# Editorial Foreword

## "Homoiōsis theōi" or "Imago Dei": A Contextual Reading on the Issue of "after the Subject" *

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The concepts of "subject" (主體) and "subjectivity" (主體性) are not only central to modern Western philosophy, but also a focal point in contemporary Chinese academia and various discourses on modernity. Given the close connection between subjectivity and modernity, Chinese scholars are particularly interested in discussing the subjectivity of traditional Confucianism to revitalize Confucian thought within the modern context.[①] As cultural exchanges and dialogues between the East and the West deepen, "Chinese cultural subjectivity" has become a frequent topic among scholars and the media. However, it is important to note that the concepts of subject and subjectivity originate from Western philosophy, and their semantic meanings in Chinese and Western contexts, while related, differ in emphasis and implicit connotations. Unlike the affirmation and exaltation of

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[①] There has been a great deal of discussion on the question of subjectivity in Confucianism, both among Chinese and foreign scholars, to name but a few. Mou Zongsan, a representative of contemporary New Confucianism, argues that the three schools in the Chinese tradition, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, all emphasize subjectivity. The discussion mainly focuses on the theory of moral cultivation in Confucian ethics, approaching to the question of subjectivity from the "self." Lao Siguang has also used the category of subjectivity to explain Chinese philosophy. [LAO Siguang, *The New History of Chinese Philosophy* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2005); SHEN Shunfu, "Subject and Virtue: On the problem of Subjectivity in Traditional Confucianism", *Academics* no. 2(2017): 45-54.]

subjectivity in the Chinese context, subjectivity in contemporary continental philosophy is a concept to be deconstructed, and its legitimacy and validity has always been questioned. With the French philosophical community's inquiry into "Who is the subject after the subject?" (Aprés le sujet qui vient?),[1] the "after the subject" has emerged as a problematic for the issue of the subject or the self. The philosophical and religious roots of the modern notion of the subject can be traced back to ancient Greek and Christian anthropology, and philosophical reflections on the "after the subject" also have significant implications for religion and theology. Examining the question of "after the subject" from the perspective of the Western tradition can help us better understand the subject/self and subjectivity in the Chinese context.

## The Raising of the Problem: The Anthropological Turn and "After the Subject"

In the modern context, subject and object are a pair of concepts that stand in opposition to and co-constitutive to each other. Broadly understood, the subject refers to "person" or "self" in general or individual sense, with its meaning further refined from this basis. The subject implies, first and foremost, a "self" in the pure sense of immanence, but also a subject in the sense of inter-subjectivity, as a subject to, and of others. Additionally, the subject can be the object of knowledge and discourse about human existence, or it can even refer to a body that is separate from other human bodies in a given physical environment.[2] However, all understandings that relate the subject to the person and thus to human identity, including the related concepts of subjectivity, objectivity, and intersubjectivity, originate from the French philosopher Descartes, often regarded as the father of modern philosophy. In ancient and medieval thought, reflections on the person and the self never took the name of the subject, and the subject as a metaphysical concept was never equated with the person. It can be argued that the person

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[1] Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy eds., *Who Comes after the Subject* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991).

[2] Donald E. Hall, *Subjectivity* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 2-3.

as subject is itself a modern narrative. Descartes' equation of the Ego with the subject as the basis of the certainty of knowledge not only triggered the "epistemological turn" in the history of philosophy but also represented an ontological shift that standardized the modern world's understanding of existence. By reducing phenomenal manifestation to the "representation" of consciousness, Descartes grounded existence in the subject, and the philosophy of subjectivity became the modern form of metaphysics.

The "representational thinking" or "controlling thinking" inherent in the philosophy of subjectivity signifies an "anthropological turn" within universal cultural consciousness. The disenchanted world manifests itself before the subject as an object, becoming cognizable only through the epistemic principles deduced by subjectivity. By means of a universal scientific methodology, the subject achieves predictive mastery over nature. As Heidegger critiqued, this paradigm operates under the illusion that "...everything can be proved and grounded in an absolutely strict and pure manner."[1] Like all metaphysical systems, the philosophy of subjectivity implicitly posits an explanatory mechanism for the genesis of "originary" meaning. The foundation of the meaning of world and human society shifts from God or the "Absolute" to humanity itself—the subject or consciousness becomes the origin of meaning. While profoundly shaping modernity's trajectory, this philosophical framework precipitated crises: the ascendancy of positivist science and scientism engendered philosophy's marginalization, while unveiling modernity's inherent dilemmas. With the triumph of the philosophy of subjectivity, metaphysics has exhausted all possibilities and is heading towards its own end, culminating in multifarious politico-ethical consequences such as nihilism, crisis of humanity, ecological collapses, colonialism, power-discourse discipline, gender politics, and religious antagonisms. For religion and theology, human experience and consciousness of God now constitute theological starting points. God is reconfigured as an object related to the feeling of absolute dependence or even reduced to anthropic projection. When divine revelation is subsumed

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[1] Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbgriffe der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 30. Cited in Simon Critchley & Peter Dews eds., *Deconstructive Subjectivities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 107.

under anthropological frameworks, faith degenerates into merely one mode of human existence. Consequently, theology is compelled to justify itself upon anthropological foundations.

The question "Who comes after the subject?" interrogates the modern conception of the subject which is autonomous, self-sufficient, enclosed, and constructive in nature. Rooted in Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of subjectivity while influenced by structuralist currents, this inquiry seeks to decenter the subject's primacy in philosophical thought and explores possibilities for a non-metaphysical understanding of subjectivity. The phrase "after the subject" reveals its deconstructive impetus—the subsequent "who" is posited as a post-metaphysical arrivant existing beyond traditional frameworks. As Jean-Luc Nancy articulates, this "who" denotes a "place" or "singularity" that need not be anthropomorphized.[①] Whether this arrivant retains the name "subject"—be it Heidegger's "Dasein," Marion's "L'Interloqué," or a Nietzschean "Übermensch"—remains an open question. Indeed, the inquiry itself resists demanding definitive answers, functioning rather as deconstruction or via negativa that clears conceptual space for the coming "who." Any proposed substitute (e.g., Dasein) must in turn undergo deconstructive scrutiny.

Do we still need to talk about the subject? The possibility of a non-metaphysical subject depends on whether the subject itself (as Heidegger understood it) can only be a metaphysical concept. After Heidegger, any discussion of the subject must consider his critique of the philosophy of subjectivity, and it cannot simply return to a pre-modern conception of the subject. Instead, it must renew the understanding of the subject through the experience of deconstruction. The question may be: Do we still want to understand the self in terms of the subject? Does deconstruction ultimately lead to "negation" or to "affirmation"—and affirm in what way?

## "Homoiōsis theōi" and the Modern Subject

The opposition between the spiritual and the material world is an ancient one, but the equation of the mind with subjectivity or consciousness

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[①] Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy eds., *Who Comes after the Subject*, 98, 107.

is a unique feature of modern philosophy. While the ancient Greeks viewed man as a "rational animal" and believed that only humans possessed reason, modern philosophy recognizes that only humans are entitled to be called subjects. The understanding of the self in different eras is closely related to rationality, which may imply a hidden connection between the modern subject and the ancient conception of the self.

The Greek oracle "Know thyself" awakens man to the discovery of his own rational nature. According to Plato, life is the union of soul and body, and the soul is the source of the movement of life, with only the soul capable of possessing intelligence. In his famous trichotomy of the soul, reason, will, and desire represent three different principles of action. The justice of life and the state can only realize if will and desire are ruled by reason.[①] Charles Taylor points out that the pre-modern world's understanding of the self and the meaning of life was often linked to a higher reality—in the case of the ancient Greeks, the cosmic order, and in Christendom, the transcendent God. For Plato, reason itself is defined as an order or the embodiment of cosmic order in the soul, and individual life is determined and shaped by the pre-existing rational order.[②] This statement is corroborated by Plato's idea of "likeness to god" (Homoiōsis theōi).

The Greek word "kosmos" literally means "order." In Timaeus, Plato describes the universe as a spherical god created by pure reason (Demiurge). The human head is an imperfect imitation of the perfect spherical sky, and the human rational soul is a lower version of the divine cosmic soul. As rational beings, the highest goal of human life lies in the full realization of their rational nature, i.e., to "become as much like god as possible" (Homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton) within the limits of what is possible. The divine attributes sought by the rational soul are immortality, happiness, good, knowledge, and self-sufficiency. The likeness to god is first and foremost rational; both Plato and Aristotle viewed reason (nous) as the divine part of man, and the purely rational life as superior to the moral life.

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[①] Plato's doctrine of the soul is scattered across multiple dialogues, primarily found in *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, *and Timaeus*.

[②] Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: *The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 43, 124.

The highest degree of immortality that man can attain lies in making the rational part of the soul the true self. Happiness (eudaimonia) denotes the divine spirit (daimōn) within oneself, i.e., the rational part in an ordered and good (eu) state. The contemplative life outside the cave or outside the politics of the city-state is the greatest bliss and brings one as close as possible to immortality.[①] The idea of Homoiōsis theōi was inherited by Aristotle and had a profound influence on Christian anthropology.

Husserl has noted that the Renaissance accomplished a revolutionary transformation of human nature in Europe. It rejected the medieval way of existence and reinvented itself using the humanity of antiquity as a model. What was fundamental for the ancients "nothing less than the 'philosophical' form of existence: freely giving oneself, one's whole life, its rule through pure reason or through philosophy."[②] The examination of the world requires breaking free from all mythological and traditional constraints, pursuing a universal knowledge about the world and humanity devoid of prejudice, ultimately discerning the inherent rationality and teleology of the world—and its highest principle, God. Modern Europeans, like the ancients, sought to shape themselves through free reason. The new philosophy initiated by Descartes, rooted in ancient philosophical ideals, aims at nothing less than a comprehensive theoretical system based on rigorous methodology. This philosophical and anthropological modern shift was termed "renewed Platonism" by Husserl.[③] Thus, is the modern concept of the subject a contemporary version of the Homoiōsis theōi? Both insist on mind-body dualism, emphasize humanity's rational essence, and elevate the self-sufficiency of the self/subject. Both assert that the pure exercise of intellect demands maximal detachment from the body, desires, and dependence on society or others. These parallels suggest that the modern concept of the

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[①] Dialogues addressing "likeness to god" extend beyond the Timaeus to include the Republic, Phaedrus, and Theaetetus, where moral dimensions of "likeness to god" are discussed. However, as far as "likeness to god" is concerned, the intellectual self-perfection of the soul remains dominant, with moral considerations being secondary. [David Sedley, *Themes in Ancient Theology*, translated by LIU Weimo (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2021), 86-129.]

[②] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, translated by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 8.

[③] Ibid. 8-9.

subject, from Descartes onward, shares at least a formal resemblance with the notion of Homoiōsis theōi. However, upon closer examination, significant divergences emerge in their respective understandings of reason and the self.

For Plato, Homoiōsis theōi entails being "ruled by reason" — a notion grounded in a substantive conception of reason. Reason actualizes its function only through orientation toward true Being. Thus, "ruled by reason" must be understood as governed by an external rational order inherent in the cosmos. For Descartes, however, this external rational order does not exist. To regard the external world as a self-revelation of certain ideas (eidos/idea) constitutes a confusion between two distinct substances: soul and matter. The mind cannot possess direct knowledge of the external world; it can only comprehend the external world through innate idea. Consequently, the order of reason becomes the order of the mind's representation of the external world. Descartes abandoned the ancient Greek teleological cosmology, viewing the world instead as mechanistic or functional. The mind adopts a detached perspective, objectifying the world, including the body. Thinking is an act of aggregation (cogitare) or construction based on clear and distinct ideas, which must conform to the standards of evidence or certainty derived from the cognitive subject's mental acts. Descartes internalized the "rule of reason," transforming reason into an inherent attribute of thought—a procedural, order-constructing capacity. "Ruled by reason" thus signifies the mind's instrumental control over the material world.[1]

The transition from the ancient self to the modern subject was not accomplished in a single stride; between Plato and Descartes was Augustine. Augustine was deeply influenced by Platonism and in many ways a precursor to Descartes. He previewed Descartes' proofs of God's existence and the argument of "cogito sum," especially his inward turn of thought, in the inward man dwells truth (in interiore homine habitat veritas), which prepared the way for the emergence of the modern subject. Augustine understood Plato's idea as the thoughts of God, and the external order as the expression of God's thoughts. Having lost the ability to recognize the order of things directly because of original sin, human beings need to turn first to the interior, to be healed through an encounter with God in the depths

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[1] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, 143-158.

of the soul. God is the inner light that makes our cognitive activity possible. The activity of knowing is a turning to the self, a reflective stance that makes experience a kind of presence to oneself, whereby the subject acquires the first-person perspective of the "I." This first-person perspective has been the basic starting point of modern philosophy since Descartes, opening up the inner realm of consciousness. Of course, Augustine did not turn to the self in order to establish a dualism between mind and body, but to discover God in the inner soul. The more one seeks the inner, the more one realizes that the self lacks self-sufficiency. Descartes, on the other hand, achieves a self-sufficient certainty through reflection. Although Descartes also attempted to prove the existence of God, the presence of God is only a necessary procedure to guarantee the certainty of knowledge, with the end result being the attainment of a clarity of self-presentation. Although Descartes was not an atheist, his reworking of Augustine certainly paved the way for later Deism.[1] Ancient philosophy understood knowledge as the acceptance of given truths rather than as human creative activity. In Augustine, the real initiative of cognitive activity was triggered by the inner light of truth. Subjectivism after the eighteenth century gradually abolished the transcendental dimension of earlier subjectivism, and the modern subject, which has done away with its theological presuppositions, gained a position of absolute origin and centrality. Through subjectivity, man's relation to his surroundings is creative, and he creates his own essence. Subjectivity replaces the "theological conception of God as an absolute subject"[2] and becomes a secular likeness to God. Of course, the God here is no longer the Platonic order of reason, but a personal God who creates from nothing (creatio ex nihilo). The creativity of the subject comes more from the Christian tradition's understanding of the divine-human relationship.

## "The Image of God" and the Reconstruction of Relationships

In the creation narrative of the Old Testament, man is created in the

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[1] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, 127-142.

[2] Karl Löwith has expressed this view on multiple occasion. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theologie und Philosophie: Ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprech, 1996) 117, 138.

"image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26), and the "image of God" (Imago Dei) becomes the unique definition that distinguishes man from the rest of creation. The use of homoiōsis and eikon/image in the Greek translation of the Old Testament has colored the biblical narrative with Platonism.[①] Christianity rejected Platonic notions of the divine nature of the soul, the pre-existent soul, and the reincarnation of the soul,[②] but adopted the Greek metaphysical concept of eikon/image to rewrite the similarity between man and God. In ancient world, "image" meant first and foremost the relationship between the work of art as a copy and the archetype. This aesthetic relationship of imitation was used to establish a link between being and non-being, between eternal divinity and temporality. Through Origen's systematic elaboration of the "chain of images" in the creative order, the "image of God" is understood as the question of the likeness between man and God in the sense of the relationship between image and archetype.[③] There has been much theological discussion of where this likeness lies,[④] but we will focus here on two formal features related to the "after the subject."

First, the concept of "image of God" emphasizes the similarity between man and God in that they are both personal. In the modern context, "person" is often equated with "individual" in the sense of an atomistic self, largely

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[①] Humans are not mere imitations of a divine prototype but, in the Platonic sense of "likeness to god," are in a continual process of drawing nearer to the divine. In Christian mysticism, both "likeness to God" and "Eros" are invoked to explain humanity's desire for direct communion with God and the soul's ascension toward the infinite Divine. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theologie und Philosophie: Ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte*, 51-54.

[②] Christian doctrine posits that the soul, as part of God's creation, lacks inherent divinity. Although later Christianity adopted the notion of the soul's immortality, this concept remains contingent upon the Creator's will. For the soul to attain likeness to the divine and participate in the divine immortal life, it requires God's grace and the transformative elevation by the Holy Spirit.

[③] Jenson argues that while the term "image" appears in Scripture, it does not play a determinative role. Robert W. Jenson, Systematic *Theology vol.2: The Works of God* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53-54.

[④] The concept of likeness can be understood primarily in terms of rationality, as Aquinas posited, or as Descartes interpreted, through free will. It may be conceived, in Catholic theology, as a potential intellectual capacity, or in Protestant theology, as the actualization of intellect. See Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol. 2: The Works of God*, 54-55. If approached from a creational perspective, the divine likeness implies that humans possessed the image of God from the moment of creation. However, through the Pauline theological distinction between the "first Adam" and the "second Adam", a soteriological and eschatological framework reveals the image

through the mediation of the modern concept of the subject. However, the concept of person has a theological origin, derived from the classic expression of the doctrine of the Trinity: "one essence/substance, three persons." In both Greek (Prosopon) and Latin (Persona), it refers first and foremost to the "mask" used in theatrical performances, and to the human person as well.[1] The meaning of person contained therein, including the concept of person in later Roman law, is more evolved from the meaning of "role," reflecting a certain relational concept, and does not refer to the real existence of human beings. After all, in the ancient Greek world, individual or personal does not have ontological status. Influenced by Greek metaphysics of substance, the Latin Church understood one God as one divine essence, with three Persons sharing and unified by the divine essence. The fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers creatively distinguished the Greek notion of concrete substance "hypostasis" with the substance in universal sense, "ousia," and equated its meaning with that of "prosopon." The Greek Fathers thus gave the word person ontological content and found the best way to express the triune God. At this point, Personhood replaces essence as the basic category for understanding the Trinity.[2] The Trinity is unified in person, not in a preexisting essence, but rather the essence is constituted by the communion of persons. Personhood itself implies relationality, and the identity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is established in relationship. Man's relationship with God is even more so through a person, the incarnate Jesus.

As a result of Platonism, there has been a tendency in the Christian

of God as an unrealized potential awaiting fulfillment. Alternatively, humans may be created "according to" the divine image rather than being the image itself. In this view, human likeness to God remains imperfect, with only the incarnate Logos—Jesus—being the true image of God. *See Wolfhart Pannenberg, Systematic Theology Vol. 2*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London & New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 202-230.

[1] "Prosopon" carries the meanings of "mask," "face" and "visage." LUO Niansheng, SHUI Jianfu eds., *Ancient Greek-Chinese Dictionary* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006), 749. In Latin "persona" refers to "mask," "role," "character" and "person." China Catholic Academic Committee ed., *Latin-Chinese Dictionary*, Unpublished, 1039.

[2] Greek theologian Zizioulas argues that the Cappadocian Fathers' ontology of personhood constitutes an ontological revolution, positing person (hypostasis) rather than essence (ousia) as the ground of being. This perspective, while influential in 20th-century Trinitarian theology, remains contentious. See John Zizioulas, Being as *Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993).

tradition to understand the "image of God" in terms of reason, as in Augustine's psychological approach to understanding the Trinity, and Boethius' definition of the human person as "an individual substance of rational nature" (naturae rationabilis individua substantia), or Aquinas' understanding of "image" as "the faculty of understanding, free decision, and self-mastery."[①] This understanding of the human person as an individualization of a common essence from the perspective of "nature" is more of a static understanding of individual characteristics and lacks a relational dimension. Approaching the "image of God" (imago Dei) from a personal perspective—as a similarity in mode of existence rather than essence between human and divine persons—restores the original relational connotation of "person." This avoids modern atomistic or individualistic interpretations of the self. Within Christian theological discourse, to be a person necessitates transcending biological attributes through participation in the divine person (Jesus) and becoming homo ecclesiasticus, thereby actualizing the "image of God." Consequently, Christian anthropology inherently encompasses Christological, ecclesiological, soteriological, and eschatological dimensions.

Closely related to the emphasis on personhood, the "image of God" inherently contains a "call-response" structure. Human dignity and uniqueness originate from their relationship with God, which lies in a personalized calling—humanity's position exists within the response to this call. The distinction between humans and other creatures is that humans are unique creations called by God and capable of response, becoming called prayers. Moreover, this call is directed not at individuals but at the community. Similarly, humanity's response to God is also communal, and the response is not limited to linguistic means but can be expressed through various audible or visible signs. Therefore, the "image of God" is not an attribute possessed by individuals but is based on the existence of human community. This community could be the Church or a human polity; Adam and Eve might be the earliest representatives of humanity's corporate response. Within this call-response structure, the primordial call creates

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[①] See Boethius, *De duabus naturis*, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologeia*, 1a, 93.5.

humanity and enables humans to speak to one another.[1] If human identity originates from dialogue, then humans no longer possess themselves and are no longer self-sufficient, autonomous subjects. Humans must receive their selfhood from elsewhere, constituting their selves through relationships with others.

It is not difficult to observe that the two characteristics of personhood and dialogicality inherent in the "image of God" hold significance for rethinking the issues of the subject and subjectivity. The open, dialogical self as demanded by "after the subject" is already implicit in the Christian tradition's view of humanity. Alternatively stated, the "who" that comes "after the subject"—whether appearing as "Dasein," "L'Interloqué" or "transparent subject"—is not a new arrival but itself a product of Christian culture. The modern subject encounters not pure sensory data but a world already received through dialogue and interpreted by the community. This world is first interpreted by the triune God and then by the social community in which humans dwell. Heidegger's notions of Dasein's always already "being-in-the-world" (In-der-Welt-sein) and "being-with" (Mitsein) others are nothing but secularized versions of the "image of God" hermeneutic. Within the doctrine of Trinity, one finds the origins of the 20th-century "dialogical personalism" (dialogischen Personalismus) and the prototype of "intersubjectivity."[2] Heidegger's call of conscience/being and Dasein's response, Marion's "L'Interloqué" summoned from original inauthenticity, Badiou's "objectless subject," Derrida's "finite experience of non-identity to self" evoked by the Other, Levinas' "face of the Other"... all these alternatives to the subject rely on a call-response structure. However, Heidegger emphasizes philosophy's "atheist" character, Derrida stresses the "non-divine origin" of the call, and Marion insists on the "anonymity" of the call to preserve the purity of phenomenology. The initiator of the call— the primordial voice—need not be concretized, thereby retaining richer hermeneutic possibilities.

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[1] Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology vol.2: The Works of God*, 58-64.
[2] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theologie und Philosophie: Ihr Verhältnis im Lichte ihrer gemeinsamen Geschichte*, 116.

## Conclusion

The modern concept of the subject is intrinsically connected to ancient Greek and Christian anthropologies. It may be argued that the philosophy of subjectivity constitutes the ineluctable trajectory of Western philosophy. The crux of the "after the subject" problem lies in modernity's erasure of transcendence and reason's self-legislation. Philosophy is the narcissism of reason, perpetually seeking itself through concepts, returning to itself, and saying "yes" to itself. Even when, as Descartes attempted, reason seeks to confirm the transcendent source of human existence and knowledge, as long as reason continues pursuing validity and epistemic certainty, the subject will merely reappear in new guises—even as a "receiver" controlling this discursive game.

How can the subject "after the subject" make dialogue an obligation without appealing to God? Can Western thought transcend its "subject" self through its own traditions? Chinese thought, with its eventual and relational language, intuitive symbolic thinking, the spirit of immanent transcendence, and the unique concept of "the mandate of heaven," may serve as the "Other" to Western thought. Here, the significance of the question "Who comes after the subject?" lies in initiating a dialogue—not only between Western thought and its own traditions but also with Chinese thought that highlights subjectivity. Perhaps dialogue itself is a kind of calling.

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