Towards a Phenomenology of Pronouns*

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For Elmar Holenstein on his Seventieth Birthday

Abstract

For most people, pronouns are just a matter for linguists. In linguistics, pronouns are classified according to the various linguistic functions they perform: for instance, deictic or anaphoric, definite or indefinite, personal or demonstrative, etc. But a closer look at the issue reveals that pronouns have a great deal to do with philosophy as well. This paper presents a brief sketch of some classical philosophical problems to show how dealing with pronouns has played a part in the formulation and advancement of important philosophical issues including spatial orientation, dialectics, cognition, existential experiences, social relationships, the philosophy of rights, and so forth.

Keywords: phenomenology; pronouns/pronominology; personal/impersonal; possessive; deixis; reflexive

I   Introduction: The Thematic and the Non-Thematic

Wittgenstein once speculated on what language would look like if the 'I' or even all pronouns were left out.[1] In fact, we do not need Wittgenstein to challenge us with such a thought experiment, for this scenario of the complete absence of pronouns is indeed the case at the beginning of language acquisition. As we can all witness ourselves, or as documented by professional linguists, the use of pronouns comes at a rather late stage in a child's language development. Therefore, it is perfectly imaginable for a child approaching the age of 2 to be relying still on proper names to refer to persons, including itself.[2] In other words, language does work without pronouns. What remains interesting is only the fact that, once the development of language went so far as to have exhausted the power and wealth of pronouns, man would have become so dependent on their use that their abandonment would no longer be realistic.

In what way are pronouns important? This is a question that people from all walks of life are entitled to answer. Politicians, advertisers, lawyers,

priests, teachers, poets, and others should all have interesting things to tell. The purpose of this paper is to show the great contribution that pronouns have made to the discipline of philosophy, with or without the notice of philosophers themselves.

For most people, pronouns should be a matter of concern, but much more for linguists than for philosophers. Indeed, for the most part, it is the linguists who have treated pronouns in a thematic or topic-focused manner. Philosophers, on the contrary, apart from very few exceptions such as Peirce or Dewey, have seldom reflected upon pronouns thematically to any great extent.[3]

This, however, should not lead us to the preconception that philosophy proper has little to do with pronouns, but rather to the realization that, in the philosophical tradition, pronouns have been treated mainly in a non-thematic manner. In other words, generations of philosophers have produced many ideas related to pronouns without actually making pronouns the target of their study. Despite this, the role played by pronouns is so overwhelmingly important that the history of philosophy would look very different without their contribution. In a sense, philosophers have always been swimming in the waters of pronouns, although they might not even have been conscious of this, just as a fish might not know how significant water is for its existence.

II   Pronouns from a Linguistic Point of View

Since pronouns involve primarily a linguistic issue, what I will do in the following is to make some very brief sketches from a linguistic standpoint, so that we can have some points of reference regarding the basic features of pronouns:

a.   As the term 'pronoun' suggests, pronouns are by definition 'substitutes' for nouns or noun phrases. For this reason, pronouns carry all the major characteristics attributable to nouns, including number, gender, and case.[4] In many Indo-Germanic languages, the declension of pronouns takes place in parallel to that of nouns, showing a consistency in morphology.

b.   As far as the object of replacement is concerned, pronouns can be distinguished into demonstrative pronouns and personal pronouns. While demonstrative pronouns refer to something immediately before the senses, to which the speaker can point (e.g., 'this'/'these', 'that'/'those'), personal pronouns refer by definition to persons only ('I', 'you', 'he'/'she'/'it', 'we', 'they', etc.).

c.   As far as the major functional properties are concerned, pronouns are divided mainly into anaphoric pronouns and deictic pronouns. Anaphora refers to the replacement of a noun mentioned earlier (antecedent) in a

linguistic utterance. In the sentence 'The tiger attacked people because it was hungry', the word 'it' anaphorically refers back to the antecedent 'tiger'.[5] While anaphoric pronouns can be fully understood purely intra-linguistically within the context of the uttered sentence,[6] *deixis* requires a deictic field that involves extra-linguistic situations, including spatio-temporal, personal (especially the first and second person), and other references,[7] in order to make full sense.[8] Interestingly, both demonstrative and personal pronouns can behave deictically as long as they function in this deictic manner. The uses of 'I', 'this', 'that', 'now', 'then', 'here', 'there', and so forth in discourses are all examples of this sort.[9] One of the most important features of *deixis* is the concept of *origo*, or the place of origin from where all the deictic words get their reference. The *origo* is usually considered to be the speaker or his/her 'body'. This is an issue of the utmost importance philosophically; it will be covered later.

d. In traditional linguistics (including in the famous *Port-Royal Grammaire*[10]) the focus has largely been confined to anaphora when treating pronouns, but in modern and contemporary linguistics, an increasing amount of emphasis is placed on *deixis*, which has much more relevance to philosophy. It is also noteworthy that the linguistic phenomenon of *deixis* is often treated by philosophers nowadays under the heading of *indexicals*,[11] a term traceable to Peirce's notion of the 'index' as one of the three types of signs.[12]

e. In addition to those mentioned above, there are still other species of pronouns, including relative pronouns ('that', 'which', 'who', 'whom', 'whoever'), indefinite pronouns ('one', 'everyone', *jemand*, etc.), interrogative pronouns ('which', 'who', 'whom', etc.), reflexive pronouns, possessive pronouns, and others, which are derivatives of the two previously named main types.[13] Marginal as they might appear, these pronouns have also played certain important roles in philosophy. In the section III below, we will go over the two main types of pronouns, as well as some of the derived types.

III Classical Philosophical Scenarios Involving Pronouns

A Demonstrative Pronouns

1. Demonstrative pronouns are basically deictic in nature. But even among deictic pronouns, demonstratives distinguish themselves additionally through the use of direct pointers (such as a finger, a glance, or gestures) to identify the objects that are meant. As Holenstein pointed out, children do rely on 'this/that' to identify objects and to orientate themselves long before they develop the ability to handle personal pronouns such as 'I'.[14] Given the uncontestable primacy of demonstrative pronouns, it is no wonder that Hegel started his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* with 'this'

and related adverbs such as 'here' and 'now' in his treatment of the history of consciousness.[15]

2. The question of *origo*: Demonstratives, as the most primitive deictic pronouns, raise the question of *origo*, the source of deictic references. In this regard, Benveniste maintained that the usual definition of demonstrative pronouns through the concept of *deixis* shows only a superficial understanding of the issue. For Benveniste, such a deictic definition of demonstrative pronouns 'is pointless … unless' reference is made to the instance of the discourse activities of the speaker, primarily the first person, even though the person might not be conscious of his/her very self.[16] In this way, the importance of the 'person', especially the first person, is underlined.

3. If demonstratives are referred back to the person, the question of *origo* is only half answered. For in what way, or through what mechanism, should the self or the person serve as the *origo* of deictic reference? Since demonstratives involve a pointing activity, an obvious answer is that this pointing activity should be traced back to the *pointer*, the finger, the glance, the facial gesture, etc., or in a word, to the very body (*Leib*) of the person. It is along this line of thought that Husserl's notion of *Leib* as the 'zero point of orientation' can be considered as a solution to the question of *origo*.[17] For Husserl, the *Leib* (or even the 'head' (*Kopf*)) as *Nullpunkt* is the point of departure, from which the subject exercises his oculomotor muscles to orientate himself kinaesthetically in the midst of the world of experience.[18]

4. This notion of the *Leib* as *Nullpunkt der Orientierung*, while having an influence felt to this day,[19] was severely criticized by Holenstein at the beginning of the 1970s.[20] Holenstein's main complaint was that Husserl's 'unreflected' emphasis on the role of the *Leib* of the first-personal subject not only confines him within his own egocentric bounds, but also fails to provide an explanation of the true mechanism of spatial orientation. Regarding the phenomenon of orientation,[21] Holenstein maintained that, instead of relying on one single subjective *Nullpunkt*, man orientates himself rather through endless 'eye-catching objects' or perceptual focuses – including this or that person addressing me, this or that house I know, certain university campuses, some bus stops, etc., of which my *Leib* is only one out of many such possible centres. It is only through such 'polycentric givenness' that orientation from spot to spot can be truly possible (think about driving from one place to another), and that spatial and other aspects of communication between man and man can work at all.[22] Holenstein's critique of Husserl not only revolutionized the mainstream understanding of deictic *origo* as rooted in the self,[23] but also helps pave the way to raising further questions concerning the multi-focal relation between the I and other persons.

B *Personal Pronouns*

1. With respect to personal pronouns, Humboldt wrote a short but impor-
tant treatise, *Über den Dualis*, which discusses the original presence of
the 'dual' number (*numerus*) besides the singular and the plural.
Humboldt maintained that duality is rooted finally in the 'principle of
dialogue' (*das dialogische Prinzip*). For Humboldt, the phenomenon of
human speech is impossible without partners. Duality at a deep level
always refers to the 'I' and the 'you', the linguistic partner. Even what we
usually call thinking is in fact nothing but the dialogue between the 'I'
and a virtual 'you'.[24] Humboldt therefore concluded that, 'There lies in
the primordial essence of language an unalterable dualism, and the
possibility of speech itself is determined by addressing and replying
(*Anrede und Erwiderung*). Human thought is by nature accompanied by
an inclination towards social existence. Besides all the bodily and sensa-
tional relations, man, for the sake of thought, longs for a "thou" who
corresponds to the "I".' For Humboldt, man's conceptual thinking will
acquire true clarity and certainty only through its reflection from a
foreign intellect.[25]

2. For Benveniste, the most interesting thing about pronouns is that 'they
do not refer to a concept or to an individual',[26] but change their reference
according to the situation of the discourse. This is exactly what *deixis* or
indexicals mean. To Benveniste, among the personal pronouns, those of
the first and second person (the 'I' and the 'you') exhibit the clear feature
of 'reversibility', and they represent uniquely the two parties or person-
alities involved in the discourse.[27] In contrast to this, pronouns of the
third person are the only pronouns that can refer to 'objects' of the first
person, 'I'. Third-person pronouns do not necessarily point to persons;
they could refer to impersonal things, and their uses are non-unique or
'unmarked'. For Benveniste, only the first and second person exhibit
true personhood; the third person (he/she/it) is doomed to be reifiable as
a 'thing', or to be 'de-personalized'[28] as a 'non-person'.[29] These observa-
tions by Benveniste show a strong resemblance to Martin Buber's
distinction between the two utterly different relations of the 'I–Thou'
and the 'I–It'.

3. Heidegger's critique of subjectivity:[30] Of all the personal pronouns,
modern Western philosophy gives a great deal of priority to the first-
person singular 'I'. Since the days of Descartes, through Fichte, Hegel,
and to Husserl, the crucial role played by the *ego*, *das Ich*, or subjectivity
has been undeniable. It is well known that Heidegger took a very critical
stance towards the theory of subjectivity, which he reproachfully charac-
terized as the 'dominance of the subject',[31] as the 'deification of
reason',[32] or as the 'mythology of an intellect'.[33] Heidegger regarded
modern subjectivism as having largely transgressed human finitude[34] and

felt that the *hybris* that comes with it should be held responsible for the many crises, whether natural-ecological or social-political, that have become a threat to human existence and human societies nowadays. But the question is, should the notion of the subject or the role of the 'I' really be so negatively conceived, as suggested by Heidegger?

4. On the other hand, in the alternative tradition of personalism, we witness a shift of emphasis from the I to the Thou, as is well known in the works of Buber or Marcel. Understandably, some socio-ontological factors might have led to this preference for the Thou over the I; presumably, the centuries-long spell of subjectivism might have led to the feeling that some change was needed. But now, given this competing role of the 'Thou', does this mean that the role of the 'I' will be eclipsed? The antagonism between subjectivism and personalism can be regarded as a confrontation between 'identity and alterity'. This is, and will remain, a question of lasting importance. In the following we will try to unfold the question to show that the answer is not an easy one.

5. Buber: As far as pronoun usage is concerned, Martin Buber is famous for having left behind the two pronominal bifurcations 'I–It' and 'I–Thou', which amount to what he called two 'basic words' or 'word pairs', or two types of relations to people or, as we would put it, two attitudes to alterity.[35] Whereas I–It signifies man's materialistic and objectivistic relations towards inanimate objects or to others, I–Thou points to man's intimate relations towards others through love, care, and respect. For Buber, if I made the 'Thou' through objectification a 'Him' or 'Her', I would in fact be degrading my intimacy with that 'Thou' through distantiation. Therefore, like Benveniste, Buber classified the He and She together with the It. One of the most important insights of the book *I and Thou* lies in the observation that 'the I of the basic word I–Thou is a different I from that of the basic word I–It'. Or, as Buber put it: 'the I of man is also twofold'. This twofoldness of the I suggests that man can indeed live in two worlds, in which his values, his behaviour, and his relations with others are utterly different. Therefore, although Buber is regarded as a major propounder of the personalistic tradition, the existential fate of the 'I' was for him by no means less important an issue than that of the 'Thou'. For even if we consider the care, love, and respect for the Thou to be the most important issue, we still have to single out an 'I' who would actually demonstrate such caring attitudes, or be condemned for not doing so. Therefore, even in personalism, the I must still be in place, although its role would be a different one.

6. Marcel: The theoretically intricate relationship between the pronouns I, Thou, and He/She/It has been nicely dramatized by Marcel.[36] In a play called *The Broken World*, which is representative of his existentialist dramas, Marcel tells the story of a couple, Christiane and Lawrence. Christiane marries not for love, but merely for social reasons. Being a

talented and attractive woman, she is not prepared to treat her husband as 'Thou', but literally only as 'Him'. After tracing some of Christiane's recent romances and describing some tensions between the couple, Marcel reveals the secret history of Christiane's unrequited love for Jacques, a man who has chosen to be a Benedictine monk, leaving her heart-broken in a 'broken world'. The turning point of the story is the sudden appearance of Jacques's sister, Genevieve, to convey the message of her deceased brother's silent but 'religious' love and care for Christiane. This striking message induces Christiane to reflect anew upon her whole life, leading her to rebuild a close relationship with her husband Lawrence, who now finally becomes (or is upgraded to) a 'Thou' in Christiane's eyes, as revealed by her words in the closing scene: '(Solemnly) I swear to you that now I belong only to you. I have been freed…. It's as if an unbearable nightmare has ended.' For me, the most important message conveyed by the play is that by switching from an I–It relationship to an I–Thou one, the protagonist experiences a transformation of her very 'I'.

7. The pronominal use of 'I' or the 'self' in traditional Chinese philosophy: Against the backdrop of the Heideggerian critique of the I on the one hand and the challenge of Western personalism on the other, a review of the pronominal use of 'I' or the 'self' in traditional Chinese philosophy makes a good contrast. In an earlier paper, I identified a number of Chinese characters that bear the meaning of 'I' or the 'self' (*ji* 己, *zi* 自, and *wo* 我 in particular). A search through some classical Chinese corpora (philosophical as well as literary) was then undertaken to see what roles these words play in context. After an extensive investigation, I discovered that a number of characteristic attitudes to life can indeed be identified when the Chinese talk about the 'I' or the 'self'. These basic attitudes are:[37]

- self-control, self-discipline, or autonomy;
- self-reflection, self-responsibility, and self-reproof;
- the self exhibiting consideration and tolerance of others;
- selflessness, self-forgetfulness, and self-sacrifice;
- self-detachment and aesthetic contemplation; and
- non-engagement and release of the self.

From the above, we can make the following observations. For the Chinese mind, the awareness of the self is seldom connected with objective cognition, but mainly with practical principles and wisdom about life.[38] Chinese self-awareness reveals a deep acknowledgement of the finiteness of the self. Among the various schools of Chinese philosophy, the Confucian tradition in particular advocates the attitudes of restraint and criticism of the self, and that of tolerance and consideration for others, which have so much in common with the Western ideal of personalism. The Taoist tradi-

tion favours a detached and quasi-aesthetic appreciation of nature and life, whereas the Buddhist tradition advocates the liberation of one's self from worldly bondage so as to attain the state of *asamskrta* or *nirvana*. When all of these are considered, it becomes quite clear that the sort of hegemony and aggression revealed by the epistemological 'subject' (as understood by Heidegger) is totally irrelevant in Chinese philosophy. But by the same token, we should also be mindful of the fact that, given such alternative notions of selfhood, Chinese culture falls short of the epistemological subject, and it is this shortfall that leads to poverty in the sense of objectivity, which is precisely what is wanting in Chinese culture, Chinese society, and Chinese politics. Chinese traditional values are basically compatible with those of Western personalism (apart from its Christian aspect). However, history has taught us that one of the main socio-political shortcomings of Chinese culture lies precisely in its having made everything 'too personal', to the extent that objective standards could be sacrificed.[39] In other words, the Chinese people might have over-emphasized the Thou at the expense of a comprehensive cultivation of the I. Therefore, contrary to what prevails in the West, Chinese culture is probably suffering from an excess of 'personalism' together with a shortage of subject-objectivism.

This contrast between the Chinese and Western conceptions of 'selfhood' seems to have taught us two lessons. On the one hand, it teaches us that the stress on the 'I' does not necessarily amount to self-centredness or self-importance, as suggested by Heidegger's criticism; on the other hand, it also shows us that the cognitive aspect of the I is indeed quintessential, and that without detriment to other functions of the 'I', this very cognitive function of the same 'I' should not be neglected. In a multidimensional, multi-faceted human society, what we need is individual 'I's who, besides possessing knowledge and the ability to judge objectively, are capable of caring about and loving others, appreciating beauty, making moral judgements, shouldering responsibilities, bearing legal consequences, and so on.

C   Reflexive Pronouns

1. Reflexive pronouns are a special kind of personal pronoun whose function cannot be fully understood apart from the reflexive verbs involved. As the quasi-*optical* term implies, we come across 'reflexives' whenever the agent of an action is the same as the recipient of the action; that is, when someone is doing something upon him(her/it)self. Reflexive pronouns are easily identifiable by suffixes or morphological elements such as '-self' in English, *mich/dich/sich* in German, *me/te/se* in French, *se* in Latin, and so forth.

2. In philosophy, the notion of 'self' or 'selfsameness' has a very wide application, and accounts for some of the most important philosophical issues. Among the various conceptual constructs, Kant's 'thing-in-itself' (*Ding an sich*) rounded up a whole tradition of the metaphysical urge and quest for an independent domain of reality. Think about the ἐν αὑτῷ ἢ αὑτό in Aristotle,[40] or the *per se* from Albert the Great through Aquinas,[41] or the *causa sui* in Spinoza,[42] which all share the very idea of self-sufficiency or independent existence. Yet, in Kant, this tradition of 'in-itself-ness' underwent a complete revolution, because instead of following the same line of thought as outlined, Kant understood the thing-in-itself in precisely the opposite manner or, as he himself preferred to put it, in a 'negative' manner.[43] Kant was of the opinion that we can only talk about the *meaning* of 'thing-in-itself', but not its *reference*. For Kant, 'thing-in-itself', together with the related notion of 'noumenon', should no longer be used positively to denote independent existence as hitherto thought, but only negatively as a 'limiting concept' (*Grenzbegriff*), 'the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility',[44] so that what is being sensed should be reckoned as things 'as they appear to us' and not 'as they are in themselves'. With this theoretical manoeuvre, Kant did not intend to denigrate sensible experience as unreal or illusive (as Plato did). With the basic attitude of empirical realism in mind, what Kant tried to do is precisely to put philosophy back to the 'fruitful bathos of experience',[45] and he did so precisely by negatively setting limits to what experience *cannot* be (things-in-themselves) so as to secure it on the firm soil of what it can be. Taking note of this negative but subtle use of the expression 'thing-in-itself', Kaulbach succinctly reformulated the Kantian distinction between appearance and things-in-themselves as one between 'things for us' (*Dinge für uns*) and 'things-in-themselves'.[46] In this way, Kaulbach demonstrated that, for Kant, the third-person reflexive pronoun *sich* in the sense of *Ansichsein* has to give way to the first-person plural personal pronoun 'we', which is nothing but the hallmark of the human perspective.[47]

3. After the Kantian revolution, the reflexive pronoun continued to exert its power over philosophy. One most dramatic scenario was Hegel's revival of the 'in-itself' (*An-sich*) immediately after Kant. But instead of leaving the *An-sich* to outward externality, he absorbed the *An-sich* into the developmental process of conscious activity, which led finally to the Absolute Spirit. By allowing *An-sich* to contrast with and be followed by the 'for-itself' (*Für-sich*), Hegel built up a conceptual pair comparable to Aristotle's conceptual doublet potentiality–actuality. With the interplay of this pair of concepts together with their synthesis into 'in and for itself' (*Anundfürsichsein*), Hegel furnished himself with a conceptual scheme that enabled him to talk not only about dialectics in the narrow sense, but also about the speculative philosophy of his matured system.

Although Hegel's metaphysical use of the reflexive transgressed Kant's tolerance for philosophical discourses by a long way, Hegel in return surpassed Kant in terms of the breadth and general layout of his problematic.[48]

4. A philosophical account of the reflexive would not be complete without taking into consideration the middle voice of the Greek language. And the context for us to do this lies in Aristotle's theory of categories. It was Benveniste's greatest merit to have clarified systematically the true nature of Aristotle's table of categories.[49] His basic insight was: instead of being a scheme for the classification of entities, the ten categories are aspects of the usage of the Greek language in particular, with which experience can be systematically described, not only from a static point of view, but also from a dynamic and developmental perspective. Benveniste stated that the first six categories were nominal forms (derivatives of nouns), but identified the remaining four as nothing but 'verbal categories', which have to do, in one way or another, with motion or change. Of the four categories κεῖσθαι, ἔχειν, ποιεῖν and πάσχειν, the last two are obviously active and passive verb forms. And the most interesting part of Benveniste's insight lies in his reinterpretation of κεῖσθαι and ἔχειν the true nature of which he considered hitherto misunderstood.[50] Whereas ἔχειν denotes the perfect tense of Greek verbs, κεῖσθαι represents their middle voice, which is roughly equivalent to reflexive verbs in German or French (and to the intransitive verb in English). From Benveniste's new interpretation, we can reconstruct the meaning of the verb-matrix in Aristotle's table of categories as follows.[51] Preoccupied with his intention to rehabilitate the mundane world and individual entities (in contrast to Plato), Aristotle had to furnish a scheme of description that explains not only all static phenomena, but all mundane changes (μεταβολαί), hence the need for a set of verb-forms after the first six static, nominal categories. Of the four verb forms, ποιεῖν and πάσχειν cover artifacts (τέχνῃ ὄντα) respectively from the standpoints of the agent and the recipient of certain man-initiated activities. On the other hand, κεῖσθαι or the middle voice, which is a kind of reflexive verb, has to deal with the self-generating activities of natural things (φύσει ὄντα) in general. And, finally, ἔχειν or the 'perfect' is put there to signal the developmental dimension of change as depicted by Aristotle's cardinal conceptual pair: δύναμις and ἐνέργεια.

5. Notwithstanding the central position of the doctrine of categories for Aristotle, traditional scholarship has until very recently failed to make sense of it. While Arnauld in the seventeenth century and Windelband in the late nineteenth spoke of Aristotle's table of categories as 'of very little use' ('très peu utile')[52] and as having 'no importance in metaphysics',[53] it was Benveniste who at long last rehabilitated it. And he did this

by recovering the true meaning of κτίσθαι as a linguistic structure that corresponds to what we now call the 'reflexive'. If Benveniste's interpretation of κτίσθαι is further related to 'natural things' (as opposed to man-made artifacts), the basic Greek philosophical insight of avoiding an overemphasis on subjectivism is brought to light.[54]

D Possessive Pronouns

1. In the history of Western philosophy, I have found no other philosopher who has exploited the power of possessive pronouns as ingeniously as did Kant. And this applies both to his theoretical and to his practical philosophies.

2. Kant once defined *Transzendentalphilosophie* as follows: 'The highest vocation of transcendental philosophy is [to ask]: How is experience possible?'[55] This lapidary statement clearly reveals Kant's basic theoretical strategy – the juxtaposition of the transcendental and the empirical. Kant's tactic was to declare empirical givenness (together with all synthetic combinations involved) empirically real, before arguing for the necessity of the transcendental, which was for Kant nothing but the conditions of the possibility of empirical reality. This juxtaposition can be further interpreted as follows. On the transcendental side, Kant posited the 'I think' (*Ich denke*) to represent the 'original synthetic unity of Apperception'. What, then, did Kant put on the empirical side? Naturally, it should be experience, intuitions, or the like. But the ingenuity of Kant lay precisely in his use at this juncture of the expression 'my representations'. This juxtaposition of the 'I' and the 'my' allowed Kant to compress his whole transcendental argument into the following sentence: 'It must be possible for the "I think" to accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought at all, and that is equivalent to saying that the representation would be impossible, or at least would be nothing to me.'[56] To pronounce the inner logic of this, frankly speaking, obscure argument, Kant used the phrase '*my* representations' or its variants in the following pages in the 'Transcendental Deduction' at least eight times, with the little word *my* (*meine*) typographically emphasized.[57] With this manoeuvre, what Kant wanted to show is obvious: the whole of transcendental philosophy is to make sense of the world of experience as man *possesses* it. This again reminds us of the wisdom in Kaulbach's twist of appearance into 'things for us'. Of course, this use of the possessive pronoun 'my' should not mislead us into misinterpreting Kant as an extreme subjectivist. In this regard, Kant left behind enough hints to tell us that human finitude was the last thing he would ever try to transgress.[58]

3. In his practical philosophy or, to be exact, in his legal doctrines, Kant made still more ingenious use of possessive pronouns. In the first part of his *Metaphysik der Sitten*, namely, the part known as the *Rechtslehre*, Kant introduced a possessive-pronominal twin expression *Mein und Dein*, which has been translated into English as 'mine or yours' and 'possession', respectively. I call this a twin expression because Kant very often used it as a 'lump sum' that takes just a single article – *das Mein und Dein*. What does this twin expression mean? *Mein und Dein* signifies man's possession in general. But to better understand what this twin expression is, we have to put it into Kant's context.

4. In his *Rechtslehre*, Kant was confronted with the task of a 'division of rights (law/justice)'.[59] What he did was a double division: he first divided rights (according to the φύσις-νόμος tradition) into natural right and positive right, but then immediately switched all emphasis to the parallel division of rights into 'innate right' (*das angeborene Recht*) and 'acquired right' (*das erworbene Recht*). It is at this juncture that the notion of *Mein und Dein* comes in. For Kant, the innate right of man could be understood as what is 'internally mine or yours' as distinct from acquired rights, which deal with what are 'externally mine or yours'. Note that *Mein und Dein* here is a general expression that Kant used to depict 'rights' from an inter-personal perspective. 'Mine or yours' used in a multiple manner from various angles will cover society as a whole. For Kant, there was only one innate right, namely, freedom. For Kant, man's freedom from bondage by others might not be a fact, but is therefore definitely a right. Freedom as an innate right, or as what is internally mine or yours, 'belongs', by default, to me, to you, and 'to every man by virtue of his humanity'. This is a basic position already declared by Kant in his earlier doctrines of the person as *end-in-itself* rather than as *means*, and as having 'intrinsic value' or 'dignity' (*Würde*).[60] Human freedom, considered socially in accordance with an *a priori* principle of coexistence or reciprocity, can only be a principle of equality (*Gleichheit*), or as Kant elsewhere put it, a matter of justice (*Gerechtigkeit*).[61] Whereas innate right (natural right) is singular and simple, Kant saw acquired rights as multiple and controversial, and as having to be established through legal means. But, in the final analysis, both kinds of rights obey what Kant called the 'universal law of justice' (*das allgemeine Rechtsgesetz*), which goes like this: 'so act externally that the free use of your Willkür can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with a universal law.'[62]

5. From the above, we can explain Kant's basic position as follows. By putting both possessive pronouns *Mein* and *Dein* next to one another, Kant was clearly declaring that, in point of law and justice, a multi- or inter-personal approach is mandatory, or that no egoistic perspective

should be allowed. Even if freedom should be regarded as an innate, inalienable right of everyone with an individual *identity*, this very freedom should not become 'heedless', but should also take the freedom of others or of *alterity* into account. This is exactly what the universal *Rechtsgesetz* is all about. Of course, Kant the moral philosopher would consider it ideal if men could act morally from respect or through *self-legislation*. But because that human *Willkür* is by nature ambivalent, Kant the legal philosopher had to make sure that, since the ideal situation was not attainable, the law had to use an iron hand to enforce through *external legislation* and sanctions that minimal justice that is the condition for peaceful coexistence between man and man, based on the principle of equality and mutual freedom.

E   Indefinite (Personal) Pronouns

1. Linguistically, indefinite pronouns are by definition 'indefinite personal pronouns' because the indefiniteness involved here, or what is not certain here, is nothing but the reference to the person.
2. Regarding the employment of indefinite personal pronouns in philosophy, Heidegger is probably the best candidate. In his magnum opus *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger coined two pronouns, one indefinite and the other super-definite, which pertain to what he called inauthenticity and authenticity. These two pronouns are: (i) *man* and (ii) *je meines* respectively. These two pronouns are so important that they have even been made into nouns, *das Man* and *Jemeinigkeit*. I will start with the first one.[63]
3. Being an indefinite pronoun, the word *man* also has a very indefinite and fluctuating meaning. In fact, a casual look at a few German dictionaries will reveal the fact that the meaning of *man* oscillates between 'people', 'we', 'you', and 'they'. We may explain this with some thought experiments: (a) Imagine that a boy is kissing a girl in a park and is about to … The girl would be very likely to say 'Nein, *man* sieht das!' In this case, *man* carries the meaning of '*people*' or 'they', which is indefinite, for there might even be no one else in the park at all. Here, *people* play the role of some invisible norms that would supposedly keep an eye on everything. (b) Imagine a bunch of lazy chumps trying to figure out what to do to kill time. Now someone might suggest 'so and so', and everybody might react in excitement by saying 'Ja, das kann *man* machen!' Here, *man* becomes '*we*' – and indeed what the linguists would call an 'inclusive *we*'. For it is through this use of *man* (*we*) that everybody gives up his own choice to identify himself with a commonly accepted value or norm. (c) Imagine that a mother spotted her daughter not observing table manners. To reprimand her daughter, the mother might say to her

'Ach! Das tut *man* nicht!' Here, *man* transfigures into '*you*', and the purpose is obviously to require the daughter to submit to some existing authority or norms. These examples show one thing clearly: since it is not a definite human individual at all, the indefinite pronoun *das Man* secretly controls the masses.

4. Heidegger's coinage of *das Man* is crucial for his theory, because once the concept of *das Man* is formed, a host of 'inauthentic' phenomena will also be in place. For example, Heidegger talked about the 'fall' (*Verfallen*) and about 'averageness' (*Durchschnittlichkeit*); about the 'levelling down' trend of 'publicness', about 'talkative fraternizing', and about 'getting lost in the They'. In such an 'average' society, conforming is the basic norm, innovation is not encouraged, and average people give up their choices and feel comfortable under such 'tempting tranquillization'. This inauthentic mode of life was described by Heidegger as: 'Unself-constancy' (*Unselbst-Ständigkeit*),[64] or the 'dictatorship of the They' (*Diktatur des Man*).[65]

5. For Heidegger, there had to be a way out of this kind of dictatorship. And the clue lies in *Jemeinigkeit*, which can be translated as 'in-each-case-mineness'. Grammatically speaking, *je meines* is a super-definite pronoun, which is the antipole of the indefinite 'man'. Philosophically speaking, *Jemeinigkeit* reveals one's being situated before one's ownmost existence. For Heidegger, *Jemeinigkeit* 'authentically' places one in front of the possibility of one's *own* death and finitude, takes one from the 'at-home' back to 'anxiety' and the 'uncanny', and puts one before one's own choices. In contrast to the inauthentic 'lost in the they', *Jemeinigkeit* cuts one off from all the inauthentic 'fraternity' and renders one into a *solus ipse*. Interestingly enough, while Husserl, like all subjectivistic philosophers, found the *solus ipse* or solipsism in general a 'disquieting thought' (*unberuhigende Bedenken*),[66] Heidegger could afford to advocate a kind of 'existential solipsism', the purpose of which is nothing but to pave a way from the inauthentic to the authentic.

6. The concept of 'existential *solus ipse*', again another pronominal structure, is not a *solus ipse* in the sense of a 'worldless I' (*das weltlose Ich*) feared and avoided by subjectivism. In a nutshell, the existential *solus ipse* is set over and against the inauthentic 'They', the anonymous 'no one', or the Unself (*Un-selbst*). Rather than rendering the self a worldless I, existential solipsism so to speak induces the self to 'individuate' (*vereinzeln*) itself from out of the anonymity of the They (Unself), so that one's authentic lifeworld can be recovered, with all the authentic *Seinkönnen* laid bare before one.[67] For Heidegger, existential solipsism does not cut one off from one's friends; on the contrary, it requires one to care genuinely about others rather than just appeasing others inauthentically through 'talkative fraternizing' (*redselige Verbrüderung*).[68]

7. Of course, Heidegger's entire theory of *das Man*[69] and of existential solipsism is not without problems. In an earlier paper, drawing upon Nietzsche's notion of the 'malady of history' and some ideas of Oskar Becker, I have tried to raise queries against this whole approach, but there is no room to do that here.[70]

F Impersonal Pronouns

1. The word 'impersonal' (as well as the word 'personal') is a very ambiguous concept. Etymologically speaking, the Latin term *persona* refers to intimate inter-human relationships characterized by mindful listening to one another. It was for this very reason that Benveniste regarded the third person (he/she/it), who does not take part in the discourse, as 'impersonal'. However, 'person' as a grammatical category (adjacent to *numerus*, *casus*, *tempus*, *modus*, etc.) is a much looser concept. It helps differentiate between the speaker (first person), the addressee (second person), and that which is spoken about (third person). From this point of view, the third person is by definition grammatically personal, and the word 'impersonal' could refer to utterly different grammatical phenomena.[71] Between these two extreme positions, we can take a middle stance to regard 'impersonal' as simply referring to the non-involvement of human(s) as agent(s). It seems that it is this meaning of 'impersonality' that is philosophically the most important.

2. In ordinary language, the pronoun 'it' is often used to denote this sense of impersonality. Consider phrases like 'it rains', 'it happens that', or 'it turns out that', and so forth. In contemporary philosophy, the most important example of such a use of 'impersonal pronouns' is Heidegger's emphasis on the 'it (*es*)', as used in the phrase *es gibt*.[72]

3. Heidegger is well known for his anti-subjectivistic position (the first person I). This basic attitude led to his own criticism of the theoretical approach of *Sein und Zeit*, which he realized retrospectively was still too anthropocentric. After the so-called *Kehre*, among various other tactics Heidegger thematized the phrase *es gibt*.[73] This suggests that, in what he now called the 'thinking of being' (*Seinsdenken*), the role of the human agent has to be underplayed as much as possible. Instead of explaining Being through the human perspective, Heidegger resorted to singling out 'Being' (and later *Ereignis*[74]) as the singular *factum*, which simply 'is there' (*es gibt*). In his book *Nietzsche II*, Heidegger wrote: 'That essence is nothing human. It is the abode of the advent of Being, which as advent grants itself an abode and proceeds to it, so that precisely as a result "There is/ It gives Being."'[75] This same *Es*, which Heidegger again and again stressed or literally 'capitalized',[76] was described as 'mysterious' and as pertaining to the singular *Sachverhalt* that embraces 'Being' and 'Time' as *Sache des Denkens*.[77] In short, it was by way of the impersonal

'It (*Es*)' that Heidegger found expression for his somewhat anti-subjec-tivistic, anti-anthropocentric, but also misological and tautological way of thinking that escapes all reason.

4. From a cultural-critical point of view, it is fully understandable why Heidegger resorted to singling out the 'It' as an antidote to the subjectiv-istic 'I'. For Heidegger, the 'Thou' in Buber's or Marcel's sense is obvi-ously insufficient to counterbalance the effect of the 'I', which was for him the source of the crises of modernity. But was Heidegger right in all this? I am afraid not. It seems to me that, with all respect to Heidegger's criticism of culture, the entire programme of his later thought should be questioned. And for me such questioning can follow two lines of thought: (a) Is the role of the 'I' really as negative as was suggested by Heidegger? (b) Is the role of philosophy really at its end, and should we allow what Heidegger regarded as 'thinking' to overshadow all other discourses? But again these questions lie beyond the scope of the present paper, which deals mainly with pronouns.

IV Conclusion: Pronouns as Phenomenological Experience

What is it that by its very essence is *necessarily* the theme whenever we exhibit something *explicitly*? Manifestly, it is something that proxi-mally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*.[78]

When Heidegger wrote the above passage, what he had in mind was obviously the theme of his lifetime – *Sein*, which he once depicted as the *Urphänomen*. It seems that we can readily borrow his words to refer to the theme of this paper – pronouns – which has remained largely *hidden* from traditional philosophy. But why, in fact, do we need to thematize pronouns philosophically today? Why don't we just leave it to the linguists to deal with all those linguistic technicalities? In what way do pronouns actually matter to us? As I thought in this direction, it suddenly became clear to me that the truly hidden phenomenon is not pronouns themselves, but that which they refer to – nouns, which further turn out, step by step, to be nothing but persons or, in a word, humanity, whether we are talking about it positively by articulating the meaning of the three grammatical 'persons' and reckon-ing with the boundaries and tension between them, or dealing with it nega-tively by advocating its retreat in the face of the unfathomable abyss of Being; whether we are lamenting its 'fall' and 'loss' in the midst of the inauthentic crowd, or anticipating its authentic individuation. Through the various pronominal forms and structures, we see how decisively such personal-humanistic concerns have been precipitated into the discipline of philosophy, giving each doctrine its *Gestalt*. Through the thematization of

pronouns, we indirectly testified to Kant's conviction that the question 'What is man?' is one of the most fundamental in philosophy. Compared with Heidegger's problem of *Sein*, the question of pronouns is at least not 'unfriendlier'. This is because pronouns, like the verb 'to be', have infiltrated every corner of everyday human existence and, morphologically speaking, pronouns are much less mythical. If Western philosophers can spend two-and-a-half millennia studying the verb 'to be' – under the name of ontology – why should we not give pronouns, or pronominology, a chance?

In the above brief sketches, the immanent role played by pronouns in philosophy should have been made manifest. For these examples have demonstrated how powerful and versatile pronouns are in helping the most varied human experiences and humanistic phenomena find ways of articulation or even transformation. These pronouns, together with the wealth of philosophical discourses and technicalities wrapped around them, are for us a rich vein of phenomenological experience, and will be an invaluable treasure for any future 'phenomenology [of pronouns]', towards which I have provided only some groundwork.

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Notes

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932–1935*, ed. Alice Ambrose (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), Sections 11, 18.
2 Frank R. Blake gives the classic example of this: 'Johnnie (= I) wants to go with Papa (= you) to see Grandma (= her).' See Blake, 'The Origin of Pronouns of the First and Second Person', *American Journal of Philology*, 55(3) (1934), pp. 244–8.
3 If philosophy is taken in a very broad sense, then there have been people like Humboldt, Benveniste, or Bühler who have handled pronouns thematically. However, they have done this mainly in their capacity as linguists rather than as philosophers.
4 See Antoine Arnauld and Claude Lancelot, *The Port-Royal Grammar*, ed. and trans. Jacques Rieux and Bernard E. Rollin (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 92ff.

5 Some linguists prefer the term 'endophora' to signify all pronominal structures, which are referred 'within' the sentence. Endophora is further divided into anaphora and cataphora depending on whether the reference is made to the preceding or following text. Over against endophora, the term 'exophora' is also used to refer to pronominal references 'outside' the sentence, i.e., in the real world. *Exophora*, therefore, is another term for *deixis*. See the entry for 'anaphora' in *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* (Web Edition: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anaphora, last accessed 18 May 2004).

6 For this reason, Bühler assigned to anaphora the important function of contributing to 'the joints of speech'. See Karl Bühler, *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language*, trans. Donald Fraser Goodwin (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 1990), pp. 438ff.

7 Ibid., p. 135. See also John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 275ff.

8 Roman Jakobson, thinking along similar lines, has remarked that the right brain is a bridge connecting the speaker to the extra-linguistic reality. See Roman Jakobson, with the assistance of Kathy Santilli: *Brain and Language: Cerebral Hemispheres and Linguistic Structure in Mutual Light*, New York University Slavic Papers; Vol. 4 (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1980), pp. 29f; also pp. 20–1.

9 Grammatically speaking, 'now', 'then', 'here', 'there', and so forth are adverbs of time and place rather than pronouns, but they do belong to 'demonstratives' and, most importantly, many linguists consider them to have the same origin as pronouns. See Wilhelm von Humboldt, 'Über die Verwandtschaft der Ortsadverbien mit dem Pronomen in einigen Sprachen', *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band VI (Berlin: Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften), pp. 304–30; cited by Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), p. 119. See also Bühler, *Theory of Language*, pp. 122ff.

10 In fact, both the *Port-Royal Grammaire* and *Port-Royal Logique* include a section on pronouns that basically covers only anaphoric structures.

11 For the contemporary development of the theory of indexicals, see David Braun, 'Indexicals', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Zalta. Web URL: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/indexicals/ (last accessed 23 May 2004).

12 See C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, Vol. 2, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1998), Book 2, Ch. 3 on 'The Icon, Index, and Symbol', pp. 156ff.

13 It is for this reason that Karl Bühler has preferred to group the derivatives together with the two main types of pronoun, which results in the following bifurcation: (1) demonstrative and interrogative pronouns, and (2) personal and possessive pronouns. See Bühler, *Theory of Language*, p. 133.

14 See Elmar Holenstein, 'Die eigenartige Grammatik des Wortes "ich"', in *Menschliches Selbstverständnis* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), p. 74.

15 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Werke*, Band 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 82–5. See the chapter on 'Sense Certainty'.

16 Emile Benveniste, 'The Nature of Pronouns', in *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary E. Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp. 218–20.

17 See Husserl, *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenlogischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch* (*Ideen I*), ed. Walter Biemel (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), §150, pp. 370f.; more importantly, *Ideen II*, ed. Marly Biemel (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1952), §41, p. 158; §54, p. 213.

18 This idea of *Nullpunkt* was for Husserl even the key to *Ursprung der Raumvorstellung* (*Ideen I*, p. 371); then also his *Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusst-*

seins, where Husserl maintained that perception through the body constitutes the pole of reference for all spatial orientation. In the paper 'Systematische Raukonstitution', dated 1917, Husserl also expounded on the idea of the body as *Null-Körper* occupying a *Nullstellung* and serving the role of *Nullorientierung*, etc. See Husserl, *Ding und Raum*, Husserliana, Band XVI (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1973), pp. 303, 326, 328ff. This very idea was absorbed by Oskar Becker in his *Habilitationsschrift* (supervised by Husserl) entitled *Beiträge zur phänomenologischen Begründung der Geometrie und ihrer physikalischen Anwendung* (1923), Neudruck (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1973), pp. 70ff. Here, Becker was using Husserl's theory to explain the dimensionality of orientated space.

19 Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Band II (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), p. 187.

20 Elmar Holenstein, 'Der Nullpunkt der Orientierung: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der herkömmlichen phänomenologischen These der egozentrischen Raumwahrnehmung', *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 34 (1972), pp. 28–78. This paper was revised and included in Holenstein, *Menschliches Selbstverständnis* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), with the new subtitle 'Die Plazierung des Ich im wahrgenommenen Raum', pp. 14–58.

21 Bernhard Waldenfels, by quoting Kant, remarked that, after all, the very concept of 'orientation' is derived from the word 'orient' (the East), where the sun as the most eye-catching object becomes the most decisive factor for orientation. See Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other, 2004 Tang Chun-I Lectures* held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (New York and Hong Kong: SUNY Press and CU Press, 2007), p. 115.

22 In his paper 'Die eigenartige Grammatik des Wortes "ich"', Holenstein again devoted a section to the issue of 'Der Nullpunkt der Orientierung', in which he further elaborated the role of orientation in inter-personal understanding. See *Menschliches Selbstverständnis*, pp. 71ff.

23 Purely linguistically, the same query about the nature of *origo* has been raised by Bühler: see *Theory of Language*, pp. 122–3.

24 Plato depicted thinking as the mind's dialogue with itself. *Theaetetus* 189e–190a; *Sophist* 263e.

25 Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Über den Dualis* in *Schriften zur Sprache*, ed. Michael Böhler (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973), pp. 21–29. See also his *Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts*, better known as the 'Kawischrift', *Werke in fünf Bänden*, Band 3, *Schriften zur Sprachphilosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), pp. 429–30.

26 Benveniste, 'Subjectivity in Language', in *Problems in General Linguistics*, p. 226.

27 Elmar Holenstein further stressed that the uses of 'I' and 'you' are markedly reversible (*umkehrbar*) and interchangeable (*ausgetauscht*). See Holenstein, *Menschliches Selbstverständnis*, p. 67.

28 Benveniste, 'Relationships of the Person in the Verb', in *Problems in General Linguistics*, pp. 199–200.

29 Benveniste, 'The Nature of Pronouns', in *Problems in General Linguistics*, pp. 217f., 221.

30 For a more detailed analysis by the present author, see Tze-wan Kwan, 'Heidegger's Quest for the Essence of Man', *Analecta Husserliana*, 17 (1984), pp. 47–64.

31 Heidegger, *Nietzsche II* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), pp. 141ff.

32 Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1981), p. 90.

33 Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), p. 98.

34 In his conversation with Dorion Cairns in the 1930s, Eugen Fink underlined the view that the question of infinitude or finitude is the great line of divide between Husserl and Heidegger. See Dorion Cairns, *Conversation with Husserl and Fink* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1976), p. 25. Many years later, Fink further explained that this was because Heidegger wanted to 'avoid the danger of deifying (*vergotten*) humanity in any idealistic manner'. See Eugen Fink, 'Welt und Geschichte', in *Husserl et la Pensée moderne*, Phaenomenologica 2 (Den Haag, 1959), pp. 155–7.

35 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, with a Postscript by the author, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith, 2nd edn (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958).

36 See Gabriel Marcel, *The Broken World*, trans. Katharine Rose Hanley (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998).

37 In preparing this list, the following sources have been used: (1) Electronic corpora of Chinese classics prepared by the Institute of History and Linguistics, Academia Sinica; (2) The electronic version of the *Guoyu Cidian* prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China; (3) Electronic corpora of Confucians of the Northern Song Dynasty, prepared by the Research Centre for Humanities Computing, the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and (4) Lao Sze-kwang's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (Hong Kong: Chung Chi College, CUHK, 1968–81).

38 In saying this, I do not, of course, mean that the Chinese mind fails to cognize natural objects: Joseph Needham has explained so much about the contributions of the Chinese mind in science and technology. What I mean is that the Chinese mind very seldom puts the issue of objective cognition on the level of serious and systematic philosophical reflection.

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

40 Aristotle, *Met.* Book VIII, 1049b10–11.

41 See Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 393. See also Ernst Bloch, *Zwischenwelten in der Philosophiegeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), p. 116.

42 Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethica*, Part I, Def.1.

43 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A253/B309; A255–6/B311–12.

44 Ibid., A255/B311.

45 Kant, *Prolegomena*, in *Kant's Gesammelte Schriften* (*KGS*), Band IV (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1903, 1968), p. 373: 'Mein Platz ist das fruchtbare Bathos der Erfahrung.'

46 Friedrich Kaulbach, *Immanuel Kant* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), p. 129. Kaulbach's redefinition of appearance as *Dinge für uns* is certainly in line with Kant's basic position. On describing the domain of phenomena or appearance, Kant very frequently employed expressions such as *unser(e)*, *für uns*, *unsere menschliche …*, and so forth (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A34–5/B50–2).

47 For more details on this topic, see Tze-wan Kwan, 'On Kant's Real/Problematic Distinction between Phaenomena and Noumena', *Tunghai Journal*, 26 (1985), pp. 173–209.

48 For some inspiring thoughts on Hegel's *sich*-expressions, see the entry on 'In, For, and In and For, Itself, Himself, etc.', in Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 133–6,

49 The following section is a summary of three of Benveniste's papers in his *Problems in General Linguistics*: in order of relevance to the topic, (1) 'Categories of Thought and Language', (2) 'Active and Middle Voice in the Verb', and (3) 'The Linguistic Functions of "To be" and "To have".'

50 Most contemporary interpreters render κεῖσθαι and ἔχειν respectively as 'position/posture' and 'state'. Such an interpretation can arguably be traced as far back as Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole's *Logique de Port-Royal* (1662). See Arnauld, *La Logique ou L'Art de Penser* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1981), pp. 49f. On the other hand, Windelband's interpretation followed the same direction and should be responsible for more recent influences. See his *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Heinz Heimsoeth (Tübingen: Mohr, 1957), p. 121.

51 For more details about a further development of Benveniste's interpretation, see Tze-wan Kwan, 'The Doctrine of Categories and the Topology of Concern: Prolegomena to an Ontology of Culture', in *Analecta Husserliana* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995), pp. 243–302, especially pp. 259–63.

52 Arnauld and Nicole, *Logique de Port-Royal*, p. 51.

53 Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, trans James Tufts (New York, Macmillan, 1901), p. 142.

54 I very pleased to be able to note that in the first keynote speech delivered by Professor Kah-Kyung Cho at the conference 'Identity and Alterity', hosted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong, reference was made to the Greek middle voice, which Cho depicted as evidence for the Greek experience of a 'de-emphasized subjectivism'.

55 Kant, *Preisschrift*, in *KGS*, Band XX (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1942), p. 275.

56 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131–2, trans. Norman Kemp Smith.

57 See Kant's 'Transcendental Deduction' (B edition), *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132–9.

58 See Tze-wan Kwan, 'Subject and Person as two Self-Images of Modern Man: Some Cross Cultural Perspectives', paper presented at the first OPO conference held in Prague in November 2002 and published at www.o-p-o.net in 2003; see especially the section on 'Kant's Special Place in the Subjectivistic Tradition'.

59 Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *KGS*, Band VI (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1907), pp. 237ff. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Tze-wan Kwan, 'Kant's Possible Contribution to Natural Law Debates', presented at the International Kant Symposium, held 17–20 May 2004 at Peking University, China. Paper pending publication.

60 Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *KGS*, Band IV (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1903, 1968), pp. 434–5.

61 Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten*, p. 302.

62 Ibid., p. 231.

63 For details, see Tze-wan Kwan, 'From "Dictatorship of the They" to "Existential *solus ipse*": A Heideggerian Problematic of Life-world', *Legein Bulletin*, 6 (Taipei, 1991), pp. 113–64.

64 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 322f., 332.

65 Ibid., pp. 126–7.

66 Husserl, *Pariser Vorträge*, Husserliana, Band I (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), p. 34.

67 In this connection, the juxtaposition of the indefinite *man* and the super-definite *je meines* and the transformation of the former to the latter can be considered as Heidegger's contribution to the millennia-old question of *principium individuationis*. See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 38, 188ff., 265ff., 336ff.

68 See Heidegger's concept of *vorausspringen*, in contrast to *einspringen*, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 122.

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69 For a critical appraisal of Heidegger's notion of *man*, see Holenstein, *Menschliches Selbstverständnis*, p. 75.
70 See Tze-wan Kwan, 'The Human Sciences and Historicality: Heidegger and the Self-Positioning of the Western Humanistic Tradition', in David Carr and C. F. Cheung (eds) *Time, Space and Culture* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004), pp. 31–55.
71 In grammar, 'grammatically impersonal' is often synonymous with 'indefinite'. One typical example is the plural form of 'you' being depicted as 'grammatically impersonal'.
72 See Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969), p. 18: 'Es gibt sein, es gibt Zeit. … Die Grammatik und Logik fassen daher die Es-Sätze als Impersonalien und als subjektlose Sätze.'
73 *Es gibt* (literally 'it gives') is equivalent to 'there is' in English.
74 Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, pp. 46–7.
75 Heidegger, *Nietzsche II*, p. 377. The translation cited is by Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, Vol. 3/4, pp. 232–3), it should be noted that in Heidegger's original, the impersonal *Es* is expressed more prominently than in the Krell translation: 'Dieses Wesen ist nichts Menschliches. Es ist die Unterkunft der Ankunft des Seins, das sich als diese mit jener begabt und sich in sie begibt, so dass "Es" – demzufolge und nur so – "das Sein gibt".'
76 Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, p. 5.
77 Ibid., pp. 46, 17.
78 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 35.