand; and on the other hand convergence with écart, reversibility without complete coincidence, ipseity amid intersubjectivity and intercorporeity, identity in difference. If the key to intercultural understanding is to enhance our possibility to penetrate the horizon of other cultures, the only way to do so is to strengthen our cultural sensibilities with regard to these other cultures. This can be done by grafting upon our own cultural flesh the cultural flesh of another culture, namely by the coiling over of the cultural flesh of others upon our original cultural flesh. Merleau-Ponty has learned from the method and works of the structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss, namely to look into our own culture from the eyes of other cultures. Not only we have to learn to look into what is strange to us in a foreign culture, but also discover what is familiar to us in this foreign culture. Likewise, we have to learn to discover what is strange in our own familiar culture. Lévi-Strauss, and Merleau-Ponty following him, are both able to discover that primitive non-Western cultures, which at first sight seem to be unfamiliar and strange from the perspective of mature Western culture, share in fact structural invariants and functional similarities with the latter upon closer observations and analyses. As Merleau-Ponty has so well shown, learning to see from the

eyes of an anthropologist is a prominent example of grafting a new cultural flesh upon one's own cultural flesh: learning to see our own culture with the eyes of another culture and discover what remains invisible under our habitual cultural vision (*c.f.*, Chap. 9).

The third task we have undertaken throughout the precedent chapters is concrete intercultural understanding in philosophy guided by the broadly defined phenomenological approach. We have tried to provide new ways of reading ancient Chinese philosophers from the phenomenological perspectives inspired by Merleau-Ponty and Patočka, namely the early Daoist philosopher Laozi and the Pre-Qin Confucian philosopher Mencius (c.f., Chaps. 3, 5, and 6 respectively). We have also tried to shed new light on the transcendental attitude of Buddhist philosophy from the standpoint of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology (Chap. 4). But we also went further to confront the basically cognitivist attitude guided by the scientific spirit which underlies Husserl's phenomenological endeavor with the Buddhist attitude which aims at ultimate spiritual liberation face to the contemporary cultural and spiritual crisis of humanity.

Last but not the least, we have tried to make sense of the ethical turn of the final Foucault, which is not only a surprise to adepts of critical theories but even incomprehensible to all those who think that philosophy is basically an epistemological enterprise. We undertake this elucidation by presenting the new conception of philosophy proposed by the contemporary Chinese philosopher Lao Sze-kwang (Chap. 8). To Lao traditional Chinese philosophy is essentially reflective thinking aiming at self-transformation. With this novel conception of philosophy, namely philosophy as a form of theoretical practice with the purpose of bringing about self-transformation through methodological and reflective enquiries, Lao has not only brought into new light the essence of Ancient Chinese philosophy, exemplified by the Pre-Qin Daoism of Zhuangzi and the Pre-Qin Confucianism of Mencius, but also forged a new understanding of forms of philosophical practice which are ethically and practically oriented. Lao's conception of philosophy as self-transformation not only serves as a complement to the merely epistemologically oriented, thus unilateral, conception of philosophy prevalent in the West, but also finds resonance in Pierre Hadot's (re)discovery of the essence of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy condensed under the now well-known expression "philosophy as a way of life". In addition, with the help of Lao and Hadot, we have found that the last Husserl's understanding of the phenomenological epoché as an act comparable to religious conversion betrays a conception of philosophy as a form of intellectual activity aiming at self-transformation guided by the consciousness of self-responsibility of the philosopher. The last Husserl's talk of the task of the philosopher as the functionary of humankind unveils his underlying concern of the ultimate ethical télos of philosophy. Thus while Husserl continued paradoxically to present his idea of philosophy as rigorous science from his own understanding of the Idea of Greek philosophy as pure *thêoria*, he himself has in fact implicitly admitted the ultimately ethic concern of philosophy. Such a conception of philosophy embedded in the last Husserl's declaration of the philosopher's vocation as functionary of humankind is in line with the conception of philosophy as self-transformation proposed by Lao Sze-kwang.

11.2 Further Reflections on the Concept of Cultural Flesh

In our effort to promote intercultural understanding in philosophy, we have proposed the concept of cultural flesh which serves a double purpose. Theoretically it serves as a conceptual means to understand the mechanism of intercultural communication. Practically and strategically such a concept can guide us toward the enhancement of our cultural sensibilities by grafting upon our own cultural flesh the cultural flesh of Others. But is the concept of cultural flesh possible? In what way, by proposing this new concept, we are able to graft upon ourselves a new cultural flesh? What is new in this new cultural flesh?

Intercultural understanding is enacted through intercultural experiences. It is a matter of encountering with other cultures, with what is unfamiliar, unexpected, strange and different from the habits, sensibilities, and rationale of one's own culture which form the background, often pre-reflective, of one's thoughts, choices and actions. The encounter with cultural otherness is always punctuated by surprise and incomprehension at the first sight. It is thus legitimate to ask the following question: on our way to enquire into the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding and the means to enhance it, why are we not first of all inspired by philosophers of Otherness, such as Lévinas, or philosophers of différance or difference, such as Derrida, or philosophers of event, such as Deleuze? Why do we find the ontological concept of flesh proposed in the unfinished manuscripts of Merleau-Ponty, notably in those attached to the posthumous publication known under the title of *The Visible and the Invisible*, can serve best our purpose? Why the philosophy of incarnation proposed by the French phenomenologist Michel Henry, which can be summarized as a theo-centric philosophy of flesh, cannot meet the requirements of intercultural understanding in philosophy?

11.2.1 Lévinas' Appraisal of the Concept of Flesh and the Enigma of Ontological Separation

The works of Lévinas, which promote incessantly ethics understood as the thinking of the primordial relation with Others as first philosophy,[1] represent of course immensely invaluable theoretical resources to our own work. His thematization of the face-to-face as a basic constituent of the phenomenon of encounter with the Other in *Totality and Infinity* is rich in lesson for any ethics of intercultural communication. To Lévinas, "the face [of the other] speaks to me and thereby invites me to a relation incommensurate with a power exercised, be it enjoyment or

[1] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Ethique comme philosophie première* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1998); "Ethics as First Philosophy", in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass. : B. Blackwell, 1989), pp. 75–87.

knowledge."[2] This ethical command from the face of the Other, which enacts on us more or less in the manner of Kant's categorical imperative, provokes in me the respect and the responsibility toward the Other. This ethical command from the face-to-face with the Other will be one of the guiding principles of the normative attitude toward cultural otherness in intercultural experience. Lévinas' phenomenological descriptions in *Totality and Infinity* pay great attention to the various dimensions of the incarnate subject. Like the late Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas accords a lot of importance to the phenomena of sensibility and affectivity. He even speaks of "incarnate thought" ("la pensée incarnée")[3] or "the original incarnation of thought" (l'incarnation originelle de la pensée"),[4] expressions which are of close affinity with the late Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh. Lévinas has given positive comments on Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the phenomenon of reversibility of touching—when one touches another object she is also touching herself—what Husserl called the double sensation of the touching and the being-touched in the *Ideen II*, and praised them as "remarkable analysis".[5] He went further on to appraise in admiring terms Merleau-Ponty's thematization of the flesh as a radically novel way to overcome the traditional dichotomy between Nature and Culture:

> It is impossible to express sufficient admiration for the subtle beauty of Merleau-Ponty's analyses of the original incarnation of spirit in which Nature reveals its meaning in the essentially signifying (i.e. expressive, i.e. cultural) movements of the human body, going from gesture to language, to art, to poetry and science; in which Nature reveals its meaning (or soul?) in Culture.[6]

To Lévinas the novelty of Merleau-Ponty consists in revealing to us that the phenomenon of incarnation or of the living flesh "is an original mode of being".[7] Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh is the patient inquiry into this original mode of being. It bears an immense significance in regard to the understanding of the genesis of Culture from Nature. To Lévinas Merleau-Ponty has tried to capture the inaugural event of the birth of culture by inquiring into the mode of being of the flesh: such an ontological inquiry "is inscribed within sensibility and in which the

---

[2] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*: *Essai sur l'extériorité* (La Haye: M. Nijhoff, 1961), p. 172; *Totality and Infinity*, Eng. trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1979), p. 198.

[3] E. Lévinas, *Totalité et infini*, p. 139; *Totality and Infinity*, p. 164.

[4] Emmanuel Lévinas, "De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty", in *Hors sujet* (Paris: Livre de Poche/Fata Morgana, 1987), p. 134; Eng. trans. "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, eds. G. Johnson & M. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990), p. 56.

[5] Emmanuel Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 151; "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 63.

[6] E. Lévinas, "De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., pp. 135–136; "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., pp. 56–57.

[7] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 150; "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 62; English translation modified.

relation of thought to extension is … the inchoative event of culture."[8] Once a close follower but also a subtle critical reader of Husserl, Lévinas cannot miss the affinity and the delicate difference between Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. The author of *Totality and Infinity* points out that Merleau-Ponty, while transforming the Husserlian phenomenological term of *Leib* into the generalized ontological term of *la chair* (flesh), has abandoned the Husserlian language of constitution by the transcendental subject. The carnal subject is no more thought of as the assimilation of the world and the entire otherness of the world by a sovereign act of constitution. If Merleau-Ponty has thematized the flesh from the phenomenon of sensibility and reversibility, the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* draws our attention to the fact that it is by "lending oneself to the world" and "lending oneself to others" that the phenomenon of sensibility and reversibility takes its place. Here the expression "takes its place" is to be understood in the literal sense of the term. This is because the double sensation of the being-touched and the touching, primal example of reversibility of the senses, must happen on the localized surface of our flesh, which is a being-in-the-world. This means that it is only by inhabiting the world, which is a world of otherness, that the carnal subject can live a life of culture. Thus cultural life is possible only on the basis of the expression of the carnal subject upon its sensible and affective interaction with the world of otherness. Life as culture is the expression of the invisible (or "inner") part of the carnal subject by and through the visible (or "outer") part of the same carnal subject in contact with the world and things of the world.[9] This line of thought will enable us to understand why the term flesh is not limited to designate the carnal subject; it applies also to the world—the flesh of the world—because the world is not inanimate Nature but a world of otherness capable of sensibility and affectivity too. Truth and knowledge as objects of ideality are the acquisitions of intellectual activities; they are neither more nor less than a particular mode of culture.[10] That is to say, they have their sensible and carnal basis. Philosophy as enquiry into truth and knowledge of a particular type (or the most general type) has likewise its sensible and carnal foundation.

With his ontology of the flesh, Merleau-Ponty has contributed to a new mode of understanding of culture in distinction to the German Idealism and Neo-Kantianism. As Lévinas has pertinently pointed out, in Merleau-Ponty,

> culture is not conceived of as the addition of axiological attributes (which would then be seen as secondary and founded on something else) on the top of the pre-established, founding representation of the thing. That which is essentially cultural can be traced back to the incarnate thought which expresses itself, to the very life of the flesh which manifests her soul—the original signifying of something which bears meaning [un sensé] or of the intelligible.[11]

[8] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 150; "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 62; English translation modified.

[9] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 150; Eng. Trans. "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 62.

[10] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 150; Eng. Trans. "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 62.

[11] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 150; Eng. Trans. "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 62; English translation modified.

Thus Lévinas has understood, as do we, that the thematization of the flesh in Merleau-Ponty provides the right way to understand the genesis of all cultural phenomena on the basis of the sensibility, affectivity and expressiveness of the flesh. This encourages considerably our own search for the way to enquire into the conditions of possibility of intercultural understanding and the opening of the space of interculturality and, furthermore, for the way to promote intercultural communication.

Yet while Lévinas declares that he has no intention to contest what he sees in Merleau-Ponty as "the opening up of a path toward the recognition of the Other in the 'lending myself to others'",[12] he nevertheless criticizes Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh through the analyses of reversibility of touching as accomplishing merely "pure knowledge".[13] It is well-known that for Lévinas all ontological treatment of relations with others is based on the re-presentation of the Other, which is ultimately a theoretical act of objectivation of the Other and thus forgetful of the ethical responsibility toward the Other.[14] And we understand why Lévinas is implicitly critical of Merleau-Ponty of extending the reversibility of touching onto the alterity of another person. This is because to Lévinas the Other is simply "untouchable". Extending the reversibility of touching onto the other person is rendering the other person as an object being touched too. This is a violation of his ethical principle of infinite respect and responsibility toward the Other. Even if Lévinas' pathetic call for attention to and demonstration of the absolute priority of the pre-ontological ethical relation between oneself and the other is rather convincing and compelling, does it infer that all ontological enquiries are infliction of violence to the Other as *Totality and Infinity* aims to argue for? Does not the ontology of the flesh sketched out by Merleau-Ponty, which is an ontology of the pre-objective and pre-reflective order, offer some basis for the understanding of the exercise of violence to the Other, as the Other is a carnal subject which is fragile, vulnerable and mortal? Is not Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh some sort of complice of Lévinas' ethics of otherness?

In addition, to Lévinas there is a "radical separation" between the subject and her Other.[15] This separation belongs both to the ethical order as well as to the ontological dimension. If the face of the Other signifies absolute transcendence and infinity, there is an absolute distance of separation between oneself and the Other. Separated by the absolute distance represented by the ontological separation between oneself

[12] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 151; Eng. Trans. "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 63; English translation modified.

[13] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 154; Eng. Trans. "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 65.

[14] E. Lévinas, "De la sensibilité", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 156; "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 66; "De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., pp. 138–139; "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., pp. 58–59.

[15] E. Lévinas, "De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 139; "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 59.

and the Other, how can one enter into the psychic domain of the Other? How can we construct the inter-space between the self and the Other? Thus in spite of Lévinas' claim that "sociality can be signified, i.e. commanded, from the face of the Other according to her ineffaceable difference in the ethical responsibility",[16] we find this claim rather enigmatic. If by extension there is an absolute ontological separation between one's own culture and the culture of others, how can we enter into the cultural horizons of others? How can we establish an intercultural space with other cultures in order that intercultural communication can take place? How can we appreciate and eventually assimilate the cultural ingredients of other cultures as a way to enhance our cultural sensibilities with regard to other cultures? In short, if cultural otherness is untouchable, how can the process of coiling over of the cultural flesh of others upon our own cultural flesh be possible? Would the radical ontological separation between one's own culture and the culture of the Other simply bar the route to the construction of interculturality? This is the principal reason for our hesitation with regard to Lévinas' philosophy of Otherness established upon his very singular doctrine of ontological separation between the self and the Other.

11.2.2 Non-sympathetic Reception of the Notion of Flesh by Deleuze and Derrida

Both Deleuze and Derrida are well-known for being a thinker of difference,[17] yet both show a non-sympathetic attitude toward the concept of flesh.

In the works of Deleuze (together with Guattari), the term "affect", which has a strong resonance with the term "flesh", begins to occupy a prominent place in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the Second volume of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and again in *What is Philosophy*?. Yet the term flesh does not receive the same privilege as the term "affect" in his corpus. In *What is Philosophy*?, Deleuze (and Guattari) comes up with the term flesh in the context of the thematization of sensation in view of a philosophy of art:

> As we have seen, phenomenology must become the phenomenology of art because the immanence of the lived-through experience (vécu) to a transcendental subject must be expressed in transcendent functions that not only determine experience in general but traverse the lived-through experience itself here and now, and are embodied in it by constituting living sensations. The being of sensation, the bloc of percept and affect, will appear as the unity or reversibility of feeling and felt, their intimate intertwinement like hands clasped

[16] E. Lévinas, "De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty", in *Hors sujet*, *op. cit*., p. 139; "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, *op. cit*., p. 59.

[17] Jacques Derrida, "La *différance*", in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Les Ėditions de Minuit, 1972), pp. 1–29; "Différance", in *Margins of Philosophy*, Eng. trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27; Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1968); *Difference and Repetition*, Eng. trans. Paul Patton (New York : Columbia University Press, 1994).

> together: it is the *flesh* that, at the same time, is freed from the lived body, the perceived world, and the intentionality of one toward the other that is still too tied to experience; whereas flesh gives us the being of sensation and bears the original opinion distinct from the judgment of experience—flesh of the world and flesh of the body that are exchanged as correlates, ideal coincidence.[18]

In this paragraph the term flesh (*la chair*) is briefly mentioned in the context of discussion on the being of sensation, a discussion approached from the phenomenon of reversibility and intertwinement of the feeling and the felt ("le sentant et le senti'). Yet the name of Merleau-Ponty is not mentioned explicitly in the main text. However, all those familiar with the works of the late Merleau-Ponty know that the expressions "flesh of the world" and "flesh of the body" and their thematization originate from the author of *The Visible and the Invisible*. In fact the title of this posthumous publication of Merleau-Ponty and the name of its author are mentioned in the footnote. In this footnote, immediately after mentioning these two Merleau-Pontian ontological terms "flesh of the world" and "flesh of the body", Deleuze (and Guattari) gives a somewhat pejorative comment on the notion of flesh:

> A curious Fleshism [*Carnisme*] inspires this final avatar of phenomenology and plunges it into the mystery of the incarnation. It is both a pious and a sensual notion, a mixture of sensuality and religion, without which, perhaps, flesh could not stand up by itself.[19]

In this short text, Deleuze hints that the notion of flesh cannot have an independent philosophical usage apart from its religious context, in particular not apart from the theme of incarnation in the Christian religion. Again readers familiar with the late Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh know that the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* never approaches the flesh from the religious or theological dimension. It is rather Michel Henry who has thematized the flesh in the context of a philosophy of incarnation, which in the end serves a Christian theology of salvation. It is a curious factual coincidence that though Deleuze and Henry adopt diametrically opposite positions with regard to religion and theology, with Deleuze being a resolute atheist, they both claim a philosophy of pure immanence, and are Eurocentric in terms of their explicit or implicit position with regard to intercultural understanding in philosophy. We will return to this point after the treatment of Derrida's critique of the thematization of the flesh in Merleau-Ponty.

Unlike Deleuze, Derrida himself has not developed any positive theoretical account related to the themes of sensation, sensibility, affect or flesh. His critical discussion of the notion of flesh in Merleau-Ponty is only an extrapolation on his way to discuss Jean-Luc Nancy's doctrine of touching in *Le toucher—Jean-Luc*

---

[18] Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*? (Paris: Les Ėditions de Minuit, 1991), pp. 168–169; *What is Philosophy*?, Eng. trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 178; English translation modified.

[19] Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 169; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 178.

Nancy.[20] Derrida's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's treatment of the concept of body-proper and the flesh can be summarized by the following points.

1. It is well known that Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh is inspired by Husserl's descriptions of the phenomenon of double-sensation of touching and being-touched in *Ideas II*, to which Merleau-Ponty has devoted long and admirable analyses in his classic article "The Philosopher and his Shadow".[21] To Derrida Merleau-Ponty's reading of Husserl goes beyond the limit of what should be allowed by the descriptive rigour and prudence of Husserlian phenomenology. This is because according to Husserl, there is reversibility only between the touching and the being-touched. Husserl has not mentioned that there is reversibility between the seeing and the visible, not to say reversibility between the senses of touching and vision. While Merleau-Ponty has extended the Husserlian doctrine of reversibility of the touching and the being-touched to that between the seeing and the visible, as well as to that between affectivity and vision, Derrida criticizes Merleau-Ponty of committing an act of theoretical transgression.
2. Husserl's thematization of the double sensation of touching and being-touched in *Ideas II* serves to show that ipseity, i.e. the sense of identity of the self, is established not by a reflective consciousness operated through vision, but through the sense of touch. So there is a shift of paradigm in Husserl: in *Ideas II* the constitutive function of consciousness does not rely first of all on eidetic seeing (the famous "Wesensschau") as the "principle of evidence" established in *Ideas I*, but on touching. Thus the basic operation of phenomenology, instead of an immediate intuitionism prioritized by vision, finds a counter-part in touching or affectivity in general which can be expressed by the term "haptocentrism". There is thus an oscillation between the paradigm of seeing (intuitionism) and the paradigm of touching (haptocentrism) in Husserl's phenomenology. Given the strategy of deconstruction of the young Derrida established since his critical reading of Husserl (the Husserl of *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas I*) in *Speech and Phenomena*, we will expect Derrida to draw on this apparent theoretical discrepancy of Husserl to deploy a new round of deconstruction on Husserl (this time the Husserl of *Ideas II*). Yet to our surprise, Derrida limits himself to point out simply that there is a haptocentrism in Husserl's *Ideas II*, and praises Husserl of remaining cautious and being a "model of vigilance",[22] without further developing the theoretical consequences of discovering the paradigm of touching as a direct competitor, if not a rival, of the paradigm of vision, a discovery which will eventually destabilize the entire architectonic of phenomenology. Derrida's fur-

[20] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2000), "Tangente III", pp. 209–243; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, Eng. trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), "Tangent III", pp. 183–215.

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), pp. 201–228; "The Philosopher and His Shadow", in *Signs*, Eng. trans. Richard c. McCleary (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 159–181.

[22] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 218; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 191.

ther extrapolation on double sensation in Husserl from his first extrapolation on reversibility in Merleau-Ponty serves to criticize the "active interpretation" of the author of the article "The Philosopher and his Shadow"[23]: Derrida criticizes Merleau-Ponty of developing the ontological implications of the phenomenology of double sensation of the touching-being touched in Husserl's *Ideas II* into an ontology of the flesh expressed in the unfinished work of *The Visible and the Invisible*, an active interpretation which the cautious gesture of Husserlian phenomenology would not allow. This is a mature Derrida who shows himself being an orthodox reader of Husserl, in sharp contrast to the young Derrida who has generated an active deconstructive and novel interpretation of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* with whom we are familiar since 1967, the year of publication of this famous inaugural work of deconstruction. A non-orthodox reader of the phenomenological movement will ask the following question: why Derrida allowed himself to propose a creative and non-orthodox reading of Husserl while he was young, and yet forbids the mature Merleau-Ponty to develop another creative and non-orthodox reading of Husserl when Derrida himself comes to maturity?

3. More than once Derrida hints that the very terms of body-proper and flesh are "connected" to the onto-theological doctrine of the body.[24] Yet his discussions on the presumed "onto-theological connection" of body and flesh are always built around the text of Nancy, and seldom directly on those of Merleau-Ponty, especially not on *The Visible and the Invisible*. The most explicit text of Merleau-Ponty to which Derrida refers is a text from *Phenomenology of Perception*. It runs as follows:

> Similarly, I offer my ear or my gaze with the anticipation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible catches my ear or my gaze; I deliver over a part of my body, or even my entire body, to this manner of vibrating and of filling space named 'blue' or 'red.' This is just as the sacrament does not merely symbolize, in a sensible way, an operation of Grace, but is the real presence of God and makes this presence occupy a fragment of space and to communicate it to those who eat the bread, given that they are inwardly prepared. In the same way, the sensible does not merely have a motor and vital signification, but is rather nothing other than a certain manner of being in the world that is proposed to us from a point in space, that our body takes up and adopts if it is capable, and sensation is, literally, a communion.[25]

After this rather long citation, Derrida shifts immediately to discuss another philosopher of the body whom Merleau-Ponty had commented in one of his lecture courses, namely the nineteenth century French philosopher Maine de

[23] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 218; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 191.

[24] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 211, 168; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 185, 145.

[25] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), pp. 245–246; *Phenomenology of Perception*, Eng. trans. Donald A. Landes (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 219; cited by Derrida in *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 168; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 145–146.

Biran (1766–1824).[26] Since in the later part of the book Derrida refers back to this citation of Merleau-Ponty,[27] an attentive reader will ask the following question: what does Derrida want to demonstrate by this citation? Does he want to prove that Merleau-Ponty, by using the term "communion" to explain the operation of sensation, is "connected" to Christian onto-theology? For sure the term "communion", if used in the context of the Christian ceremony of sacrament, has a religious connotation. But it is quite evident that Merleau-Ponty uses the term communion to explain the operation of internal communication of the senses within a body-subject whose manner of being is a being-in-the-world. Thus in the context of the appearance of the term "communion" in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the meaning of the verbal form "to communicate" is as important as its use as a substantive. There is no reason to concede that the use of the term "communion" is monopolized by Christian theology.[28] Just as the term "history" has been linked to the expression "Holy History" or "Sacred History" in Europe until the late eighteenth century in the context of the millennium long domination by the Christian conception of human history, there is no reason to concede that any use of the term history today is connected to Christian theology. In any case Derrida never demonstrates what he precisely means when he infers that the talk about body proper and flesh by Merleau-Ponty contains some onto-theological implications. A cautious reader of Merleau-Ponty will ask these other questions: does Derrida himself have a proper reading of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh? Does his reading entail interpretative violence? Or does his extrapolation on Merleau-Ponty while his main target author is his friend Nancy not betray merely his unsympathetic attitude toward the author of *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*?

4. Yet we find some laudatory words of Derrida on *The Visible and the Invisible*. In fact Derrida writes: "It is impossible to do justice to this great work 'in progress', and especially to detect in it in a very rigorous manner what develops further and what displaces *The Structure of Behavior* and *Phenomenology of Perception*."[29] But do these words of praise serve merely a certain cosmetic function? For Derrida confesses afterwards that the reading of Merleau-Ponty causes him "malaise", and even at times is "irritating or disappointing" to him.[30] The princi-

[26] *L'Union de l'âme et du corps chez Malebranche*, *Biran et Bergson*, *Notes prises au cours de Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jean Deprun (Paris: J. Vrin, 1968); Eng. trans. Paul B. Milan as *The Incarnate Subject*: *Malebranche*, *Biran*, *and Bergson on the Union of Body and Soul*, ed. Andrew G. Bjelland Jr. and Patrick Burke (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2001).

[27] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 211; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 145.

[28] The *Collins English Dictionary* online gives the following definition of the term "communion": "noun. (1) an exchange of thoughts, emotions, etc.; (2) possession or sharing in common; participation; (3) (followed by with) strong emotional or spiritual feelings (for) ⇒ *communion with nature*; (4) a religious group or denomination having a common body of beliefs, doctrines, and practice; (5) the spiritual union held by Christians to exist between individual Christians and Christ, their Church, or their fellow Christians. http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/communion?showCookiePolicy=true 。 Retrieved 27 April 2015.

[29] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 232; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 205.

[30] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 238; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 211.

pal reason Derrida gives is the following: Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the movement of double sensation—that of the touching and being-touched of the hands—is an "experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence, the coincidence of coincidence *with* non-coincidence—transferred to the order of (inconsequential) consequence or (interrupted) continuity in philosophical discourses, and in a way that is not always diachronic—following the evolution or mutation of a way of thinking—but synchronous at times."[31] Derrida then charges Merleau-Ponty of being "unable to carry out a more powerful reformulation of his discourse in order to thematize and think the law under which he was thus placing himself."[32] It seems that what Derrida is not satisfied with is not the fact that he thinks that Merleau-Ponty's thematization of the "experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence" is in-itself a wrong theoretical gesture, but that in the treatment of this experience Merleau-Ponty has oscillated between the diachronic and the synchronic order. Yet Derrida himself has not explained further which is the better way of thematization of the experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence. So what is the reason behind Derrida's malaise and irritation? Let us try to throw more light on this paradoxical attitude of Derrida toward Merleau-Ponty.

To capture the above mentioned experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence, the late Merleau-Ponty has invented a term: *écart*. Many scholars of French phenomenology agree that this term plays more or less the role of the term "*différance*" invented by Derrida himself to conceptualize the double movement of temporal deferral and spatial distancing as the inaugural movement of signification.[33] It is well-known that one of Derrida's enduring contributions to phenomenology and contemporary philosophy in general is his invention of this very term of "*différance*" as well as his rigorous descriptions of the double movement of temporal deferral and spatial distancing captured by this term. Considering the affinity between the Merleau-Pontian term of "*écart*" and the Derridian term of "*différance*", we think that there can be more than one possible ways to understand why Derrida himself has a feeling of malaise, irritation or deception while reading Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence, which are so close to what he wanted to describe by the movement of "*différance*" when he was young.[34] Does the malaise of the mature Derrida comes from his finding that Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the experience of coincidence *with* noncoincidence contain inexactitude, such that he comes to the realization that his own earlier descriptions of the movement of "*différance*" are also contaminated by inexactitude? Or the malaise of the mature Derrida comes from the realization that his own

[31] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 238; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 211.

[32] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 239; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 211.

[33] Cf. M.C. Dillon (ed.), *Écart & Différance*: *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Humanities Press, 1997).

[34] Derrida's article "La différance" is first published in 1968 and later collected in the volume *Marge—de la philosophie* (Paris: Les Èditions de Minuit, 1972), pp. 1–29; "Différance", in *Margins of Philosophy*, Eng. trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 3–27.

conceptual innovation ("*différance*") is in fact preceded by that of Merleau-Ponty (*écart*) with reference to an experience which has captured the attention of both philosophers?

In any case, it seems that the malaise of Derrida before the writings of Merleau-Ponty has brought about some practical consequence: namely pushing him to commit some sort of interpretative violence with regard to Merleau-Ponty's texts. Derrida has in fact quoted Merleau-Ponty's texts which explicitly declare that the phenomenon of reversibility between the touching and the being-touched as well as between the visible and the tangible is never a phenomenon of complete coincidence. The following is part of a quotation by Derrida from Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*:

> It is time to emphasize that it is a reversibility always imminent and never realized in fact. My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never rich coincidence … this hiatus between my right hand touched and my right hand toughing, between my voice heard and my voice uttered, between one moment of my tactile life and the following one, is not an ontological void, a non-being; it is spanned [*enjambé*] by the total being of the body.[35]

This declaration of the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* should be crystal clear without any ambiguity. Yet Derrida concludes his discussion on Merleau-Ponty by the following terms: "[he is] always, in fact, and all things considered, *preferring* 'coincidence' (of coincidence with noncoincidence) to 'noncoincidence' (of coincidence with noncoincidence)."[36] Derrida is making a judgment of the psychological tendency of Merleau-Ponty—asserting the "preference" of the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* which is contrary to the explicit declaration of the same author in the text. Other than "interpretative violence", what other expression can we use to describe more appropriately Derrida's reading of Merleau-Ponty with reference to the theme of reversibility of the flesh?

11.2.3 Michel Henry's Radical Phenomenology of Flesh and Its Theocentric Concept of Life, History and Culture

Derrida's suspicion of the onto-theological connection of a phenomenology of flesh is not without reason. Yet his target of criticism should not be Merleau-Ponty, but rather Michel Henry. Probably out of pure coincidence, by the year Derrida published *Le toucher-Jean-Luc Nancy*, Michel Henry published his book-length study

[35] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 194–195; *The Visible and the Invisible*, Eng. trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 147–148; cited by Derrida in *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 239–240; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, pp. 212–213; English translation modified.

[36] Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 239; *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 211.

on phenomenology of flesh entitled *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*.[37] It is a phenomenology of flesh which serves explicitly and entirely Christian theology.

Henry's phenomenology of flesh is part and parcel of his philosophy of life. In Henry, the term "flesh" (*chair*) is almost interchangeable with the term "life" (*vie*). Henry starts his determination of life from an ontological duality between flesh as life and body as mere thing. This is a modified form of ontological duality in Descartes, the duality between the mind which is the non-spatial thinking substance on the one hand and the body which is the spatially extended thing on the other. In Henry the defining ontological character of the flesh is affectivity and the power of self-affection, while a body, including the human body existing in the mundane world, is a mere thing incapable of self-affection.

> Because our flesh is nothing other than *that which*, *feeling itself*, *suffering from itself*, *is subsisting and is supporting itself and thus enjoying itself according to impressions which are always regenerating*, for this reason is found to be susceptible to feel the *body* which is external to it, to touch it as well as to be touched by it. This is what the external body, the inert body of the material universe is in principle incapable of.[38]

Thus the flesh in Henry, as the being opposed to a mere thing, has a strange ontological status. It is not a being-in-the-world. Rather, as the transcendental being which is the constitutive origin of the appearance and the meaning of the world, the flesh is in opposition to the world. The flesh itself does not appear; it is in-apparent. The ontological status of the flesh in Henry is a curious combination and modification of the transcendental consciousness of Husserlian phenomenology (as the absolute constitutive origin of the meaning of things in the world) and the in-apparent Being as condition of possibility of apparition of beings in Heideggerian ontology.

In between the flesh and the things, there is the human being. What makes a human being unique is her status as an incarnate being. But to Henry, the incarnate character of human being has nothing to do with the body, be it a human body, but with "incarnation", which "consists in the fact of having a flesh, perhaps more, of being flesh."[39] And to Henry, incarnation is nothing of a human phenomenon. It must be understood from the Christian sense of the term. Henry finds the foundation of incarnation not in the fact that a human being possesses necessary a body, but in the well-known sentence in the Christian tradition, namely "And the Word became flesh" in *Gospel of John* (1, 14).[40] Thus from the start Henry does not consider incarnation from the standpoint of phenomenological anthropology, but from that of Christian theology. In fact Henry has a conception of human civilization built completely on Christian faith. To him the birth of Jesus Christ is the most important spiritual and cultural event in the history of humankind. It is the core event of the development of human culture and its institutions. Against the view that Greek civilization and its philosophy are somewhat convergent with the Christian religion,

---

[37] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000).

[38] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, pp. 8–9. All translations from this text into English are by the present author.

[39] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, p. 9.

[40] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, p. 10.

Henry thinks that Greek thinking is at the antipode of Christianity. Greek thinking, exemplified by Platonic philosophy, opposes intelligence and intelligibility to the sensible. Whereas Greek thinking looks for salvation from the Logos (the intelligible), to Christianity Incarnation (in capital letter) is the only source of salvation. Thus there is a gradual divorce between Christianity and Greek thinking. Christian thinking has abandoned Greek thought and her ontology on her way to maturity.[41]

Thus it is not difficult to see that the intention of thematization of flesh by Henry is completely different from Merleau-Ponty. Starting from a philosophical anthropology by way of a phenomenology of the body-subject, Merleau-Ponty deepens his phenomenological enterprise into an ontology of the flesh in *The Visible and the Invisible* which aims at building an ontology of the world capable of understanding the genesis of the intelligible from the sensible. Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh is not a philosophy of incarnation from the above. His concept of flesh applies to a being-in-the-world which is a being-in-situation, thus "it cannot be envisaged as something descending from a spirit into a body, but as this fold or this topological singularity where the inanimate becomes animated, where the dimension of all the dimensions is inaugurated, namely that of the sensible."[42] This is the phenomenon of pre-reflective reflexivity of the flesh as the Sensible-in-itself which Merleau-Ponty calls reversibility (this will be explained further later). Thus there is no theological implication in Merleau-Ponty's use of the term flesh. But this is not the case of Henry, whose theological motivation is evident. To Henry, his phenomenology of flesh is only a springboard for his philosophy of life, in which the mysterious phenomenon of "the word becoming flesh" exemplified by Jesus Christ is the prototype of life. Such a life is not any human life, but "the absolute Life ("*la Vie absolue*)".[43] Such life is an invisible life: it is invisible to the eyes of the mortals. From Husserl and Heidegger onwards, phenomenology is the study of phenomena, of things appearing, such as the world or Being. To Henry the direction of study of traditional phenomenology cannot capture the absolute Life which is the invisible Life. Thus Henry's phenomenology of life needs a radically different phenomenology as a substitute of the phenomenology of the world or of Being.[44]

With the intention of reversing the direction of study of phenomenology, namely undertaking a phenomenology of the invisible life, Henry criticizes the late Merleau-Ponty's ontology of flesh and the related concepts such as intertwining and reversibility as resulting in the confusion between the absolute constitutive power and the constituted. Because in Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the flesh, by analyzing the phenomenon of reversibility between the touching hand and the hand being-touched, a transcendental status is conferred first to the tactile body, then to the visible body. But to Henry, the visible body is merely a thing; it can never have the transcendental

[41] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, pp. 11–15.

[42] This important clarification is provided by the beautiful article of Emmanuel de Saint Aubert, "Le mystère de la chair", *Studia Phaenomenologica*, Vol. III, No. 3–4, 2003, pp. 73–106. The citation is from p. 97.

[43] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, p. 30.

[44] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, p. 31.

power of constitution. The latter can only be conferred to something invisible. Thus Henry has a severe critical judgment on Merleau-Ponty's thematization of the flesh in which "the transcendental power of constitution, of which Husserlian phenomenology has pursued systematic elucidation and had so much difficulty to arrive at foundational structures, is thus crashed on the constituted, reduced to the latter, confused with it, identified to it—lost, conjured away."[45] In short, Henry reproaches Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of flesh of blurring out the radical distinction between the constituting and the constituted.

Henry opposes his own phenomenology of life to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of flesh which is also a phenomenology of the world, as Merleau-Ponty understands the flesh also as the flesh of the world. Henry cannot accept Merleau-Ponty's claim that with the invention of the term "flesh of the world", things in the world can no more be understood as merely reified and lifeless matter. Flesh of the world is the Sensible-in-general and the already constituted which take part in the constitution of culture and history. As flesh of the world, the flesh in Merleau-Pontian ontology is the source of multiplicity. Only in this way the world can be a world of pluralism and heterogeneity. Yet Henry's philosophy of life points to the other direction: its theological motivation conducts it toward a transcendental monism. There is only one unique source of meaning and life, that of Incarnation by the mystery of "the word became life" of Jesus. Henry's own explanation is clear and net:

> The flesh is nothing other than the possibility the most interior of our Self, which is a unitary Self. Man does not know dualism… As it was in the case in Judeo-Christianity, I and Flesh are but one. If I and Flesh are but one, it is because they come the one and the other from Life…; life [is] this originary and transcendental possibility of feeling oneself pathetically in a flesh. Such a possibility has its basis in the Archi-possibility of absolute Life. To born means to come in a flesh, where all flesh comes in itself, in the Archi-Flesh of Life. It is thus that the phenomenology of flesh inevitably refers back to a phenomenology of Incarnation.[46]

Henry's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's ontolgoy of the flesh shows that he remains in the traditional ontological division between spirit and matter, between interior and exterior, between subject and object, between the I and the thing. Henry refuses to think the sensible as the in-between which exhibits the power of affectivity as does Merleau-Ponty. Thus to Henry, the sensible is more or less the in-itself (*l'en soi*) of Sartre, which is a mere object, senseless and lifeless. Meanwhile, the world in Henry is not given any proper ontological status, as does in Sartre. Henry's theocentric conception of life does not allow a pluralist conception of history and civilization. Centred on the Christian religion, Henry's conception of culture cannot accept secularized forms of culture, or all other non-Christian forms of culture. It can neither accept other ontological theory which is neither non-theocentric nor non-anthropo-centric, such as that of the early Chinese Daoist Zhuangzi, namely the theory of "all things being equal" (「齊物論」, "qi wu lun"). How can a theocentric philosophy of flesh which preaches a transcendental monism of absolute Life

[45] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, p. 166.

[46] Michel Henry, *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*, pp. 178–179.

built on the Christian mystery of Incarnation undertakes the task of intercultural understanding, a task which has to accept the plurality of cultures as its first principle?

11.2.4 Philosophy of Pure Immanence and Eurocentrism of Deleuzian Geophilosophy

Another big issue inherent in Henry's conception of the flesh is he tries by all means to argue for a system of pure immanence. His radical phenomenology even rejects the notion of intentionality. In doing so he renders the status of Otherness and alterity problematic. A system of pure immanence which serves ultimately Christian eschatology will be highly suspected of being Eurocentric. This is because a system of pure immanence which excludes any ontological status given to transcendence will have to face the difficulty of accounting for otherness and alterity, in particular cultural alterity and cultural hybridity. This can be further illustrated by a critical discussion of the conception of geophilosophy proposed by Deleuze in the lines below.

Though Deleuze is well-known to be a thinker of difference, he is also famous for arguing for a philosophy of pure immanence.[47] In the chapter entitled "Geophilosophy" in *What is Philosophy*?, a work co-authored with Guattari, Deleuze describes the movement of philosophical thought as essentially a movement of creation of concepts proceeding from deterritorialization to reterritorialization.[48] This amounts to saying that any philosophical activity worthy of its name must begin from a given historical and cultural soil, which, in the language of the late Husserl, is the life-world. Since philosophy aims at attaining truth of universal intent, the movement of philosophical conceptualization must go through a process of deterritorialization. Yet the philosophical concepts and the theories built on such a soil must testify themselves by trying to solve the problems embedded in the particular historical and cultural soil upon which this movement of conceptualization and theorization has taken place. Thus the philosophical concepts and theories formed must be reterritorialized in order to confront the reality of the life-world from which these concepts and theories are born. The process from deterritorialization to reterritorialization is best illustrated by the way of the philosopher

[47] Gilles Deleuze, "L'immanence, une vie", *Philosophie*, No. 47, Sept 1995, pp. 3–7, collected in *Deux régimes de fous*, *textes et entretiens 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2003), pp. 359–363; "Immanence: a Life", in *Pure Immanence*: *Essays on a Life*, Eng. trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, Mass., 2001), also in *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, Eng. trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), pp. 388–393. Cf. also "Le plan d'immanence", in Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, Ch. 2, pp. 38–59; "The Plane of Immanence", in *What is Philosophy*?, pp. 35–60.

[48] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, pp. 82–108; *What is Philosophy*?, pp. 85–113.

in Plato's allegory of the cave who, after ascending to the open air and seeing the light from the sun, must go back to the cave and tell her fellow humans the truth she had experienced in the hope of helping the prisoners of the cave to liberate themselves from their ignorance. This is the universalist vocation of the philosopher. Without confronting the reality of the world, concepts and theories of philosophy will remain elements of a pure intellectual game without moral, political and other practical bearings. Their theoretical validity will be put into doubt, or simply considered as irrelevant. Thus Deleuze summarizes his descriptions by saying that "absolute deterritorialization does not take place without reterritorialization. Philosophy is reterritorialized on the concept."[49]

Now, after this seemingly convincing descriptions of the general process of concept formation in philosophical thinking by the terms of deterritorialization and retorritorialization, Deleuze simply claims that the origin and birth of philosophy can have no other *topos*, no other place than the Greek City of Athens:

> Nevertheless, philosophy was something Greek… The birth of philosophy requires an *encounter* between the Greek milieu and the plane of immanence of thought. It required the conjunction of two very different movements of deterritorialization, the relative and the absolute, the first already at work in immanence. Absolute deterritorialization of the plane of thought had to be aligned or directly connected with the relative deterritorialization of Greek society.[50]

To Deleuze, philosophy in its essence is Greek, and the Greek society in its essence is philosophical. Apart from Greece, it is modern Europe which is Deleuze's chosen land of reterritorialization of philosophy. "Modern philosophy is reterritorialized on Greece as form of its own past."[51] Deleuze proceeds from a speculation about the parallel between the expansion of capitalism in Europe and the development of philosophy in Modern West. He asserts that "in fact, the connection of ancient philosophy with the Greek city and the connection of modern philosophy with capitalism are not ideological",[52] and that "capitalism reactivates the Greek world on these economic, political, and social bases [of the Modern West]."[53] While merely mentioning the alleged parallel between the birth and development of philosophy in Greece as the centre of Ancient West as well as the birth and expansion of capitalism in Modern West, which, according to Deleuze, both "*proceed through immanence*",[54] the authors of *What is Philosophy*? claim that "*only the West extends and propagates its centers of immanence*."[55] From there, Deleuze makes a declara-

[49] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 97; *What is Philosophy* ?, p. 101.

[50] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, pp. 89–90; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 93.

[51] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 97; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 101.

[52] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 95; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 99.

[53] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 94; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 98.

[54] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 93; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 97; italics by Deleuze and Guattari.

[55] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 93; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 97; italics by Deleuze and Guattari.

tion which is simply the repetition of Husserl's Eurocentric confession of faith (*profession de foi*):

> The European can, therefore, regard himself, as the Greek did, as not one psychosocial type among others but Human being par excellence.[56]

Thus according to Deleuze's conception of philosophy which is essentially not very different from Husserl, philosophy is the essence of humankind and Europeans the genuine human beings. But who are these Europeans? By citing Nietzsche as the founder of geophilosophy, Deleuze subscribes to Nietzsche's judgment that only France, England and Germany are capable of philosophizing; even Spain and Italy are denied the right to be member of the restrained club of philosophical nations.[57] Outside these three nations, there are no Europeans in the genuine sense of the term. Thus the geophilosophical Europe of Deleuze is very narrow, and his Eurocentric conception of philosophy is very strict, narrower and stricter than the Husserlian version.

Does philosophy exist outside Europe or the West in general, for example in Ancient China, India, or the territories which have given rise to Jewish and Islamic cultures? Haven't these peoples deposited in the history of human civilization intellectual works which are the witness of concept formation? Deleuze concedes that

---

[56] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 93; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 97; English translation slightly modified, italics by Deleuze and Guattari.

[57] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, pp. 98–99; *What is Philosophy*?, pp. 102–103. In support of their argumentative parallelism between the birth and development of philosophy in Greece as the centre of Ancient West as well as the birth and expansion of capitalism in Modern West, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the work of the great French Annales School historian Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV^e-XVIII^e siècle*, 3 Vol. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967–1979; *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, Eng. trans. Siân Reynolds, 3 vols, New York : Harper & Row, 1982–1984; Deleuze has omitted the term "*économie*" in citing the title this work). However, Braudel's concept of capitalism is entirely different from the ordinary concept of capitalism—capitalism as free market economy—inherited from Adam Smith and Karl Marx which Deleuze and Guattari share. Braudel's studies of capitalism are based on his former studies on the Mediterranean world (*La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen a l'époque de Philippe II*, 3 vols, Paris: Armand Collin, 1949; *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Eng. trans. Siân Reynolds, New York: Harper & Row, 1976). But the Mediterranean world is never the world of a single nation, a single religion, a single culture; rather, the Mediterranean is always a confluence and thus a mixture of ethnicities, religions and cultures at the origin of the division between the East and the West. To Braudel, it is simply impossible to understand the Mediterranean world without reference to what is geographically and culturally exterior to it. Thus the assimilation by Deleuze of Braudel's concept of the Mediterranean into his philosophy of pure immanence betrays an act of theoretical violence. On the other hand, Braudel's account of the rise of capitalism in the West starts with the Mediterranean Italian ports of Venice and Genoa in the thirteenth Century, and not with the industrial city of Manchester of the eighteenth Century England. In fact Braudel's non-Eurocentric concept of capitalism and Europe is very different from the Marxist conception of capitalism and the Nietzschean conception of philosophical Europe of Deleuze, and we cannot see how it can help Deleuze to argue for his Eurocentric conception of philosophy. On Braudel's concept of capitalism, *c.f.* the precise account of Immanuel Wallerstein, "Braudel on Capitalism. Or Everything Upside Down", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (1991), pp. 354–361.

there are intellectual works in Ancient China and India, yet they are merely pre-philosophical:

> Can we speak of Chinese, Hindu, Jewish, or Islamic 'philosophy'? Yes, to the extent that thinking takes place on a plane of immanence that can be populated by figures as much as by concepts. However, this plane of immanence is not exactly philosophical, but prephilosophical.[58]

But why are intellectual works of Ancient China and India, etc., are merely prephilosophical? The explanation of Deleuze is that these intellectual works of the East express their thoughts in terms of figures and not in terms of autonomous concepts deploying themselves to form a plane of immanence according to a certain necessity.

> In the case of figures, the prephilosophical shows that a creation of concepts or a philosophical formation was not the inevitable destination of the plane of immanence itself but that it could unfold in wisdoms and religions according to a bifurcation that wards off philosophy in advance from the point of view of its very possibility.[59]

The explanation given by Deleuze betrays the ignorance but arrogance of a very narrow-minded Eurocentric attitude: in Ancient China and India, though there were potentials of development into philosophy from prephilosophical concept formation, intellectual works in Ancient China and India are not authentic philosophical works; they are merely works of wisdom and religion.[60] When Deleuze insinuates that intellectual works of Ancient China and India think only through figures and not concepts, what reference has he in mind? To what texts does he refer to? Does he refer merely to the semiological system of the *Book of Changes* (*Yi Jing*) which has been brought to the knowledge of European intellectuals by Leibniz through the Jesuit missionaries who reported it from China from the mid-seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century? Does he know that the very concepts of *dao*, *hua* and *ren* which, being respectively the basic metaphysical-ontological and anthropological-moral concepts of Pre-Qin Daoism and Pre-Qin Confucianism, have given rise to philosophical-conceptual discussions and debates in China during almost twenty-five centuries?[61] In any case, this is the ignorance and arrogance of a well-known contemporary French philosopher who, at his mature age, has never

---

[58] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 97; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 101.

[59] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 97; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 101.

[60] When Deleuze talks about Chinese thought, he refers almost exclusively to writings of François Jullien (*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 88; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 92), who is famous for his repeated declaration that in China there exists only wisdom and never philosophy. This declaration is of course contested by the whole living community of Chinese philosophers both in the East and in the West. In fact, Jullien, in spite of the proliferation of his publications on Chinese thought, is considered by the philosophy community as more a sinologist than a philosopher. We can of course understand this by thinking about the following question: how can someone who publishes on Chinese philosophy argues that there is no Chinese philosophy? Either she/he is playing with the word "philosophy", or she/he does not consider herself / himself a philosopher.

[61] On the concepts of *dao*, *hua* and philosophical Daoism, cf. *supra*, Chaps. 3, 5 and 8; on the concept of *ren*, cf. *supra*, Chaps. 6 and 8; on the transcendental character of philosophical Buddhism, cf. *supra*, Chap. 4.

had any direct knowledge of either the languages nor the intellectual works of ancient Eastern civilizations like China or India, but nevertheless makes a top-down determining judgment of exclusion guided by a ratiocinating attitude toward Ancient Chinese and Indian philosophies. Has Deleuze ever undertaken the painful effort of reading and confronting canonical texts of Ancient Chinese or Indian philosophies through credible translations? If so, could he find a way into a territory of thinking to which and in which he is most unfamiliar? Is his attitude of refusal to admit the existence of philosophies in Ancient China and India a consequence of his conception of philosophy as deployment of the plane of pure immanence? Deleuze's conception of pure immanence excludes the existence of transcendence. Yet the transcendence that Deleuze has in mind is in most cases the Christian God which, as a supreme being, is a form of vertical transcendence. Has Deleuze thought about lateral transcendence incarnated by the existence of a cultural border, in particular incarnated by a form of writing which requires another cultural flesh to decipher its meaning formation, beyond which Deleuz's own Eurocentric theoretical plane of immanence cannot reach out? Transcendence in the form of existence of a cultural border and a cultural beyond is a primal fact, not a contingent fact; it is a basic factum. The plurality of languages and symbolic systems is a primal example of this basic factum. What can a philosopher of pure immanence do face to a realm of transcendence incarnated by a plurality of figures of cultural border and cultural beyond which a philosopher of European origin is unable to make sense of and which resists his own philosophical theorization? Either he has to revise his theory of system of pure immanence, or he has to deny the existence of the cultural beyond. Deleuze has chosen to be consistent with his own theory of pure immanence; the only option which remains for him is to deny the factual existence of philosophies in Ancient China and India.

On his way to justify his decision, Deleuze has to mobilize a magic word, the word "prephilosophical". This word is a magic word in Deleuze because it is by means of this word that he gives an appearance of softening his attitude of rejection of philosophies in Ancient China and India. Far from excluding the prephilosophical from the immanence of the philosophical, Deleuze says on the contrary that:

> Prephilosophical does not mean something preexistent but rather something *that does not exist outside philosophy*, although philosophy presupposes it. These are its internal conditions. The nonphilosophical is perhaps closer to the heart of philosophy to philosophy itself.[62]

To Deleuze, not only the prephilosophical is not outside the philosophical, the nonphilosophical is not opposed to the philosophical. But then what is the distinction between the philosophical and the prephilosophical and the nonphilosophical? Even if Deleuze is elusive toward this question, when he decides that intellectual texts in Ancient China and India are prephilosophical, he has only a single and clear purpose: to deny the factual existence of philosophy outside Europe and the West in general.

[62] G. Deleuze et F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie*?, p. 43; *What is Philosophy*?, p. 41.

The Eurocentric core of the Deleuzian conception of geophilosophy can be no more manifest.[63] Though he uses disguised wordings such as "pre-philosophical", he simply denies the factual existence of other activities of philosophical concept formation in the more or less same historical era as in Ancient Greece, in particular philosophical Daoism and philosophical Confucianism in Ancient China and philosophical Buddhism in Ancient India and Medieval China. Thus despite the effort of Schaupenhauer, but also that of Karl Jaspers, who has acknowledged that philosophical Daoism (inaugurated by Laozi), philosophical Confucianism (inaugurated by Kungfuzi, alias Confucius in the West), as well as philosophical Buddhism (inaugurated by Gautama Buddha) as genuine forms of philosophy with different modes of conceptualization and theorization which came to see the world in more or less the same historical epoch as that of Socrates but on different parts of the Earth—this synchronization of the birth of philosophies in the plural in the history of human civilization being captured by the famous Jaspersian expression of "the axial age"—the Deleuzian conception of geophilosophy is still unable to recognize the existence of philosophical alterity, namely the existence of genuine philosophical activities and philosophical personage as well as their sedimentation outside Europe.[64] Thus, Deleuze, philosopher of difference and philosopher of event, but also philosopher of pure immanence, has espoused Husserlian Eurocentrism in maintaining that the Greek soil is the unique place of birth of philosophy and modern Europeans in the very restrained sense of the term (only English, French and German) are the unique genuine heir of this ancient philosophical nation of the West. How can such a narrow-minded but arrogant attitude, which denies at the outset the existence of philosophy outside Europe, thus denies the existence of philosophical alterity, help to promote intercultural understanding in philosophy in the globalized age?

---

[63] Rodolphe Gasché has devoted a whole book on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of geophilosophy: *Geophilosophy. On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's* What is Philosophy? (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014). Yet the problem of Eurocentrism inherent in Deleuze and Guattari's conception of geophilosophy has never been mentioned. The short article written by Hervé Couchot on "L'Extrême-Orient. Une ligne de fuite japonaise et chinoise", collected in *Aux sources de la pensée de Gilles Deleuze 1*, ed. Stéfan Leclercq (Mons, Belgium: Les Éditions Sils Maria and Paris: Les Éditions Vrin, 2005, pp. 133–147), has neither explicitly mentioned the Eurocentric nature of Deleuze's concept of geophilosophy. Yet he has at least the merit of pointing out that "the reply given by Deleuze and Guattari to this question [whether there is philosophy in the strong sense outside the West?] is none the least problematical."(p. 141).

[64] We have already pointed out in the Introduction that Merleau-Ponty's attitude toward the question of whether there is philosophy in Ancient China is much more open and careful. Likewise, Derrida adopts a prudent attitude face to this question. Not only he alerts us of the Eurocentric nature of Husserl's Idea of philosophy, he even suggests that the Chinese writing, being a non-phonocentric language, is a prominent example of a non-logocentric civilization to which the Greek-European civilization never belongs. Cf., Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1968), p. 138; *Of grammatology*, Eng. trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 90–91.

11.2.5 Advantage of Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh for a Theory of Intercultural Understanding

We need a concept or a constellation of concepts which can give us a satisfactory account of intercultural experience. The recognition of intercultural experience implies the recognition of the existence of cultural otherness and its transcendence with respect to our own culture of origin. The philosophies of immanence in the manner of Deleuze and Henry are obviously difficult to fulfill this task. But the recognition of intercultural experience also implies the recognition of an intercultural space which is formed at the junction of different cultural sensibilities and different perspectives from different cultural perceptions. While the ethical concern of Lévinas pushes him to favor cultural otherness, his skepticism toward knowing activities renders the construction of an intercultural space difficult. Recognition is impossible without cognition. Thus the role of knowing must be given a proper due in intercultural understanding. The crucial point here is: we have to admit that each culture has its blind spot inherent in the perspective generated by its own perception. No single culture has access to the total truth. On the contrary, interculturality is a condition of truth, at least in the philosophical sense of the term. The concept of inter-world (inter-monde) proposed by Merleau-Ponty is precisely the concept we need to understand the conditions underlying the formation of an intercultural space. Yet the concept of inter-world is comprehensible only on the basis of the adequate understanding of reversibility as one of the main ontological characters of the flesh.

We know that Merleau-Ponty confers a multiplicity of meaning to the term flesh.[65] Thus rather than a single concept, flesh is in fact a constellation of concepts. From the static point of view, flesh refers to the carnal nature of pre-objective Being, meaning that it is neither matter nor spirit, but the Sensible-in-general. With this term, Merleau-Ponty aims at accounting for the genesis of ideas, which belong to the order of objective thought, from the order of the sensible. Thus flesh as the Sensible-in-general, which is Being in the pre-objective order, serves to understand the ontological basis upon which Institution of meaning in the form of idea, which is the medium of intellectual activities of consciousness, can happen. This is the task of understanding the emergence of culture from primordial Nature that the late Merleau-Ponty assigns to genetic phenomenology. To adequately fulfill such a task, Merleau-Ponty confers a second meaning to flesh: reversibility. This is the ontological character of pre-objective Being considered from the dynamic point of view.

Reversibility is the term which means the movement of reflexivity initiated by the visible to become the seeing, the tangible to become the touching, and the audible to become the hearing; in short, the sensible in general to become the sensing. This is a mode of thinking which priorities the sensible in general and revers the intellectualist mode of understanding of the origin of the synthetic unity conferred

[65] Among other works, I refer in particular to Lawrence Hass, "On the Multiplicity of Flesh", *Chiasmi International*, Vol. 9, 2007, pp. 431–443.

to any object by a reflective subject, the intellectualist mode common to the Cartesian cogito, the Kantian transcendental apperception and the Husserlian transcendental Ego. Thus Merleau-Ponty as a phenomenologist is confronted with one of the most difficult tasks in the history of Modern Western Philosophy, namely to give a credible account of the possibility of reflexivity initiated by the sensible pre-reflective consciousness.[66] And the problem becomes: is it possible to conceive of a form of pre-reflective consciousness which, while sensible in nature, is capable of reflexivity?

Already in the period of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty understands that all consciousness must be incarnate consciousness. Pure consciousness is only the result of high order reflection which is preceded by the pre-reflective consciousness. Thus the primordial form of consciousness is incarnate consciousness manifested through a body which is carnal and sensible in nature. But the late Merleau-Ponty finds that "the problems posed in Ph. P. [*Phenomenology of Perception*] are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'-'object' distinction."[67] This means that to Merleau-Ponty himself the conception of consciousness in *Phenomenology of Perception*, though incarnate, is still under the influence of the Husserlian model of transcendental consciousness which considers consciousness as the absolute constitutive origin of the meaning and ontological validity of the world and objects of the world, while the world and mundane objects are in frontal opposition to consciousness itself and are of inferior ontological status. Such a model of consciousness is still too intellectualist and idealist. It does not take into enough consideration of the ontological condition of possibility of operation of the primordial consciousness in its pre-reflective stage, namely such a consciousness must be a being-in-the-world. Consciousness has no way to experience the world and objects of the world if it is not at the same time a being-in-the-world. Yet consciousness as being-in-the-world implies that consciousness is no more understood as pure immanence in opposition to the world as pure transcendence in the Husserlian way. Thus the dilemma of a form of pre-reflective consciousness which, while sensible and incarnate in nature, is capable of reflexivity can only be surmounted "by the idea of consciousness as *Offenheit* [openness]."[68] Incarnate consciousness is not merely opening of a world but also opening toward a world. The world appears to incarnate consciousness only by virtue of the fact that incarnate consciousness is opened toward the world by its perception. Thus the appearance of the world to an incarnate subject is a function of the inhabitation of the incarnate subject in the world such that the world as the field of appearance is opened to it. The inhabitation of the incarnate subject in the world is nothing other than the basic ontological condition of possibility of the structuration of the world as the field of appearance. It is also the basic ontological condition of the phenomenon of revers-

[66] Cf. the extremely fine and penetrating analyses of Jacques Colette, "La réflexivité du sensible. Une aporie phénoménologique", in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, *le psychique et le corporel*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka (Paris : Aubier, 1988), pp. 39–51.

[67] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 253; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 200.

[68] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 252; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 198.

ibility: the power of disclosure of the world to the incarnate subject (its status as the constitutive origin of the appearance of the world in Husserl's language) is rendered possible by the incarnate subject's affectivity by virtue of its situatedness in the world.

In view of the above change of perspective, Merleau-Ponty undertakes in *The Visible and the Invisible* a reconceptualization of incarnate consciousness and reforms it into the concept of flesh in order to highlight the carnal nature of the sensible body. He confers the character of reversibility to the flesh in order to understand why the sensible consciousness of the carnal subject can initiate reflexivity at the pre-reflective stage. As explained above, this has to be understood from the ontological situation of the carnal subject as a being of affectivity: it is a being-in-the-world as well as a being-toward-the-world, the two aspects of "l'être-au-monde".

The concept of reversibility seems entirely enigmatic and speculative to traditional materialism and idealism or intellectualism. Materialism wants to explain the emergence of life and culture from matter as inanimate nature. But as the mode of understanding of materialism relies heavily on the law of natural causality which is a top-down and one way determinism, the phenomenon of reversibility is entirely beyond its capacity of comprehension. Likewise, intellectualism and idealism are unable to acknowledge the phenomenon of reversibility as they consider reflexivity an intellectual power which belongs uniquely to the faculty of understanding but denied to sensibility.

Yet reversibility has phenomenal evidence. Sartre has already shown in his famous description of the phenomenon of look starting from the pre-reflective experience of shame in the Part devoted to "Being-for-Others" in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre declares: "'Being-seen-by-the-Other' is the *truth* of 'seeing-the-Other'."[69] Though Sartre himself may not have in mind the concept of reversibility, what he describes under the theme of the operation of the look at the pre-reflective level is precisely what Merleau-Ponty wants to capture by what he calls the reversibility between the visible and the seeing. In other words, the visible is the condition of possibility of vision:

> As soon as I see, it is necessary that the vision… be doubled with a complementary vision or with another vision: myself seen from without, such as another would see me, installed in the midst of the visible, occupied in considering it from a certain spot.[70]

But Merleau-Ponty's favorite example of reversibility of vision is drawn from the phenomenon of Gestalt. The Gestalt is diacritical and differential in nature: the figure is visible by virtue of its distinction and *écart* with the ground without any active intervention of the seeing subject. In a note annexed to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty writes:

---

[69] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, Collection TEL, 1980), p. 303; *Being and Nothingness*, Eng. trans. H. E. Barnes (London & New York: Routledge Classics, 2003), p. 281.

[70] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 177; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 134.

> Understand that the 'to be conscious' = to have a figure on a ground…, the figure-ground distinction introduces a third term between the 'subject' and the 'object'. It is that *écart* first of all that is the perceptual *meaning*.[71]

Since it is *écart* which institutes the perceptual meaning and not the perceptual consciousness, seeing is initiated by the visible and vision is a function of the latter.

Phenomenal evidence of reversibility of the tactile sense is provided by the celebrated descriptions of the phenomenon of touch between the two hands of the same body-subject by Husserl in §§ 36–37 of the *Ideas II*.[72] This phenomenon is analyzed again by Merleau-Ponty in his famous article of reappraisal of Husserl, "The Philosopher and his Shadow".[73] Here the sensation of touching of a hand is initiated by the sensation of being-touched of this same hand: the being-touched becomes the touching, and the touching becomes the being-touched. Husserl goes on to show that the consciousness of ipseity is born through the double sensation of being-touched and touching.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty returns again to the phenomenon of reversibility of the touch in even greater details. The communication of two sensible subjects is enacted through the reversibility of being-touched and the touching: without being touched, we never have access to the feelings of others. In addition, the reversibility of the sense of tactility reveals that the world is not only a world to be seen, that the world is not composed of things reducible to nothing other than *qualia*. The world is also a world to be touched; i.e., the world is also a tactile world. It is the tactile aspect of the world and things which shows that the world is not a flat world, but a world of depth, because only through the sense of touch can we go deep down the things without remaining merely at the surface level. Merleau-Ponty gives a succinct summary of the phenomenon of touch as a power of penetrating into the depth of the world in the following terms:

> Already in the 'touch' we have just found three distinct experiences which subtend one another, three dimensions which overlap but are distinct: a touching of the sleek and of the rough, a touching of the things—a passive sentiment of the body and of its space—and finally a veritable touching of the touch, when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the 'touching subject' passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things.[74]

---

[71] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 250; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 197.

[72] Edmund Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch*: *Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*, ed. Marly Biemel (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), pp. 144–151; *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, *Second Book*, *Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*, Eng. trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), pp. 152–159.

[73] M. Merleau-Ponty, "Le philosophe et son ombre", in *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 210; "The Philosopher and his Shadow", in *Signs*, Eng. trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 166.

[74] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 176; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 133–134.

As to the phenomenon of reversibility of the sense of hearing, Merleau-Ponty draws our attention to the experience of hearing musical performance in a concert. Whether from the perspective of the performer or from that of the listener, it is always the musical idea or the musical work which takes the lead:

> The performer is no longer producing or reproducing the sonata: he feels himself, and the others feel him to be at the service of the sonata; the sonata sings through him or cries out so suddenly that he must 'dash on his bow' to follow it. And these open whirlpools [tourbillons] in the sonorous world finally form one sole whirlpool in which the ideas fit in with one another.[75]

From the experience of music hearing, Merleau-Ponty concludes that just as there is a reflexivity of the senses of touch and of vision, there is also a reflexivity of the movements of phonation and of hearing.[76] Passivity is at the basis of activity; or more precisely: passivity is the primordial level of activity.

But to Merleau-Ponty, there is not only reversibility in our senses of vision, touching and hearing, there is also reversibility between the visible and the tangible. Here Merleau-Ponty departs from Husserl:

> We must habituates ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility, is not without visual existence. Since the same body sees and touches, visible and tangible belong to the same world.[77]

The reversibility thesis is a key to understand Merleau-Ponty's concept of interworld, which in turn provides an ontological basis for the understanding of the interwoven character of the spatiality in which we inhabit, and further to the understanding of the formation of the space of interculturality. We will return to this in greater details later.

Yet Merleau-Ponty goes on to ask: what renders reflexivity and hence reversibility possible in the Sensible-in-itself as the Sensible-in-general? The answer is: negativity and circumscribed absence.[78] Thus the flesh as the Sensible-in-itself is different from the In-itself in Sartre which is pure positivity. Negativity and *écart* are at work within the Sensible-in-itself. This renders it possible to pass onto the For-itself, whereas in Sartre the emergence of the For-itself from the In-itself is never explained.

Reversibility as first level reflexivity is passivity working at anonymity. It is rendered possible by the *écart* within the Sensible-in-itself which inaugurates a rapport-to-one-self (rapport à soi). On the basis of this anonymous reflexivity there is the second level of reflexivity as reflection initiated by the *cogito*. This is reflexivity captured by objective thought, including objective sciences and intellectualist phi-

---

[75] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 199; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 151, Eng. translation modified.

[76] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 190; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 144.

[77] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 177; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 134.

[78] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 198–199; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 151.

losophy. Since reversibility is at work both in our experiences of passivity as well as experiences of activity, we can even say that "reversibility is the very principle of experience."[79]

Nevertheless, coincidence in the phenomenon of reversibility is never complete. There is always *écart* between the sensible and the sensing. This is because my body as flesh is a being-in-the-world. As such it is surrounded by the world; it is in the midst of whirlpools (tourbillons). The horizon of the world is not simply in front of me as a pure spectacle but also behind me. Thus we should rather say "horizons of the world" in plural, as the world is not only the assembly of objects existing actually before my eyes. There are dimensions of the beyond, absence and the invisible. They are not pure absence but constitute sources of my possibilities. The conceptualization of reversibility of the flesh pushes Merleau-Ponty to revise his earlier philosophy of perception which cannot be entirely exempt from objective thought he himself had criticized. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, perception is conceived, under the guidance of Husserl, as the mode of consciousness which grasps directly the thing spreading out in front of it. Thus it is a somewhat positive conception of perception. The late Merleau-Ponty has a more negative conception of perception. In one of the notes attached to *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty declares:

> I describe perception as a diacritical, relative, oppositional system—the primordial space as topological (that is, cut out in a total voluminosity which surrounds me, in which I am, which is behind me as well as before me.[80]

A negative conception of perception means that perception is not a mode of consciousness which is in complete possession of itself. It is rather a latent consciousness which does not know of itself. Merleau-Ponty invents the term "imperception" to name it:

> *The key is in this idea that perception qua wild perception is of itself ignorance of itself, imperception*, tends of itself to see itself as an *act* and to forget itself at latent intentionality, as *being at* – .[81]

When Merleau-Ponty equates "perception as imperception",[82] he wants to highlight the fact that perception at the savage state which is not yet captured by objective thought or intellectualist philosophy is accompanied by evidence without possession of it. Thus vision and feeling at the passive and anonymous stage, as operative intentionality, do not have the illusion of completeness as does the reflective consciousness of seeing and feeling. However, anonymous vision and feeling bears with itself "a certain nothingness sunken into a local

---

[79] This is suggested by Henry Maldiney in his beautiful article "Chair et verbe dans la philosophie de M. Merleau-Ponty", in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty, le psychique et le corporel*, *op. cit*., p. 66; "Flesh and Verb in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty", in *Chiasms*, *Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany, NY : State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 60.

[80] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 267; *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 213–214.

[81] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 266–267; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 213.

[82] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 254; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 201.

and temporal *openness*." [83] In other words, savage perception as imperception is the way a wild spirit sees the world which is not a flat world of pure presence but a vertical world comprising of proximity and distance, presence and absence, invisible and depth. It is a world of wild Being not yet domesticated by the objective thought of Modern Science and intellectualist philosophy. This world of wild Being is a world of flesh characterized by reversibility. It is not a Big-Object susceptible to be exhausted by intellectual possession. Rather than a closed field, the world suffers from partial indeterminations. But this guarantees that the world is a whole with essential openness. Modulated through temporal and spatial *écart*, Gestalts and figures find their way to appearance as the basic units of perceptual meaning. The world of flesh is thus a world of pregnant forms, "a *pregnancy* of possibles, *Weltmöglichkeit*",[84] i.e., world as possibilities rather than mere actualities.[85] The world for sure appears to the carnal subject, but only in part. Since the world is comprised of the invisible, non-being, absence and depth, no single perceptual subject can have the totality of world horizons unveiled before him even in an infinite series of perceptual acts. Thus the idea of the world cannot be understood as the *Idea* in the Kantian sense. Under this conception we can imagine that all aspects of the world can be adequately grasped and totalized by a perceptual consciousness operating ad infinitum. But this conception of world is that of a flat world. It does not correspond to the sense of depth which is comprised of absence and invisible that we encounter in our lived-through experience of the world. The conception of perception underlying such a concept of flat world is a positive conception. It does not take into account the inherent imperception of perception. To Merleau-Ponty, the imperception of perception does not refer to the factual default of being unable to totalize all the possible perspectives that a perceptual consciousness can bring onto the object, but to the essential blindness, the *punctum caecum* of any perceptual consciousness with regard to its condition of possibility, namely its underlying attachment to pre-objective Being and to the primordial world, as well as its carnal basis:

> *What* it does not see it does not see for reasons of principle, it is because it is consciousness that it does not see. *What* it does not see is what in it prepares the vision of the rest… *What* it does not see is what makes it see, is its tie to Being, is its corporeity, are the existentials by which the world becomes visible, is the flesh wherein the *ob*ject is born.[86]

In short, perceptual consciousness as objectifying consciousness is in principle incapable of the ontological vision which discovers the flesh of the world as Being of the pre-objective order covered up by objective thought of the Modern sciences and intellectualist philosophy.

---

[83] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 254; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 201.

[84] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 304; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 250.

[85] The inner connection of perception as imperception and the openness of the world as pregnant forms is highlighted and well explained in the very clear article of Françoise Dastur, "Monde, chair, vision", in *Chair et langage. Essais sur Merleau-Ponty* (Fougères: Encre Marine, 2001), pp. 69–107, especially pp. 78–84; "World, Flesh, Vision", in *Chiasms*, *Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, *op. cit*., pp. 29–32.

[86] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, pp. 301–302; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 248.

The primordial world only shows itself at the junction and interweaving of different perspectives on the world from different carnal subjects. Thus it is a world of intertwinement, encroachment and infringement.[87] It is with reference to this state of affairs that Merleau-Ponty says that "the sensible world and the historical world are always inter-worlds (inter-mondes)".[88] The concept of inter-world provides an important key to understand the formation of intercultural space. The world of Modern sciences is the world of Euclidean space which is a flat world constructed by representations through geometric ideation, it does not correspond to the world we inhabit characterized by depth, encroachment and infringement. The primordial world which we inhabit is an inter-world: it is primordially woven and weaving. The spatiality of the sensible world we inhabit is an interwoven space, not a Euclidean space of pure idealization. In fact Merleau-Ponty has drawn our attention to the fact that the rise of Euclidean space is a cultural fact which took place in Renaissance Europe.[89] It corresponds to the classical ontology of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe:

> The Euclidean space is the model for perspectival being, it is a space without transcendence, positive, a network of straight lines, parallel among themselves or perpendicular according to the three dimensions, which sustains all the possible positions—Underlying appropriateness of this idea of space (and of velocity, movement, time) with the classical ontology of the *Ens realissimum*, of the infinite entity.[90]

If Euclidean space is a cultural product, the perception leading to the vision of such a space is a perception informed by a particular culture. Since every culture has its inherent relativity, and if Euclidean space is the product of cultural perception, there is no reason to accept that Euclidean space reveals the absolute truth of space in itself without further questioning: why Euclidean space does not correspond to our intuitive experience of living space which gives us the sense of proximity and distance, presence and absence, depth, invisible and openness? Thus the Euclidean conception of the world is only one of the perspectives on the world, a perspective provided by Renaissance European culture. It cannot be claimed to be absolute. On the contrary, it masks the underlying vertical world, the world of wild Being which is experienced differently by different cultural perceptions. Euclidean geometry and the analytic science built on it is one of the pregnant forms of the primordial world of wild Being. But it is not the only one. However, it masks the world as essentially a world of transcendence and openness.

Thus in order to appropriately understand our own ontological condition and our own situation in the primordial world, we cannot dogmatically rely on the objective thought generated by Euclidean science. To Merleau-Ponty, not only Euclidean geometry as analytic science, but even the genetic psychology of Piaget which has

---

[87] This point has been magnificently explained in M. C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2nd ed., 1997), p. 155.

[88] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 116; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 84, Eng. translation modified.

[89] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 265; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 212.

[90] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 264; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 210.

an underlying logicism "is an absolutization of our culture."[91] This is incompatible with experience and knowledge acquired by contemporary ethnology. This amounts to saying that to avoid being shut up in the dogmatism of Euclidean science, we have to look for help from other cultures. But we should also avoid being shut up in flat cultural relativism. Merleau-Ponty is fully aware of the fact that "psychology, logic, ethnology are rival dogmatisms that destroy one another; philosophy alone, precisely because it aims at the total domain of Being, renders them compatible by relativizing them."[92] What Merleau-Ponty suggests can be understood as intercultural criticism from the philosophical standpoint. Yet the kind of philosophy he proposes to practice is not objective thought of Modern sciences and intellectualist philosophy, but a philosophy which takes serious consideration of cultural otherness and their contribution to understanding our sensible and historical world as inter-world.

The interwoven character of the inter-world implies that the cultural space built on it is also intercultural in nature, as it is formed at the encroachment and intertwinement of different cultural perspectives, thus by intertwinement and encroachment. In a way, we can even say that the pre-objective world of wild Being can be understood better as an intercultural space rather than a space of Modern objective sciences. There is an epistemological dimension of interculturality: due to the factually historical character of every life-world upon which a philosophy is born, no philosophical theory born in a single cultural soil can be assured a priori of its truth value until it could be testified in and by other cultures.

Let us sum up the above discussions on Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh as the Sensible-in-itself and reversibility as its ontological character with reference to a theory of intercultural understanding in philosophy. By the concept of flesh, Merleau-Ponty has established that the primordial world is neither a world of dead matter nor a world of pure ideas, but a sensible world invested with the capacity of reflexivity at the pre-reflective level shown through the phenomenon of reversibility. Reversibility as the ontological character of the flesh of the world means that the primordial world is a world of interwoven space between presence and absence, proximity and distance, visible and invisible, depth and surface, between the perspective of my own flesh and the perspectives of the flesh of other carnal subjects. Thus the primordial world is an inter-world. Since an inter-world is a sensible world and a historical world, its spatiality has a cultural character. Thus the concept of world underlying the primordial inter-world is not a formal concept. The cultural sedimentations deposited in an inter-world can never be exempt from perspectives brought from other cultures. The space of an inter-world is an intercultural space. The reversibility of the flesh of the world is thus the synonym of openness to cultural otherness and recognition of their transcendence. The formation of classical Greek philosophy and culture in general is an eminent example of the resultant of constant exchanges of early Greek culture with a great variety of other cultures in the entire Mediterranean region.

[91] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 257; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 204.

[92] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 258; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 204.

There is a second point of importance in Merleau-Ponty's reversibility thesis. To the author of *The Visible and the Invisible*, there is reversibility not only between the visible and the seeing, the tangible and the touching, the audible and the hearing, but also reversibility between the tangible and the visible. This throws important light on intercultural understanding: exchange of ideas is not the only path of intercultural communication, exchange of feelings and expression of emotions are also important means of intercultural understanding. Intercultural understanding in philosophy is of course a matter of exchange of philosophical ideas from different cultural traditions. But it should not be restricted to the exchange of objective thought which is a result of high order intellectual reflections. It should also pass by understanding of underlying cultural sensibilities generated by experience of the wild Being through the senses of pre-reflective perception, touch and hearing in other cultures. As Merleau-Ponty has warned us, "the ideas we are speaking of would not be better known to us if we had no body and no sensibility; it is then that they would be inaccessible to us."[93] Thus thinking through ideas is not a matter of pure intelligence; ideas are given to us in no other way than as carnal experience. On the one hand carnal experience is the time and space for the event of thinking to take place through the exercise of ideas. On the other hand ideas "owe their authority, their fascinating, indestructible power, precisely to the fact that they are in transparency behind the sensible, or in its heart."[94] The sensible is the indispensable ontological support of the intelligible. Thus intercultural understanding through creative arts, dance, music, poetry and literature as multiple modes of expression of feelings of other cultures is part and parcel of intercultural understanding in philosophy, as the former lays the sensible basis for the latter as high order intellectual and reflective work. In addition, the universality of philosophical concepts and doctrines generated in a certain culture must be testified through other cultures from the bottom-up manner and not from the top-town way. This means that cultivation of cultural sensibilities of other cultures through grafting of the cultural flesh of other cultures onto our own cultural flesh is no less important in intercultural understanding in philosophy. Only by sharing other cultural sensibilities can a philosopher have a way to testify that the truth and rationality of the philosophical ideas she/he proposes is not merely valid for her/his own culture of origin, but also for other cultures.

11.2.6 What Is New in the Concept of Cultural Flesh?

1. What is new in the concept of cultural flesh we propose is it serves to lay down the basis for an ontology of cultural existence. Speaking of cultural existence means that a cultural entity is not an object of purely physical properties upon which there is the supervenience of some spiritual properties. Such theory of

[93] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 196; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 250.

[94] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible*, p. 196; *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 250.

supervenience relies on a physicalism which falls under what Merleau-Ponty calls the classical dualistic ontology of matter and spirit which the author of *The Visible and the Invisible* wants precisely to overcome by the very concept of flesh. Cultural entities such as painting, calligraphy, sculpture, music, poetry, novel, photography, or even architecture are not merely generic objects, but also individualities in the sense that they have each one its own character and is each one a power of affectivity and can convey meaning by their sensible appearance. They are what Merleau-Ponty calls pregnant forms. The meanings they emanate are captured by us as perceptual subjects only if our senses of vision, touch and hearing are affected by the visibility, tangibility and audibility of these cultural entities. Thus ontologically speaking, cultural entities are flesh. The meanings they convey are effectuated through images (graphic, pictorial, acoustic) or ideas, or the combination of both. Images are of course of carnal basis, but ideas are too, as we have pointed out earlier. Thus we can speak of the flesh of ideas and images.[95] As for performing arts such as dance, singing, playing of musical instruments, drama acting, etc., their medium of existence is of course flesh, as it is through movements of the artist's body that meaning is expressed. Even landscape, when it becomes motive of artistic creation such as landscape painting or garden design, is transformed from naturel object to cultural flesh as it is no less a power of affectivity as other cultural entities. Thus we can say that the ontological basis of cultural existence is flesh. Cultural ontology is a matter of inquiry into the being of cultural entities as cultural flesh.

2. The concept of cultural flesh also paves a new way to understand cultural identity. Since the concept of cultural flesh is built upon Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh, it bears the same ontological character of the latter: *écart* and movement of differentiation instead of coincidence with oneself. A cultural formation is never a system of pure immanence. For sure individual cultural formations always have more or less a border with other cultures. But this border is also always porous such that interaction with cultural otherness is a constant factor of the formation of cultural identity. Given the differential and diacritical nature of cultural flesh, there is always *écart* and difference within a given cultural formation such that the spatiality of a given culture is never entirely homogeneous. It is *écart* and non-coincidence which give life to any cultural formation. Cultural identity formed in this manner is alterity within oneself, ipseity in difference, identity as non-coincidence, encroachment and intertwinement; in short: reversibility. The cultural flesh is a kind of differential but synergic being, because it is sensible and sentient at the same time. Thus cultural identity understood in this manner is not homogeneous in nature, but heterogeneous. It is unity in plurality.
3. Cultural identity built on the concept of cultural flesh guarantees its ontological openness to cultural otherness and thus favors communication and exchange with the latter. Since such exchange is enacted in the bottom-up way through

[95] I refer to the excellent work of Mauro Carbone, *La chair de images*: *Merleau-Ponty entre peinture et cinéma* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2011).

sharing of cultural sensibilities which has primal importance and not in a top-down manner through pure ideas, intercultural communication built in this manner is lateral and transversal in nature. The relation between cultures is not vertical and does not follow an order of hierarchy. This facilitates the construction of an ethics of reciprocity and an ethics of recognition among different cultures required by intercultural exchange.[96] This also enhances the establishment of cultural universals which are a kind of lateral universal identified through reflective judgment in the Kantian sense on commonalities shared among individual examples but tolerant of differences, and not from determinative judgment formed from an a priori law which tends to exclude differences. As examples, traditional Chinese medicine and Indian Yoga each exhibits a whole system of knowledge of the living body, of method of diagnosis and techniques of cure entirely different from modern Western medicine which is built on anatomy of the dead human body.[97] In Cultural China today, modern Western medicine and Chinese medicine are complementary to one another.

4. Since cultural flesh is heterogeneous in nature, it favors the formation of intercultural space which is a heterogeneous spatiality. A heterogeneous intercultural space is necessary for the possibility of co-existence of different cultural entities or cultural forms, whether this co-existence is peaceful or conflictual. The existence of cultural otherness within an intercultural space, as shown from experiences of intercultural communication, is often a source of misunderstanding and even conflict among different cultures. But cultural otherness is also the guarantee of cultural openness.
5. Given the diacritical nature of flesh, cultural flesh is also diacritical. As mentioned earlier, perceptual consciousness has its blind spot in principle. Thus every cultural perception has its own blind spot. The incomprehension and criticism of other cultures with regard to a given culture enable the latter to come to awareness of its own unthoughts and to think through them. Face to the criticism of other cultures, a given culture has to defend itself through rational demonstration. Only in this way a given culture can raise from the state of a being-in-itself to that of a being-for-itself by passing through the state of being-for-Other-cultures.
6. In view of the above, the diacritical nature of cultural flesh enables intercultural understanding to fulfill a critical function with respect to the reformulation of the concept of rationality. Merleau-Ponty's conception of rationality is different from reason in the tradition of Western philosophy from Plato to Kant: to this tradition reason pre-exists the world and Nature. For example, reason as a human

[96] Cf. G. B. Madison, "The Ethics and Politics of the Flesh", in *The Ethics of Postmodernity : Current Trends in Continental Thought*, ed. Gary B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p. 178.

[97] On the genesis of Modern Western medicine from anatomy of the dead human body, see Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la Clinique. Une archéologie du regard medica*l (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963); *The Birth of the Clinic. An Archaeology of Medical Percepton*, Eng. trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock Publications, 1973).

faculty in Kant is a pre-existing entity residing a priori in the transcendental subject.[98] But to Merleau-Ponty, "the only *Logos* that pre-exists is the world itself".[99] The task of phenomenological philosophy is not "the reflexive mapping [le reflet] of a pre-existing truth, but rather, like art, the realization of a truth."[100] Intercultural understanding redefines or reshapes our understanding of rationality: truth is not pre-ordained by philosophical judgments determined a priori by transcendental principles, but truth, in particular truth of philosophical concepts and doctrines, is a function of the event of confrontation between different perspectives and the convergence of perspectives proposed by different cultural formations in different situations. The Hegelian or Husserlian idea of philosophy is ethnocentric in essence which judges other cultures and philosophies from the top-down manner. With the concept of cultural flesh operating in an intercultural space, rationality is lateral or horizontal and is established at the junction of different cultural perspectives with the character of encroachment, reciprocity, and intertwinement. If the sensible world and the historical world is always already an inter-world, reason and intelligibility emerge only in the event of cultural shocks in which the intelligibility and truth of a philosophy succeed in passing through the test of recognition beyond the cultural borders within which such a philosophy is born. In the same manner as the possibility of falsification of a scientific statement is a condition of its character of truth, the delimitation of the cultural border beyond which a philosophy is no more comprehensible is its condition of intelligibility. In other words, philosophical rationality needs an intercultural space to realize itself. Without the recognition of cultural otherness, a philosophy cannot realize its truth. This intercultural space is never pure immanence and homogeneous; it has its own openness and dimensions of transcendence. Thus it is heterogeneous and is a hybridity of immanence and transcendence.[101]

7. Intercultural understanding in philosophy guided by the concept of cultural flesh contributes to the revelation of the vertical depth of the world probably better than any philosophy of a single culture. On the one hand a philosopher practicing intercultural understanding cannot be a transcendental spectator of the world; she/he contributes to the intelligibility of the world through the expression of his/her experience of Being rendered possible by the cultural soil on which she/he inhabits. But at the same time she/he is aware of the fact that every cultural perception has its own imperceptions. Such a philosopher is more sensitive to the

[98] Cf. Dominique Pradelle, "La doctrine phénoménologique de la raison: rationalités sans faculté rationnelle", in *Husserl. La science des phénomènes*, eds. Antoine Grandjean et Laurent Perreau (Paris : CNRS Éditions, 2012), p. 244.

[99] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. xv; *Phenomenology of Perception*, *op. cit*., p. lxxxiv.

[100] M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, p. xv; *Phenomenology of Perception*, *op. cit*., p. lxxxiv; Eng. Translation modified.

[101] The above lines are inspired by the article of Garth Gillan, "In the Folds of the Flesh: Philosophy and Language", in *The Horizons of the Flesh*, ed. Garth Gillan (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), pp. 1–60.

reciprocity between different cultural perceptions. The voices and silences of a given cultural perception on the world reveal as much the visible and the invisible of such a culture. Practitioners of intercultural communication in philosophy need mutual recognition and mutual criticism from cultural otherness. The voices and silences they express are thus polyphonic and not monotonic. The critical function of philosophy is also enhanced through mutual criticism in the community of intercultural philosophy.

8. In the tradition of Western Culture, the function and ambition of philosophy is the intellectual possession of the world. This is especially manifest in the transcendental philosophies of Kantian and Husserlian inspiration and in the dialectical philosophies of Hegelian incentive. Practitioners of intercultural philosophy, informed by the concept of cultural flesh as we have tried to explain, will no more conceive of the function of philosophy in this way. They understand that the world can never be in our complete intellectual possession. On the contrary, the world is always a shared world and a world to be shared. Any meaning we can discover from the world is meaning only when it is a shared meaning and a meaning to be shared. Intercultural understanding is the act of realization of meaning sharing (le partage du sens). Cultural flesh as element of our cultural body is our ontological disposition which allows us to share meanings and feelings with others, in particular with cultural otherness. Therefore cultural flesh is a kind of prosthesis built upon our natural body. Cultural instruments are figures of cultural flesh grafted upon our natural body in view of enhancing our power of sensibility and understanding such that we can better realize acts of meaning sharing in reciprocity. Truth can be realized only through meaning sharing in this way, and not in the way conceived as the result of the heroic intellectual effort of a sovereign subject in full possession of the world and of himself as in traditional philosophy.

Bibliography

Literature in Western Languages

Barbaras, Renaud. 2002. The Ambiguity of the Flesh. In *Merleau-Ponty: figures et fonds de la chair, Chiasmi International, nouvelle série*, no. 4, ed. R. Barbaras, M. Carbone, and L. Lawlor, 19–26. Paris: Vrin. French version: "L'ambiguïté de la chair. Merleau-Ponty entre philosophie transcendantale et ontologie de la vie", in *Merleau-Ponty aux frontière de l'invisible* (*Les Cahiers de Chiasmi International*, no. 1), ed. M. Cariou, R. Barbaras, and E. Bimbenet (Milano: Associazione Culturale Mimesis, 2003), 183–189.

Barbaras, Renaud. 1991. *L'être du phénomène. Sur l'ontologie de Merleau-Ponty*. Grenoble: Jérôme Million. Eng. trans. by Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor as *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004).

Barbaras, Renaud. 2007. *Le mouvement de l'existence. Études sur la phénoménologie de Jan Patočka*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Transparence.

Barbaras, Renaud. 2011. *L'ouverture du monde: lecture de Jan Patočka*. Paris: Les Éditions de la Transparence.

Bouvet, J. 1699. *L'Histoire de l'Empereur de la Chine* (The Hague).

Braudel, Fernand. 1967–1979. *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XV^{e}-XVIII^{e} siècle*, 3 vol. Paris: Armand Colin. Eng. Trans. by Siân Reynolds as *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Centuries*, 3 vols (New York: Harper & Row, 1982–1984).

Braudel, Fernand. 1949. *La Méditerranée et le Monde Méditerranéen a l'époque de Philippe II*, 3 vols. Paris: Armand Collin. Eng. Trans. by Siân Reynolds as *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

Bruzina, Ronald. 1989. Solitude and community in the work of philosophy: Husserl and Fink, 1928–1938. *Man and World* 22: 287–314.

Carbone, Mauro. 2011. *La chair des images: Merleau-Ponty entre peinture et cinéma*. Paris: J Vrin.

Catherine, Colliot-Thélène. 1990. *Max Weber et l'histoire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Chan, Wing-Tsit. 1963. *A Source Book in Chinese philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ching, Julia, and Willard G. Oxtoby. 1992. *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China*. Nettetal: Steyler Verlag.

*Chuang-Tzŭ: The Inner Chapter*s. 2001. Eng. Trans. A.C. Graham. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3

Cohen, Richard A. 2000. Merleau-Ponty, the Flesh and Foucault. In *Rereading Merleau-Ponty. Essays Beyond the Continental-Analytic Divide*, ed. Lawrence Hass and Dorothea Olkowski, 277–291. New York: Humanities Books.

Colette, Jacques. 1988. La réflexivité du sensible. Une aporie phénoménologique. In *Maurice Merleau-Ponty, le psychique et le corporel*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, 39–51. Paris: Aubier.

Confucius. 1992. *The Analects*, a New Bilingual Edition. Eng. Trans. D.C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Contemporary Chinese Thought 37, no. 1–3 (2005–2006).

Crépon, Marc. 2007. Postface: Histoire, éthique et politique : la question de l'Europe. In *L'Europe après l'Europe,* ed. Jan Patočka, 277–295. French Trans. Erika Abrams, etc. Paris: Verdier.

Dastur, Françoise. 2001. Monde, chair, vision. In *Chair et langage. Essais sur Merleau-Ponty*, 69–107. Fougères: Encre Marine. Eng. trans. As "World, Flesh, Vision", in *Chiasms, Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany, NY : State University of New York Press, 2000).

Dastur, Françoise. 1992. Three questions to Jacques Derrida. In *Ethics and Danger. Essays on Heidegger and Continental Thought*, ed. A.B. Dallery, C.E. Scott, and P.H. Roberts, 25–41. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Declève, Henri. 1992. Philosophie et liberté selon Patočka. In *Profils de Jan Patočka: Hommages et documents*, ed. Henri Declève, 111–125. Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1968. *Différence et répétition.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Eng. Trans. by Paul Patton as *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Deleuze, Gilles. 2003. L'immanence, une vie. In *Philosophie*, No. 47, Sept 1995, pp. 3–7, collected in *Deux régimes de fous, textes et entretiens 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, 359–363. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit. Eng. trans. by Anne Boyman as "Immanence: a Life", in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, (New York: Zone Books; Cambridge, Mass., 2001), also in *Two Regimes of Madness. Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*. Eng. trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), pp. 388–393.

Deleuze, Gilles et Félix Guattari. 1991. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* Paris: Les Ėditions de Minuit. Eng. Trans. by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell as *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *De la grammatologie.* Paris: Minuit. Eng. trans. by G. C. Spivak as *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: John Hopskins University Pess, 1975).

Derrida, Jacques. 1987. *De l'esprit. Heidegger et la question.* Paris: Éditions Galilée. Eng. trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby as *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Derrida, Jacques. 1962. Introduction et traduction. In *L'origine de la géométrie d'Edmund Husserl.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Eng. trans. by John P. Leavy as *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (York Beach: ME, Nicholas Hays, 1978).

Derrida, Jacques. 1972. La *différance*. In *Marges de la philosophie*, 1–29. Paris: Les Ėditions de Minuit. Eng. Trans. by Alan Bass as Différance. In *Margins of philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 1–27.

Derrida, Jacques. 1967. La structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines. In *Ecriture et différence,* 409–428. Paris: Seuil. Eng. trans. by Alan Bass as "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". In *Writing and Difference* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 278–293.

Derrida, Jacques. 2000. *Le toucher—Jean-Luc Nancy.* Paris: Éditions Galilée. Eng. Trans. by Christine Irizarry as *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *La voix et le phénomène.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Eng. trans. by David B. Allison as *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Descartes, René. 1967/1973. *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Tome II & III, ed. F. Alquié. Paris: Classiques Garnier.

Descartes, René. 1985, 1984. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. I & II. Eng. Trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dillon, Martin C. 1997a. *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 2nd ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Dillon, Martin C. (ed.). 1997b. *Écart & Différance: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing*. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press.

Étiemble. 1988. *L'Europe Chinoise, I, De L'Empire romain à Leibniz*. Paris: Gallimard.

Findlay, Edward E. 2002. *Caring for the Soul in a Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the thought of Jan Patočka*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fink, Eugen. 1959. Les concepts opératoires dans la phénoménologie de Husserl, first published. In *Husserl: Cahiers de Royaumont, Philosophie no. III*, 214–230. Paris: Minuit. German version as "Operative Begriffe in Husserls Phänomenologie", in Eugen Fink, *Nähe und Distanz* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber GmbH, 1976), 180–204. Eng. trans. as "Operative Concepts in Husserl's Phenomenology", in *Apriori and World. European Contributions to Husserlian Phenomenology*, ed. William McKenna, Robert M. Harlan and Laurence E. Winters (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1981), 56–70.

Fink, Eugen. 1976. *Nähe und Distanz*. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber GmbH.

Fink, Eugen. 1933. Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik, first Published in *Kant-Studien* XXXVIII(1933): 321–383. Now in *Studien zur Phänomenologie* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1966), 79–156. Eng. trans. as "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism", in *The Phenomenology of Husserl: Selected Critical Readings*, ed. R. O. Elveton (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 73–147.

Fink, Eugen. 1959. Die Spätphilosophie Husserls in der Freiburger Zeit, first published in *Edmund Husserl, 1859–1959,* 99–115. The Hague: M. Nijhoff. Now in *Nähe und Distanz* (Freiburg/München: Verlag Karl Alber GmbH, 1976), 205–227.

Fink, Eugen. 1988. *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil I. Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre. Husserliana-Dokumente Bd. II/I*, ed. Hans Ebeling, Jann Holl, and Guy van Kerckhoven. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Eng. trans. by Ronald Bruzina as *Sixth Cartesian Meditation. The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

Foucault, Michel. 1994. L'écriture de soi. In *Dits et écrits*, IV, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald, 415–430. Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Robert Hurley as "Self Writing", in *Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, vol. 1, Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, The New Press, 1997), 207–222.

Foucault, Michel. *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1st ed. Paris: Plon, 1961. 2nd ed. Paris: Gallimard, 1972. 3rd ed. Gallimard, Collection TEL, 1976). Partial Eng. trans. by R. Howard as *Madness and Civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1965). New integral Eng. trans. by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa as *History of Madness* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

Foucault, Michel. 2001. *L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France, 1981–1982*, ed. Frédéric Gros. Paris: Seuil/Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Graham Burchell as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982* (New York: Picador, 2005).

Foucault, Michel. 1966. *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Alan Sheridan as *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970).

Foucault, Michel. 1963. *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard médical.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Eng. trans. by Alan Sheridan as *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London: Tavistok Publications, 1973).

Foucault, Michel. 1984. *Le souci de soi, Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 3. Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Robert Hurley as *The Care of the Self*, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

Foucault, Michel. 1990. Qu'est-ce que la critique? [Critique et Aufklärung]. *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* LXXXIV(1990): 39. Eng. trans. as "What is Critique?", in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 41–81.

Foucault, Michel. 1994. Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? In *Dits et écrits*, IV, ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald, 562–578. Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Catherine Porter as "What is Enlightenment?", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: The Penguin Books, 1984), 32–50.

Foucault, Michel. 1994. Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? In *Dits et écrits*, IV, ed. D. Defert and F. Ewald, 679–688. Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. as "What is Revolution?", in Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 83–100.

Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Alan Sheridan as *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison* (New York: Random House, 1977).

Foucault, Michel. 1984. *L'usage des plaisirs, Histoire de la sexualité*, T. 2. Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Robert Hurley as *The Use of Pleasure, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2* (New York: Random House, 1985).

Funke, Gerhard. 1984. The primacy of practical reason in Kant and Husserl. In *Kant and phenomenology*, ed. Thomas M. Seebohm and Joseph J. Kockelmans, 1–29. Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology & University Press of America.

Galilei, Galileo. 1957. The Assayer. In *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, 229–238. Eng. Trans. Stillman Drake. New York: Double Day Anchor Book.

Gasché, Rodolphe. 2014. *Geophilosophy. On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's What is Philosophy?* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Gauchet, Marcel. 1985. *Le désenchantement du monde: une histoire politique de la religion*. Paris: Gallimard.

Gillan, Garth. 1973. In the folds of the flesh: Philosophy and language. In *The Horizons of the Flesh*, ed. Garth Gillan, 1–60. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. 1970. *Theory of Colours*. Eng. Trans. Charles Locke Eastlake. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Graham, A.C. 1989. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Arguments in Ancient China*. La Salle: Open Court.

Graham, A.C. 1955. *Kung-sun Lung's Essay on Meanings and Things*. Hong Kong: University Press.

Graham, A.C. 1978. *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Graham, A.C. 1992. Rationalism and anti-rationalism in pre-Buddhist China. In *Unreason Within Reason. Essays on the Outskirts of Rationality*, ed. A.C. Graham, 97–120. La Salle: Open Court

Graham, A.C. 1985. *Reason and Spontaneity*. London: Curzon Press.

Graham, A.C. 1992. *Two Chinese Philosophers: The Metaphysics of the Brothers Cheng*. La Salle: Open Court.

Hadot, Pierre. 1992, 1997. *La citadelle intérieure. Introduction aux* Pensées *de Marc Aurèle*. Paris: Fayard. Eng. trans. by Michael Chase as *The Inner Citadel: the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Hadot, Pierre. 1998. *Études de philosophie ancienne*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Hadot, Pierre. 1993. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique,* 1st ed. Paris: Institut d'Études augustiniennes. Augmented ed. Paris: Albin Michel, 2002). Eng. trans. by Michael Chase as *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Excercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Edited by Arnold Davidson (Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1995).

Hadot, Pierre. 2001. *La philosophie comme manière de vivre. Entretiens avec Jeanne Carlier et Arnold I. Davidson.* Paris: Albin Michel. Eng. trans. by Marc Djaballah and Michael Chase as *The Present Alone is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

Hadot, Pierre. 1997. *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard.* Paris: Gallimard, Folio Essais. Eng. trans. by Michael Chase as *Plotinus, or, The Simplicity of Vision*. Introduction by Arnold I. Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Hadot, Pierre. 1995. *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* Paris: Gallimard, Folio Essais. Eng. trans. by Michael Chase as *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

Hass, Lawrence. 2007. On the multiplicity of flesh. *Chiasmi International* 9: 431–443.

Hegel, G.W.F. 1971. *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag. Eng. trans. by E. S. Haldane as *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. I (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955).

Heidegger, Martin. 1954. Das Ding. In *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* 145–204. Pfullingen: Neske. Eng. trans. by A. Hofstadter as "The Thing", in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 163–186.

Heidegger, Martin. 1953. *Einführung in die Metaphysik.* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. Eng. trans. by Ralph Manheim as *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). New English translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt as *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

Heidegger, Martin. 1969. Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens. In *Zur Sache des Denkens,* 61–80. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. Eng. trans. by Joan Stambaugh as "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", in *Martin Heidegger. Basic Writings*, ed. D. F. Krell (London: Routledge, revised and expanded edition, 1993), 427–449.

Heidegger, Martin. 1975. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 24. Frankfurt-am-Main: V. Klostermann. Eng. trans. by A. Hofstadter as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

Heidegger, Martin. 1927. *Sein und Zeit.* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 15th ed., 1979. Eng. trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson as *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

Heidegger, Martin. 1986. Seminar in Le Thor 1968. In *Gesamtausgabe* vol 15. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann.

Heidegger, Martin. 1958. *The Question of Being*. Eng. Trans. Jean T. Wilde and W. Kluback. New Haven: College & University Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 1959. *Unterwegs zur Sprache.* Pfullingen: Verlag G. Neske. Eng. trans. by P. D. Hertz as *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

Heidegger, Martin. 1976. *Wegmarken. Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9. Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann.

Held, David. 1990. *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*. Cambridge: Polity.

Held, Klaus. 1989. Husserl et les grecs. In *Husserl*, ed. Eliane Escoubas and Marc Richir, 119–153. Grenoble: Editions Jérome Millon.

Held, Klaus. 2002. The origin of Europe with the Greek discovery of the World. *Epoché* 7, issue I.

Henrich, Dieter. 1992. The moral image of the world. In *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*, 3–28. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Henry, Michel. 2000. *Incarnation. Une philosophie de la chair*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Henry, Michel. 1990. *Phénoménologie matérielle*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Herder, Johann Gottfried von. 1962. *Idées pour la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité*, French-German bilingual ed. Edited by Max Rouché. Paris: Éditions Montagne.

Héring, Jean. 1959. Edmund Husserl. Souvenirs et réflexions. In *Edmund Husserl, 1859–1959*, *recueil commemorative publié à l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance du philosophe.* La Haye: M. Nijhoff.

Horkeimer, Max. 1972. Authority and the Family. In *Critical Theory: Selected essays*, 47–128. New York: The Seabury Press.

Horkeimer, Max. 1974. *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: The Seabury Press.

Horkeimer, Max. 1967. *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft.* Frankfurt-am-Main: S. Fischer Verlag GmbH. Eng. trans. by M. J. O'Connell and Others as *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974).

Horkeimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. 1944. *Dialektik der Aufklärung.* New York: Social Studies Association, Inc. Reissued in Germany by S. Fischer Verlag GmbH, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1969). Eng. trans. by J. Cumming as *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1972).

Hu, Shih. 1962. The scientific spirit and method in Chinese philosophy. In *Philosophy and Culture: East and West*, ed. Charles A. Moore, 191–222. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Husserl, Edmund. 1994. In *Briefwechsel*, ed. Karl Schuhmann and Elisabeth Schuhmann. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Husserl, Edmund. 1950. *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge, Husserliana I* The Hague: M. Nijhoff. Eng. trans. by Dorion Cairns as *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960).

Husserl, Edmund. 1989. In *Aufsätze und Vorträge (1922–1937), Husserliana XXVII*, ed. Thomas Nenon and Hans Rainer Sepp. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher.

Husserl, Edmund. 1940. Grundlegende Untersuchungen zum phänomenologischen Ursprung der Räumlichkeit der Natur. In *Philosophical Essays in Memory of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Marvin Farber. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Eng. trans. by F. Kersten as "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of Spatiality of Nature", in *HUSSERL. Shorter Works*, ed. P. McCormick and F. A. Elliston (Notre Dame, Indianna: University of Notre Dame Press & Brighton, Sussex : The Harvester Press, 1981), 222–233.

Husserl, Edmund. 1952. *Ideen zu einer Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Zweites Buch, Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution, Husserliana IV*, ed. Marly Biemel. The Hague: M. Nijhoff. Eng. trans. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer as *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book, Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989).

Husserl, Edmund. *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, Husserliana VI*, ed. W. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1st ed. 1954, 2nd ed. 1962). Eng. trans. by David Carr as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

Husserl. Edmund. *Logische Untersuchungen.* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1st ed. 1900–1901, 6th ed. 1980. Eng. trans. by J.N. Findlay as *Logical Investigations* (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

Husserl, Edmund. 1930. Nachwort zu den <Ideen I>. In *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, Bd. 11. 1930. Now in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Drittes Buch, Die Phänomenologie und die Fundamente der Wissenschaften, Husserliana V*, ed. M. Biemel (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1952), 138–162. Eng. trans. by W. R. Boyce Gibson as "Author's Preface to the English Edition", in *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1st ed. 1931, New York: Collier Books Ed., 1962), 20–21. New Eng. trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer as "Epilogue", in *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book, Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution* (Dorcrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 405–430.

Husserl, Edmund. 2010. Sokrates—Buddha. An Unpublished Manuscript from the Archives, ed. Sebastian Luft. *Husserl Studies* 26: 1–17.

Husserl, Edmund. 1959. In *Erste Philosophie (1923/24), Zweiter Teil, Husserliana VIII*, ed. R. Boehm. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.

Kant, Immanuel. 1991. Conjectures on the beginning of human history. In *Political Writings*, 2nd ed, 221–234. Eng. Trans. H.B. Nisbet, ed. Hans Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. Eng. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Eng. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1929. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Eng. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. London: MacMillan.

Kant, Immanuel. 1996. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. In Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, 37–108. Ed. and Eng. Trans. Mary Gregor. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1996. Religion within the boundaries of mere reason. In *Religion and Rational Theology*, 39–216. Ed. and Eng. Trans. by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1902–1938. Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?. In *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol.VIII, 33–42. Berlin: Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften. "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?', in Kant, *Political Writings*, Eng. trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1991), 54–60.

Kley, Edwin J. Van. 1971. Europe's 'Discovery' of China and the writing of world history. *The American Historical Review* 76(2): 358–385.

Kroner, Richard. 1956. *Kant's Weltanschauung*, Eng. Trans. John E. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Küng, Hans. 1991. *Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic*. Eng. Trans. John Bowden. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Laertius, Dogenes. 1925. *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Greek text with Eng ed., Eng. Trans. R.D. Hicks. The Loeb Classical Library, London: William Heinemann & Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. French trans. by Robert Genaille as *Vie, doctrines et sentences des philosophes illustres* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1965).

Landgrebe, Ludwig. 1984. The Life-world and the Historicity of Human Existence. In *Phenomenology and Marxism*, ed. Bernhard Waldenfels, Jan M. Broekman, and Ana Pažanin, 167–204. Eng. Trans. J. Claude Evans, Jr. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Landgrebe, Ludwig. 1981. The problem of a transcendental science of the a priori of the life-world. In *The phenomenology of Husserl: Six essays*, ed. Donn Welton, 176–200. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Lao, Sze-Kwang. 1991. On understanding Chinese philosophy: An inquiry and a proposal. In *Understanding the Chinese Mind: The Philosophical Roots*, ed. Robert E. Allinson. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lao-Tze. 1989. *Tao Te Ching*. Eng. Trans. D.C. Lau, bilingual ed. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2014. The flesh: From ontological employment to intercultural employment. In *Border-crossing: Phenomenology, Interculturality and Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Kwok-ying Lau and Chung-Chi Yu, 25–44. Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2010. Husserl, Buddhism and the problematic of the crisis of European sciences. In *Identity and Alterity. Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, ed. Kwok-Ying Lau, Chan-Fai Cheung, and Tze-Wan Kwan, 221–233. Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2004. Intersubjectivity and phenomenology of the other: Merleau-Ponty's contribution. In *Space, Time, Culture*, ed. David Carr and Chan-fai Cheung, 135–158. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2007. Jan Patočka: Critical consciousness and non-eurocentric philosopher of the phenomenological movement. *Studia Phaenomenologica* VII: 475–492.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 1998. Para-deconstruction: Preliminary considerations for a phenomenology of interculturality. In *Phenomenology of Interculturality and Life-world, Special Issue of Phänomenologische Forschungen*, ed. E.W. Orth and Chan-fai Cheung, 229–249. Freiburg: Verlag K. Alber.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2011. Patočka's concept of Europe: An intercultural consideration. In *Jan Patočka and the Heritage of Phenomenology. Centenary Papers*, ed. Ivan Chvatik and Erika Abrams, 229–244. Dordrecht: Springer.

Lau, Kwok-ying. 2012. Self-transformation and the Ethical *Telos*: Orientative philosophy in Lao Sze-Kwang, Foucault and Husserl. Japanese translation, in *Journal of Innovative Ethics*, published by Project Innovative Ethics, Graduate School of Humanities, Kobe University 5: 1–34.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1987. Lettre de M. G. G. de Leibniz sur la philosophie chinoise à M. De Rémond. In *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, ed. Christiane Frémont, 77–143. Paris: Éditions de L'Herne. Eng. Trans. as "Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese: Letter on Chinese Philosophy to Nicolas de Rémond", in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1992), 87–141.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 2000. *L'harmonie des langues*. French Trans. and commentaries by Marc Crépon. Paris: Éditions Seuil.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm. 1987. Préface des <*Dernières nouvelles de la Chine*>. In *Discours sur la théologie naturelle des Chinois*, ed. Christiane Frémont, 73–76. Paris: Éditions de L'Herne. Eng. Trans. by Donald F. Lach as "Translation of Leibniz' Preface", in Donald F. Lach, *The Preface to Leibniz' Novissima Sinica. Commentary, Translation, Text* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1957), 68–86.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1973. *Anthropologie structurale, Deux.* Paris: Plon. Eng. trans. by M. Layton as *Structural Anthropology, Vol. II* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1964–1971. *Le cru et le cuit, Mythologiques, Vol. I.* Paris: Plon. Eng. trans. by John and Doreen Weightman as *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1971. *L'homme nu, Mythologiques, Vol. IV.* Paris: Plon. Eng. Trans. by John and Doreen Weightman as *The Naked Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. *Du miel aux cendres, Mythologiques, Vol. II.* Paris: Plon. Eng. Trans. by John and Doreen Weightman as *From Honey to Ashes* (London: J. Cape, 1973).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1962. *La pensée sauvage.* Paris: Plon. Eng. trans. as *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté,* 1st ed.1949, 2nd ed. Paris: Mouton & Co. & Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1967. Eng. trans. by James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer and Rodney Needham as *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, revised ed. 1969).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1968. *L'origine des manières de table, Mythologiques, Vol. III.* Paris: Plon. Eng. trans. by John and Doreen Weightman as *The Origin of Table Manner*s (London: J. Cape, 1978).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1971. De quelques rencontres. *L'Arc*, no. 46: 43–47.

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1987. De l'intersubjectivité. Notes sur Merleau-Ponty. In *Hors sujet.* Paris: Livre de Poche/Fata Morgana. Eng. Trans. as "Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, eds. G. Johnson & M. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern Univeristy Press, 1990).

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1987. De la sensibilité. In *Hors sujet.* Paris: Livre de Poche/Fata Morgana. Eng. Trans. as "Sensibility", in *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, eds. G. Johnson & M. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern Univeristy Press, 1990).

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1986. Détermination philosophique de l'idée de culture. In *Philosophie et Culture. Actes du XVIIe Congrès Mondial de Philosophie, Montréal 1983.* Montréal: Éditions du Beffroi & Éditions Montmorency.

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1998. *Éthique comme philosophie première.* Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages. Eng. trans. as "Ethics as First Philosophy", in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: B. Blackwell, 1989), pp. 75–87.

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 1961. *Totalité et infini: Essai sur l'extériorité.* La Haye: M. Nijhoff. Eng. Trans. by Alphonso Lingis as *Totality and Infinity*, (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1979).

Löwith, Karl. 1973. The nature of man and the world of nature. For Heidegger's 80th Birthday. In *Martin Heidegger in Europe and America*, ed. Edward G. Ballard and Charles E. Scott. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.

Madison, Gary B. 1999. The ethics and politics of the flesh. In *The Ethics of Postmodernity: Current Trends in Continental Thought*, ed. Gary B. Madison and Marty Fairbairn, 174–190. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Maldiney, Henry. 1988. Chair et verbe dans la philosophie de M. Merleau-Ponty. In *Maurice Merleau-Ponty, le psychique et le corporel*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Paris: Aubier. "Flesh and Verb in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty", in *Chiasms, Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh*, ed. Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

Malebranche, Nicolas. 1958. *Entretien d'un philosophe chrétien et d'un philosophe chinois sur l'existence et la nature de Dieu, Oeuvres Complètes, Tome XV*, ed. André Robinet. Paris: Librairie J. Vrin.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1968. The affirmative character of culture, first published 1937. Now in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory,* 88–133. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *Soviet Marxism: A critical Analysis*. Boston: Beacon.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1968. The struggle against liberalism in the totalitarian view of the state. First published 1937. Now in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory,* 3–42. Boston: Beacon Press.

"A Martyr, or a Murderer?" *Newsweek*, February 23 (2004): 56.

Marx, Werner. 1971. The Life-world and its Particular Sub-worlds. In *Reason and World: Between Tradition and Another Beginning*. Eng. Trans. T. Yates and R. Guess, 62–76. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff.

May, Reinhard. 1989. *Ex oriente lux: Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluß.* Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden. Eng. trans. by Graham Parkes as *Heidegger's Hidden Sources. East Asian Influences on his Work* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996).

Mencius. 2003. *Mencius*, *A Bilingual Edition*, Eng. Trans. D.C. Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, revised edition.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1979. *Éloge de la philosophie et autres essais.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by John Wild, James Edie and John O'Neill as *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2000. Un inédit de Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In *Parcours deux, 1951–1961,* 36–48. Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier. Eng. trans. by Arleen B. Dallery as "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work", in *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, ed. James E. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 3–11.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1995. *La Nature. Notes, Cours du Collège de Franc*e, ed. and annotated by Dominique Séglard. Paris: Éditions du Seuil. Eng. trans. by Robert Vallier as *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1945. *Phénoménologie de la perception.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Colin Smith as *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962). New Eng. Trans. by Donald A. Landes as *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968. *Résumés de cours, Collège de France 1952–1960.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by J. O'Neill as *Themes from the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952–1960* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1960. *Signes.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by R.C. McCleary as *Sign*s (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *La structure du comportement,* 1st ed. 1942, 2nd ed. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949.. Eng. trans. by Alden L. Fischer as *The Structure of Behavior* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964. *Le visible et l'invisible.* Paris: Gallimard. Eng. trans. by Alphonso Lingis as *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968. *L'Union de l'âme et du corps chez Malebranche, Biran et Bergson, Notes prises au cours de Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jean Deprun. Paris: J. Vrin. Eng. Trans. By Paul B. Milan as *The Incarnate Subject: Malebranche, Biran, and Bergson on the Union of Body and Soul*, ed. Andrew G. Bjelland Jr. and Patrick Burke (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2001).

Mungello, David E. 1999. *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Mungello, David E. 1971. Leibniz's interpretation of neo-confucianism. *Philosophy East and West* 21: 3–22.

Mungello, David E. 1988. The seventeenth-century Jesuit translation project of the confucian four books. In *East meets West: The Jesuits in China, 1582–1773*, ed. Charles E. Ronan and Bonnie B.C. Oh, 252–273. Chicago: Loyola University Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2001. *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams. Eng. Trans. Josefine Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orth, E.W. 1992. Unity and plurality of cultures in the perspectives of Edmund Husserl and Ernst Cassirer. In *Phenomenology and Indian philosophy*, ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree, and Jitendranath Mohanty. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Parkes, Graham (ed.). 1987. *Heidegger and Asian Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Parkes, Graham (ed.). 1991. *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Patočka, Jan. 2011. *Aristote, ses devanciers, ses successeurs*. French Trans. Erika Abrams Paris: J. Vrin.

Patočka, Jan. 1981. *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*, French Trans. Erika Abrams, Preface by Paul Ricoeur. Paris: Editions Verdier. Eng. trans. by Erazim Kohák as *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1996).

Patočka, Jan. 2007. *L'Europe après l'Europe*. French Trans. Erika Abrams, etc. Paris: Verdier.

Patočka, Jan. 1990. *Liberté et sacrifice: Ecrits politiques*. Ed. and French Trans. Erika Abrams. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon.

Patočka, Jan. 1985. La conception de la crise spirituelle de l'humanité européenne chez Masaryk et chez Husserl. French Trans. E. Abrams In Jan Patočka, *La crise du sens,* t. 1: *Comte, Masaryk, Husserl*, ed. E. Abrams (Bruxelles: OUSIA).

Patočka, Jan. 1988. *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, French Trans. Erika Abrams. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Patočka, Jan. 1989. In *Philosophy and selected writings*, ed. Erazim Kohák. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Patočka, Jan. 1983. *Platon et l'Europe*. French. Trans. Erika Abrams. Paris: Editions Verdier. Eng. trans. by Petr Lom as *Plato and Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

Patočka, Jan. 1990. Die Selbstbesinnung Europas. In *Perspektiven der Philosophie* 20 (1994). French Trans. Erika Abrams as Réflexion sur l'Europe. In *Liberté et sacrifice. Écrits politiques*, ed. Erika Abrams, 181–214. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon.

Pinkard, Terry. 2002. *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of German Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pinot, Virgile. *La Chine et la formation de l'esprit philosophique en France (1640–1740)* Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, 1932. Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971.

Pradelle, Dominique. 2012. La doctrine phénoménologique de la raison: rationalités sans faculté rationnelle. In *Husserl. La science des phénomènes*, ed. Grandjean Antoine, Grandjean Antoine, and Perreau Laurent, 243–263. Paris: CNRS Éditions.

Ricci, Matthieu. 1978. *Histoire de l'expédition chrétienne au royaume de la Chine 1582–1610*, French trans. from the Latin by Matthieu Ricci, S.J. and Nicolas Trigault, S.J., ed. Georges Bessière. Bellarmin: Desclée de Brouwer. Eng. trans. from the Latin by Louis J. Gallagher as *China in the Sixteenth Century: the Journals of Matthew Ricci, 1583–1610* (New York: Random House, 1953).

Saint Aubert, Emmanuel de. 2003. Le mystère de la chair. *Studia Phaenomenologica* III(3–4): 73–106.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1980. *L'être et le néant.* Paris: Gallimard, Collection TEL. Eng. trans. by H. E. Barnes as *Being and Nothingness* (London & New York: Routledge Classics, 2003).
Schelling, F.-W. 1994. *Philosophie de la mythologie*. French Trans. Alain Pernet. Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon.
Schuhmann, Karl. 1992. Husserl and Indian thought. In *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy*, ed. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree, and Jitendranath Mohanty, 20–43. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Schuhmann, Karl. 1977. *Husserl-Chronik: Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.
Sedlar, Jean W. 1986. Schopenhauer and India. In *Asia and the West. Encounters and Exchanges from the Age of Explorations: Essays in Honor of Donald F. Lach*, ed. Cyriac K. Pullapilly and Edwin J. Van Kley, 149–172. Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc.
Semedo, Alvarez. 1996. *Histoire universelle du Grande Royaume de la Chine*, French Trans. Jean-Pierre Duteil. Paris: Éditions Kimé.
Sepp, Hans-Rainer. 2003. On the border: Cultural difference in and beyond Jan Patocka's philosophy of history. *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* III: 161–177.
Sinha, Debabrata. 1971. Theory and practice in Indian thought: Husserl's observations. *Philosophy East and West* 21: 255–264.
Tardivel, Emilie. 2011. *La liberté au principe. Essai sur la philosophie de Patočka*. Paris: Vrin.
Tassin, Etienne. 1992. La question du sol: monde naturel et communauté politique. In *Jan Patočka: philosophie, phénoménologie et politique*, ed. Etienne Tassin and Marc Richir, 167–187. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon.
Taylor, Charles. 1994. The politics of recognition. In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, 25–73. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Vattimo, Gianni. 1993. *The Adventure of Difference. Philosophy After Nietzsche and Heidegger*. Eng. Trans. C. Blamires. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Vattimo, Gianni. 1988. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*. Eng. Trans. J.R. Snyder. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Victor, Barbara. 2003. *Army of roses. Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*. London: Robinson Books.
Vissière, Isabelle, and Jean-Louis Vissière (eds.). 1979. *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine par des missionaires jésuites 1702–1776*. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion.
Voltaire. 1990. *Les Essais sur les moeurs*, Tome I & II. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
Voltaire. 1965. *The Philosophy of History*, Eng. Trans. Henry Wood Gandell, Preface by Thomas Kiernan. London: Vision Press.
Voltaire. 1961. Le philosophe ignorant. XLI. De Confucius. In *Mélanges*, ed. Jacques Van Den Heuvel. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.
Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1991. Braudel on capitalism. Or everything upside down. *The Journal of Modern History* 63(2): 354–361.
Weber, Max. 1948. In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. London: Routledge.
Weber, Max. 1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Eng. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
Weber, Max. 1951. *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*. Eng. Trans. Hans H. Gerth. New York: The Free Press.
Wimmer, Franz M. 2007. "Intercultural Polylogues in Philosophy", Statement submitted to the Panel "Intercultural Dialogue", 29th Wittgenstein-Conference of the ALWS, Kirchberg am Wechsel, August 11, 2006. The version consulted is the paper distributed at *the Workshop on Culture, Value and Practice*, organized by the Department of Philosophy, Soochow University, Taipei, June 18–19, 2007.
Wolff, Christian. 1985. *Rede über die praktische Philosophie der Chinesen* (Lateinisch-deutsch), ed. Michael Albrecht. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag. Eng. trans. as "Discourse on the Practical

Philosophy of the Chinese", in Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment. Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1992), 145–186.
Zhuangzi: Basic Writings. 2003. Eng. trans. Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press.
Zhuangzi. 1999. Eng. Trans. Wang Rongpei. Library of Chinese Classics, Chinese-English ed. Hunan: Hunan People's Publishing House & Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Literature in Chinese Language

石介:《徂徠石先生文集》, 陳植鍔點校,北京: 中華書局, 1984。Shi, Jie. 1984. *Culai Shi Xiansheng Wenji* [The collected works of Shi Jie], ed. Chen Zhi'e. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Store.
李天綱: 《中國禮儀之爭:歷史、文獻和意義》, 上海: 上海古籍出版社, 1998。Li, Tiangang. 1998. *Zhongguo Liyi Zhi Zheng: Lishi, Wenxian He Yiyi* [The Chinese Rite Controversy: History, Documents and Meaning]. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Texts Publishing House.
陳鼓應:《老子註釋及評介》, 北京:中華書局, 1984。Chen, Gou-Ying. 1984. *Laozi Zhushi ji Pingjie* [Lao-tzu: Annotations and Commentaries]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Store.
張西平: 《中國與歐洲早期宗教和哲學交流史》, 北京: 東方出版社, 2001。Zhang, Xiping. 2001. *Zhongguo Yu Ouzhou Zaoqi Zongjia He Zhexue Jiaoliushi* [Early History of Religious and Philosophical Exchange Between China and Europe]. Beijing: Dongfang Publishing House.
勞思光: 《文化哲學講演錄》, 劉國英編, 香港: 中文大學出版社, 2007。Lao, Sze-Kwang. 2002. *Wenhua Zhexue Jiangyanlu* [Lectures on Philosophy of Culture]. Edited and annotated by Kwok-ying Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
勞思光:〈王門功夫問題之爭議及儒學精神之特色〉,《新亞學術集刊》, 第3期 (1982): 1–29. Republished in《思辯錄》, 台北: 東大圖書, 1996, 頁55–97 Lao, Sze-Kwang. 1982. The controversy on the problem of Askēsis among the followers of Wang Yangming and the characteristics of confucian spirit. *New Asia Academic Bulletin* 3: 1–29. Republished in *Sibian Lu* [Philosophical Essays], Taipei: Dong-Da Publishing House, 1996, 55–97).
勞思光:《中國之路向新編》, 劉國英編, 香港: 中文大學出版社, 2000。Lao, Sze-Kwang. 2000. *China's Way Out*, new and augmented ed. Edited by Kwok-ying Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
勞思光: 《中國文化路向問題的新檢討》, 台北: 東大圖書, 1993。Lao, Sze-Kwang. 1993. Chinese Culture's Way Ahead. Taipei: Dong-Da Publishing House.
勞思光: <中國哲學研究之檢討及建議>,《虛境與希望 — 論當代哲學與文化》, 劉國英編, 香港: 中文大學出版社, 2003, 頁1–24。Lao, Sze-Kwang. 2003. Review and suggestions on research in Chinese philosophy. In *Illusion and Hope: On Contemporary Philosophy and Culture*, ed. Kwok-ying Lau, 1–24. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
勞思光:《危機世界與新希望世紀——再論當代哲學與文化》, 劉國英編, 香港: 中文大學出版社,2007。Lao, Sze-Kwang. 2007. *A World of Crisis and the New Century of Hope: On Contemporary Philosophy and Culture (II)*, Edited by Kwok-ying Lau. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
勞思光:《新編中國哲學史》(三卷四冊), 台北:三民書局, 1984–1986。(Lao, Sze-Kwang. 1984–1986. *History of Chinese Philosophy,* New Edition, 3 vol. Taipei: San Min Book Store.
劉笑敢:《老子》, 台北:東大圖書, 1997。Liu, Xiaogan. 1997. *Laozi*. Taipei: Dong-Da Publishing House.

Author Index

A
Adorno, T., 72
Althusser, L., 159
Aristotle, 19, 25, 36, 63, 67, 70, 72, 79, 95, 128, 136

B
Barbaras, R., 67, 79, 176–178, 180, 182, 184
Buddha, G., 53, 57–64, 215

C
Cairns, D., 16, 60, 150
Chan, W.-T., 40, 99
Comte, A., 68, 87
Confucius, 98, 99, 114, 117, 121–123, 133, 134, 215

D
Deleuze, G., 196, 200–206, 210–215
Derrida, J., 6, 21, 27, 28, 42, 105, 126, 159, 196, 200–206, 215
Descartes, R., 41, 105, 127, 128, 136, 147, 150, 159, 179, 207

E
Epictetus, 143

F
Fichte, J.G., 132
Fink, E., 22, 148, 175
Foucault, M., 4, 6, 12, 27, 30, 63, 72, 74, 76, 125–151, 159, 177, 195
Frankfurt School, 72–74
Freud, S., 165
Fu Hsi, 116

G
Galileo, G., 25, 105, 154, 184
Goethe, J. W. von, 184
Graham, A. C., 36
Guattari, F., 200, 210–212, 215
Guo Xiang, 69

H
Hadot, P., 5, 127, 146, 151, 195
Hegel, G. W. F., 2, 9, 12, 15, 23, 24, 36, 38, 54–56, 59, 76, 82, 105, 170
Heidegger, M., 7, 22, 26, 27, 31, 35, 37–41, 46, 48, 50, 63, 67, 68, 76, 78, 94, 95, 105, 174, 190, 208
Held, K., 5, 63
Henry, M., 175, 196, 201, 206–210, 221
Heraclitus, 49, 131
Herder, J. G., 117
Hitler, A., 37
Hobbes, T., 158
Horkheimer, M., 72
Hu Shih, 26
Hume, D., 136
Husserl, E., 154

J
Jaspers, K., 215

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3

K
Kant, I., 1, 6, 10–12, 56, 64, 74, 76, 90, 103–124, 126, 136, 140, 157, 175
Küng, H., 37, 111
Kungfuzi, 215

L
Lao Sze-Kwang, 3, 4, 12, 30, 70, 125–151, 195
Laozi (Lao-Tzu), 9, 11, 19, 35–52, 69, 81, 82, 98, 99, 105, 195, 215
Leibniz, G. W., 103, 114, 118–121, 123, 124, 213
Lévinas, E., 6, 42, 126, 196, 197, 199, 200, 216
Lévi-Strauss, C., 11, 13, 21, 27, 28, 31–32, 153–171, 189, 194
Lucilius, 143, 144
Luther, M., 58

M
Malebranche, N., 114, 117–119, 121, 123, 204
Marcus Aurelius, 143, 144
Marcuse, H., 72
Martini, M., 116
Marx, K., 105, 212
May, R., 37–39
Mencius, 10–12, 85–102, 114, 121, 128–135, 195
Merleau-Ponty, M., 153
Mohists, 36

N
Neuman, K.E., 10, 11, 53, 57, 58, 60, 105
Newton, I., 105
Nietzsche, F., 37, 50, 77, 103, 108–113, 212

P
Parkes, G., 37
Parmenides, 42, 46, 136
Patočka, J., 10–12, 14, 67–83, 85–102, 195
Piaget, J., 223
Plato, 48, 63, 67, 70, 85, 86, 93, 95, 100, 101, 128, 146, 227
Protagoras, 48

R
Ricci, M., 114
Ricoeur, P., 42, 71, 86
Rorty, R., 6, 126

S
Sade, Marquis de, 37
Sartre, J.-P., 46, 153, 163, 209, 218, 220
Scheler, M., 41
Schelling, F. W. J., 23, 24
Schopenhauer, A., 60, 109, 110
Schuhmann, K., 24–25, 56, 60
Seneca, 144
Shakespeare, W., 189
Sima Qian (Sze-ma Ch'ien), 114
Socrates, 5, 53, 59–64, 69, 72, 95, 146, 215
Sotion, 25
Stoics, 141, 143, 147
Strauss, Victor von, 37

T
Talyor, C., 108

V
Vattimo, G., 50
Voltaire, 103, 122–124, 189
Vossius, I., 116

W
Wang Pi, 40, 42, 46, 69
Wang Yangming, 135
Weber, M., 77, 103, 107, 108–113, 154
Wilhelm, R., 37
Wimmer, F.M., 13, 14
Wolff, C., 103, 119, 121–124

Z
Zhu Xi, 118, 119, 121
Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu), 37, 69, 98, 99, 128–135, 195, 209

Subject Index

A
Absence, 23, 33, 61, 62, 183, 220–224
Absolute Spirit, 15
Abyssal, 68, 81
Activities, 3, 8, 16, 44, 49, 58, 65, 80, 109, 128, 136, 137, 139
Activity, 2, 4, 6, 13, 15, 19, 24, 26, 32, 54, 59, 65, 88, 127–128, 132, 139–142, 148, 155, 156, 158, 160, 164, 195, 198, 210, 215–216, 220
Aesthetics, 112, 133, 142, 143, 146, 184
Aesthetics of Existence, 141–143
Affective, 184, 198
Affectivity, 181, 197–199, 202, 207, 209, 218, 226
Agnostic, 121, 124
Alienated, 73, 74
Alter ego, 22
Alterity, 10, 53, 105, 197–200, 210, 215, 226
Ambiguity, 45, 47, 89, 173, 176–178, 186, 191, 206
America, 22, 23, 46, 64, 68
Analogical apprehension, 16
Analogical association, 16
Ancient China, 36, 98, 115, 212–215
Ancient Chinese thought, 23
Ancient Greece, 56, 93, 101, 215
Ancient Western philosophy, 5, 127, 144–146
Anonymity, 220
Anthropocentric, 44, 48
Anthropomorphism, 178, 181
Anti-Eurocentrism, 124
Antique mode of philosophical praxis, 128
Anti-rationalism, 35–37, 52
Aphrodisia, 141
Appearance, 46, 58, 79, 81, 82, 89, 93, 109, 115, 147, 204, 207, 214, 217, 222, 226
Apprenticeship, 174
Appresentation, 16
Appropriation, 21, 29–31, 35, 39, 40, 70
Arabic, 32, 107, 162
Archaeology, 135–138, 157, 159, 227
Arché, 51
Ascetic exercises, 145
Ascetics, 141, 143
Askēsis, 5, 6, 135, 139–145, 150
Assimilation, 15, 46, 52, 90, 140, 198, 200, 212
A-subjectivism, 48
Atheism, 109, 110, 112, 118, 121, 122
Atheist religion, 61
Authenticity, 57, 71
Autonomous cognition, 60
Autonomous morality, 141–144
Axiological, 65, 113, 155, 198

B
Babylonia, 24, 54, 104
Back to the things themselves, 3, 161
Backward questioning, 86, 95
Being, 22, 23, 33–34, 37–40, 42–46, 48, 51, 52, 68, 73, 76, 78, 79, 82, 88, 94, 120, 123, 153, 160–195, 207, 208, 216, 218, 222, 225, 228
Being-for-Others, 218, 227
Being in the world, 7, 88, 198, 203, 204, 207, 208, 217, 218, 221
Benevolence, 86, 98–100
Biblical myth, 95
Binary opposition, 133, 159, 160

K.-Y. Lau, *Phenomenology and Intercultural Understanding*,
Contributions To Phenomenology 87, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44764-3

Bliss, 53, 60–62, 64
Bodily existence, 16
Body, 3, 33, 73, 88, 119, 131, 156, 178, 197
Body-subject, 7, 204, 208, 219
Book of Genesis, 115, 194
Bottom up, 62, 225, 226
Bourgeois liberalism, 68, 73, 74
Brute being, 153, 160–195
Brute mind, 52
Brute spirit, 165
Buddhism, 10, 11, 37, 38, 53–66, 105, 122, 215
Buddhist philosophy, 11, 64, 195
Buddhist Scriptures, 53, 56–60, 62

C
Care for the soul, 12, 85–102
Care for truth, 71
Care of the self, 13, 143
Care of the soul, 10, 69, 72
Carnal existence, 17, 18, 178, 180
Carnal subject, 16, 17, 32, 33, 186, 187, 198, 199, 218, 222–224
Cartesian way, 88
Catastrophe, 97
Categorical imperative, 61, 197
Causality, 72, 131, 218
Certainty, 173
Ch'an Buddhism, 37
Chiasm, 34, 182, 186, 191, 194
Chiasms, 221, 222
China, 2–4, 8, 13, 19, 24, 36, 41, 51, 54–56, 69, 91, 98, 104, 108, 113–118, 120–126, 168, 189, 193, 212–215, 227
Chinese Chronology Controversy, 11, 12, 113–117, 194
Chinese civilization, 24
Chinese culture, 3, 10–12, 24, 36, 56, 70, 99, 103–124, 135, 194
Chinese history, 12, 114–116, 124
Chinese Philosophy, 2, 4–6, 9–11, 23, 24, 26, 35–52, 54–57, 59, 64, 69–70, 82, 87, 99, 104, 105, 117–121, 125, 127–131, 133–135, 153, 169, 170, 193, 195, 213
Chinese Rite Controversy, 11, 12, 114
Chorismos, 70, 72
Christian, 17, 58, 60, 77, 103, 107, 109, 115, 118, 120–122, 124, 194, 201, 204, 207, 209, 210, 214
Christianity, 117, 123, 208, 209
Chronological history, 163
Closed element, 3–4
Closed-nature, 1, 3–5, 7–9
Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, 19
Cogito, 217, 220
Cognition, 3, 31, 53, 60, 62, 63, 65, 74, 80, 100, 109, 110, 127, 154, 216
Cognitive, 5, 6, 62, 65, 109, 125–129, 132, 133, 141, 145, 146, 149, 154, 155
Coiling over, 182, 183, 185, 187, 188, 190, 194, 200
Coincidence, 138, 181, 194, 201, 206, 221, 226
Collectivism, 73
Commiseration, 99, 134
Communion, 139, 203, 204
Concealment, 97
Conflict of civilizations, 103
Confucianism, 86, 108, 117, 118, 122, 124, 135, 195, 213, 215
Connivance, 171, 180
Consciousness, 3, 7, 12, 14, 23, 33, 41, 57, 63, 67–83, 88, 89, 93, 109, 114, 116, 141, 146, 147, 153, 154–159, 176–178, 181, 187, 195, 202, 207, 216–219, 221, 222
Constellation, 2, 19, 35, 47, 78, 126, 216
Contemplation, 71
Copernican Revolution, 109
Corruption, 43, 80, 155
Creation, 24, 52, 54, 93, 104, 113, 115, 120, 121, 125, 129, 132, 133, 148, 165, 210, 213, 226
Crisis, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 22, 24–25, 36, 41, 52–68, 74, 78, 86, 87–93, 104, 105, 125, 127, 147–149, 154, 169, 184, 195
Critical consciousness, 12, 67–83
Critical ontology of ourselves, 74, 76
Critical philosophy, 4, 51, 72, 103, 109–111, 113
Critical potential, 35, 51, 70, 77
Critical spirit, 71
Critical theory, 72, 195
Criticism, 13, 46, 51, 72, 110, 111, 166, 168, 174–176, 178, 182, 202, 206, 209, 224, 227, 229
Critique, 1, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 29, 50, 51, 71–76, 92, 96, 110, 126, 174, 193, 201
Critique of contention, 51
Critique of domination, 50, 51, 72, 73
Critique of Eurocentrism, 13, 96, 193
Critique of modernity, 51
Critique of Sino-centrism, 13
Critique of vanity, 51

Critique of violence, 51
Cross-cultural, 2, 28, 52, 54, 60
Cultivation, 15–19, 44, 100, 104, 118, 121, 123, 142–145, 190–191, 225
Cultural, 149
Cultural border, 14, 214, 228
Cultural chauvinism, 191
Cultural China, 3, 125, 227
Cultural constellation, 2, 19
Cultural difference, 13, 14
Cultural flesh, 1–19, 178, 189–191, 193–229
Cultural horizon, 14, 190, 200
Cultural hybridity, 32, 210
Cultural identity, 15, 31, 34, 226
Cultural imperialism, 191
Cultural renewal, 52, 53, 58, 66, 149, 164
Cultural sensibility, 19, 189–191, 194, 200, 216, 225, 227
Cultural transformation, 148
Culture, 1, 23, 36, 54, 68, 87, 103, 126, 153, 173, 194
Curiosity, 60
Czech, 10, 12, 67, 85, 87

D
Dao, 11, 35, 38–39, 42–46, 48–52, 81–82, 98, 213
Daodejing, 35, 39, 41, 42, 45, 48, 51, 69, 81
Daoism, 35, 37–40, 42, 48, 82, 122, 135, 195, 213, 215
Daoist, 35–40, 48, 50, 51, 68, 81, 82, 98, 99, 130, 135, 195, 209
Daoist philosophy, 35–37, 40, 68, 81, 82, 130
Dasein, 7, 42, 76
Death of man, 159
Deconstruction, 27–32, 159, 202, 203
Dehiscence, 183, 185
Dehumanized, 73, 74, 78
Demystification, 8
Den Sachen Selbst, 3
Deployment, 2, 35, 46, 48–49, 82, 136, 214
Depth, 24, 54, 70, 71, 73, 90, 104, 180, 183, 186, 219, 222–224, 228
Description, 3, 7, 11, 17, 18, 34, 47, 48, 50, 58, 59, 90, 94, 95, 97, 99, 107, 109, 116, 123, 133, 137, 160–162, 171, 182–184, 190, 197, 202, 205, 206, 210, 211, 218, 219, 221
Determining judgment, 4, 7, 126, 214
Deterritorialization, 210, 211
Diachronic, 159
Diacritical, 160, 218, 221, 226, 227
Dialectic, 35, 46–49, 72, 105, 139, 229
Différance, 28, 159, 205
Difference, 4, 13, 14, 24, 28, 33, 42, 48, 51, 54, 60, 61, 70, 92, 96, 104, 116, 140, 159, 165, 171, 178, 179, 181, 182, 189, 191, 194, 196, 198, 200, 205, 210, 215, 226, 227
Differential, 218, 226
Disastrous, 73, 106
Disclosure, 48, 68, 78, 79, 95, 218
Discourse, 26, 28, 36, 57, 109, 119, 121, 138, 141
Disenchanted world-view, 10–12, 56, 103–124
Disenchantment of world, 103, 107–108, 110, 112–114, 116, 124, 154
Dissident European, 85
Dissident phenomenologist, 85
Distance, 58, 70, 151, 153, 166, 181, 183, 194, 199, 222–224
Distinction, 4, 5, 11, 13, 17, 28, 37, 44, 47, 63, 72, 95, 99, 100, 109, 121, 127, 128, 178–180, 190, 191, 198, 201, 209, 214, 217–219
Distress, 78, 93, 94, 99
Divine, 99, 109
Dogmatic metaphysics, 110
Dogmatism, 224
Domination, 1, 8, 9, 23–24, 50, 51, 65, 72, 73, 76, 85, 86, 92, 107, 108, 111, 136, 138, 154, 170, 183, 204
Double epoché, 10, 21, 23, 24, 193
Double exclusion, 24–26
Duty, 2, 49, 60, 65, 76, 102
Dynamis, 68, 70

E
Earth, 13, 33, 39, 43–45, 48, 49, 68, 80–82, 87, 116, 118, 120, 156, 184, 215
Eastern, 2, 9, 38, 55, 56, 59–64, 81, 117, 214
Eastern culture, 126
Eastern philosophy, 9, 11, 55, 56, 64, 81
Écart, 167, 181, 183, 194, 205, 218–222, 226
Egyptian, 25, 41, 162
Eidetic reduction, 161
Eidetic variation, 7
Einfühlung, 16
Empathy, 16
Emperor Kang-Xi, 123
Empiricism, 28
Emptiness, 23, 38

Encroachment, 186–188, 191, 194, 220, 223, 224, 226, 228
Endogamy, 158, 162
Enlightenment, 22, 72, 74, 76, 77, 103, 112, 113, 117, 119–122, 124, 132, 133, 135
Entelechy, 92
Epistemological, 4, 74, 100, 113, 138, 163, 195, 224
Epoché, 3, 5, 7, 10, 21, 23, 24, 29, 30, 62, 63, 127, 146–150, 160, 161, 170, 189, 193, 195
Error, 28, 96, 110, 167, 189, 190
Eschatology, 112, 113, 210
Essence, 5, 7, 33, 63, 71, 89, 91, 97, 99, 102, 119, 127, 128, 179, 195, 211, 212, 228
Eternal life, 95–97, 99
Ethical practical, 6, 53, 62, 125
Ethical-practical concern, 126
Ethical telos, 12, 13, 30, 53, 62, 125–151, 195
Ethical turn, 126, 127, 135–146, 195
Ethical work, 140, 141
Ethico-religious, 57, 59, 62
Ethics, 6, 12, 19, 36, 53, 58, 60, 62–63, 71, 107, 111, 112, 125–127, 138–146, 149, 151, 173, 195–196, 199, 200, 216, 227
Ethnocentrism, 13, 15, 25, 29, 32, 167, 170, 193
Ethos, 75
Etymological approach, 128
Euclidean, 223
Eurocentric, 1, 3, 9, 12, 21, 40–42, 54–56, 64, 67–68, 77, 82, 85–87, 91, 96, 103–105, 170, 201, 210, 212–215
Eurocentrism, 215
Euro-logocentrism, 26–29
Europe, 67, 82
European, 2, 22, 36, 54, 67, 103, 154, 189, 194
European culture, 8, 12, 24, 28, 30, 57, 59, 65, 70, 87, 93, 106, 136, 137, 154, 164, 194, 223
European humanity, 85, 125
Europeanization, 55, 91, 92, 97, 105, 169
Event, 1, 11, 12, 47, 87, 98, 109, 116, 122, 130, 133, 163, 164, 182, 196, 197, 207, 215, 225, 228
Evident, 1, 3, 6, 18, 48, 76, 80, 91, 94, 107, 111, 121, 122, 155, 182, 184, 204, 208
Exchange, 22–24, 26, 29, 32, 60, 80, 114, 144, 158, 160, 188, 201, 204, 224–226
Exclusion, 4, 14, 24–26, 214
Exclusiveness, 7, 9
Exegesis, 69, 70, 163
Exercise, 146
Existence, 5–7, 9, 16–18, 23, 25, 31, 32, 36, 44, 45, 56, 63, 65, 68–71, 76, 80–82, 86, 87, 90, 92–94, 96, 97, 107, 108, 110, 112, 118, 123, 139, 140, 142, 143, 145, 149, 155, 164, 167, 169, 170, 175–178, 180, 188, 191, 194, 214–216, 220, 225–227
Existential phenomenologist, 153, 160
Existential transformation, 63, 147
Exogamy, 158, 162
Experience, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 40, 43, 44, 50, 57, 61, 70, 72, 77, 78, 81, 86, 88–90, 95, 109, 110, 117, 136, 137, 139, 141, 142, 145, 154, 161, 164, 168, 171, 174, 178, 184, 187–190, 194, 196, 197, 200, 201, 205, 211, 216–220, 222–225, 227, 228
Explanatory power, 4, 129
Expression, 6, 13, 14, 18, 23, 29, 38–40, 54, 56, 61, 76, 78, 105, 107, 109, 129, 157, 159, 173, 177, 183, 185, 187, 195, 197, 198, 201, 204, 206, 215, 225, 228
Exteriority, 28, 89, 178, 185

F

Fanaticism, 110–112, 194
Far-Eastern, 117
Fifth Cartesian Meditation, 16
First person experience, 16
First philosophy, 64, 126, 136, 196
Flesh, 1–19, 163, 176, 196–225
Flesh of the world, 177, 185, 186, 188, 190, 198, 201, 209, 222, 224
For-itself, 220, 227
Foundation, 32–34, 36, 68, 76, 80, 92, 100, 109, 110, 119, 136, 150, 163, 165, 171, 175, 198, 207, 209
Four beginnings, 99, 134
Four-fold human faculties, 11
Freedom, 7, 60–62, 64, 69–73, 96, 106, 112, 130–133, 138, 146
Freedom from prejudice, 61, 62
Freedom from presupposition, 62
Freedom of thinking, 69
French Enlightenment, 122
French philosopher, 159, 203, 213
French Revolution, 18
Functional approach, 128
Functionaries of humankind, 127, 149, 151, 195
Fundamental ontology, 46
Fusion of horizons, 14, 15
Futuristic, 76

G
Gelassenheit, 50
Genealogy, 116, 135–138
Generation, 40, 41, 43, 49, 69, 80, 155, 159, 162, 176
Genesis-phthora, 80
Genetic phenomenology, 153, 164, 216
Genuine philosophy, 3–5, 9, 21, 25, 30, 36, 55, 126, 215
Geophilosophy, 210–215
German, 18
German Idealism, 23, 112, 198
German philosopher, 18, 117
Gestalt, 218, 222
Gilgamesh, 95
Givenness, 7, 8, 90, 139, 166
Globalization, 1, 106, 178
Grafting, 18, 19, 189, 190, 194, 225, 229
Greek, 4–5, 23–26, 30, 32, 41, 42, 54–56, 61–63, 68, 86, 93–100, 104, 105, 115, 120, 125, 127, 128, 131, 141, 142, 144, 150, 155, 169, 195, 208, 211, 212, 215, 224
Greek and Roman, 5, 127, 195
Greek-European culture, 170

H
Haptocentrism, 202
Heaven, 13, 39, 43–45, 48, 49, 81–82, 106, 107, 120
Heavenly existence, 107
Hegemony, 1, 10, 92, 93, 111, 125–128
Hellenistic-Roman, 141, 143, 144, 150, 151
Heritage, 1, 3, 7, 10, 26, 30, 72, 85, 93, 97, 101, 106, 174
Hermeneutic turn, 22
Hermeneutics of the Subject, 6, 127, 144, 149
Heroism, 50
Heterogeneous, 77, 179, 185, 186, 226–228
Hindu, 213
Historical consciousness, 7
Historical sedimentation, 7
Historical world, 34, 45, 91, 188, 223, 224, 228
History, 1, 23, 41, 54, 68, 86, 103, 127, 154–159, 174, 194
History of philosophy, 2, 23, 36, 41, 55, 56, 82
History of Sexuality, 6, 127, 139, 140, 143, 144
History of the present, 72, 74, 76
Holiness, 58, 59
Holy Scriptures, 57
Homogeneous, 180, 185, 188, 226, 228
Hope, 3, 24, 53, 58, 65, 73, 75–79, 82, 86, 87, 92, 103, 111, 118, 121, 124, 129, 164, 191, 211
Horizon, 1, 3, 5, 11, 14–19, 57, 58, 89, 90, 174, 190, 200, 221, 222, 228
Hua, 130, 183, 184
Human existence, 16, 65, 68, 70, 71, 76, 80–82, 86, 92–94, 96, 97, 139, 149
Humanity, 12, 13, 24, 32, 54, 55, 62, 64, 65, 68, 70, 76–78, 83, 85–99, 102, 108, 134, 148, 154, 158, 195, 204, 205
Humankind, 1, 5, 25, 55, 62, 63, 75, 110, 112, 127, 146–149, 154, 156, 162, 163, 195, 207, 212
Human sciences, 10, 137–138, 159
Human subject, 15, 48, 82, 127, 136, 138, 154, 177
Human suffering, 73
Hupomnēmata, 144
Hybridity, 31–32, 189–191, 210, 228
Hyperdialectic, 35, 47, 48

I
I-Ching, 118
Idealism, 23, 112, 181, 198
Ideality of meaning, 7
Idealization, 154, 156, 223
Ideas II (Ideen II), 15, 43, 51, 179, 182, 183, 197, 202, 203, 219
Ignorance, 95, 96, 170, 211, 213, 221
Imagination, 16, 23, 56, 60, 151, 164, 167, 171, 184, 222
Immanence, 45, 89, 200, 201, 210–217, 226, 228
Imperception, 221, 222, 228
Inanimate, 184, 208, 218
Incarnate being, 177, 207
Incarnate subject, 197, 204, 217
Incarnate thought, 198
Incarnation, 26, 71, 96, 117, 122, 123, 177, 181, 184, 196, 197, 201, 207–210, 214, 217, 218
Inchoative Nature, 11, 35, 42–46, 80, 81
Independence, 69, 93, 174
Indeterminations, 222
India, 2, 3, 8, 24, 41, 54–56, 60, 91, 104, 126, 162, 212–215
Individuality, 56, 73, 139, 226
Industrial civilization, 77, 78
Infringement, 220, 223
Inhabitation, 217

Injustice, 15, 73, 96, 97, 102
Institution, 10, 13, 51, 69, 85, 87, 137, 138, 140, 163, 164, 185, 207, 216, 219
Instrumentality, 104
Instrumental rationality, 65, 73, 86
Intellectualism, 218
Intelligibility, 17, 18, 194, 208, 228
Intelligible, 17, 82, 162, 164, 167, 176, 191, 198, 208, 225
Intentional, 3, 7, 24, 41, 54, 58, 73, 88, 89, 104, 136, 161, 164, 169, 208
Intentionality, 90, 201, 210, 221
Intercorporeality, 46, 187
Intercultural, 1–19, 85–102
Intercultural communication, 10, 15, 21, 31, 111, 119, 124, 196, 199, 200, 225, 227, 229
Intercultural criticism, 13, 224
Intercultural critique, 14
Interculturality, 21–34, 41, 56, 103–124, 153–171, 173–191, 193, 194, 196, 199–201, 210, 215–225, 227–229
Intercultural polylogue, 13, 14
Intercultural understanding, 1–19, 21, 26, 31, 34, 56, 85, 92, 98, 103–124, 153, 170, 171, 190–191, 193–196, 199, 201, 210, 215–225, 227–229
Interdependence, 34, 186–188
Interest, 4–6, 36, 38, 41, 53, 59–65, 74, 76, 90, 101, 111, 119, 125–128, 138, 141, 145, 147–149, 175
Interiority, 73, 178, 185
Internal time consciousness, 7
Interpenetration, 34, 180, 182, 186–188, 191, 194
Interpretation, 7, 13, 38, 40–42, 48, 74, 79–82, 93, 118, 166, 188, 203, 204, 206
Intersubjective world, 88, 188
Intersubjectivity, 16, 19, 32, 88, 161, 188, 194, 197, 199
Intertwinement, 194, 200, 201, 223, 224, 226, 228
Intertwining, 34, 163, 180, 182, 186–188, 191, 208
Interweaving, 223
Inter-world, 10, 32–34, 216, 220, 223, 224, 228
Interwoven, 7, 220, 223, 224
Intropathie, 16
Intuitionism, 202
Invisible, 33, 195, 198, 208, 221–224, 229
Ipseity, 182, 185, 194, 202, 219, 226
Iranian, 162
Islamic, 212, 213

J
Japan, 2, 11, 149
Jesuit Missionaries, 113, 122, 213
Jewish, 19, 212, 213
Jing, 2
Junction, 157, 216, 223, 228
Justice, 9, 11, 35–52, 82, 86, 94–102, 105, 107, 108, 119, 120, 123, 204

K
Kingdom of ends, 112
Kinship, 7, 157, 158, 162
Kinship relation, 158
Know thyself, 5, 12, 53, 62, 144, 145

L
Lack, 14, 24, 46, 73, 78, 99
Language, 10, 16–18, 23, 26, 39, 43, 44, 58, 60, 107, 113, 115, 117, 118, 129, 130, 132, 154, 156, 177, 186, 189, 190, 193, 197, 198, 210, 214, 215, 218, 228
Lateral transcendence, 214
Lateral universal, 11, 13, 153, 167–170, 227
Legitimacy of Chinese Philosophy, 4, 125, 128
Letting-to-be, 50
Li, 118–120
Liberation, 53, 60–65, 195, 211
Life, 5, 21, 41, 53, 69, 87, 104, 129, 153, 176, 195, 210, 218
Living-body, 6, 88, 180, 227
Localized sensation, 17
Logicism, 224
Logos, 36, 42, 98, 134, 139, 162, 208, 228
Look, 12, 57, 66, 109, 128, 143, 145, 160, 168, 169, 180, 194, 208, 218, 224

M
Madman, 108
Madness, 136, 210
Marxism, 68, 72, 90
Material, 11, 45, 73, 80, 94, 117, 124, 155, 160, 183, 207
Materialism, 110, 184, 218
Materiality, 178–182, 184, 191
Mathematization of Nature, 154, 184
Meaning, 5, 7, 8, 17, 42, 44, 48, 55, 56, 59, 62, 68, 71, 76–78, 86–88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 99, 105, 130, 137, 140, 143, 155, 160, 161, 164, 174, 176, 177, 184, 185, 187, 197, 198, 204, 207, 209, 214, 216, 217, 219, 222, 226, 229

Meaningfulness, 55, 77
Meaning of history, 76–78
Measure, 25, 39, 48, 186
Mechanical view of the universe, 154
Mechanism, 45, 168
Meditation, 76, 79, 148, 187
Meditative practice, 61, 62
Memorization, 140, 144
Metaphysical dualism, 177–186, 191
Metaphysics, 17, 19, 27, 51, 81, 98, 100, 110, 112, 120, 123, 128, 136, 139, 173, 177–186, 191, 213
Methodological, 3, 4, 7, 30, 127, 147, 157, 159–161, 170, 195
Ming Dynasty, 113
Missionaries, 117
Moderation, 73, 140, 142
Modern civilization, 67, 73
Modernity, 13, 72, 78, 142, 166, 194
Monads, 173
Monism, 33, 178, 180, 191, 209
Mood, 18, 190
Moral conscience, 69
Moral judgment, 135
Moral-practical, 4
Moral subject, 127, 135, 139–141, 143, 144
Mortal, 93, 133, 199, 208
Mortality, 95–98
Movement, 1, 7, 12, 19, 24, 35, 41, 46–48, 52, 54, 55, 64, 67–83, 85, 96, 103, 107, 111, 130, 140, 148, 154, 174, 181–183, 185, 197, 203, 205, 210, 211, 216, 220, 223, 226
Multiculturalism, 36
Multiplicity, 15, 209, 216
Mundane, 53, 147
Mundane life-interest, 62, 63, 101
Mundane world, 62, 107, 207
Musical, 15, 220, 226
Myriad things, 43, 44, 49, 81, 82, 120
Myth, 25, 27, 28, 33, 36, 41, 61, 86, 95–97, 115, 116, 153, 160, 162, 163, 165–167, 169
Mythological framework, 86, 93–98
Mythological thinking, 23
Myths, 190

N
Naïve naturalistic realism, 8
National-Socialist, 68
Natural, 4, 8, 26, 40, 43, 44, 54, 61, 62, 68, 70, 79–82, 88, 91, 92, 101, 113, 118–121, 130, 131, 136, 147–149, 154, 155, 187, 218, 229
Natural causality, 131
Naturalism, 44, 46, 160
Natural theology, 118–121
Natural thought, 61
Nature, 153
Nature-Culture Distinction, 11, 13, 28, 153–171, 190
Neo-Kantian, 63, 72, 198
Neo-pragmatic turn, 6, 126
New humanity, 62, 64, 148
Non-anthropocentric, 35, 48, 82
Non-contention, 50
Non-enforcement, 50
Non-Eurocentric, 12, 67–83, 85, 87, 212
Non-European, 5, 8, 24–26
Non-rational, 94
Non-theocentric cosmology, 82
Norm, 39, 156, 157
Normative activity, 140
Norms, 60, 62, 65, 133, 138, 156
North America, 22, 23, 168
Nothing, 37, 38, 43, 44, 82
Noumenon, 72, 109, 131

O
Object-being, 45
Objectivation, 138, 199
Oblique universality, 9, 169
Oblivion, 41, 92, 155, 170
Obstacle, 3, 15, 106, 108, 130, 191
Occidentals, 169
Oedipus, 96, 165, 166
Old Testament, 113, 115, 116, 194
Ontogenesis, 180
Ontological character, 18, 177, 180–183, 186, 207, 216, 224, 226
Ontological difference, 70, 178, 182, 191
Ontological duality, 97, 179–186, 191, 207
Ontological structure, 7, 76, 97
Ontology, 46, 50, 51, 74, 76, 86, 126, 153, 163, 171, 176, 187, 191, 197–199, 201, 203, 204, 207–209, 223, 225
Ontology of the flesh, 164, 197–199, 201, 203, 204, 208
Ontology of the present, 74
Onto-theological, 81, 204, 206
Open elements, 3–4, 7
Openness, 1, 3–5, 7–9, 217, 222–224, 226–228
Operative concept, 7, 9, 28, 175
Operative intentionality, 161, 221
Opium War, 19

Optimism, 77, 132
Order, 4, 13–15, 19, 21, 25, 43, 45, 49, 51, 63, 76, 98, 101, 107, 110–112, 117, 120, 121, 126, 128–134, 139–141, 145, 147, 156, 160, 166, 168, 169, 171, 174, 176, 181, 183, 185–187, 190, 193, 210, 218, 223
Organic beings, 178, 180, 182, 191
Oriental philosophy, 41, 56, 169, 193
Orientative philosophy, 4, 12, 30, 146–151
Other, 16, 18, 27, 31, 32, 36, 38, 67, 82, 103, 106, 108, 113, 119, 124, 166, 169, 170, 193, 196, 199, 200, 206, 218
Other Europe, 85, 97
Otherness, 196–200, 210, 216, 224, 226–229
Over-civilization, 67, 73
Oxymoron, 110

P

Paarung, 16
Pacification, 57, 59
Pairing, 16, 18
Pan-European, 109, 114
Para-deconstruction, 9, 10, 21–34, 41, 56, 105
Passivity, 17, 220
Pathetic, 66, 199, 209
Patient, 137, 166, 197
Perception, 03, 8, 18, 33, 34, 51, 136, 139, 161, 173, 174, 176–178, 181, 184, 186, 187, 200, 203, 204, 216–217, 221, 222, 225, 227–229
Perceptual consciousness, 178, 181, 219, 222, 227
Perpetual Peace, 1
Personalistic attitude, 15
Phenomenality, 68, 79, 80, 82
Phenomenalization, 86
Phenomenological attitude, 53, 59, 62, 63, 127, 150, 189
Phenomenological movement, 1, 7, 12, 24, 35, 41, 52, 54, 55, 67–83, 85, 103, 136, 174, 203
Phenomenology, 1, 21, 41, 53, 68, 86, 104, 125, 139, 174, 195
Phenomenology of Perception, 03, 8, 18, 33, 34, 51, 139, 161, 174, 176–178, 181, 184, 186, 203, 204, 217, 221, 228
Phenomenon, 15–18, 76, 79, 86, 109, 157, 164, 173, 179, 181–183, 196–198, 201, 202, 206–208, 217–221, 224
Philosophical anthropology, 12, 86, 93–102, 139, 208
Philosophical solipsism, 32
Philosophical theology, 110
Philosophy, 125–150, 174
Philosophy as a way of life, 5, 63, 195
Philosophy of history, 2, 14, 41, 42, 71, 77–79, 86, 117, 122
Philosophy of Mythology, 23
Phonology, 159
Phusis, 44, 98
Physical patients, 137
Physics, 17, 19, 27, 51, 68, 78, 79, 81, 88, 100, 110, 112, 123, 126, 128, 155, 173, 178–186, 191
Physis, 80
Planetary, 2, 24, 76, 78
Plato, 71
Play, 5, 8, 12, 31, 40, 41, 60, 98, 103, 107, 113, 146, 154, 165–167, 171, 179, 187, 189, 226
Pleasurable, 141
Pleasure, 6, 58, 73, 74, 137, 139–143, 184
Pluralism, 31, 36, 76, 77, 123, 124, 209
Polemos, 49
Politics, 1, 13, 19, 23, 36, 51, 67, 69, 72–74, 78, 83, 86, 87, 93, 98, 100, 101, 108, 111, 129, 134, 137, 157, 158, 211, 227
Positivism, 68
Positivistic, 157, 168, 174, 178, 183
Possession, 18, 21, 26, 34, 134, 143, 189, 204, 221, 229
Post-Auschwitz, 18
Post-European, 12, 67, 68, 76, 83, 85, 93
Post-European humanity, 12, 68, 76–79, 83, 85
Post-structuralism, 27
Practical concern, 6, 60, 75
Practical wisdom, 49
Practice of the self, 12
Practico-moral, 5
Praxis, 60, 62, 65, 68, 70, 72, 81, 94, 149
Pre-conception, 22
Pregnant, 222, 223, 226
Prehistoric, 156, 157
Prehistoric humanity, 156
Prejudice, 3, 7, 8, 36, 61, 62, 87, 88, 104, 147, 170
Pre-objective, 32–34, 42–44, 153, 164, 171, 177, 180, 183, 186, 187, 191, 199, 216, 222, 224
Prephilosophical, 213, 214
Pre-Qin Confucianism, 122, 195, 213
Pre-Qin Daoism, 195, 213

Pre-reflective, 3, 86, 93, 95, 97, 153, 161, 196, 199, 208, 217–218, 224, 225
Pre-requisite, 11, 22, 150
Pre-scientific, 8, 34, 95, 104
Pre-scientific life-world, 8, 95, 104
Presence, 27, 97, 183, 203, 222–224
Presuppositionless philosophy, 22
Primacy of the practical, 6, 64, 65, 68, 72, 81, 126
Primitive Buddhism, 131
Primitive cultures, 8, 162, 167
Primitive society, 27, 160–162, 166
Primordial, 33, 34, 42–46, 51, 52, 71, 76, 80–82, 90, 91, 93, 156, 159, 162–196, 216, 217, 220–224
Primordial Being, 33, 44–46, 52
Primordial Nature, 34, 45, 51, 52, 79, 80, 82, 162, 164, 187, 216
Primordial World, 91, 222–224
Prisoner, 137, 181, 211
Problematicity, 71, 86
Productivity, 43, 49
Prohibition, 140, 157, 158, 162, 165, 166
Prohibition of incest, 157, 158, 162, 165, 166
Project, 11, 46, 56, 61, 76, 91, 94, 97, 101, 107, 111, 114
Promiscuity, 34, 188–191, 194
Propriety, 86, 99, 123, 134
Prosthesis, 229
Providence, 109, 110, 113, 117, 121
Proximity, 222–224
Psychic domain, 15, 16, 18, 200
Psychoanalysis, 153, 165–166
Punctum caecum, 222
Purification, 57, 59, 135, 145
Purposive activity, 139

Q
Qi, 119, 120
Qing Dynasty, 113, 123
Qi wu lun, 209
Qualia, 219
Quietude, 35, 48–51
Qur'an, 106

R
Ratio, 92
Ratiocination, 34
Rational cosmology, 110
Rationalism, 19, 22, 36, 37
Rationalist, 95, 124
Rationalist philosophy, 124
Rationality, 13, 23, 36, 73, 86–88, 91, 92, 162, 225, 227, 228
Rational psychology, 110
Rational spirit, 99
Rational theology, 110, 112
Re-appreciation, 8
Re-appropriation, 8, 25, 26, 165
Reason, 6, 7, 23, 36, 37, 41, 46, 54, 59, 62, 64, 65, 72–74, 90–92, 96, 109–112, 116, 119, 121, 126, 131, 148, 153, 166–169, 177, 178, 200, 206, 207, 222, 227
Reciprocity, 33, 34, 187, 227–229
Recognition, 11, 15, 47, 106, 108, 199, 216, 224, 227–229
Reduction, 3, 7, 31, 62, 63, 88, 127, 147, 161, 167
Reflective, 2, 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 15, 18, 19, 45, 48, 61, 62, 93, 105, 127, 130, 131, 141, 143, 145, 146, 150, 156, 181, 194–196, 199, 202, 217, 221, 224, 225, 227
Reflective attitude, 61, 62, 143
Reflective depth, 70
Reflective judgment, 7, 48, 227
Reflective subject, 129
Reflexivity, 17, 208, 216–218, 220, 224
Refoundation, 87
Relation, 7, 29, 31–32, 36, 38, 48, 69, 71, 77, 80, 89, 94, 95, 109, 115, 138, 139, 141, 143, 158, 169, 171, 180–182, 185, 196, 198–199, 227
Relativism, 25, 48, 96, 224
Relaxation, 60
Religion, 56, 58, 59, 99, 107–108, 111, 112, 119–123, 194, 201, 208, 209, 212–213
Religiosity, 57–58
Religious conversion, 63, 147, 195
Religious-ethical, 57, 63
Religious faith, 107, 108, 111, 194
Religious tolerance, 123, 124
Renewal, 51, 52, 58, 65, 70, 149, 191
Renewal of culture, 52
Renunciation, 61, 62, 140, 145
Reorientation, 148
Representational space, 137
Responsibility, 6, 62, 71, 77, 86, 88, 91, 94, 96, 107, 111, 127, 145, 147–149, 195, 197, 199, 200
Reterritorialization, 210, 211
Retrieval, 35, 46–47, 49, 51
Reversibility, 177, 181–183, 187, 194, 197–203, 206, 208, 216–222, 224–226
Righteousness, 86, 98, 134

Rituals, 51, 117, 123, 160, 162
Russia, 68
Ruthless cognition, 53, 60, 62

S
Sacred History, 115, 194, 204
Sage, 100, 123, 132–134
Salvation, 60, 107, 109, 201, 208
Same, 38
Savage mind, 13, 27, 28, 162–195
Savage perception, 222
Savage spirit, 11, 13, 28, 153–171, 190
Science, 5, 8, 24, 25, 36, 41, 54, 61–64, 68, 70, 79, 81, 86–88, 90–92, 95, 97, 103–105, 107–113, 154, 156, 161, 165, 169, 170, 183, 195, 197, 222, 223
Science of being, 61, 63
Scientific culture, 8, 24, 25, 104
Scientific objectivism, 8, 33
Scientific thought, 61, 155
Self-examination, 144, 145
Self-explanatory, 8
Self-givenness, 88
Selfhood, 185
Self-manifestation, 48
Self-mastery, 135, 141–143
Self-responsibility, 62, 86, 88, 91, 94, 96, 195
Self-sufficient, 8, 167
Self-transformation, 4, 12, 30, 62, 125–151, 195
Self-understanding, 8, 65, 88, 95, 165
Seneca, 143
Sensation, 17, 182, 197, 198, 200–202, 219
Sensibility, 17, 19, 181, 183, 184, 190, 191, 197, 199, 201, 218, 225, 229
Sensible, 11, 17–19, 56, 107, 110, 177, 181–188, 191, 198, 203, 208–209, 216–221, 223–226, 228
Sensible world, 34, 107, 177, 188, 224, 228
Sensitivity, 178, 181, 184
September-11, 1
Sexual being, 136, 139
Shame, 99, 134, 218
Shi Jie, 13
Sinocentrism, 193
Sinophile, 118–123
Situatedness, 94, 218
Situation, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 29, 69–71, 74, 76–78, 86, 93–95, 97, 103, 105, 138, 155, 171, 175, 190, 208, 218, 223, 228
Situational, 98
Socialist regime, 69
Social organization, 157, 158, 162
Social technology, 73
South Asia, 15
Space, 49, 80, 94, 154, 177, 179, 188, 199, 200, 203, 216, 219–221, 223, 227, 228
Spatial configuration, 156
Spectator, 60, 189, 228
Speculation, 3, 7, 128, 188, 211
Spirit, 2, 7, 11, 15, 17, 26, 46, 50, 57, 92, 95, 99, 107, 121, 136, 157, 164, 170, 174, 177, 185, 190, 195, 197, 208, 209, 222, 226
Spiritual, 127, 128, 132, 134, 135, 144, 146
Spiritual dispositions, 11, 12, 97–99, 134, 191
Spiritual exercise, 5, 63, 99, 128, 144–146
Spiritual exercises, 127
Spirituality, 6, 59, 127, 128, 144–146, 181
Spiritual liberation, 65, 195
Spiritual purification, 57, 59
Spiritual purity, 57
Spiritual self-liberation, 65
Spiritual world, 15, 18
Spontaneity, 37, 40, 173
Spontaneous, 40, 109, 112
State machine, 73
State of nature, 156–158
State of war, 158
State police, 69
Stimmung, 18, 190
Structural analysis, 27, 28, 161, 162, 165
Structural anthropology, 28, 153, 159–195
Structural history, 163, 164
Structural invariants, 7, 161, 194
Structuralist, 133, 159
Structural linguistics, 159
Stylization, 142
Subject, 3, 6, 16, 24, 26, 88, 90, 127, 131, 135–146, 149, 153, 156, 159, 164, 166, 182, 185, 187, 219
Subjectivation, 137, 138, 141, 142, 144
Subjectivism, 48
Subjectivity, 76, 88, 90, 127, 137, 156, 161
Substance, 14, 17, 44, 73, 76, 81, 119, 168, 179, 184, 185, 207
Substantial, 43, 49
Subsumption, 48, 170
Suffering, 58, 99, 134, 207
Supra-natural, 61, 107, 110, 113, 154
Suspension, 61, 62
Suttapitaka, 57, 58
Suttapitakam, 58
Symbolic, 25, 118, 156, 164, 166, 167, 214
Synchronic, 159
Synergic, 226

T
Tactility, 206, 208, 219, 220
Tangible, 58, 86, 183, 185, 187, 188, 206, 216, 220, 225
Taoism, 37, 108
Taylor, 108
Technology, 2, 65, 68, 73, 74, 76, 78, 104, 108, 155, 162, 163, 190
Teleological, 47, 87, 154
Teleological idea, 87
Teleological world-view, 154
Teleology, 164
Tenderness, 35, 48–51
Terrorism, 106
Thematic, 3, 9
Theocentric, 206–210
Theodicy, 109, 110, 122
Theology, 76, 81, 110, 112, 118–121, 124, 201, 204, 206–209
Theoretical attitude, 11, 25, 41, 53, 58, 59, 62–64, 126, 149
Theoretical reason, 72
Theoretical validity, 176–178, 211
Thêoria, 1, 3–6, 13, 21, 25, 26, 30, 41, 54, 55, 62, 65, 68, 87, 93, 95, 96, 105, 125, 126, 128, 149, 150, 195
Thing-in-itself, 110
Tolerance, 13, 14, 123, 124
Top-down, 4, 7, 126, 168, 214, 218, 228
Topological, 208, 221
Totalitarian regime, 69
Tranquility, 60, 131, 143
Trans-appear, 186
Transcendence, 44, 45, 72, 101, 164, 199, 210, 214, 216, 217, 223, 224, 228
Transcendent, 61, 101, 130, 131, 133, 200
Transcendental, 5, 6, 8, 11, 22, 25, 36, 53–55, 57, 59–61, 63, 64, 68, 86, 88–90, 104, 125, 127, 148, 154, 160, 164, 174, 178, 181, 184, 187, 195, 198, 200, 207–209, 217, 228, 229
Transcendental attitude, 63, 195
Transcendental idealism, 181
Transcendental phenomenological, 63
Transcendental phenomenological attitude, 53, 63
Transcendental phenomenology, 5, 8, 11, 22, 25, 36, 53–55, 59, 61, 63, 68, 86, 89, 104, 125, 127, 136, 154, 184, 195
Transcendental philosophy, 11, 63, 136, 229
Transcendental reduction, 63, 88
Transcendent freedom, 130, 131, 133
Trans-cultural, 14
Trans-cultural philosophy, 14
Transformation, 147, 148
Transformation of humanity, 62, 95
Transformation of our mode of existence, 145
Transformation of the world, 4, 127, 129
Transgression, 14, 27–29, 110, 140, 202
Transitivity, 177, 188
Transparence, 67
Transparency, 45, 225
Tree of knowledge, 95
Tree of life, 95
Truth, 6, 28, 33, 47, 50, 60–62, 65, 71, 73–74, 76–78, 86, 93–98, 100, 109, 115, 116, 131, 133, 137, 138, 144, 145, 149, 150, 153, 166, 167, 189, 194, 198, 210, 211, 216, 218, 223, 225, 228, 229
Two-dimensional, 179–186, 191

U
Unconscious, 153, 156, 159, 161
Uncoveredness, 95, 96
Understanding, 1–19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29, 31–34, 37, 38, 41–46, 56–61, 64, 65, 68, 74, 76–78, 85, 86, 88, 91–93, 95–98, 101, 103–131, 133–137, 143, 144, 146, 147, 153, 154, 156, 157, 161–164, 166–171, 176–181, 183–187, 189–191, 193–199, 201, 205, 208–210, 212, 215–229
Unfathomable, 44, 49, 68, 159
Universal, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13, 23, 25, 38, 41, 53, 54, 61–65, 68, 70, 76, 80, 86, 88, 90–92, 96–98, 105, 106, 110, 115, 116, 118, 133, 134, 137, 139, 142, 147–149, 153, 157, 165–170, 180, 183, 210, 227
Universal History, 76, 77, 115–117
Universality, 3, 4, 7, 9, 116, 157, 167, 169, 170, 225
Universalizable moment, 103
Universal phenomenon, 157
Universal practical interest, 62, 64
Universal science, 53, 54, 61–65, 97, 105
Universal truth, 169
Universal validity claim, 68
Universe, 32, 43, 48, 50, 93, 97, 118, 120, 121, 155, 207

V
Vacuity, 35, 48–51
Vigour, 58

Violence, 48, 50, 51, 58, 103, 106, 199, 204, 206, 212
Visible, 18, 58, 86, 176, 177
Visible and the Invisible, The, 17, 18, 32, 47, 48, 164, 176–178, 180–188, 196, 198, 201, 203, 204, 206, 208, 217–226
Vision, 33, 57, 88, 93, 94, 99, 112, 150, 171, 178, 184, 185, 195, 202, 218–223, 226
Vocation, 54, 57, 64, 65, 95, 96, 99–101, 107, 108, 148, 149, 151, 195, 211
Vocational, 90, 101, 148
Voltaire, 117
Voluptas, 143
Vulnerable, 177, 199

W
Weakness, 35, 48, 51, 109
Well-being, 73
West, 2, 8, 9, 13, 15, 19, 26, 30, 35–36, 38, 60, 68, 104, 106–108, 114, 118, 128, 153, 169, 170, 176, 195, 211–215
Western, 1, 2, 4–6, 9–12, 16, 17, 19, 21–23, 27–30, 35, 36–40, 51, 66, 78, 81, 91, 97, 109, 126, 128, 141, 142, 145, 153–156, 165–168, 170, 171, 188, 193, 194, 217, 227, 229
Western Philosophy, 2, 4–6, 9, 10, 16, 21, 23, 27–29, 37, 41, 109, 127, 129, 135–136, 146, 174, 217, 227
Whirlpool, 220, 221
Wild, 34
Wild Being, 222–225
Wisdom, 5, 38, 49, 65, 86, 99, 100, 121, 124, 128, 130–132, 134, 146, 170, 213
World, 1, 21, 53, 68, 85, 103, 154, 175, 198
World ethics, 111
World-horizon, 89, 90, 222
World-mystery, 90, 91, 93
Writing, 6, 7, 13, 27, 28, 36, 42, 53, 58, 67, 69, 73, 74, 80, 87, 102, 108, 114–116, 126, 130, 144, 150, 157, 162, 176, 179, 180, 205, 206, 214, 215
Wu-wei, 50

X
Xiaoyao, 130

Z
Zao hua, 130
Zen Buddhist, 38, 39
Zi, 2
Zi ran, 39
Zu den Sachen selbst, 104, 161