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HUSSERL ON CHINA AND CULTURE CENTRISM

Introduction

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During the past two decades there have been opposite positions in regard to the cultural philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Despite the Eurocentric position of Husserl, defenders consider him innocent of Eurocentrism. In their eyes, as Husserl himself already pointed out, Europe does not refer to any particular area in terms of geography. It signifies instead transcendental status that people around the world are expected to acknowledge in themselves. (Sepp 2004: 297) In this way, Husserl can be seen to have contributed to intercultural issues. To become “European” does not mean to submit oneself to an alien culture, but to advance to a higher level of rationality as well as personality. Concretely speaking, when people recognize “the idea of one world” that displays the spirit of openness, they become “European.” (Held 1989: 22)

In an article published in *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Dermot Moran proposes to defend Husserl by situating his appeal to universal reason within the political context in the 1930s, when the main stream of philosophy and anthropology in German inspired by National Socialists was opposed to universalism. Ernst Kriek and Alfred Kremmt are mentioned as representatives. Moran’s argument may well help us become aware of this historical concern of Husserl.

Nevertheless, Husserl's thesis that only Europe deserves the title of universal reason is accepted by him since he also holds that only in Greece did the breakthrough to theoretical reason happen and it is from ancient Greece that Europe originated.⁸⁰

This tendency of interpretation meets with the counter-position of skepticism that questions the interpretation of "Europe" in Husserl. For example, Holenstein raises the question: How is the birth of philosophy and science as well as the idea of universalism in the ancient Greece so crucial to modern Europe? The triumph of modern Europe since 17th century due to achievements in science and technology does not mean that the early Greece provides the only source for such a development. What matters is the result and the result may be traced back to more than one source. Not all the European achievements have their origin in early Greece, since some are adapted from other cultures and refined. (Holenstein 1998: 233, 236) In addition, the so-called Europeanization (or Westernization) of the globe should never be overemphasized. Even though many other cultures were influenced by Europe extensively, they have also proceeded to remold themselves. In such a case, taking China as an example, the European achievements are Sinonized. (Holenstein 1998: 238)

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Even if universalism is important, what of pluralism, which is no less inherent in the Husserlian discourse on culture? The relationship between homeworld and alienworld deserves much more attention. The overriding of the difference between two worlds by introducing the idea of one world is questionable, particularly when only Europe claims to incorporate such a universal idea. How Europe is justified in setting up standards and ideals for all other cultures as the intertwining relationship between self and other, between homeworld and alienworld, needs to be more deeply understood. (Waldenfels 1997: 80; 2004: 285)

Based on Husserl's insights Anthony Steinbock unfolds a kind of homeworld/alien-

80 Moran, Dermot. "Even the Papuan is a Man and not a Beast: Husserl on Universalism and the Relativity of Cultures," first presented in the third OPO (Organization of Phenomenological Organizations) conference (Hong Kong 2008), revised version is received from the author.

world discourse without assuming the idea of one world. He contends that the homeworld does not count as the independent foundation of the alienworld. (Steinbock 1995: 248) The status of homeworld is so to speak made relative due to the fact that the homeworld and alienworld are co-constituted. The alienworld is never independent as long as alienworld is always alien to a specific homeworld, and the reverse holds true because no homeworld is possible without the existence of alien homeworld that lies beyond it. Steinbock strongly objects to the idea of one world that diminishes all differences between cultures and particularly the delimitation between homeworld and alienworld. (Steinbock 1995: 207)

The present essay reexamines Husserl's discourse on culture with special emphasis on his remarks about China. No geographical region other than Europe has attracted so much attention from the founder of phenomenology. Europe plays a substantial role in his philosophy in so far as it incorporates rationality. By contrast, the "non-Europe" would be viewed as a whole without distinction, be it India, China, Papua New Guinea, or Patagonia. It is the difference between Europe and non-Europe that he focuses on. Never has Husserl been seriously concerned with any specific civilization beyond Europe. If he deals with them, it is only for the sake of example-giving.

However, among all his examples China is very frequently mentioned. Husserl refers to it not only because China is a non-European civilization, but also because China is the typically alien and incomprehensible culture in his eyes. Granted that he never discusses China at length, his thoughts about it provides us with the most insight into how he thinks about the difference between Europe and non-Europe as well as what it means to encounter alien culture.

China is then intertwined with two major problems in the cultural philosophy of Husserl:

How to conceive of the relation between Europe and non-Europe in general?

How to analyze the experience of encountering alien culture, i.e., what is the relationship between what he calls "homeworld" and "alienworld"?

These two questions will be discussed in the first two sections of the present paper. On such a basis further reflections will be made in the concluding remarks, in particular in relation to the problem of culture centrism.

I. Europe and non-Europe

Husserl's discourse on Europe appears mainly in texts such as *Krisis* (Hua VI), *Intersubjectivität* (Hua XIII-XV), and *Lebenswelt* (Hua XXXIX). Among these the most remarkable is his so-called "Vienna Lecture" of 1935, which is published in *Krisis* as an Appendix (see Hua VI, 314-348, Carr translation, pp. 269-310). We will start our discussion with this text.

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The background of Husserl's discourse on Europe, as is well known, is the reflection on the reason why the European science went into crisis in the modern age. What is the meaning of such a crisis? How can one cope with such a crisis and wherein lies the solution? In consideration of this problematic Husserl comes to deal with "Europe." First of all Europe is not defined for him in terms of geography. Not all the people living within the boundary of geographical Europe belong to "European humanity" (*europäisches Menschentum*)—the wandering Gypsies are his typical example of non-Europeans in Europe. (Hua VI, 318) In contrast, some people who are living beyond the boundary of geographical Europe, such as Americans (the indigenous Native Americans excluded) deserve being treated as "Europe men" in terms of their cultural or spiritual heritage. Husserl holds definitely that Europe can only be interpreted in terms of its spiritual life, spiritual activity and creativity. Anyone, as long as he or she shares such a heritage may be seen to be an European, regardless of his or her social class, ethnicity, clan, or family. The European is characterized either through personhood, social organization, or cultural achievements. (Hua VI, 319)

But, what is in reality the "spiritual Gestalt of Europe" (*die geistige Gestalt Europas*)? For Husserl, there is a sort of historical mission or teleology in the spiritual development of Europe. This signifies that a new stage of humanity is achieved which is characterized by the willingness to live by the ideal of reason. In Husserl's understanding this novel epoch began historically in ancient Greece during the seventh century B.C.. This event, which is the birth of philosophy, is so unique that no similar happening ever occurred in other ancient cultures, such as India and China. The crucial point lies in what Husserl calls "theoretical attitude" (*theoretische Einstellung*). (Hua VI, 325)

Attitude is defined by Husserl as “a habitually fixed style of willing life comprising directions of the will or interests that are prescribed by this style, comprising the ultimate ends, the cultural accomplishments whose total style is thereby determined.” (Hua VI, 326, Crisis, 280) Only in ancient Greece was the theoretical attitude disclosed and developed, only there does one find people devoted to philosophical-scientific research, i.e., people with the theoretical attitude in the full sense.

By contrast, the “philosophy” that emerged in other civilizations can only be evaluated as religious-mythical practice (*religiös-mythische Praxis*), which is closely connected with the natural attitude in daily life. This kind of practice is concretely revealed through “the mythical way of perceiving the world.” (Hua VI, 330) The whole universe is regarded as dominated by the mythical power. It follows that the knowledge based on the religious-mythical attitude is none other than the knowledge about the mythical power. People pursue such knowledge not for the sake of knowledge, but instead for the sake of earthly happiness. To sum up, from the European standpoint, Chinese or Indian thought can only be regarded as religious-mythical thought. They are not qualified to be called the philosophy. They are incomparable to the Greek philosophy.

Although philosophy constitutes only a part of the whole culture, yet for Husserl philosophy is the core of the culture. Philosophy so to speak upholds the spirit of Europe. (Hua VI, 337) In order to clarify the meaning of philosophy, Husserl distinguishes between the philosophy revealed in determinate epoch and philosophy as idea. The former is considered to be only an incomplete realization of the latter. The true meaning of philosophy lies in self-reflection (*Selbstbesinnung*). (Hua VI, 339) Understood as such, philosophy is universal knowledge (*universale Erkenntnis*). (Hua VI, 339) However, from the beginning of modern age, even though the philosophy considers itself to incorporate the universal reason, it is revealed in the manner of objectivism and naturalism which reduces spiritual existence to natural phenomena. These also hold that spirit is founded on bodily experiences. According to such a point of view, the human being is no more than a part of the objective facts. (Hua VI, 341)

But Husserl is suspicious about the way how the homogeneity of nature could

be appropriately applied to the heterogeneity of the spirit. He contends that the subjectivity of the human being does not allow itself to be adequately studied in terms of scientific positivism. Only by way of intentional phenomenology, in particular transcendental phenomenology, can one gain adequate access to spiritual phenomena. By contrast, the psychology that is conducted in the manner of objectivism or naturalism just turns away from spirit.

In sum, the spiritual world of Europe begins from the emergence of the idea of reason, i.e., the birth of philosophy. But with the impact of the objectivism and naturalism in the modern age, Europe falls in deep crisis in regard to science as well as the humanity. Husserl is keenly aware of the weariness of Europe in regard to its rational culture and he is obliged to recover the innate teleology of European culture and hopes to lead “European” people to restore their heritage.

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II. Cultural Difference

Edmund Husserl obviously notices the difference between cultures. Every person lives in his “primordial *Umwelt*” (*primordiale Umwelt*, Hua XV: 436), in which he not only interacts with his fellow people and behaves himself according to the social norms, (Hua XIV: 225) but also shares with these others the common cultural mode, which he determines as *Umwelt-Apperzeption*. (Hua XXXIX, 159) Living within the familiar milieu, we can easily understand the meaning of the objects around us as well as other people’s behavior. Taking up the example mentioned by Husserl, if we see someone using scissors to cut a piece of paper into slices, we can figure out what is going on without difficulty. In case we know more about the vocation of this person, for example, that she is an editor, the meaning of such a behavior is even clearer. (Hua XXXIX, 159)

In other words, the *Umwelt-Apperzeption* is quite crucial to grasping meaning. Sometimes such an apperception does not exist at all. This happens when we come to an unfamiliar environment. Not only the meaning of other people’s action is unclear, but also the specific meaning of certain objects becomes vague, for example, the plant on the farm, the building beside the road, etc. This is the typical situation when one discovers an alien *Umwelt* starting from the primor-

dial *Umwelt*. (Hua XV: 426) Husserl imagines that he would dizzy if he were in a town in China, (Hua XXXIX, 159) since all essential types of behavior and objects would be unfamiliar to him. Even though he is certain that there are types that lie behind the appearances he encounters, yet he knows nothing about them. All that he knows remains extremely superficial.

Living in one's familiar environment, with help of *Umwelt-Apperzeption*, one is always clear about the meaning of what is going on. Even if the occupations of some people are different from mine, such as farmers or soldiers, I still share with them the common *Umwelt*. Our *Umwelt-Apperzeption* are so much alike that we share what Husserl calls *Erfahrungsgemeinschaft* and *Denkgemeinschaft*. (Hua XXXIX, 171) We all live in the same "world-horizon" (*Welthorizont*). (Hua XXXIX, 160) Between us and them there is the unity of traditionality and by way of familiar types I may more or less easily get in touch with their thoughts, no matter how their occupations are distinguished from mine.

Beyond the familiar milieu there are alien environments in which people lead ways of life that are unfamiliar to me. Husserl mentions, for example, that between him and the Chinese there is just no common world. The living conditions over there in China is what he is not at all familiar with. All in all, all things in the alien environment are not easily accessible. The only way for the outsiders to get access to the meaning of objects or people's behavior is to change the mode of apperception.

In sum, for people in general, the world is revealed to them in the form of generative homeworld (*generative Heimwelt*). In contrast to their own homeworld, there are the alien homeworlds of other people. (Hua XXXIX, 163)⁸¹ Living in a world, people set up and pursue their goals. Their homeworld is the framework of their total actions and provides people with useful resources. Moreover, as persons they themselves also make up parts of the world. Husserl now raises a question in regard to such a world: Can people reach beyond the confines of the

81 It is noteworthy that Anthony Steinbock unfolds the viewpoint of co-constitution of homeworld and alienworld. (Steinbock 1995: 182) My emphasis in this paragraph is more related to Husserl's descriptions about how one experiences the alienworld from his own homeworld.

homeworld? He is confident about such a possibility and the answer points to the theoretical attitude of scientific culture.

Husserl does not object to the possibility to break with the confines of one's homeworld through religion. In particular, absolute religion also has a "universal worldly intention" (*universale weltliche Intentionen*). Nevertheless, as a philosopher, he is not inclined to treat religious revelation as the ultimate foundation of conviction, i.e., to let science be grounded on religious faith.

As Husserl sees of it, the greatest obstacles in understanding an alien culture lies in dealing with the role of the mythical (*das Mythische*). How can the secularized Europeans get access to a mythical apperception (*mythische Apperzeption*)? Husserl asks if there is a core that is involved in all kinds of apperception? Can the mythical apperception be deprived of such a core? Is it not the function of such a core to make all mutual understanding between different cultures possible? Should we not assume a common world for all, such that the comprehension of mythical apperception would be made possible?

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Husserl holds that such a question is closely related to the following question: Who has provided us with the scientific theory to deal with question concerning the homeworld as well as alienworld? He is convinced that the answer to this question lies in ancient Greece and the Europeans who have inherited the Greek tradition. (Hua XXXIX, 169) He asserts furthermore that only the European can possess the knowledge of the barbarian, not the reverse. All the analysis in knowledge is the contribution of the Europeans.

Herewith, Husserl reflects on his own cultural background. He is aware of the fact that even though he is unable to lose his own cultural background and, besides, he only counts as one person among many and his vulgar, mundane personality is the starting point from which he deals with his own thinking. He is, so to speak, confined to his own *Umwelt-Apperzeption*. Even science was first learned about during his school years. But does this signify that the truth is only regionally valid? Can the knowledge he learns be valid only for himself and without universal validity? A relativist may hold such a position, but Husserl is strongly opposed to it.

Husserl contends that as long as my own conviction is true, it would maintain its valid-

ity even among the people of primitive tribes. But what is exactly the content of this truth? The answer lies in “the one world” (*die eine Welt*) that is revealed to all persons, no matter which kind of *Umwelt* he lives in. Such a one world would make up the universal framework and all the different *Umwelten* would constitute only as aspects of it. (Hua XXXIX, 171) In such a case, the one world is also presumed by the religious-mythical attitude.

Husserl concludes that only the Europeans – thanks to the heritage from ancient Greece – could see the commonalities shared by all cultural worlds through the superficial differences in cultures. Such an idea of one world is constructed by way of the theoretical attitude, which is crucial to the birth both of philosophy and science. This is what the ancient Romans could not achieve. For this reason they had to learn from the ancient Greeks. It is also what the Chinese in the modern age have not achieved and they also have to learn from the Europeans.

Husserl holds that, in the pre-scientific world, there is immeasurable distance between him and other people. But so long as he assumes the role of scientist, the situation changes. He may recognize what is going on in the diverse types of experiences in different worlds. What Husserl advocates is the “descriptive science of the *Umwelt*” (*descriptive Wissenschaft von der Umwelt*) that concerns the non-living objects as well as the living objects, certainly including the human persons who live in the *Umwelt*. This is a science that concerns the individual objects and is no other than the science of the empirical world (*Wissenschaft der Erfahrungswelt*). With help of such a science, people can seek the common aspects of all cultural worlds. It is a universal world of experience, which makes up the core of apperception and is assumed even in the mythical way of thinking.

III. Husserl on China

After clarifying these two preparatory steps, we can resume our main theme. Husserl’s articulations about China can be characterized in three ways: 1). Arbitrary example-taking; 2). The negative appraisal of China; 3). The broadening of horizons through a change of attitude.

1). Arbitrary example-taking

By referring to *Umwelt* as a spiritual concept, i.e., a construction out of history and tradition of the people that are concerned, Husserl holds that the *Umwelt* of European humanity is completely different from that of the Indian people or Chinese people, so long as the latter two peoples have their own specific characteristics. When Husserl deals with the problem of understanding an alien culture, he often uses China as his example.

He mentions on the one hand the experience of the European who arrives in China, encountering a totally different culture, (Hua XXXIX, 159) and, on the other hand, the experience of Chinese who encounter the European culture and come to learn from it. (Hua XXVII, 163) The very first time a European arrives at China, he would meet with situations that are beyond his comprehension. As Husserl imagines,

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The individual type is not completely unknown to me: a plant, but of a strange sort, a field, but full of plants that are unfamiliar to me. The work on the field: I do not grasp the typical ways of cultivating the land. A house is built in alien ways. Is it a temple, or is it a building of the government? I am in China, there is market trade and traffic, but in an alien way. I do know that they have their own typification, but I have no knowledge of them; somehow there are people there in the market. (Hua XXXIX, 159, my translation)

Husserl emphasizes how one can catch no more than the superficial meaning of what one encounters. The deeper structures of the typification are concealed for the people who do not belong to them. In order to understand China, the European can do no otherwise than “grow up into” the homeworld of the Chinese, similarly to how a child grows up into the world of adults. (Hua XXXIX, 158) He has to learn some past history of this homeworld that is originally alien to him. The European has to catch the mode of apperception of this alien-world. No matter whether it could be realized, this remains the presupposition of a proper understanding of the Chinese culture. But here Husserl emphatically points out that the concerned European (or the German) remains who he is, an European or a German. His adherence to his *Umwelt* remains unchanged.

In Husserl’s conception everyone lives in his *Umwelt*, which has, as men-

tioned before, a spiritual heritage of history and tradition, and accordingly involves specific cultural characteristics. No matter whether this is national or regional, there is overall an obvious boundary between cultural groups. How one gets across the borderline to get in touch with an other culture beyond is a big issue in Husserl's eyes. He treats it as no easy job to overcome cultural difference. It is thus a big challenge for an European to get access to the Chinese culture, and the same for a Chinese when he arrives at Europe and tries to get hold of the achievements of the European culture, e.g., the poetry or the music and, particularly, the philosophy and science. He also needs to grow up into the homeworld of the European as much as possible.

2). The negative appraisal of China

Superficially, in dealing with cultural difference, Husserl takes up an equal position to compare the experience of an European who encounters Chinese culture with the experience of a Chinese who encounters the European culture. But an imbalance becomes obvious when one looks more deeply into Husserl's discourse. It is true that both the European and the Chinese need to grow up into each other's homeworlds in order to appropriate the alien culture. But what exactly do they have to cope with? As long as one remembers that outside of Europe there is no philosophy (and accordingly no science), the mode of thinking can be characterized as mythical-religious or mythical-practical. This is what the European find most difficult to get over. In Husserl's notion, the élite among European people underwent a change of attitude – from the naïve mythical mode of thinking to the more sophisticated mode of rational thinking – this makes up the basic difficulty in regard to how an European encounters the non-European culture.

The non-European world is distinguished from that of the European by lacking philosophic-scientific rationality and the Chinese world is no exception. When a European tries to get access to the Chinese homeworld, he has to make himself familiar with the mythical-magical worldview. Conversely, if a Chinese desires to have a better understanding of the European culture, he has to transform

himself into an European, (Hua XXXIX, 169) creating a “European I” in himself, (Hua XXVII, 103) that is to say, equipping himself with European rationality. Behind Husserl’s discourse on encountering cultural difference is the essential distinction between rationality and irrationality.

Seen as such, we may not be surprised at Husserl’s seemingly unintentional remarks when he wants to explain what imagination is through the example as such: “... in the fantasy ‘appears’ the objectivity of fantasy, now they are for me gigantic Chinese, to the feet of whom there are pretty dwarfs and tiny trees.” (Hua XIII, 299, my translation) Or in other contexts he makes direct comments as follows: “... within their own framework of meaning this world-view and world-knowledge are and remain mythical and practical, and it is a mistake, a falsification of their sense, for those raised in the scientific ways of thinking created in Greece and developed in the modern period to speak of Indian and Chinese philosophy and science ... in a European way.” (Hua VI, 331; Crisis, 284-285) The Chinese way of thinking, as long as it is characterized by Husserl as mythical-magical, does not deserve being called Chinese philosophy, much less Chinese science.

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The image of China is thus quite negative in Husserl. But Husserl may not be the only one who devaluates China. Let us see things in a broader perspective. Max Weber, for examples, comparing Europe, in particular the Protestant Ethic with all the other types of ethic around the world, also came to similar conclusion that due to the “enchantment” (*Entzauberung*) of the Protestants capitalism came to develop in Western Europe. The whole world, except that of Protestant Europe, remains caught up in magical thinking and therefore was unable to develop capitalism by themselves.⁸²

With similar arguments Husserl posits that among all cultures on earth

82 Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons ; introduction by Anthony Giddens. London/New York: Routledge, 1992, c1930. Incidentally, Kwok-Ying Lau suggests that Husserl’s discourse on the contrast between Europe and non-Europe is reminiscent of Hegel’s comments on Indian and Chinese philosophy, which are only on the elementary level. See Kwok- Ying Lau, “Husserl, Buddhism and the Problematic of the Crisis of European Sciences,” in *Identity and Alterity: Phenomenology and Cultural Traditions*, ed. by Kwok-Ying Lau/ Chan-Fai Cheung/ Tze-Wan Kwan, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2010. p. 224.

only the culture developed in Europe deserves the name of philosophy and science thanks to its fortunate heritage from ancient Greece. The European culture is quite unique and Husserl sees his transcendental phenomenology as the genuine inheritor of this great tradition.

Whether both Husserl and Weber are correct in their theses is in my opinion an open question, which is not going to be explored in this context, yet one thing that is clear to Husserl as well as to Weber is that compared to the European culture of rationality, China is devaluated as mythical-magical.⁸³

3). The broadening of horizons through a change of attitude

Husserl's discourse on cultural difference, including his discourse on China, does not end here. The essential concern for him is as follows: Is there a common ground among all cultures? Supposing there is, wherein lies the access to it? Husserl is certain that all people live in different cultures, and they have difficulty to gain access to one other, so cultural difference is difficult to deal with. But for Husserl, it is the case only when people are bound up by their own narrow vision, that is to say, so far as they live in their native (*urwüchsig*) attitude. As long as they do not learn to change their standpoint, they will continue to live in their narrow horizons. Now the question is how to widen our horizons, i.e., what does Husserl suggest for us to get over our limitations? The answer lies in, as already indicated, changing the attitude from naïve-practical one to the theoretical one. This change is no other than the contribution of the ancient Greek culture, and accordingly the most precious contribution of the European culture to the whole world.

83 This is not, however, a universal viewpoint among European, even in the early 20th century. A contrary point of view emerged, for example, as Karl Jaspers praised China as well as India in his book *Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus : the Paradigmatic Individuals* (edited by Hannah Arendt ; translated by Ralph Manheim, San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985, c1962)

This contribution brings about a new way of looking at things, which are not just of practical concern, but of theoretical concern. Husserl mentions: “My reflective concern for human existence, human environment, human world-having prior to science and on the fore-having of universal science is itself the reflective concern of the European.” (Hua XXXIX, 169, my translation) In this way, one may encounter what lies behind all the different cultural worlds – the only one world for all, which Husserl also determines precisely as the lifeworld. We have already explored this point in the earlier section.

Concluding Remarks and More Questions Raised

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Taking into account the current world situation, one might wonder how to evaluate Husserl’s discourse about culture. Should we say that whereas Husserl is dealing with the genuine question of how one encounters alien cultures, he completely overlooks or could not foresee the mixed or hybridized cultures that have become commonplace in our time? The cultural development in the 20th century indicates that no culture can be completely enclosed in itself, because no culture can evade the constant exchange with other cultures, the result of which is the hybridization of culture. Husserl’s view that we might encounter an alien culture that is completely incomprehensible and understood only with the help of the switch into the theoretical attitude to recognize the commonality between cultures seems to us so odd that one may doubt the value of Husserl’s discourse completely.

But what if we read his viewpoint from a different angle, that is, no matter how each culture is in constant exchange with other cultures and no matter how the border between cultures has been redefined over the time, there is always something unfamiliar that confronts us – be it attractive or haunting. As long as the borderline between familiarity and unfamiliarity remains, cultural difference of some kind will continue to hold. Seen this way, should the experience of encountering cultural difference not remain an issue for us today as for Husserl in his epoch?

As regards Husserl's discourse on China and Eurocentrism, one may be motivated to make further reflections. First of all, let me point out that it is unusual for the Chinese people to identify themselves as "Chinese." China, the prefix of which refers to the first imperial Chin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), is an unusual name for the Chinese people in general. "China" is a name from outside. The Chinese call themselves the people of the Middle Kingdom or the Kingdom of Centre (*Zhongguo*). Whereas "center" may signify a geographical location, it may also refer to the attitude of centrism.

Traditionally the Chinese people hold a kind of centrism firmly because they are highly confident about their own culture. Their pride lasted until the Boxer Rebellion at the end of the 19th Century. The breakdown of Sinocentrism means China was forced to join the "New World Order" modified by Europe or the West. However, the centrism of China has never genuinely vanished, as long as they never cease to call themselves the people of the Kingdom of Center (*Zhongguo Ren*). If any form of centrism is objectionable, then either Eurocentrism or Sinocentrism should be equally condemned.

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But what if we take centrism as sign of confidence in one's own culture? As cultural anthropology tells it, most cultural groups, be they civilizations, nations, or local communities tend to treat themselves as the center of the world. This is reminiscent of the Husserlian description of the spatial orientation of each of us as the zero point of orientation in the body. If it is meaningless to raise the question as regards who stands in the centre of the whole world in terms of space, should not such an idea also hold good in regard to culture? Should we not suggest that neither Eurocentrism nor Sinocentrism is true, as long as each of them just claims itself to be the centre of all cultures and through this way shows firm confidence in its own culture? Can a culture survive without centrism? Would it not become a culture that turns back on its own worldview?

If the Middle Kingdom has confidence in itself, then the Sinocentrism would be a natural consequence. Should one ban Eurocentrism, so should one do the same to Sinocentrism. But if Sinocentrism is a natural effect that the people of the Middle Kingdom have confidence in their own culture, then why not regard Eurocentrism also in the same way? Seen as such, as long as both Eurocentrism and Sinocentrism are just different expressions of culture centrism, should we continue to criticize Husserl in a harsh manner?

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