The Problem of Intersubjectivity in Heidegger’s Concept of solus ipse

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I. Introduction

One of the aims in the existential analytic of Dasein is that Heidegger seeks to develop a new determination of the self of Dasein that is distinguished from the concept of self as elaborated by modern Cartesian metaphysics. According to Cartesian metaphysics, the self is thought to be situated in a self-positing “I think” whose function is to produce representations of things in the world. And because the self is only related to its representations, which are separated from the world, it is defined as an isolated ego encapsulated in its immanent consciousness. In contrast to such a conception of the self, Heidegger argues that the self of Dasein is constituted in the ec-static movement of “potentiality-for-Being” (Seinkoennen) by which Dasein transcends towards the world. The ec-static movement by which Dasein already finds itself in the midst of world is the distinctive characteristic of Heidegger’s concept of the self. Since the self of Dasein is defined as an ec-static self transcending towards the world, it is not coincided with the enclosed self separated from the world in the sense of Cartesian metaphysics.

In his account of the self of Dasein, Heidegger, however, also contends that, in the state of anxiety, Dasein is withdrawn into itself and becomes solus ipse, namely the solipsistic self. “Anxiety individualized [vereinzelt] Dasein and discloses it as ‘solus ipse’.” (BT, 233) Also, in the phenomenon of “resoluteness”, Dasein again becomes an individual self. As Heidegger states: “Dasein is authentically itself in the primordial individuation [Vereinzelung] of the reticent resoluteness which exacts anxiety of itself.” (BT, 369) With this concept of the solipsistic self that is disclosed in anxiety and in the phenomenon of resoluteness, Heidegger now seems to set forth a phenomenon, which speaks directly against the definition of the self of Dasein as the ec-static self. That is, instead of an ec-static self that exists essentially in the midst of the world, he now seems to posit an isolated self without others as given in his concept of solus ipse. Therefore, with the solipsistic self, it now seems that Heidegger regresses back to the modern

2 The solipsistic self of Dasein in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology has been misinterpreted by some commentators. It has been conceived in such a way that the existential analytic of Dasein still remain caught in the modern metaphysical view of the self which refers to the Promethean self-willing of an isolated subject. J. Taminiaux, for instance, claims that the solipsistic self of resolute Dasein “contains a sort of paroxysm of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity,” Cf. J. Taminiaux, Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology (New York: The University of New York Press, 1991), xix. In addition, Jean-Luc Marion, an influential Heidegger scholar, goes so far as to interpret the solipsistic self of Dasein revealed in the phenomenon of resoluteness as an autarkic subject, which indicates not the destruction, but the culmination of the modern metaphysical concept of subjectivity. He explains: “Autarky, however strange it might sound, is the suitable term, for resoluteness only opens the world in the ec-stasis of care through eventually disclosing that the self of Dasein leads back to itself. Even if the autarkic and self-poising of Dasein do not regress back to the self-constitution and permanence of subsistence or the present-at-hand, the mime the latter.” Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “The Final Appeal of the Subject”, in Deconstructive Subjectivities, edited by S. Critchley and P. Dews (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 90.
metaphysical concept of subjectivity, or at least he mimes it. However, is it the case that in spite an ec-static self, Heidegger seeks to reestablish the solipsistic self that is encapsulated in its immanent domain and knows nothing but its own modifications? In other words, does the concept of the solipsistic self lead us back into the modern Cartesian concept of an isolated self despite the destruction of modern subjectivity in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology?

Among many problems in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology, the relation between the ec-static movement of Dasein and the solipsistic self must be singled out as the principal problem. For the most part, this relation has been understood as a contradiction or as an inconsistency in Heidegger’s concept of the self. The common view is that, though Heidegger emphasizes the ec-static self at the beginning of the existential analytic of Dasein, his concept of solipsistic self represents the destruction of the self that exists in the world. Hence, the solipsistic self has been understood as an indication that Heidegger’s thought still remains in the Cartesian tradition. Upon closer examination on the solipsistic self, this, however, is not the case. In a proper sense, the solipsistic self of Dasein has nothing to do with the encapsulated self in the Cartesian metaphysics. Right after the introduction of the solipsistic self, Heidegger immediately speaks of the “existential ‘solipsism’.” (BT, 233) In other place, he also makes a reference to “the metaphysical isolation of Dasein.” What is at stake here is that he qualifies “solipsism” or the “isolation of Dasein” with the term “existential” or “metaphysical”. In order to avoid a misunderstanding of the solipsistic self, one must distinguish the “existential solipsism” from the “epistemological” and “practical solipsism”. With the discovery of the ec-static movement as an essential characteristic of Dasein, Heidegger certainly departs from the modern concept of subject that has been defined as an isolated self. Therefore, although Heidegger alludes the solipsistic self, he does not intend to reinstitute the *epistemological solipsism*, which presupposes that the self of Dasein is enclosed within its immanency of representing consciousness without any access to an outer world. The essential quality of modern subjectivity, however, consists not only in the concept of representing consciousness of a knowing subject but also in the Promethean stance of a self-positing ego, which subordinates every other thing to itself in order to dominate them. In this Promethean stance, the emergence of modern subjectivity is tantamount to the conquest of beings by man in the course of history. The Promethean self-positing subject can also be conceived as *solus ipse*, insofar as it reduces every other thing to itself, which is enclosed within the “impregnable walls of a self-willing.” In contrast to the epistemological solipsism, we can characterize *solus ipse* of a self-willing ego as *practical solipsism*. Nevertheless, by the solipsistic self of the resolute Dasein, Heidegger does not mean the practical solipsism.

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5 As you will see later, for Heidegger the term “existential” and “metaphysical” in his own sense are used interchangeably.
For Heidegger, what “existential solipsism” reveals is that the solipsistic self of Dasein—whether it is a theoretical Dasein or the practical Dasein—is never conceived of as “an isolated subject-Thing [ein isoliertes Subjektding] into the innocuous emptiness of a worldless occurring.” (BT, 233) However, although Heidegger clarifies that the solipsistic self has nothing to do with an isolated ego, he does not present, sufficiently, the positive definition of the existential solipsism. Hence, there arise so many misunderstandings. In this paper, we will try to elucidate the genuine meaning of the solipsistic self by furnishing the positive determination of the existential solipsism, in which Heidegger’s peculiar concept of intersubjectivity is ultimately grounded.

II. The Difference between Existential and Categorial Determination of the Self

It is a well-known fact that in fundamental ontology, Heidegger seeks to establish the new foundation of the self that has been forgotten by Cartesian metaphysics. In par. 6 in Being and Time, he criticizes Descartes for setting up the philosophical system on the foundation of “I think”. “With the ‘cogito sum’ Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined [unbestimmt] when he began in this ‘radical’ way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the res cogitans, or—more precisely—the meaning of the Being of the ‘sum’ [Seinsinn des >sum<.” (BT, 46) Here in order to set up the new concept of Being Heidegger puts into question the traditional concept of foundation by making a contrast between “I think” and the “Being of sum”. Moreover, he points out that Descartes only focuses on “I think” and fails to consider the “Being of sum”. Later he defines the “Being of sum” in terms of “existence”; “The ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence.” (BT, 67) By the term “existence”, Heidegger, however, does not only mean to express the new foundation of Dasein that is distinguished from the foundation of “I think”. The term “existence” also signifies the ground for the new mode of thinking.

The contrast between “existence” and “I think” is the basic starting point for the development of the existential analytic of Dasein. Based on this contrast, Heidegger further distinguishes the existentialia way of thinking from the categorial way of thinking. “Because Dasein’s characters of Being are defined in terms of existentiality, we call them ‘Existentialia’ [Existenzialien]. These are to be sharply distinguished from what we call ‘categories’ [Kategorien]—characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein.” (BT, 70) In another passage, he also states: “‘With’ and ‘too’ are to be understood existentially, not categorially.”8 (BT, 154-155) The categorial ways of thinking, which refers to Cartesian metaphysical determination of beings, is founded and draws its justification from the foundation of “I think”. But for Heidegger, the essence of Dasein is based on “I think”. Consequently, the categorial thinking is not regarded as the appropriate mode of determining beings.

The defining characteristic of Dasein lies in its existence. What is at stake in the term “existence”, however, is that this term signifies not only the peculiar mode of Being of man but also the new mode of thinking which Heidegger calls the existentialia distinguish from categories. But in the existential analytic of Dasein, he does not provide us the proper meaning of the existential way of thinking sufficiently. Therefore, we often confuse these two modes of thinking and misunderstand the certain essential feature of Dasein. For instance, in dealing with the solipsistic self of Dasein, we, who

8 See also, BT., 71, 81,183.
are only accustomed to the categorial thinking, immediately define it as an isolated self. This confusion between the existential and categorial thinking is the reason why the solipsistic self of Dasein has been widely misinterpreted as an isolated ego. Hence, in order to understand the proper meaning of the solipsistic self, we must first grasp the difference between existential and categorial thinking.

For Heidegger, categorial thinking is a thinking based on the isolated thinking subject.\(^9\) In modern philosophy, categorial thinking was first systematically formulated by Descartes. What still makes the Cartesian metaphysical thinking so modern today is its radically new approach to determining the fundamental ground of the knowledge of things. Unlike the Scholastics, Descartes did not think that the fundamental ground consists in God, through which we can have certainty in our knowledge of things. By adopting a radical attitude of nominalistic skepticism, revealed in his formulation of the deceitful God,\(^10\) Descartes successfully demonstrated that the metaphysical ground of knowledge founded on the concept of the veracious God in the Scholastic metaphysics is baseless. Moreover in searching for a new fundamental ground that must be immune to the outright doubt, he discovered that there is an indubitable fact in the act of thinking. As he states: “This proposition: I am, I exist, is necessarily true every time that I pronounce it or conceive it in my mind.”\(^11\) I am a thinking substance; therefore, I am. With this indubitable principle of cogito that is separated from the world, Descartes provided the foundation of the categorial thinking. Accordingly, what is primarily given in categorial thinking is the thinking substance enclosed in its immanent representations. Here, one can see the two distinctive characteristics of the categorial thinking. First, categorial thinking based on worldless cogito necessarily presupposes the presence of self-centered subject, which relies on nothing but one’s own rational power in regard to the theoretical activity and practical activity. Second, in the categorial thinking of cogito, what is originally given is the self conceived of as an encapsulated atomistic self that is separated from the world.

But in contrast to this, Heidegger contends that what is primarily given is never a bare atomistic self that is without the world and other self. “In clarifying Being-in-the-world we have shown that a bare subject without a world never ‘is’ proximally, nor is it ever given. And so in the end an isolated ‘I’ without Others is just as far from being proximally given.”\(^\text{BT, 152}\) Instead of an isolated subject, he contends that Dasein is essentially in the world and is with others. “The world of Dasein is a with-world (Mitwelt). Being-in is Being-with Others.”\(^\text{BT, 155}\) For Heidegger, the clarification of this phenomenon of “Being-with” requires a new ways of thinking other than categorial thinking. He identifies this new ways of thinking with existential thinking.

On the discussion of the genuine philosophical thinking, Nietzsche furnishes a following statement by quoting Emerson. “‘Beware’, says Emerson, ‘when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk.’”\(^12\) Now with the mode of existential thinking, Heidegger puts all things that have been determined in the categorial sense into a question and tries to view them in a new perspective. However, what is existential thinking?

\(^9\) Cf. BT., 86-90.
\(^11\) Ibid., 82
\(^12\) F. Nietzsche, Unfashionable Observation (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1995), 254.
As mentioned earlier, the existential way of thinking is grounded on existence. So in order to understand existential thinking, one should know first what “existence” means in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. In Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’ Heidegger provides an extensive definition on “existence”. “What does ‘existence’ mean in Being and Time? The word names a way of Being; specifically, the Being of that being which stands open for the openness of Being in which it stands in withstanding [aussteht] it...Withstanding [Ausstehen], experienced in this manner, is the essence of the ecstasy that is to be thought here. The ecstatic essence of existence is therefore still understood inadequately as long as one thinks of it as merely a ‘standing out,’[Hinausstehen] while interpreting the ‘out’ [Hinaus] as meaning ‘away from’ [Weg von] the interior of an immanence of consciousness or spirit. For in this manner, existence would still be represented in terms of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘substance’; while, in fact, the ‘out’ ought to be understood in terms of the ‘outside itself’ of the openness of Being itself.”

The defining characteristic of “existence” lies in the “outside itself” of the openness of Being. However, the expression “outside”, that is “ex” of “ex-istence”, must be understood in the precise sense. When Heidegger speaks of “outside”, he does not mean the “away from” the interior of immanent consciousness. Instead prior to the immanent consciousness, Dasein, insofar as it ex-ists, is already outside in the world and finds itself in midst of things. Besides this sense, the meaning of “outside” signifies the more fundamental aspect of Dasein. By the “outside” of Dasein Heidegger wants to show that the self of Dasein always transcends the substantialized and actual self. That is, Dasein is “outside” of the domain of actuality. Because Dasein remains essentially “outside” of the domain of actuality, it is defined as “possibility”. Thus, Heidegger defines the essence of Dasein in terms of possibility. “Being-there [Dasein] has this possibility not as an empty evasion; no, insofar as it is, being-there [Dasein] is this possibility.”

What is important to see in this passage is that for Heidegger, “possibility” is not thought to be the property (Eigenschaft) of the substantialized self; rather the possibility precedes the substantialized self. Moreover, insofar as the possibility is the ground of Dasein, the self of Dasein can be also considered as an ec-centric, i.e, de-centered self. Here one can see the distinctive characteristics of the existential ways of thinking. According to Heidegger, existential thinking that originated from the “outside” of Dasein is decentered thinking.

It has been stated that prior to an isolated ego, Dasein exists essentially with others. The reason for the primordial experience of “Being-with” is that Dasein is defined as a decentered subject from which the decentered thinking is originated. By this decentered thinking, Heidegger wants to show firstly that the self of Dasein is never primarily regarded as an isolated self-point subject but is constituted in the co-existence with others in the world. Then secondly, decentered thinking means that Dasein can never appropriate its own Being, insofar as it is always ahead of itself grounded in the possibility.

The misinterpretation of the solipsistic self in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is based on the confusion between existential thinking and categorial thinking. With this confusion, the solipsistic Dasein has been understood as an isolated ego, because one

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defines the existential solipsism with categorial thinking. Nevertheless, in order to avoid such a misunderstanding, the solipsistic self of Dasein must be understood in respect to existential thinking, which, in contrast to categorial thinking, presupposes the decentered subject. Insofar as Dasein is grounded in the decentered subject, it escapes the closure of immanent consciousness and exists in the intersubjective world. The self of Dasein as the decentered subject, which exists in the world, however, is revealed in two distinctive modes. Heidegger characterizes these modes as the inauthenticity and authenticity respectively. For a proper understanding of the solipsistic self, we now turn to investigate these two modes of the self of Dasein.

III. The Inauthentic “They” and Intersubjectivity.

A fundamental view of Heidegger’s concept of self is that the self of Dasein must be defined in terms of existentiality. As an existential self, Dasein already exists in the everyday world and forms the intersubjective world. The fact that Dasein finds itself in the intersubjective world is Heidegger’s starting point in the existential analytic of Dasein. In the intersubjective world, Dasein, however, does not attain its own self. Rather, for the most part, everyday self of Dasein is not its own self. “It could be that the ‘who’ of everyday Dasein just is not the ‘I myself’.” (BT, 150) For the proper meaning of “not-I” of Dasein, Heidegger provides the following statement. “In that case, the ‘not-I’ is by no means tantamount to an entity which essentially lacks ‘I-hood’ (Ichheit), but is rather a definite kind of Being which the ‘I’ itself possesses, such as have lost itself (Selbstverlorenheit).” (BT, 152) In the everyday world, Dasein is not its own self, because it loses itself. Since Dasein loses itself, the self of Dasein in the everyday world is regarded as an inauthentic (uneigentlich) self. “In these modes of one’s way of Being is that of inauthenticity [Uneigentlichkeit] and failure to stand by ones’s Self.” (BT, 166) Heidegger now characterizes this inauthentic self of everyday Dasein as “they”. “The Self of everyday Dasein is the they-self [das Man-selbst], which we distinguish from the authentic self—that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way (eigens ergriffenen).” (BT, 167) For Heidegger, “they” signifies the self of everyday Dasein.

In dealing with the self of Dasein, the term “they”, however, may appear to have a negative meaning. 15 It may suggest that the everyday Dasein, insofar as it is constituted in the “they”, is tantamount to the herdlike mass and is unable to make its own judgment on issues in the public affairs, but is overwhelmingly predetermined by anonymity in the mass society. To strengthen this view, Heidegger also makes a claim that in the everyday world “we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they (das Man) take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge.” (BT, 164) From this point of view, it seems quite natural to think that Heidegger’s account of the “they” advocates a negative aspect of collectivism in modern society where an individual Dasein helplessly conforms to the powerful force of the anonymous “they”.

Nevertheless, in a proper sense, the “they” does not represent the negative aspect of collectivism. When Heidegger speaks of the “they” with respect to the self of everyday

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Dasein, he does not mean an alienated self lost in the anonymous mass. That is, the discourse on the “they” is not the criticism of collective mass in modern culture. Rather, the “they” is closely associated with the positive constitution of Dasein. Concerning this matter, in par.27 in *Being and Time*, Heidegger states: “The ‘they’ is an existential; and as a primordial phenomenon, it belongs to Dasein’s positive constitution.” (BT, 167) And the “they” as the positive constitution of Dasein consists in the fact that with this concept of “they” that is unveiled in the everyday world, Heidegger seeks to set up a new concept of the intersubjective world that departs from the theory of the constructive intersubjectivity based on the inference in modern metaphysics.\(^{16}\)

According to the constructive standpoint of intersubjectivity, the self is situated in *cogito me cogitare*, that is in self-consciousness. In self-consciousness in which thinking turns around to itself, there arises the apperception of the self. That is, in this introspective activity of turning around and back, which is tantamount to the activity of reflection, the self is discovered. Here one can see the main presupposition of the constructive standpoint. It begins with the presupposition that the self is isolated in the inner consciousness. If this is the case, what is primarily given is not the intersubjective world, but an isolated self enclosed in the inner consciousness. Because of this fact, in order to form an intersubjective world, it must construct it by escaping one’s inner consciousness. Thus in the constructive standpoint, the intersubjectivity is understood as the aggregation of atomistic individuals. However, Heidegger argues that such a conception to intersubjectivity is an “illusion”.\(^{17}\)

In Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein, the intersubjectivity is not constructed by an isolated self which must emerge from its inner sphere in order to encounter others. For Heidegger, the introspective experience of self in self-consciousness is no longer considered the primordial phenomenon. Rather, it results from the original experience of interaction, in which Dasein learns of itself in activities with others. Thus, the introspective consciousness of I is the derivation of “Being-with” and is formed only on the basis of mutual recognition in the intersubjective world. Furthermore, Dasein already finds itself in the intersubjective world, because it is constituted in the self-disclosure. With regards to this point, Heidegger states in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: “We must first of all see this one thing clearly: the Dasein, as existing, is there for itself, even when the ego does not direct itself to itself in the manner of its own peculiar turning around and turning back, which in phenomenology is called inner perception as contrasted as with outer. The self is there for the Dasein itself without reflection and without inner perception, before all reflection, in the sense of a turning

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\(^{16}\) This theory was advocated by Descartes in his “Second Meditation”. According to the theory of inference, we can encounter others and form the intersubjective world by a process of reasoning and analogy insofar as the unity of the other—for instance other’s state of feeling—can never be apprehended with respect to immediate experience. We can only know the unity of other by inferring from the other’s expressive bodily gesture, which are supposed to be analogous to our states of mind. Thus, the knowledge of others is possible by mediate inference.

\(^{17}\) Cf. M. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 206. “Philosophy has reinforced this illusion even further by propounding the dogma that the individual human being exists for him-or herself as an individual and that it is the individual ego with its ego-sphere which is initially and primarily to itself as what is most certain. This has merely given philosophical sanction to the view that some kind of being with one another must first be produced out of this solipsistic isolation.” In this passage, the solipsistic isolation, however, should not be equated with the existential solipsism. So here again, one can see that Heidegger uses the terms “solipsism” in two different senses.
back, is only a mode of self-apprehension, but not the mode of primary self-
disclosure.” As indicated in the passage, the self of Dasein is revealed in the mode of
self-disclosure based on which Dasein already finds itself with other Dasein. In this
sense, the self-disclosure is the medium within which Dasein encounters another Dasein.

Concerning the “Being-with” of Dasein in the everyday world, what is primarily
given is the intersubjective world, insofar as the defining characteristic of the self of
Dasein belongs to the self-disclosure. Here one can see why Heidegger calls the “they”
a primordial phenomenon. As a self-disclosure, Dasein exists primarily with others,
which Heidegger calls the “they”. Thus, by the term “they”, he wants to signify this
original experience of intersubjectivity, i.e., the common world. “The ‘they’ as that
which forms everyday being-with-one-another in these ways of its being constitutes
what we call the public in the strict sense of the word… It is not the case that on the one
hand there are first individual subjects which at any time have their own world; and that
the task would then arise of putting together, by virtue of some sort of an arrangement,
the various particular worlds of the individuals and of agreeing how one would have a
common world. This is how philosophers imagine these things when they ask about the
constitution of the intersubjective world. We say instead that the first thing that is given
is the common world—the they—, the world in which Dasein is absorbed such that it
has not yet come to itself.”

As a primordial phenomenon, the “they” represents Heidegger’s solution to the
problem of intersubjectivity. In dealing with the problem of intersubjectivity in terms of
the existential “they”, Heidegger argues that the original experience is not based on the
isolated and atomistic self; rather it is grounded on the public world of “they”. The
“they”, however, is not to be understood as the mere collective existence of empirical
subjects with each other. By the “they” as the self of Dasein, Heidegger means the
condition of possibility, upon which Dasein can comport itself toward another Dasein.

“Only because Dasein as such is determined by selfhood can an I-self comport itself
toward a you-self. Selfhood is the presupposition for the possibility of being an ‘I’, the
latter only ever being disclosed in the ‘you’. With the discovery of the “they” as the
self of everyday Dasein, which introduces the alternative ground to the foundation of an
atomistic self, Heidegger makes great progress in the theory of intersubjectivity.
Heidegger’s concept of the “they”, however, does not stop at this point. With the
conception of the “they”, he further tries to articulate the peculiar concept of
intersubjectivity in which the authentic self is concealed.

It is important to see that the “they” must be defined by the existentiality. The
existentiality, as discussed in the previous section, presupposes the decentered subject,
which is constituted in a possibility. Since Dasein is essentially a possibility, there is no
substantialized subject that can appropriate its constant self or Being. For the most part,
the decentered subject that can never appropriate its own self is manifested in the “they”.

18 M. Heidegger, The Basic Problems of Phenomenology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982),
159.
19 M. Heidegger, The History of the Concept of Time, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985),
246.
1998), 122.
examine the phenomenon of the “they”, the absolute non-appropriation of Dasein does not take place in existing with others; instead, Dasein seeks to appropriate its possibility. Hence, in the everyday world, Dasein loses its own self, that is, its own possibility and becomes something other than itself, namely, “they”. This process of the self-alienation of Dasein can be shown clearly in Dasein’s comportment towards things in the everyday world.

According to Heidegger, Dasein finds itself in things (Dingen). “Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities [betreibt] and the things [aus den Dingen] we take care of.”21 What is important in this passage is that when Heidegger speaks of “things”, he does not mean them as natural things i.e., “thing-realía”. Rather by things, he denotes pieces of equipment (Zeug), which Dasein pursues, uses, and cares of in the everyday world. For Heidegger, the essence of equipment consists in the “in-order-to” (Um-zu) structure. “Equipment is essentially ‘something-in-order-to’. ” (BT, 97) That is, equipment is a thing that serves some purpose; therefore, Heidegger uses the teleological principle of the “in-order-to” structure to describe the essence of equipment.

In the teleological principle of “in-order-to”, a piece of equipment is not determined by substantiality or materiality but by “serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.” (BT, 97) So a piece of equipment, for instance a hammer, is what is is only insofar as it has ability for hammering. If the hammer loses its ability for hammering, it no longer remains as a hammer. Moreover, the ability of hammer signifies nothing other than its possibility. Here one can see why Heidegger claims that Dasein finds itself in caring for things.

As we mentioned in the previous section, the self of Dasein is defined as a possibility. The possibility of Dasein is manifested in the caring for the serviceability of equipment by using it. However, in using a piece of equipment, Dasein has a “tendency to annihilate the possibility of the possible by making it available to us.” (BT, 305) In other words, in concernfully dealing with equipment, Dasein comports itself towards the actualization of possible equipment, which is encountered “in the field of what is ready-to-hand and present-at-hand—what is attainable, controllable, practicable, and the like.” (BT, 305) In doing so, Dasein seeks to appropriate its possibility. Thus in the concernful actualization of equipment, Dasein is no longer able to encounter a possibility that remains constantly as the possibility, that is, the non-appropriated possibility. Consequently, Dasein is alienated from itself and becomes dispersed in the various activities of caring for equipment in the everyday world.

The “Being-with” of “they” in the everyday world is the intersubjectivity based on the self-alienation of Dasein in which Dasein pursues the actualization of equipment. In this pursuing, Dasein is not thought of as an absolutely passive self; rather, it is regarded as a self-assertive self, which “brings tranquilized self-assurance.” (BT, 233) Moreover, in the tranquilized self-assurance, Dasein is not absolutely free from the closure of self-oriented subject.

IV. The Authentic solus ipse and Intersubjectivity.

For the most part, Dasein loses itself and becomes the “they” in concernfully dealing with equipment in which Dasein cares for the actualization of possible equipment.

21 The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, 159.
Dasein, however, does not always maintain itself as the inauthentic “they” that is absorbed into the possibility that is actualized in concernful dealings. In the phenomenon of anxiety, Dasein is wrenched away from concernful dealings with equipment in the everyday world of “they” and becomes individualized. “But in anxiety there lies the possibility of a disclosure which is quite distinctive; for anxiety individualized.” (BT, 235) Here the “Being-with” of the “they”, as a defining characteristic of Dasein, is abandoned in favor of the individualized Dasein.

In anxiety, the self of Dasein is not the “they” but the solipsistic self. In order to clarify the proper meaning of the solipsistic self, he distinguishes the “metaphysical isolation” from the “egoistic-solipsism”. In *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, he states: “Pure selfhood, understood as the metaphysical neutrality of Dasein, expresses, at the same time, the metaphysical isolation of Dasein in ontology, an isolation which should never be confused with an egoistic-solipsistic exaggeration of one’s own individuality.” The solipsistic self of Dasein in terms of “metaphysical isolation” is not to be thought as the traditional concept of the solipsistic ego that finds itself in the inner consciousness and knows nothing but its own modification. In contrast to the solipsistic ego in the traditional sense, the solipsistic Dasein finds itself in the world. “Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in-the-world.” (BT, 233) But how do we understand the peculiar phenomenon that Dasein is individualized in the world? This can be clarified when one has an appropriate understanding of anxiety and its relation to the world.

Anxiety, according to Heidegger, has a certain aspect of something that is anxious (das Wovor der Angst). Yet, something that is anxious differs fundamentally from that of fear (Furcht). Heidegger maintains that in fear Dasein always shrinks back from something within the world, whereas in anxiety, far from fearing something specific in the world, Dasein withdraws itself from nothing. “Anxiety reveals the nothing.” The “nothing” revealed in anxiety, however, should not be conceived as the total annihilation of the world. On the contrary, it signifies the specific disclosure of the world in which the world is manifested as insignificance (Unbedeutsamkeit). As Heidegger states: “The utter insignificance which makes itself known in the ‘nothing and nowhere’, does not signify that the world is absent, but tells us that entities within-the-world are of so little importance in themselves that on the basis of this insignificance of what is within-the-world, the world in its worldhood is all that still obtrudes itself.” (BT, 231) By this “insignificance”, Heidegger wants to point out the collapse of the teleological structure of equipment in the everyday world.

As indicated before, the everyday world is constituted in the “in-order-to” structure of equipment. In this structure, a piece of equipment that is used for something refers to other pieces of equipment. Therefore, what determines a piece of equipment is that its way of being refers to other pieces of equipment. In this referential connection, the possibility of equipment has a relational character. To describe the relational character of equipment, Heidegger uses the term “significance”. “The relational character which these relationships of assigning possesss, we take as one of signifying [be-deuten].” (BT, 120) Thus, the “significance” is the framework in which the referential whole of

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equipment in the everyday world is constituted.

This referential whole of equipment, however, collapses when a piece of equipment becomes unserviceable. In this case, the referential totality of equipment is without any interconnective relation, and consequently, the “significance” of equipment becomes the “insignificance”. So the “insignificance” as the collapse of the everyday world refers to the disturbed state of the referential totality, in which a piece of equipment is no longer regarded as something used for doing something in the teleological sense and, therefore, remains a merely indefinite possible thing without a relation. Here one can see why Heidegger relates the “nothing” with the “insignificance” in the analysis of anxiety. The indefinite possibility can be also characterized as the “nothing”, since it is considered opposed to the determinate actuality. It is from this perspective that Heidegger joins the “insignificance” to the “nothing”, insofar as they refer to the indefinite possibility, i.e., the non-relational possibility. Thus, when Heidegger speaks that the “insignificance” of the world is revealed in anxiety, his intention is to show the manifestation of the non-relational possibility.

Dasein experiences the total collapse of the referential whole in anxiety in which Dasein becomes the solipsistic self. So, in contrast to the “they” that cares for the relational possibility of equipment, the solipsistic self encounters the non-relational possibility. In fact, Heidegger contends that the possibility of the authentic Dasein is the non-relational possibility. “The ownmost possibility is non-relational[unbezuegliche].” (BT, 308) With this concept of the non-relational possibility, we now discover a clue to understand the distinctive meaning of the existential solipsism in which Dasein is individualized in the world.

The solipsistic self is not the worldless self. Even in the state of solipsism, Dasein still exists in the world. In Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein, Dasein becomes the solipsistic self only in respect to the everyday world. The everyday world turns into the “insignificance” in anxiety in which Dasein shrinks itself away from the concernful dealings with equipment. Therefore, in the “insignificance”, Dasein becomes a solipsistic self detached from pieces of equipment. The solipsistic self now means that though Dasein exists in the world, it is wrenched away from the referential whole of equipment and directs towards the non-relational possibility.24 Hence, because Dasein is no longer related to the surrounding world, it is individualized.

In Heidegger’s account of “existential solipsism”, the solipsistic self means nothing other than the non-relational possibility, i.e., “Being-possible”. Concerning this matter, Heidegger states: “Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible [als Möglichssein] and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization(vereinzeltes in der Vereinzelung).” (BT, 232) As shown clearly in this passage, Dasein’s “Being-possible” belongs essentially to the individualized self. Furthermore, the possibility of authentic Dasein disclosed in anxiety is defined as “Being-possible”, because this possibility is not used for achieving a certain end, as in the case of the “they”. So the

24 This fact that the solipsistic Dasein exists with others in the “insignificant” world can be shown ontically in the phenomenon of aphasia. In the state of aphasia, a patient, who is loss of speech, experiences the collapse of the surrounding world and is withdrawn to itself. But even in such a state, in which the relational life within the family circle is broken, a patient still comparts towards the family. The fact that a patient refuses to communicate indicates that she is intimately linked with the family. Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London: Routledge, 1998), 160-164.
“Being-possible” of the authentic Dasein is regarded as the indefinite possibility, which can never be actualized. For Heidegger, the indefinite possibility that constitutes the solipsistic self is finally attested in death.

In par 47 in *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that the solipsistic self only occurs in the face of death, insofar as every Dasein is confronted with its own death. “Dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time. By its essence, death is in every case mine, insofar as it ‘is’ at all. And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one’s own Dasein is an issue.” (BT, 284) Here the existential concept of death, which does not simply signify the cessation of life, represents two essential aspects of Dasein. On the one hand, death discloses the individual Dasein, and, on the other hand, it unveils the peculiar possibility of Dasein. With the distinctive concept of future, Heidegger seeks to clarify the relation between death and these two aspects of Dasein.

According to Heidegger, death is conceived as the ultimate *malum futurum*. In its relation this *malum futurum*, Dasein is determined by two different modes of comportment; the inauthentic “Being-at-an-end” (Zu-Ende-Sein) and the authentic “Being-towards-the-end”(Sein-zum-ende). “The ‘ending’ which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein’s Being-at-an-end (Zu-Ende-sein), but a Being-towards-the-end(Sein-zum-Ende) of this entity.” (BT, 289) Death as the way of being towards the peculiar possibility is not to be understood in the mode of “Being-at-an-end”. In his account of the inauthentic mode of “Being-at-an-end”, Heidegger wants to show that Dasein finally lives through its life and finds itself in the actual presence of death. Here death defined as *malum futurum* is thought of as an *actual reality*, but it is not yet encountered in the present. By considering death as something actual, the inauthentic Dasein believes that it can seize death in the case of suicide. However, in the mode of “Being-at-an-end” in which death is thought of as an actual reality, Dasein is unable to direct towards a peculiar possibility.

Death as a peculiar possibility is only encountered in the authentic mode of “Being-towards-the-end”. By this authentic mode, Heidegger means that Dasein does not experience death when it is immanently present at a particular moment, but rather Dasein stands in an ever-presenting impending death. This ever-present death, however, should not be taken as an actual reality. As outstanding (Ausstehen), death is constantly projected ahead and therefore belongs to the dimension of the indefinite possibility. “Death is the utmost, though indefinite, yet certain possibility in which Dasein itself stands before itself.”26 Thus, “Being-towards-the-end” is distinguished from “Being-at-an-end”, because in the former, Dasein is related to death as something that remains the indefinite possibility, while in the latter, death is regarded as a certain reality. In addition, the reason why death always remains the indefinite possibility is that in the mode of “Being-towards-the-end” death is never experienced as an actual reality and consequently is not subjugated by Dasein. “It [death] is an end beyond all consummation[Vollendung], a limit beyond all limits. Here there is not breaking-out or breaking-up, no capture or subjugation.”27 In this passage, one can see that death marks the ultimate limitation of Dasein’s virility to seize everything and put it at its disposal. Therefore, Dasein can never reach death, insofar as death is situated in a distinctive

future (Zu-kunft) as “coming towards”. “This letting-itself-come-towards-itself in that distinctive possibility which it puts up with, is the primordial phenomenon of the future as coming towards [Zu-kunft]” (BT, 372) With this concept of future as coming towards, Heidegger attains the essential insight that the solipsistic self of Dasein is not absorbed in the relational possibility of present in equipment but is projected upon a dimension of the distinctive possibility that “becomes ‘greater and greater; that is to say, the possibility reveals itself to be such that it knows no measure at all.” (BT, 307) It is in this possibility that Dasein becomes individuated. Furthermore, with the distinctive possibility that becomes “greater and greater” and hence is never appropriated by Dasein, Heidegger finally achieves the authentic meaning of self that is distinguished from the “they”.

As shown, the solipsistic Dasein brings out the indefinite possibility. In this indefinite possibility, Dasein no longer maintains its virility, which is still manifest in the “they”. Rather, Dasein ultimately becomes the decentered subject. As a decentered subject, Dasein is projected upon the world and thereby forms the genuine community with others. In this sense, the indefinite possibility of the solipsistic self is essential for encountering others. Thus, in Heidegger’s thoughts, the solipsistic self has nothing to do with an isolated subject. Instead, it signifies the medium upon which Dasein can encounter others in the world. That is, it is the condition of the possibility for the co-existence with others.

V. Conclusion

What Heidegger attempts to set up in his existential analysis of the solipsistic self, is not to reestablish the subject encapsulated in its immanent consciousness. Nor is the solipsistic self a failure to escape from the modern subjectivity. In Heidegger’s thought, the solipsistic (individualized) self has an absolutely different meaning from the traditional concept. For Heidegger, an individualized Dasein is not a solipsistic self in the traditional sense, since the individual is defined only by the relationship to the world and to others. An individual Dasein exists only by ec-static movement of possibility, and this possibility can be only achieved only through the indefinite possibility projected upon the world. Thus, with the concept of the indefinite possibility, towards which Dasein remains essentially passive, we can finally ascertain how the solipsistic self is reconciled with the ec-static self that exists not only the surrounding world but also in the world. Furthermore, in the indefinite possibility of the solipsistic self, which no longer remains captive to the tradition of the self-positing subject in modern philosophy but instead highlights the passivity of the self, we can see Heidegger’s criticism on the modern philosophical idea that the autarkic subject is the ultimate foundation.

One of the constant themes in Heidegger’s existential analytic of Dasein is a de-stuction of the modern metaphysical conception of self. From the point view of Heidegger’s thought, the spirit of modern philosophy is dominated by the fact the history of thought is a progressive enlightenment towards the individual freedom. And in the metaphysical sense, the foundation of individual freedom consists of the self-constitution of an autarkic thinking subject that recognizes no authority other than its own reason. With the emergence of the autarkic subject in modern philosophy, there arises a breakdown of unity in society. Against such a tendency of dissolution in society, Heidegger seeks to restore the unity in society by emphasizing the intersubjective world
over individuality.

Yet this intersubjective world is not formed by the abstraction of the freely contracting individuals. Prior to free individuals as the given starting point, Dasein already finds itself in the co-existence with others. Heidegger, however, does stop his arguments at this point. He goes one step further. With the solipsistic self, he wants to show the peculiar manner of co-existence with others, which eventually leads to the historical world of Dasein. Thus, by the solipsistic self, Heidegger does not seek to establish the empirical theory of intersubjectivity, which is found in the explication of “they”; but rather he lays a ground for the empirical theory of intersubjectivity.