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Is Yogācāra Phenomenology? Some Evidence from the *Cheng weishi lun*

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Abstract There have been several attempts of late to read Yogācāra through the lens of Western phenomenology. I approach the issue through a reading of the *Cheng weishi lun* (*Treatise on the Perfection of Consciousness Only*), a seventh-century Chinese compilation that preserves the voices of multiple Indian commentators on Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikāvijñaptikārikā* (*Thirty Verses on Consciousness*). Specifically, I focus on the "five omnipresent mental factors" (*pañcasarvatraga*, Chin. *wu bianxing xinsuo*) and the "four aspects" (Chin. *sifen*) of cognition. These two topics seem ripe, at least on the surface, for phenomenological analysis, particularly as the latter topic includes a discussion of "self-awareness" (*svasaṃvedana*, *svasaṃvitti*, Chin. *zizheng*). Yet we find that the *Cheng weishi lun* account has little in common with the tradition associated with Husserl and his heirs. The categories and modes of analysis in the *Cheng weishi lun* do not emerge from or aver to a systematic reflection on the nature of "lived experience" so much as they are focused on subliminal processes and metaphysical entities that belong to the domain of the noumenal. In my conclusion I suggest that the later *pramāṇa* tradition associated with Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—a tradition that profoundly influenced later Yogācāra exegesis in Tibet—did indeed take a "phenomenological turn." But my comparison shows that both traditions falter when it comes to relating conceptual content to non-conceptual experience, and thus there is reason to be skeptical about claims that phenomenology is epistemologically grounded in how the world presents itself first-personally.

Keywords Yogācāra · *Cheng weishi lun* · Phenomenology · *Pañcasarvatraga* · Four aspects of cognition · *nirvikalpajñāna*

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Today there are, broadly speaking, two approaches to the study of Yogācāra thought. The first, which is characteristic of Yogācāra studies in Germany and Japan, views it as an architectonic scholastic system that is properly understood as the product of a particular time and place. This approach foregrounds philology and doctrinal history, and traces the intellectual debt that Yogācāra owes to previous Buddhist systems (Sarvāstivāda, Sautrāntika, Madhyamaka, etc.) as well as to the influence of their non-Buddhist philosophical interlocutors. The works of Lambert Schmithausen in Germany and Gadjin Nagao in Japan, as well as their many students, are representative of this approach. Their work tends to be directed toward the historical development, conceptual dynamics, and internal coherence of Yogācāra thought, understood in the context of the scholastic world from which it emerged.

The other approach to Yogācāra, which is more dominant in America, places Yogācāra in conversation with strands of contemporary Western thought, notably the phenomenological tradition traced to Brentano, Husserl, and Heidegger, as refracted through the more recent concerns and methods of Anglo-American analytical philosophy.[1] This approach is enjoying a renaissance of late, particularly in America and the UK, through the work of Dan Arnold, Christian Coseru, Mario d'Amato, Jonardon Ganeri, Jay Garfield, Dan Lusthaus, Evan Thompson, and others.[2] Their efforts to render Buddhist philosophy in general, and Yogācāra in particular, accessible and relevant to their colleagues in Western philosophy may be working, as seen in the enthusiasm generated at the NEH seminar "Investigating Consciousness: Buddhist and Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives," held at the College of Charleston in the summer of 2012.[3]

This is not the first time that Yogācāra has been viewed from the perspective of current intellectual fashion. In the nineteenth century, Chinese Buddhist apologists presented Yogācāra as a form of "higher empiricism." Western science, they argued, is limited by its exclusive concern with outer physical reality. Buddhist science is superior insofar as it attends to inner psychological or spiritual reality as well. This conceit remains alive and well today: scholars in the emerging field of "contemplative studies," as well as many affiliated with the Mind & Life Institute,

[1] It is not unusual for Buddhism to be understood with reference to contemporary intellectual concerns. Buddhism sometimes functions like a Rorschach ink blot, allowing people to see whatever they are looking for. The process of projection and transference played a role in the transformation of Buddhism as it spread from India throughout East and Southeast Asia—Buddhism was reconfigured, often unwittingly, in response to local concerns, expectations, and needs. And the process continues down to the present day; the popular American understanding of Buddhism as a "science of happiness"—an antidote to the stresses of modern urban life—shows how thoroughgoing the transformation can be. (In some respects, this New Age construal of Buddhism is the very antithesis of the Buddhism found in the earliest scriptural accounts.) And while Buddhist scholars are supposed to possess the historical and hermeneutical tools to allow them to recognize and resist projection and transference, they too are susceptible to Buddhism's allures. Andrew Tuck's 1990 book, *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship: On the Western Interpretation of Nāgārjuna*, documents the tendency of modern scholars to read Madhyamaka in the light of whatever Western philosopher they happen to find compelling.

[2] Representative writings include Arnold (2012), Coseru (2012), Ganeri (1999), Garfield (2015), Lusthaus (2002) and Varela et al. (1991).

[3] The seminar was organized by Christian Coseru, Jay Garfield, and Evan Thompson, and faculty included Daniel Arnold, Jonardon Ganeri, Mark Siderits, and William Waldron, among others.

claim that "Buddhist science" is founded on rigorous first-person methodologies designed to plumb the depths of consciousness, and that these methodologies can and indeed should be used to augment the third-person methodologies developed in the West. The "laboratory" for Buddhist inner science is the practice of meditation, and the neuroscience and therapeutic effects of Buddhist meditation are now regarded as legitimate fields of research. The recent interest in Yogācāra and phenomenology might then be seen as part of a larger project, well over a century old, to render Buddhism intellectually respectable, philosophically relevant, and amenable to empirical inquiry.[4]

If by "phenomenology" one means a philosophical rendering of the psycho-physical processes that underlie and condition conscious experience, then there is little objectionable in approaching Yogācāra, or indeed most any Abhidharma system, as phenomenology. But the use of the term by scholars of Buddhism is intended to carry more weight. Today there are at least two discrete but complementary usages in play. The first is anthropological: it is a claim that the Yogācāra account of cognition is founded upon, or emerges from, the lived religious experiences of Indian Buddhist masters. These experiences, acquired through meditation, are presumed to be trans-cultural and trans-historical and hence universal; they open a window onto the deep structures of consciousness, and reveal aspects of mind and cognition that may otherwise be inaccessible. That the term Yogācāra literally means "yoga practitioner" would seem to support the claim that Yogācāra doctrine is warranted by the phenomenology of rarified states of consciousness realized and described by adepts of ages past.[5]

The second and, for the purposes of this paper, more germane use of the term "phenomenology" by scholars of Yogācāra is to refer to the philosophical tradition associated with Husserl and his heirs. This tradition seeks to move philosophy away from speculative metaphysics—away from a concern with what lies behind or beyond appearances—and to focus instead on the world as it is given to us in lived first-person experience. The foundation of this approach is "phenomenological reduction," a method that begins by suspending or bracketing (*epoché*) questions of ontology and attending instead to the immediacy of the "life-world" (*Lebenswelt*) or "the things themselves" (*die Sache selbst*). (Heidegger will use the term *Dasein* or "being there" to invoke a similar stance.) This might be characterized as a method of *introspection*, but phenomenologists reject this term as it suggests that the locus of analysis is an inner psychological domain or "Cartesian theater" that stands apart from outer physical reality. The insuperable ontological gap between inner and outer, subject and object, mind and world, is precisely the metaphysical conundrum from which the phenomenological reduction seeks escape. That Yogācāra includes a rich analysis and deconstruction of the moieties of inner and outer, subject and object, grasper and grasped, suggests, at least to some, an affinity with Husserl's project.

[4] On the nineteenth-century Chinese Buddhist discourse on Buddhism and science see Hammerstrom (2010), as well as the collection of essays in Makeham (2014). On the broader history of attempts to render Buddhism "scientific" see Lopez (2008, 2012).

[5] On the possibility that Yogācāra thought emerged in connection with reflection on yogic experiences see esp. Schmithausen (1976, 2007, 2014).

It is no accident that the interest in phenomenology among scholars of Buddhism coincides with a renewed interest in phenomenology in the academy at large. The revival is due, in part, to findings in the field of cognitive science that are increasingly difficult for philosophers to ignore—findings that bear directly on concepts such as "person," "self," "agency," "consciousness," and "mind." Well-documented phenomena such as brain-fission,[6] blind sight, inattentional blindness, automatism, prosopagnosia, and Cotard's syndrome—to cite some of the better-known examples—undermine our deepest intuitions about what it is to be a conscious subject or "cogito." Our sense of ourselves as singular, self-aware agents would seem to be a chimera, a confabulation that unfolds within a widely distributed and ephemeral set of processes and systems. As a result, philosophers are proposing new theoretical models that (1) are not predicated on the existence of a unitary self or center of experience that has privileged access to its own mental states, and (2) resist the naïve and unwarranted "neurophysicalism" that is often taken for granted in psychology and neuroscience. The new models include "embodied cognition," "enactive cognition," "distributed cognition," "situated cognition," and the like, all of which approach consciousness as a function of a system that extends beyond the physical bounds of the brain and body. And this is where Brentano and Husserl have proven helpful, since their notion of "intentionality"—the claim that consciousness cannot be disaggregated from its object, and vice versa—is congenial to emergent or distributed theories of cognition on the one hand, and inimical to naïve or reductive physicalism on the other.

It should then be clear why some insist that Buddhism in general, and Yogācāra in particular, be given a seat at the table. Buddhist theories of perception and consciousness are predicated on the rejection of an abiding self. Buddhists hold that the "I" is an illusion created, moment-to-moment, through the complex interactions of discrete, impersonal, interdependent, and fleeting mental events or *dharma*s. It thus seems reasonable to suppose that Buddhist theories of mind and cognition, honed by centuries of meditative experience and philosophical reflection, have something to contribute to the dialogue between philosophy and cognitive science. This is the argument forcefully made in the influential book *Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, the collaborative effort of a neuroscientist, a philosopher, and a psychologist. Drawing on Buddhist Abhidharma and Yogācāra, as well as Husserlian phenomenology, the authors treat mind as an emergent entity that arises within a complex and interdependent biological/ecological system.[7]

Given the long and problematic history of reading (or misreading) Buddhism in the light of contemporary intellectual trends, one might expect scholars to be more circumspect when it comes to approaching Buddhism as phenomenology. My own suspicions were aroused in the spring of 2013, as I was working through sections of

[6] Brain-fission refers to surgically severing the corpus callosum—the bundle of nerves that connects the two hemispheres of the brain—an operation that has been performed on a number of patients suffering from severe epileptic seizures.

[7] Varela et al. (1991). None of the authors of *Embodied Mind* had a technical background in Buddhist philosophy, but all believed that Buddhism provides valuable conceptual resources. See also Evan Thompson's (2007) follow-up study.

the *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 (*Treatise on the Perfection of Consciousness Only*) with my graduate students. This Chinese compendium, compiled by the celebrated Chinese pilgrim, translator, and exegete Xuanzang 玄奘 (circa 602–664), preserves the voices of multiple Indian commentators on Vasubandhu's *Triṃśikāvijñaptikārikā* (*Thirty Verses on Consciousness*), one of the seminal texts of Yogācāra. The *Cheng weishi lun* became a foundational work in the East Asian Yogācāra tradition known as Weishi 唯識 ("consciousness only") or Faxiang 法相 ("*dharma* characteristics") that is traced to Xuanzang and his disciple Kuiji 窺基 (632–682). And it so happens that the *Cheng weishi lun* is the focus of Dan Lusthaus's 2002 tome, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*, which is, in part, a spirited defense of Yogācāra as phenomenology.

Two topics discussed in the *Cheng weishi lun* seemed particularly apropos to discussions about Yogācāra and phenomenology. The first is the "five omnipresent mental factors" (*wu bianxing xinsuo* 五遍行心所, *pañcasarvatraga*), namely contact, attention, sensation, conception, and volition, which are present in, and crucially constitutive of, each and every moment of consciousness. The second topic is "self-awareness" (*zizheng* 自證, *svasaṃvedana*, *svasaṃvitti*)—the faculty by which consciousness knows itself as such. Both topics would seem, at least at first glance, ripe for phenomenological analysis, and yet in my reading the *Cheng weishi lun* account of the five omnipresent factors and self-awareness seemed to have little in common with phenomenology. This paper is a provisional foray into both subjects, laying out the reasons I think the phenomenological approach is wrongheaded when it comes to the *Cheng weishi lun* and to early Yogācāra writ large. But this does not mean that there are no areas of convergence between medieval Buddhist scholasticism and contemporary phenomenology. In my conclusion I will suggest that the *pramāṇa* tradition associated with Dignāga (ca. 480–540) and Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660)—a tradition that influenced later Yogācāra exegesis in Tibet—did indeed take a "phenomenological turn," a turn reminiscent of moves made by Husserl, Heidegger, and their heirs. But rather than converting me to the phenomenological program, my historical and comparative analysis left me skeptical, particularly with regard to the claim that phenomenology is "empirically grounded" in how the world presents itself in first-person experience.

The Omnipresent Factors

Of the dozens of constituent mental factors in Buddhist Abhidharma, one might suppose that the group most amenable to phenomenological analysis would be the omnipresent factors—a subset of the "concomitant mental factors" (*caitasika*, *xinsuo* 心所)—which accompany all moments of cognition. While the list of omnipresent factors varies from school to school,[8] the "classical" Yogācāra tradition associated with Asaṅga and Vasubandhu enumerates five, namely: contact (*sparśa*, *chu* 觸), attention (*manaskāra*, *zuoyi* 作意), feeling or sensation (*vedanā*, *shou* 受),

[8] See Waldron (2003, p. 223 n. 48), for a summary of the enumerations of other schools.

conception (*saṃjñā*, *xiang* 想), and volition (*cetanā*, *si* 思). The phenomenal or experiential character of these factors would seem palpable from most any of the standard English translations: contact, attention, feeling, conception, and volition seem to be the sorts of things that can be known first hand; they are grasped directly and immediately. And each of them might be expected to play a role in a phenomenological account of perception.

The first, "contact," for example, might be likened to a "bare stimulus," a sort of pre-discursive or pre-reflective sense impression that philosophers sometimes dub a "raw feel." The second, "attention," would seem to refer to the function of accessing and fixating upon the raw feel, while the third, "feeling," is a sort of autonomic sensory reflex or hedonic tone—positive, negative, or neutral—that precedes the recognition of the object. "Conception" involves the recognition of a particular object—discriminating a salient figure from ground and apprehending it as a member of a category. And conception in turn is the basis of "volition," which is an intentional or goal-directed response to the stimulus. Indeed, this is precisely how the omnipresent mental factors are treated in many of the recent philosophical studies of Yogācāra thought.

So I was surprised to find that the *Cheng weishi lun* discussion of these five mental factors, which appears in fascicle 3 in the commentary to verse 3 of the *Triṃśikā*, proceeds quite differently, and that virtually no attention is paid to the experiential or phenomenal features of these entities. They are understood, rather, as part of the underlying or subliminal cognitive machinery, and the analysis is deductive rather than inductive—the discussion is predicated unambiguously on a set of prior metaphysical and ontological postulates. Rather than averring to how things appear first-personally, the focus of the *Cheng weishi lun*'s terse account is on the conceptual and logical puzzles that bedeviled earlier generations of scholiasts.

Take the first of the omnipresent factors, "contact," for example. The early Abhidharma schools agree that contact is occasioned by the convergence of three distinct elements: the sense object, the associated sense organ, and the associated sense consciousness. Contact will arise when a visual object (shape, color) converges with the eye faculty and visual consciousness, or when a sound converges with the ear and audio consciousness, and so on. But this early and elementary Buddhist analysis gave rise to a number of problems. For example, some Sarvāstivāda exegetes held that the arising of these three cannot be simultaneous, since sense consciousness proper cannot exist in the absence of a sense organ and an object; as such it must arise as the *result* of, and hence be temporally subsequent to, contact between the sense organ and the sense object.[9] And then there is the question of the precise relationship between "contact" as an entity in its own right, and the convergence of the object, organ, and consciousness: are these simply two ways of talking about one and the same event? Sautrāntika and Dārṣṭāntika authors believed that "contact" is a provisional designation for this convergence, and hence while the object, organ, and consciousness are all really existing things, "contact" per se is not. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* disagrees; it regards contact as a discrete entity

[9] *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 145; see Dhammajoti (2009, pp. 226–227), and Engle (2009, p. 276).

(*dharma*) in is own right, as it is causally efficacious. As this causal power cannot inhere in, or be reduced to, the three concomitant components of organ, object, and consciousness, it must be associated with an independent *dharma*, namely, "contact."[10]

When we turn to the *Cheng weishi lun* account, we see that the author is concerned with precisely these conceptual puzzles.

> Contact is the union of the three [i.e., the sense organ, sense object, and sense consciousness], which is analyzed as the transformation [of the three]. Its nature is to bring about contact between the mind and concomitant mental factors [on the one hand], and the sense object [on the other]. Its activity is to serve as the support for feeling, conception, volition, and so on. It is called the "union of the three" because the organ, object and consciousness correspond to and are in accord with one another. [For example, if the object is visual, so is the organ and consciousness.] Contact arises dependent on them and brings them into union, and thus it is called [union of the three]. When the union of the three is established it brings about the functioning of the mind and concomitant mental factors, and thus is called transformation [of the three]. As contact resembles the arising of the three, it is [similarly] analyzed as "transformation." The transformative power of the sense organ is greater than that of consciousness or the object in leading to the arising of contact, and thus the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and other texts talk about [contact] only in terms of the transformation of the organ. The essential nature of contact is to bring about the union of all mind and concomitant mental factors such that they contact an object of the same type. As it appears as the ability to bring about the arising of the mental constituents, its activity is to serve as the basis for feelings and so on.
> 觸謂三和。分別變異。令心心所觸境為性。受想思等所依為業。謂根境識更相隨順故名三和。觸依彼生令彼和合故說為彼。三和合位皆有順生心所功能說名變異。觸似彼起故名分別。根變異力引觸起時勝彼識境。故集論等但說分別根之變異。和合一切心及心所令同觸境是觸自性。既似順起心所功能。故以受等所依為業.
>
> The *Scripture on Arising and Cessation* says that the aggregates of feeling, conception, and volitional formations all have contact as their condition. For this reason the scripture also says that consciousness, contact, feeling, etc., are born from the union of two, three, four, etc., respectively. [That is to say: consciousness is born from the union of organ and object; contact from the union of organ, object, and consciousness; feeling from the union of organ, object, consciousness, and contact, etc.] As for the fact that the *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra* speaks only about [contact] being the support for feeling, conception, and volition: volition takes the aggregate of volitional formations as primary, and thus it incorporates all the remaining [mental constituents].
> 起盡經說受想行蘊一切皆以觸為緣故。由斯故說識觸受等因二三四和合而生。瑜伽但說與受想思為所依者。思於行蘊為主勝故舉此攝餘.

[10] de La Vallée Poussin (1988–1990, 2.424–425) and Dhammajoti (2009, p. 218).

> The reason the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* and other texts say that contact is the basis of feeling is because the arising of feeling from contact is both proximate and primary. Which is to say, characteristics such as "pleasant" that are grasped by contact, and characteristics such as "beneficial" grasped by feeling, are extremely close, and thus contact is primary. Therefore the nature of contact is real and not provisional because it has the nature of the concomitant mental factors included among the six hexads.[11] It is included in the category of nutrients and thus is able to serve as a causal condition. Its nature is like feeling and so on, and thus it is not identical to the unity of the three.
> 集論等說為受依者以觸生受近而勝故。謂觸所取可意等相與受所取順益等相。極相鄰近引發勝故。然觸自性是實非假。六六法中心所性故。是食攝故。能為緣故。如受等性非即三和.[12]

It would take us too far afield to unpack the complex lines of argumentation that run through this passage, not to mention its use of sources. But in brief, the *Cheng weishi lun* is responding directly to the positions mentioned above, notably the Sautrāntika claim that contact is merely a provisional designation for the convergence of organ, object, and consciousness. However, the *Cheng weishi lun* seems to struggle with this. On one hand, it insists that contact is a real entity, since, following a Sarvāstivāda line of reasoning, it is the effective cause of a series of ensuing mental events. But at the same time, contact is said to be the "transformation" of the three elements, and the author claims that contact—understood as both a transformational effect and as a causal condition—"resembles" (*si* 似) but is not identical with the convergence of organ, object, and consciousness. The author's use of notions such as "transformation" and "resemblance" seems to be a way of describing the relationship between "contact" and the "union of the three" that acknowledges their correspondence and overlap while still insisting that they are somehow distinct.

The *Cheng weishi lun* is also concerned with technical inconsistencies across accounts in authoritative treatises such as the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. For my immediate purposes it will suffice to note that the arguments in the *Cheng weishi lun* are invariably analytical and exegetical in nature. Nowhere does the *Cheng weishi lun* treat contact as an entity with phenomenal properties—a "raw feel" to which one might, at least in theory, have conscious access. Rather, contact is treated as a component of the underlying cognitive system, a system described in terms of complex interactions between discrete entities each of which serves a unique function. The function of contact, we learn, is to coordinate the sense organ, sense object, and sense consciousness such that a given object (a visual form or color, for example) is properly aligned with the appropriate organ (eye) and consciousness (visual).

Precisely the same approach is taken in the *Cheng weishi lun* analysis of attention (*manaskāra*, *zuoyi*). The place of attention in Buddhism has recently emerged as an

[11] I.e., the six consciousnesses 六識, six contacts 六觸, six feelings 六受, six conceptions 六想, six volitions 六思, and six cravings 六愛.

[12] T.1585: 31.11b19-c5; cf. Cook (1999, pp. 68–69), de La Vallée Poussin (1928, 1.143–146) and Wei (1973, pp. 155–157).

important topic of research among those interested in the psychology and neuroscience of meditation. Up until now, the scientific community had been preoccupied with studying "mindfulness," but mindfulness has proven difficult to operationalize both theoretically and empirically in laboratory settings. Some now suggest that attention will be easier to stipulate, isolate, and operationalize in a controlled environment. So I was curious to see how the *Cheng weishi lun* deals with the subject.

As in the case of contact, the *Cheng weishi lun* account of attention is concerned with ongoing exegetical controversies, particularly with regard to the relationship between attention and meditative concentration (*samādhi*). According to Sthiramati (circa sixth century), an influential Yogācāra commentator who is often the target of *Cheng weishi lun* criticism, attention refers to the ability of the mind to turn toward and stay fixed on a single object through successive moments of consciousness. In his commentary on the *Pañcaskandhaka*, Sthiramati defines attention as follows:

> Attention is the "bending of the mind." Bending is that which causes something to bend. Bending of the mind is the condition by which the mind is directed toward an object. Its action is to cause the mind to keep hold of an object. Causing the mind to keep hold of an object means to repeatedly turn the mind toward it. Moreover, this description of its action is made in the sense of a particular kind of attention—namely, one that causes the continuum of the mind to remain fixed upon an object. It is not meant in terms of individual moments of the mind. This point is illustrated [in the *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya*] by the expression: "one who has attained attention has attained one-pointed concentration (*samādhi*)." The phrase "one who has attained attention" means [a meditation practitioner] who has attained an extraordinary kind of attention. Otherwise, since every moment of consciousness includes the mental factor of attention, it would follow incorrectly that all sentient beings have attained attention.[13]

[13] *manaskāraḥ katamaḥ / cetasa ābhoga iti / ābhujanam ābhogaḥ / ālambane yena cittam abhimukhīkriyate, sa cittasyābhogaḥ / sa punar ālambane cittadhāraṇakarmakaḥ / cittadhāraṇaṃ punas tatraivālambane punaḥ punaś cittasyāvarjanam / etac ca karma cittasantater ālambananiyamena viśiṣṭaṃ manaskāram adhikṛtyoktam, na tu yaḥ praticittakṣaṇam /* (TrBh adds *tasya hi pratikṣaṇam eva vyāpāro na kṣaṇāntare*) *yad apy atra nidarśanam ucyate – samādhilābhī manaskāralābhīty ucyata iti, tatra viśiṣṭamanaskāralābhād eva manaskāralābhīty ucyate / anyathā hi sarvasattvā eva manaskāralābhinaḥ syuḥ, sarveṣāṃ praticittakṣaṇaṃ manaskārabhāvāt //* PSkV 20a6-b4; trans. Engle (2009, p. 276), with slight changes. Thanks to Jowita Kramer for her help with this passage, and noting its relationship to parallel passages in the *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* (20.12), *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (Pradhan 6.2), and *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya* (Tatia 5.1–3). Kawamura (1964, p. 51) translates the *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* parallel as follows:

> Attention is the utilization of the mind. Utilization [is used in the sense of] 'turning toward' by which the mind is made to face towards the sense object. That [attention] has the function of concentrating the mind on the sense object. Again, 'concentrating the mind' means to attract the mind to that very [same] object of the sense over and over again. And this action is taught in reference to attention qualified by the definiteness of the sense object in a continuous flow of the mind (*citta-saṁtati*) but not [in reference of] that in each moment because this latter attention can operate only in a particular moment and not in the other moments.

Note the problem with which Sthiramati is struggling: if attention is to be considered a discrete entity (*dharma*), which Sthiramati assumes it to be, then it must have a particular characteristic that manifests at a particular point in time. Sthiramati follows tradition in referring to this as that which "bends" or "turns" the mind toward the object. But there is also a sense in which attention is that faculty that keeps the mind directed toward a single object through a *succession* of moments, which is why Sthiramati has no choice but to reference the mental continuum in his account. This creates a number of problems: if attention is omnipresent in each and every moment of consciousness, why isn't everyone always in a state of meditative absorption? And how can attention be considered a discrete momentary entity if it is, in some respects, an artifact of the temporal continuum? In his response, Sthiramati introduces a distinction, seemingly ad hoc, between ordinary attention and the specific form of attention, namely *samādhi*, attained by meditators, yet he never gives an account of wherein the difference lies. This simply begs the question as to the relationship, if indeed there is one, between the run-of-the-mill *manaskāra* of commoners, and the *manaskāra* of advanced yogis.

The *Cheng weishi lun* recognizes these problems and deals with them head on:

> The nature of attention is its ability to arouse the mind, and its activity is to draw the mind toward the object. It is called "attention" because it arouses and awakens the mental seeds, leading them in the direction of the object. Similarly it also directs the concomitant mental factors, but as mind is primary, the text only talks about directing the mind. There are some who claim that it causes the mind to turn in the direction of a different object, while others claim that it is called attention because it holds the mind steady on a single object and makes it rest there. Both accounts are contrary to reason, since [in the first case] it would not be an omnipresent mental factor, and [in the second case] it would be no different from meditative concentration.
> 作意謂能警心為性。於所緣境引心為業。謂此警覺應起心種引令趣境故名作意。雖此亦能引起心所。心是主故但說引心。有說令心迴趣異境。或於一境持心令住故名作意。彼俱非理。應非遍行不異定故.[14]

In other words, attention is not simply that which directs the mind to an object, but it is that which coordinates the mind *and* concomitant mental factors such that they all come to bear on one and the same object. To make this argument the *Cheng weishi lun* claims that when the *Triṃśikā* refers to "mind" it actually means both "mind *and* concomitant mental factors" (*citta* and *caitasika*).[15] The *Cheng weishi lun* is working through the same problem that Sthiramati had, to wit: if the function of attention is to arouse and direct the mind to a *new* object, then it cannot be associated with *all* moments of cognition, since in some moments, notably moments of *samādhi*, the object of consciousness remains the same from moment to moment. But if, alternatively, its function is to sustain attention on a single object through

[14] T.1585: 31.11c6-c11; trans. Wei (1973, p. 159), with changes. Cf. Cook (1999, pp. 69–70) and de La Vallée Poussin (1928, 1.146–147).

[15] I would note that the *Cheng weishi lun* makes frequent use of this strategy—insisting that where the root text refers to "mind," it actually is a shortened reference to "mind and mental factors."

successive moments, then it is indistinguishable from meditative concentration. And it is surely not the case that we are all perpetually in a state of meditative absorption.

The *Cheng weishi lun* solves the problem by removing the mental continuum from the equation; instead of a temporal analysis of attention, the mental factor of attention is seen again as part of the underlying cognitive processes that coordinate mind and mental factors such that they land on a single object, and this is essential, according to Abhidharma analysis, for cognition to occur. Thus, like contact, attention operates below the threshold of consciousness. "Attention" may turn out to be a poor English rendering, at least in this instance, for the Sanskrit *manaskāra* and its Chinese equivalent *zuoyi*.

One response might be that the *Cheng weishi lun* was forced into an idiosyncratic reading of the *pañcasarvatraga* by the peculiar logic of the Yogācāra system. The mature Yogācāra system insists that only mind or consciousness is real, but at the same time they had to account for why there *seems* to be an external world and why there *seems* to be a grasping self. Their solution involved positing two novel mechanisms or processes—the *ālayavijñāna* or "storehouse consciousness," and the *manas* or "mentality" (also known as the *kliṣṭamanas* or "defiled mentality")—to do the work. Since both persist throughout a sentient being's existence (with one exception: the *kliṣṭamanas* temporarily ceases when a yogi is in *nirodha*), and since both are by definition forms of *vijñāna* or "consciousness," the omnipresent factors, which are present in every moment of cognition, must be continuously present in both the *ālayavijñāna* and *manas*. However, since the *ālayavijñāna*, and arguably even the *manas*, function, in certain respects, beneath the threshold of conscious awareness, the omnipresent factors cannot be phenomenologically available or accessible. This is made explicit in the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, which acknowledges that, as features of the *ālayavijñāna*, the omnipresent factors occur "beneath the threshold of conscious awareness (*sūkṣmapravṛtti*), imperceptible 'even for the wise.'"[16]

This may explain, in part, the exegetical strategy taken in the *Cheng weishi lun*. But it doesn't explain all of it: the theoretical puzzles posed by entities like "contact" and "attention" were not invented by Yogācāra commentators, but emerged in the earliest Ābhidharmika mereological accounts of the self.

And the theoretical conundrum that may trump all others concerns the nature of consciousness itself. This subject is taken up in the *Cheng weishi lun* under the rubric of the "four aspects."

Unconstructed Cognition and Luminous Mind

The Pali *Aṅguttara-nikāya* contains a statement, rare in early Buddhist sūtra literature, to the effect that mind (*citta*) is originally pure or luminous (*pabhassara*) but that this purity is obscured by adventitious defilement.[17] But the notion of mind

[16] Waldron (2003, p. 111). On the subliminal nature of the *ālayavijñāna* see also Schmithausen (2007, *passim*).

[17] *Aṅguttara-nikāya* 1.49–52; cf. the notion of *viññanam anidassanam* or "featureless consciousness" found in the *Brahma-nimantaṇika-sutta* (*Majjhima-nikāya* 49) and the *Kevaddha-sutta* (*Dīgha-nikāya* 11), which has become a topic of controversy and debate among contemporary Theravāda scholars. See, for

as intrinsically undefiled did not sit well within the Pali scholastic system, and commentators resort to identifying the pure *citta* mentioned in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* as the *bhavaṅga-citta*, which is mind in its latent or "non-arising" state.[18] With few exceptions, the notion of intrinsically pure consciousness was rejected by early Buddhist scholastics[19]; in the **Satyasiddhi-śāstra* (*Chengshi lun* 成實論), for example, Harivarman (circa fourth century) characterizes the notion of intrinsically pure mind as a mere *upāya* for the benighted:

> It is not the case that the nature of mind is originally pure and becomes impure due to adventitious defilements. It is just that the Buddha, for the sake of sentient beings who hold that mind is eternal, teaches that mind, when tainted by adventitious defilements, becomes impure. Also, he teaches original purity for the sake of lazy beings who, hearing that mind is originally impure, hold that its nature is unalterable and thus do not give rise to pure mind.
> 心性非是本淨客塵故不淨。但佛為眾生謂心常在。故說客塵所染則心不淨。又佛為懈怠眾生若聞心本不淨。便謂性不可改。則不發淨心。故說本淨.[20]

The Sarvāstivāda too rejected the intrinsic purity or luminosity of mind, and taught instead that mind is characterized as either pure or tainted depending on the surrounding conditions. In other words, it is not that consciousness is essentially pure but *becomes* tainted; rather, the cessation of the defilements results in the arising of the undefiled mind of a buddha or arhat. In short, for Ābhidharmikas, mind arises within a complex matrix of associated mental factors (*caitta*) that mediate and condition one's experience, and thus it does not appear possible, given the framework of Sarvāstivāda (or even Pali) Abhidharma, to accommodate a "subjective experience" that was unconstructed or free of representational/conceptual content. Indeed, the closest thing we have to a truly unconstructed experience in early Abhidharma is *nirodhasamāpatti*—a coma-like state in which there is simply no cognition whatsoever. For the Ābhidharmikas, the final goal is not pure or unconstructed experience but rather the termination of the five aggregates, including the aggregate of consciousness itself. This is *nirvāṇa*.[21]

In time a number of Mahāyāna texts, particularly those associated with Tathāgatagarbha ("matrix of buddhahood") thought, picked up and ran with the idea of the abiding luminosity of mind, identifying it with one's abiding buddha-nature.[22] These texts draw on the notion that the Buddha's mode of cognition is free

Footnote 17 continued
example, the treatments in Collins (1982, pp. 246–247), Gombrich (2006, pp. 43–45), Harvey (1989, 1995, pp. 166–174) and Thanissaro Bhikkhu on accesstoinsight.org.

[18] Dhammajoti (2009, pp. 232–234).

[19] Dhammajoti (ibid.) notes that the theory that mind is intrinsically pure appears to have been maintained by some Mahāsāṃghika and Vibhajyavāda commentators.

[20] T.1646: 32.258b17–20; cf. Dhammajoti (2009, p. 234).

[21] On *nirodha* and the cessation of consciousness see esp. Griffiths (1986) and Sharf (2014).

[22] For a comprehensive treatment of the history of the "natural luminosity of mind" in Buddhist exegesis see esp. Ruegg (1969, pp. 411–454).

of conceptual construction (*vikalpa*); the goal of Buddhist practice is no longer understood in terms of cessation or extinction; rather, the focus becomes the attainment of "yogic perception" (*yogipratyakṣa*), a supramundane (*alaukika*) state characterized in terms of "unconstructed cognition" or "non-conceptual knowledge" (*nirvikalpajñāna*).[23] Much has been written on this topic, but for our present purposes it will suffice to note that unconstructed cognition, while attested in a variety of early Buddhist works, was originally posited as a rarified state experienced by buddhas and advanced yogins alone. It did not play a role (at least as far as I have been able to determine) in the analysis of *mundane* cognition until the development of Buddhist *pramāṇa* ("valid means of cognition") theory by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in the sixth and seventh centuries.

Dignāga's analysis is predicated on a distinction between "pure perception" (*pratyakṣa*), which is direct and immediate, and "inference" (*anumāna*), which is mediated by conceptual construction (*vikalpa*, *kalpanā*). In distinguishing between pure versus conceptually mediated cognition, Dignāga draws directly from non-Buddhist Indian traditions of logic, notably Nyāya, but the distinction was by no means unknown in earlier Buddhist thought. In Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, for example, the five "material" sense organs are understood to grasp their sense objects directly, without conceptual mediation, since only the sixth sense, mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna*), is capable of conceptual thought. But this normative account gave rise to confusion, as it is not obvious how the senses can be said to apprehend or discern an object—a color, sound, feeling, etc.—without access to the notion of "object," "color," "sound," or "feeling." Thus rather than assert that sense perception is *entirely* bereft of *vikalpa*, Sarvāstivāda writers distinguish between three kinds of *vikalpa*. The first, *svabhāva-vikalpa* (*zixing fenbie* 自性分別), is the unmediated and inerrant discrimination of a particular object. The second, *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa* (*jidu fenbie* 計度分別), is discrimination through conceptual examination, while the third, *anusmaraṇa-vikalpa* (*suinian fenbie* 隨念分別), is discrimination through recollection. The five material sense faculties discriminate objects through *svabhāva-vikalpa* alone, while mind-consciousness can use all three modes of discernment, depending on the nature of the object.[24] One standard way of elucidating this is to say that eye consciousness, when presented with a blue object, knows "blue" but not that "this is blue"; it is only when mind consciousness reflects on the visual object that one knows "this is blue."[25] The asymmetry between the five material senses and the mind-sense, as well as the problem of what it means to know

[23] On yogic perception see Deleanu (2013) as well as the collection of papers in Franco (2009), esp. Eltschinger (2009).

[24] See, for example, *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* (*Apidamo da piposha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論), T.1545: 27.219b7–18; de La Vallée Poussin (1988–1990, 1.97–98). Note that *svabhāva-vikalpa* only applies when one of the six consciousnesses is presented with an object of its own kind. Thus *svabhāva-vikalpa* only operates in mind consciousness when it is in contact with a mental object; when mind consciousness makes contact with an object "transduced" via one of the five material senses, it discriminates via *abhinirūpaṇā-vikalpa* and/or *anusmaraṇa-vikalpa*. Thanks to both Jowita Kramer and Birgit Kellner for drawing my attention to the significance of the Sarvāstivāda account.

[25] See, for example, *Apidamo shishen zulun* 阿毘達磨識身足論, T.1539: 26.559b27-c4; de La Vallée Poussin (1988–1990, 1.138, n. 75); idem 2.425.

"blue" but not "this is blue," would bedevil generations of exegetes who ventured into this area.[26]

In any case, it is clear that Dignāga's distinction between pure perception and conceptually mediated inference drew on established Abhidharma principles. His innovation lay in the manner in which he intertwined this distinction with his analysis of "self-awareness" (*svasaṃvedana*, *svasaṃvitti*); this allowed him to argue that *all* states of consciousness, including eminently discursive states such as imagining, remembering and rumination, have a non-conceptual or pre-reflective aspect. In short, Dignāga laid the groundwork for the later claim—a claim, it should be noted, not made in Dignāga's own writings—that non-conceptual self-awareness is the very hallmark of consciousness *an sich*. And in doing so, he provided a philosophical rationale for a kind of Buddhist "perennialism"—the notion that the goal of Buddhist practice is awakening to a primordial and ever-present state of pure or unconstructed consciousness. (Indeed, some commentators cite the *Aṅguttaranikāya* notion of *pabhassara citta* as an early scriptural warrant.)

Dignāga's account of self-awareness is also key to recent scholarly interest in Buddhism and phenomenology; as we will see, Dignāga's analysis of *svasaṃvedana* has much in common with modern phenomenological accounts of pre-reflective self-consciousness.[27] But Dignāga's theory of self-awareness and the perennialism that it countenanced was difficult to square with earlier Buddhist theories of mind and perception, and sounded to some suspiciously like the heterodox positions of certain non-Buddhists.

Self-awareness

In order to understand the *Cheng weishi lun* approach to self-awareness, it is necessary to look more closely at Dignāga's account of the relationship between perception and conceptual thought.[28] The canonical formulation of this relationship is found in the first chapter of his *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and its autocommentary, the *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti*. Dignāga's extraordinarily terse prose gave birth to a substantial commentarial literature, and modern scholars frequently aver to the authority of Dharmakīrti, Devendrabuddhi, Jinendrabuddhi and others in unpacking

[26] See below, as well as the discussion in Dhammajoti (2009, pp. 227–232).

[27] On the central role of "pre-reflective self-consciousness" in contemporary phenomenology—a locution closely associated with Sartre—see Gallagher and Zahavi (2013, 2015).

[28] While Dignāga is sometimes considered the founder of the Buddhist theory of self-awareness, Yao (2005) traces the notion back to earlier debates between the Mahāsāṃghikas and Sarvāstivādas. According to Yao, the controversy was over the nature of omniscience, and whether the Buddha can know all dharmas in a single instant (as some accounts of the Buddha's enlightenment might seem to imply). The Mahāsāṃghikas apparently believed he could, while the Sarvāstivāda disagreed. In brief, the Sarvāstivāda reject self-cognition in a single instant; the mind can only know mind indirectly, by reflecting on what has passed away. The Mahāsāṃghikas, on the other hand, are the first on record to claim that mind can apprehend itself directly, just as a lamp illuminates itself.

Dignāga's text.[29] Accordingly there is a large secondary literature on Buddhist epistemology (*pramāṇavāda*) that I have neither the time nor the expertise to survey here.[30] I will, however, devote some space to reviewing Dignāga's original formulation, as it will prove key to understanding the trenchant analysis found in the *Cheng weishi lun*.

Dignāga begins by claiming that there are two *pramāṇa*, namely perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) (K.2a-b). The object of perception is always an inexpressible (*avyapadeśya*) particular (*svalakṣaṇa*) and is devoid of mental construction (*avikalpaka*). Inference grasps universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*), thereby giving conceptual content to the particular through the application of name (*nāman*), genus (*jāti*), etc. (K.3c-d). The products of inference—what we might call conceptions—are mediated by language and are accordingly conventionally existent and accompanied by obscurity (*sataimira*).

This distinction between unmediated perception and mediated knowledge is key to all that follows, as it raises the question of how, if at all, meaningful claims about the world are rooted in perception. Indeed, there would appear to be an unbridgeable gap between "raw" perception and conceptual understanding—whereas the Sarvāstivāda claimed that the eye knows "blue," but not "this is blue," in Dignāga's account it is not clear how the eye could even be said to know "blue." Only transient particulars are real (in a causal sense), but only universals have content and meaning.[31]

After positing two *pramāṇa*, Dignāga demonstrates that, contra other traditions of his day, there are only these two and no more (K.2b–3b), and he goes on to argue that his analysis conforms to earlier Abhidharma orthodoxy (K.4–5). He then claims that there are two kinds of mental perception, namely, the perception of an external object given by one of the five senses, and the self-awareness of internal mental activities (*caitta*) such as desire and the like (K.6a–b). As these are both said to be forms of perception proper, they are devoid of mental construction, but there is an asymmetry. The notion of "self-awareness" is introduced here to capture the reflexive perception of mental states, as opposed to the mind's perception of the objects transduced through the five senses.

Dignāga then claims that conceptual construction is, when brought to awareness, known through direct perception. But he immediately clarifies: "However, with regard to the [external] object, [the conceptual construction is] not [admissible as perception], because it conceptualizes [the object]." The commentary continues: "When it [viz., conceptual construction] is directed toward an object, it is not perception, any more than desire or the like. However, the internal awareness [of

[29] Hattori's translation and study (1968), upon which I rely here, is based on Tibetan translations. For a "hypothetical reconstruction" of the Sanskrit text of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* based on recently discovered Sanskrit fragments see Steinkellner (2005).

[30] For philosophical analyses of *svasaṃvedana/svasaṃvitti*, see, for example, Arnold (2005, 2010, 2012), Coseru (2012), Dreyfus (1996, 1997, 2007), Garfield (2006), Hattori (1968), Kellner (2010), Matilal (1986), Moriyama (2010), Watson (2006, 2010), Williams (1998) and Yao (2005).

[31] On the distinction between *svalakṣaṇa* and *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* see esp. Hattori (1968, pp. 78–80). Dharmakīrti elaborates on the distinction, but also ends by insisting that the only real object of cognition (*prameya*) is *svalakṣaṇa*, and that *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* is *svalakṣaṇa* seen from a different perspective.

conceptual construction] is not [itself a conceptual construction], and hence there is no harm [in admitting it as a type of perception]" (K.7a-b; trans. Hattori 1968, pp. 27–28). Or in Birgit Kellner's succinct analysis: "conceptual cognitions are conceptualizing with regard to external objects, but they are perceptual in their awareness of themselves" (Kellner 2010, p. 208).

Next Dignāga will claim that all cognition has this twofold appearance—that it cognizes itself (*svābhāsa*) and the object (*viṣayābhāsa*) at the same time. Self-awareness (*svasaṃvitti*) is then understood (1) as the cognition of itself as possessing these two appearances, and (2) as the result of the cognitive act (K.9a *vṛtti*).

Finally, in what is perhaps the most often quoted passage from this text, Dignāga elaborates on self-awareness and its role in cognition:

> Whatever the form in which it [viz., a cognition] appears, that [form] is [recognized as] the object of cognition (*prameya*). The means of cognition (*pramāṇa*) and [the cognition which is] its result (*phala*) are respectively the form of subject [in the cognition] and the cognition cognizing itself. Therefore, these three [factors of cognition] are not separate from one another.

The autocommentary continues:

> The cognition which cognizes the object, a thing of color, etc., has [a twofold appearance, namely,] the appearance of the object and the appearance of itself [as subject]. But the cognition which cognizes this cognition of the object has [on the one hand] the appearance of that cognition which is in conformity with the object and [on the other hand] the appearance of itself. Otherwise, if the cognition of the object had only the form of the object, or if it had only the form of itself, then the cognition of cognition would be indistinguishable from the cognition of the object.[32]

This analysis comes to be known as the "three-aspect model," wherein one can distinguish, within each cognitive event, (1) the appearance of an object (*prameya*), (2) the awareness or cognition of said object (*pramāṇa*), and (3) the reflexive awareness that knows itself as having the cognition (*pramāṇaphala*). Self-awareness is, in effect, the awareness of itself as having a dual appearance; I am aware both of an object and of my awareness of it. The rest of the chapter (K.11–12) consists of proofs for this model, based in part on the nature of memory.

Note again that the third element in the three-aspect model—self- or reflexive-awareness—is a mode of perception (*pratyakṣa*) and thus, by definition, is unconstructed. As such, it might be likened to the direct perception of the sense faculty, which is devoid of "conceptual" or "meaningful" content. Yet unlike direct sense perception, self-awareness would seem to be rendered contentful by virtue of its apprehension of the apprehension of the object; it is, in effect, the unmediated cognition of the mediated (or contentful) cognition of the object. Dignāga needs the notion of "cognition" or "awareness" to appear twice in his three-aspect analysis, and this is why he must brandish the distinction between *pramāṇa* and

[32] K.10; trans. Hattori (1968, pp. 29–30); see also helpful analysis by Matilal (1986, p. 152).

pramāṇaphala at the same time that he denies they are distinct. In other words, Dignāga insists that the distinction is merely conventional,[33] but he still needs it to explain how cognition can be pure *and* mediated—perceptual *and* meaningful—at one and the same time. If I am correct, then the reason that this key passage has given rise to so much commentary, analysis, and debate is that, from the get-go, it was a cheat—only by a certain equivocation can Dignāga account for contentful understanding that is warranted by direct perception. While Kellner is more charitable, her own summary of Dignāga's argument comes close to the same conclusion: "Rather than being introduced as a hallmark of the mental, self-awareness could here be said to amount to a hallmark of access to the mental. This is, perhaps, then the single unifying characteristic of Dignāga's internally diverse articulation of self-awareness: self-awareness is an immediate, non-conceptual mode of awareness that provides access to how mental content (including feelings, etc.) presents itself subjectively" (Kellner 2010, pp. 227–228).

To recap our brief overview, Dignāga begins with a problem of *pramāṇa* or warranted knowledge, and this turns out to involve the relationship between the object of our experience, and the perception that renders said object consciously available to us. This perception is, by definition, non-conceptual. To bridge the epistemic gap between object and perception he introduces a notion of self-awareness, which is said to be an inherent property of perception itself. (There is some controversy over whether Dignāga considered self-awareness to be a property of all cognition or not, but that need not concern us here.) Later commentators will run with this, transforming self-awareness from a kind of self-intimating awareness of the dual nature of cognition, to an abiding luminosity or translucence of consciousness. But to posit self-awareness as a self-intimating property of mind is to solve the epistemological problem by fiat: it claims that a moment of cognition is dual with reference to its subject-object relational structure, but singular with respect to its ontological ground, which is reflexive awareness or abiding luminosity itself. This isn't so much an explanation as it is a restatement of the explanandum.

Of course, cheating may be unavoidable when dealing with the problem of consciousness. Contemporary philosophers try desperately to gain a toehold on the problem, invoking notions of intentionality, or aboutness, or seemings, or qualia, or what-it-is-likeness, all of which are intended to present the irreducibly subjective character of consciousness as singular and dual at one and the same time. (For something to be *like* something, there must be someone or something for whom it is like.) Christian Coseru, for example, writes:

> If self-awareness were not implicitly relational, it could not be a necessary condition for genuine aboutness. Even assuming, on metaphysical rather than phenomenological grounds, that there could be nonrelational modes of awareness, these could not serve as basis for intentional experience. Being pre-thematically present to oneself (that is, being present in a way that does not entail any perceptual or conceptual apprehension of an object) does not mean that, as phenomenologists like Michel Henry have argued, there is no

[33] See the auto-commentary to K.8c-d; trans. Hattori (1968, p. 28) and Kellner (2010, pp. 208–209).

> internal distance. Self-awareness has a horizon structure that discloses the dual aspect nature of mental states: self-awareness and object awareness are interdependent and inherently relational.

But Coseru's analysis simply follows from the claim that consciousness *must* be intentional; that it must be singular (lest we are thrown back into metaphysical dualism) and at the same time have a dual structure (lest it be devoid of content). As I understand it, for a phenomenologist, the demonstration of the truth of this claim cannot be analytic necessity alone, but rather an appeal to the phenomenology of subjective experience; it is a claim that, once one sets aside (via the epoché) the metaphysical and ontological assumptions and commitments that attend the "natural attitude," this is just how the world presents itself. But this is far from evident to those of us who haven't drunk the Kool-Aid, and it has been attacked for its unacknowledged commitment to a "metaphysics of presence" and the "myth of the given."[34] I will return to this in my conclusion.

For our present purposes, it will suffice to note that, at least in the case of Dignāga, the notion of self-awareness did not emerge in the context of a phenomenological investigation of consciousness per se, but rather in a discussion about warranted knowledge. With that as background, we can return to the *Cheng weishi lun*.

The Four Aspects

The *Cheng weishi lun* deals with self-awareness under the rubric of the "four aspects" (*sifen* 四分, literally, "four parts") of cognition, a terminology unknown, to my knowledge, in surviving Sanskrit and Tibetan works. In fact, the *Cheng weishi lun* counterposes three different theories of self-awareness in circulation in India at the time, known as the "two-aspect," "three-aspect," and "four-aspect" theories, making it particularly valuable from both a historical and a philosophical perspective. In Japanese Hossō 法相, the four aspects are considered one of the most difficult but also sublime topics of study; as a Japanese saying goes, "The four aspects [of cognition] and three kinds [of perceptual objects] are half of the study of consciousness only" 四分三類唯識半學.[35]

It is important to remember that, for the authors of this work—notably Dharmapāla and Xuanzang—the notion of self-awareness is not tied to *pramāṇa* theory so much as to an analysis of the *ālayavijñāna*. While self-awareness and the four aspects of cognition are mentioned at several junctures, the primary account is found in fascicle two of the text, in the exposition of the "mental image" (*xingxiang* 行相, Sk. *ākāra*) of the *ālayavijñāna*:[36]

[34] The critique of the "metaphysics of presence" is traced to Heidegger's reworking of Husserl, but is appropriated by Derrida and used against the foundationalism in the phenomenological project writ large. The "myth of the given" is associated with the work of Wilfrid Sellars.

[35] Tagawa (2009, p. 7) and Yao (2005, p. 147). On the four aspects of cognition see especially the seminal study by Fukihara (1988).

[36] On the complex term *ākāra*, translated variously as "form," "aspect," "mode of appearance," "mode of mental functioning," etc., see esp. Dhammajoti (2007), Kellner (2014) and Kellner and McClintock (2014).

At the time when, through the power of the causes and conditions, the substance of the *ālaya* consciousness emerges, inwardly it transforms into seeds as well as a body endowed with sense faculties; outwardly it transforms into the container [world]. It then takes these transformations as the object-support, because the mental image arises in dependence on them. Here "knowing" means that the maturational consciousness [i.e., the *ālaya*] has the function of apprehension with regard to its own object-supports. This function of apprehension is included in the seeing aspect.
阿賴耶識因緣力故自體生時。內變為種及有根身。外變為器。即以所變為自所緣。行相仗之而得起故。此中了者謂異熟識於自所緣有了別用。此了別用見分所攝.

[TWO-ASPECT THEORY]

Thus when the substance of defiled cognition arises, it seems as if there is both an object and a subject. The associated mental factors should be understood similarly. The apparent object-support is called the appearance aspect, and the apparent subject is called the seeing aspect. If the mind and mental factors did not assume the form of an object, then there would be no apprehension of an object realm. Or alternatively, in each and every moment there would be the apprehension of everything; one's own object realm would be like that of others, and [the object realm of] others would be like one's own. If the mind and mental factors did not assume the form of a subject, then there would be no apprehension at all. It would be the same as empty space, or, alternatively, empty space could be said to have apprehension. Consequently, mind and mental factors must have these two aspects. As the [*Ghanavyūha*] *sūtra* says, "Everything is mere knowing; that which is known is non-existent. The knower and the known are each naturally transformed."[37]
然有漏識自體生時。皆似所緣能緣相現。彼相應法應知亦爾。似所緣相說名相分。似能緣相說名見分。若心心所無所緣相應不能緣自所緣境。或應一一能緣一切。自境如餘餘如自故。若心心所無能緣相應不能緣。如虛空等。或虛空等亦是能緣。故心心所必有二相。如契經說。一切唯有覺。所覺義皆無。能覺所覺分。各自然而轉.

[THREE-ASPECT THEORY]

As for those who posit an object realm that exists apart from consciousness, they explain that this external realm is the object-support, the appearance aspect is the mental image, and the seeing aspect is the thing itself, because [seeing] is the essence of mind and its activities. The mind and its associated mental factors have the same object-support, which conditions the appearance

[37] The quotation, with slight changes, is from the *Dasheng miyan jing* 大乘密嚴經, translated by Divākara in the late seventh century: 一切唯有覺。所覺義皆無。能覺所覺性。自然如是轉 (T.681: 16.731c24–25).

of the mental image. While the associated objects are equal in number, their individual characteristics differ, because the characteristics of consciousness, feeling, conception, etc., are differentiated. [I.e., one and the same object is presented in different forms by the different mental factors.]
[However,] if we grasp the fact that there is no object realm apart from consciousness, then we explain that the appearance aspect of consciousness is the object-support, and the seeing aspect is the mental image. The substance that supports both the seeing and appearance aspects of consciousness is called the thing itself, which is the "self-aware aspect" of consciousness. If this did not exist, there would be no recollection of mind and mental factors, just as it is impossible to recollect things that never took place. Mind and mental factors have the same supporting basis, but while the object support will in each case be similar, the mental image differs because the functions of recognition, feeling, etc. are different. The phenomena are equal in number, but their characteristics differ, because the substance of consciousness, feeling, etc., are different. Thus when mind and its activities are born one after another, rational analysis reveals that each has these three aspects, because what is known, the knowing itself, and the fruit of knowing are different, and because the appearance and the seeing must have a supporting substance. According to a verse in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*,

The image of what appears as an external object is the known;
That which grasps the image and that which is self-aware
Are the knower and the fruit of knowing.
There is no difference in the substance of these three.[38]

執有離識所緣境者。彼說外境是所緣。相分名行相。見分名事。是心心所自體相故。心與心所同所依緣。行相相似。事雖數等而相各異。識受想等相各別故。達無離識所緣境者。則說相分是所緣。見分名行相。相見所依自體名事。即自證分。此若無者應不自憶心心所法。如不曾更境必不能憶故。心與心所同所依根。所緣相似。行相各別。了別領納等作用各異故。事雖數等而相各異。識受等體有差別故。然心心所一一生時。以理推徵各有三分。所量能量量果別故。相見必有所依體故。如集量論伽他中說。似境相所量。能取相自證。即能量及果。此三體無別.

[FOUR-ASPECT THEORY]

If we make a more refined distinction concerning mind and mental factors, we must posit four aspects. Three are explained as above, and the fourth is the aspect that is aware of self-awareness. If this fourth aspect did not exist, what would know the third aspect? All the divisions of mind must be known equally. Also, [were it not known,] the self-aware aspect would have no result, and all valid cognitions (*pramāṇa*) must have results. It cannot be that the seeing aspect is the result of the third aspect, because the seeing aspect is

[38] For a reconstruction of the original see Steinkellner (2005, p. 4, lines 17–18).

sometimes categorized as mistaken cognition (非量, *apramāṇa*). Consequently, it is not the seeing aspect that knows the third aspect, because that which knows its own substance must be direct perception (現量, *pratyakṣa*). Of these four aspects, the first two are external, and the latter two are internal. The first aspect is merely an object of perception, while the last three are dual [i.e., they include a knowing and a known]. Although the second aspect always has the first aspect as its object, it may function as warranted cognition (*pramāṇa*) or it may not, and it may be direct perception or inference.
The third aspect has as its object the second and the fourth aspects. That which is aware of self-awareness has only the third aspect as its object, not the second aspect, because there is no need for it to do so. The third and fourth aspects are both categorized as direct perception.
Therefore the mind and mental factors are created from the union of these four aspects, which form subject and object, without falling into an infinite regression. They are neither identical nor different, and thus the principle of consciousness only is demonstrated. For this reason a verse in the [*Ghanavyūha*] *sūtra* says,

The minds of living beings have two natures,
Everything is divided into internal and external,
And with the defilements of a grasper and a grasped,
There is the perception of innumerable distinctions.

This verse means that the minds of living beings are created from the union of the two aspects. Whether the aspects are internal or external, they are bound to the defilements of a grasper and a grasped. Seeing has many varieties, and can be divided into either valid or invalid cognition, and either direct perception or inference. Here "seeing" refers to the seeing aspect [of consciousness].
These four aspects may be categorized as three, because the fourth aspect may be subsumed within the third aspect. Or [the four] may be reduced to two, because the last three have the nature of apprehending, and therefore can be subsumed within the seeing aspect. Here we speak of "seeing" in the sense of apprehending. Or they all may be reduced to one, because in terms of their substance there is no differentiation. As a verse in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* says,

From the attachment of mind to itself,
The mind takes on the appearance of an external realm.
What it perceives does not exist,
Therefore it is said to be only mind.

Therefore in many places [the scriptures] state that there is only the one mind. When they speak of "one mind" it includes the mental factors. Therefore the appearance of consciousness as a mental image is precisely its discernment, and discernment is precisely the seeing aspect of consciousness.
又心心所若細分別應有四分。三分如前。復有第四證自證分。此若無者誰證第三。心分既同應皆證故。又自證分應無有果。諸能量者必有果故。不應見分是第三果。見分或時非量攝故。由此見分不證第三。證自

體者必現量故。此四分中前二是外後二是內。初唯所緣後三通二。謂第二分但緣第一。或量非量或現或比。第三能緣第二第四。證自證分唯緣第三。非第二者以無用故。第三第四皆現量攝。故心心所四分合成。具所能緣無無窮過。非即非離唯識理成。是故契經伽他中說。眾生心二性。內外一切分。所取能取纏。見種種差別。此頌意說眾生心性二分合成。若內若外皆有所取能取纏縛。見有種種或量非量或現或比多分差別。此中見者是見分故。如是四分或攝為三第四攝入自證分故。或攝為二後三俱是能緣性故皆見分攝。此言見者是能緣義。或攝為一體無別故。如入楞伽伽他中說。由自心執著。心似外境轉。彼所見非有。是故說唯心。如是處處說唯一心。此一心言亦攝心所。故識行相即是了別。了別即是識之見分.[39]

Yao has suggested that the *Cheng weishi lun* account of the four aspects represents Dharmapāla's attempt to synthesize Dignāga's analysis of self-awareness with the analysis given by Asaṅga in his *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*. For Dharmapāla, self-awareness is the substantial basis or essence (*ti* 體, which Yao takes as a translation of Sk. *dravya*) of both the seeing and apparent (knowing and known) aspects of consciousness. This would explain why the third aspect, self-awareness, is sometimes called *zi ti fen* 自體分, which Yao reconstructs as **svabhāvāṅga* (2005, pp. 145–146). And this creates an apparent muddle, since self-awareness is both the result of (*guo* 果, *phala*), and the substantial basis for (*suo yi ti* 所依體), the first two aspects. (The *Cheng weishi lun* cites *kārikā* 10 of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* discussed above in support of this claim.) Indeed, this formulation, in which self-awareness is both the basis for and result of the knowing-known structure of experience, may simply refract a muddle in Dignāga's original formulation. In any case, when we come to Dharmapāla, he either does not recognize or does not endorse the claim that *svasaṃvitti* is self-intimating, and thus he must posit a fourth aspect: the awareness that cognizes self-awareness.

It should now be clear that the four-aspect theory found in the *Cheng weishi lun* resists the phenomenological reading of Yogācāra that has become popular of late. Dharmapāla's argument that a fourth aspect is needed to cognize the third aspect aligns him with a more traditional Abhidharma understanding of Yogācāra, in which cognition always requires a distinct object of knowledge. The author of the four-aspect model clearly understands the danger of infinite regress, but rather than availing himself of the theory that consciousness has a self-intimating or intransitive aspect, which may have seemed unorthodox if not incoherent, he simply has the model fold back on itself, with the third aspect responsible for cognizing the fourth aspect, and vice versa.

Ābhidharmikas had long expressed concern with self-intimation. In the *Mahāvibhāṣā* for example, the Sarvāstivāda scholar Vasumitra provides a series of arguments intended to refute the Mahāsāṃghika notion that cognition can know itself. The following is typical: "If something in itself knows itself, then one cannot establish grasper and grasped, knower and known, awareness and that of which it is

[39] T.1585: 31.10a18-c12. Cf. the translations in Cook (1999, pp. 60–64), Wei (1973, pp. 137–145) and de La Vallée Poussin (1928, pp. 125–135); as well as the discussions in Frauwallner (2010, pp. 424–437), Kern (1988, 1992) and Yao (2005, pp. 145–147).

aware, an object and that which possesses the object, the mental image (*ākāra*) and its object support, the sense faculties and their objects, and so on" 復次若自性知自性者。不建立能取所取。能知所知。能覺所覺。境有境。行相所緣。根根義等.[40] To Vasumitra, awareness is like a fingertip that cannot touch itself, a knife blade that cannot cut itself, an eye that cannot see itself, a strong man that cannot carry himself.[41] (The Mahāsāṃghika counter with the simile of the lamp that lights itself, to which the Sarvāstivāda [and later the Madhyamaka] reply that the lamp's nature is illumination, and thus it makes no sense to claim that a lamp stands in need of illumination.) But the argument that is perhaps most effective is also the most succinct: "Why does [awareness] in itself not know itself? Because it is not an object" 何故自性不知自性。答非境界故.[42] Awareness or consciousness is not a something that can be known, and to call it intransitive or self-intimating is simply to acknowledge that there is nothing to be said about it. This is where explanations come to an end.

Conclusion: A Historicist Critique of the Phenomenological Project

> *If atoms are really to explain the origin of color and smell of visible material bodies, then they cannot possess properties like color and smell.*
>
> Werner Heisenberg

The patriarchs associated with "classical" Yogācāra—Asaṅga and Vasubandhu—as well as later commentators such as Dharmapāla and Xuanzang, may well have been influenced by non-Buddhist systems, but from all appearances they were writing primarily with a Buddhist scholastic audience in mind. Accordingly, they remain filial to what I have characterized as Abhidharma "orthodoxy"—an understanding of consciousness in which (1) "knowing" entails that there is something that is known, (2) truly existing (i.e., causally efficacious) things have a single essence that cannot be further divided, and hence, (3) knowing cannot know itself. In defense of these postulates they had centuries of authoritative scripture, commentary, and argument from which to draw.

In contrast, Dignāga seems to have been writing for a rather different audience; his contributions to *pramāṇa* theory were intended to engage his non-Buddhist interlocutors—to turn them away from their own misbegotten systems and to render Buddhist views relevant and philosophically compelling (Krasser 2004). Dignāga and his heirs are celebrated for their success in this regard; they were among the first Buddhist philosophers to bring Buddhist doctrine into sustained conversation with non-Buddhists, and thereby to establish the legitimacy of Buddhism within the

[40] *Apidamo da piposha lun*, T.1545: 27.43b10–12; cf. Yao (2005, pp. 56–57).

[41] *Apidamo da piposha lun*, T.1545: 27.43a26–27; Yao (2005, p. 52).

[42] *Apidamo da piposha lun*, T.1545: 27.43a28–29; cf. Yao (2005, p. 57), who comments: "this is the most clear and effective refutation of self-awareness in terms of epistemology."

larger world of Indian thought.[43] To do this Dignāga had to develop a rhetorical strategy that did not aver to the authority of the Buddha or Buddhist scripture; such sources had no purchase outside the fold. Dignāga's program was to reestablish the authority of Buddhist doctrine on two and only two non-controversial philosophical warrants—direct perception and inference. Direct perception serves as an unassailable empirical ground for philosophical analysis, while inference allows for discursive meaning and conceptual content. Dignāga recognizes the ontological gap between the two—direct perception discloses pre-conceptual transient singularities, while inference is predicated on language and convention. So Dignāga, in a move that would fascinate and exasperate generations of commentators, posits *svasaṃvedana* as the means to bridge the divide. *Svasaṃvedana* is both singular (self-intimating, intransitive) and dual (it grasps the subject-object relation), thus managing to be both contentless and contentful at one and the same time. Buddhist conceptual truths can now be affirmed not via the authority of scripture or tradition, but on the warrant of non-conceptual experience.

Husserl had a structurally similar problem—how to legitimize a philosophical project that was under assault from the rise, popularity, and success of science? The physicalist picture of the universe endorsed by science seemed to leave little room for philosophy and metaphysics as traditionally understood. Husserl responded by reestablishing philosophy on an "empirical" foundation. The result—phenomenology—would set aside centuries of fruitless metaphysical speculation, and make of itself a "science of pure phenomena" that "is inferior in methodological rigor to none of the modern sciences" (Husserl 1981).

The basis for this science is pure experience itself: "the first and most primitive concept of the phenomenon referred to the limited sphere of those sensuously given realities [*der sinnendinglichen Gegebenheiten*] through which Nature is evinced in perceiving." This provides Husserl with a basis on which to build: "the existence of what is given to immanent reflection is indubitable while what is experienced through external experience always allows the possibility that it may prove to be an illusory Object in the course of further experiences." The result is what Husserl calls a "science of the spirit" (Husserl 1965) that will save us from the misplaced materialism of the age. It is, as it were, a higher science, that discloses for systematic reflection the wellspring from which all science flows.

> Is pure phenomenology genuinely possible as a science, and, if so, then how? Once the suspension is in effect, we are left with pure consciousness. In pure consciousness, however, what we find is an unresting flow of never recurring phenomena, even though they may be indubitably given in reflective experience. Experience by itself is not science. Since the reflecting and cognizing subject has only his flowing phenomena genuinely and since every

[43] Kellner (2014) mentions Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā among the primary targets. On the revolutionary nature of Dignāga's work, and its broad impact on Indian philosophy, see the comments in McCrea (2013, pp. 129–132). McCrea writes that "alongside the dramatic doctrinal changes in both Buddhist and anti-Buddhist philosophical text traditions set in motion by Dignāga's work, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* also initiated a sudden, widespread, and radical transformation in the reading, citational, and discursive practices of Sanskrit philosophers, a transformation perhaps even more dramatic in its effects than Dignāga's specifically philosophical contributions" (2013, p. 130).

> other cognizing subject—his corporeality and consequently his consciousness [*seinem Erleben*] as well—falls within the scope of the exclusion, how can an empirical science still be possible? Science cannot be solipsistic. It must be valid for every experience subject. (Husserl 1981)

The parallels with Dignāga are striking. "Pure consciousness," like *pratyakṣa*, is comprised of a flow of transient particulars ("never recurring phenomena") whose "purity" lies in the pre-discursive or unconstructed immediacy of the flow as grasped first-personally. Then, through the phenomenal reduction and systematic reflection (bracketing the "natural attitude" and attending to things as they appear), one can arrive at a precise description of the phenomenal world in which we find ourselves. This results in an account that is scientific, empirical, and universal precisely because it is arrived at through pure observation unencumbered by the unwarranted metaphysical assumptions and confusions that attend the natural attitude. Husserl, like Dignāga, grounds the conceptual truths of his system in unassailable non-conceptual reality.

But, as with Dignāga, a closer look reveals the sleight of hand that allows Husserl to pull this particular rabbit out of the hat. The claim that the "unresting flow of never recurring phenomena" given to us in "pure consciousness" is "indubitably given in reflective experience," is a cheat, for as soon as Husserl introduces the notion of "reflection" we step back from the *Lebenswelt*—we retreat from the immediacy of pure consciousness—into the realm of concepts and meanings, and accordingly we forfeit whatever certainty we may once have had.

In short, Dignāga and Husserl are both trying to rework the epistemic foundations of their respective traditions so as to respond to external critique. They both do this by averring to the authority of immediate experience—understood as non-objectifying, pre-reflective self-consciousness or, more simply, as "what shows up"—and both stumble when it comes to explaining how conceptual content can be extracted from this. In the end they present us with a Möbius strip—a surface that is both one and two sided.

Heidegger recognized the latent Cartesianism in Husserl's account, and attempted to save the project by developing an increasingly idiosyncratic vocabulary intended to forestall the reification of being or presence (*Dasein*). Derrida, in turn, would critique Heidegger for his attempt to turn pure presence into yet another metaphysical foundation for philosophical work. Heidegger, like Husserl, bumps up against the problem of deriving conceptual truths from a domain of non-conceptual being. And this impulse to establish truth claims through an appeal to a domain of pure phenomenality shows no sign of abating; philosophers continue to be motivated by a conviction that naïve positivism or physicalism leaves something fundamental and glaring out of the equation. In their efforts to resist the hegemony of scientific materialism, they posit new formulations to direct our attention to that crucial something—our subjective sense of ourselves—that is missing from the scientific worldview. Each formulation—"aboutness," "seemings," *qualia*, "what-it-is-likeness"—promises to mitigate the unwarranted reifications and metaphysical commitments that attend Cartesianism.

Take, for example, the language suggested by Ned Block that has gained traction of late in both cognitive science and analytic philosophy. Block distinguishes (1) phenomenal consciousness ("p-consciousness"), which is raw or pre-discursive

(non-representational) experience, from (2) access consciousness ("a-consciousness"), which has representational content that is available or "poised" "for use in reasoning and rationally guiding speech and action" (Block 1995, p. 230). The distinction unleashed a storm of debate and controversy, with critics arguing that the proposal is dubious on philosophical, empirical, and common-sense grounds.[44] Yet the rubric remains popular, and the reason, I believe, is that the refusal to distinguish between pure phenomenality on the one hand, and one's ability to access it on the other, would call into question the coherence, and thus the very existence, of pure experience itself—of the "blueness" of blue, the "wetness" of water. Without p-consciousness we would not be able to distinguish ourselves from machines or zombies, and this would open the door to behaviorism, cognitivism, computationalism, reductive physicalism, and other such ills. Here I am reminded of the fear mongering of religious partisans who insist that without God, ethics and morality will vanish. Whatever security the notion of p-consciousness affords, it remains a "wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it" (Wittgenstein 1958: §271).

Block offers us another Möbius strip; like *svasaṃvedana* for Dignāga and intentionality for Husserl, Block's "consciousness" is both one and two sided. (Note how p-consciousness and a-consciousness are tendered as two types of one and the same thing, namely, "consciousness.") This finesses precisely what is at issue, namely, whether any sense can be made of consciousness or phenomenality *as such*. Block's proposal sidesteps the problem by shifting our focus from ontology and metaphysics (which seem intractable) to methodology (in which science will come to our rescue). Instead of asking "does it make sense to attribute phenomenal properties to states to which we as outsiders, and indeed to which the subject as insider, may have no access?" we are directed to ask the ostensibly more manageable question: "what indirect methods might be used to assess phenomenal states to which we have no direct access?" Magicians know this tactic as "misdirection."[45]

And this raises questions concerning the phenomenological project itself. Given the philosophical and conceptual issues that have dogged it from the beginning, and the paucity of much to show for all its efforts, it may be time to recognize phenomenology as an artifact of a particular historical imperative. Its task was to

[44] See, for example, the multiple commentaries in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1995 (18), pp. 247–269, and 1997 (20), pp. 144–166, as well as Block's (1997) response. A number of the reviewers criticize Block for failing to demonstrate how representational content can be derived from non-representational phenomenal states. Defenders of Block's proposal insist that some such distinction is required to account for conscious states to which we do not have immediate access, from the "consciousness" of the sound of a radio in the background before one consciously notices it, to what echolocation must "feel like" for a bat.

[45] For a recent attempt to adapt Block's distinction between "access" and "phenomenal" consciousness in a Buddhist philosophical context, see Garfield (2015, esp. Chaps. 5 and 6). Influenced in part by Block, Garfield makes a distinction between "surface" versus "deep" phenomenology, which he also likens to Dan Zahavi's distinction between phenomenology as introspection versus phenomenology as transcendental analysis. While Garfield's analysis is intended, in part, to obviate the misplaced enthusiasm for rendering Buddhism as phenomenology as well as the attendant reifications of mind, consciousness, interiority, etc. (see also Garfield 2011), his own approach is subject to the same critique given above: there is a certain equivocation at work in couching "deep phenomenology" as phenomenology in the first place.

render philosophy scientific and empirical by presenting its special domain—mind and the domain of meaning—as amenable to critical, objective analysis. In its defense of philosophy, phenomenology went on the offensive: philosophers insisted that scientific inquiry is the product of the human mind, and thus any science that refuses to, or is incapable of, bringing mind and consciousness within its purview is incomplete. Phenomenology could then claim to be more thoroughgoing in its empiricism than the physical sciences. And this is precisely the claim made on behalf of Buddhism as a "science of mind," which may explain why phenomenology has attracted the attention of modern Buddhist philosophers.

The problem with this strategy lies in the manner in which it privileges "mind" and "consciousness" and "what shows up" as the wellspring of who and what we are. There are good reasons to suspect that an understanding of mind and the human condition on the basis of rigorous first-person inquiry is untenable from the get go. The giants who gave rise to the modern social sciences—Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Freud, and their heirs—argued, each in their own way, that a robust account of the individual "lifeworld" must begin from the perspective not of the individual, but from the collective social structures in which the individual emerges. In other words, there is no a priori reason to believe that an understanding of the latent categories, causal processes, and underlying structures of experience can be ascertained on the basis of how the world appears first-personally. (From this perspective, Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Freud offer more radical critiques of the "natural attitude" than did Husserl.) This, I take it, is the real take-away from recent theoretical models such as "situated cognition," in which the constitutive system for the emergence of experience is not the individual, much less the mind or cogito, but rather the larger social, cultural, and environmental matrix in which we find ourselves. And this is grasped not through phenomenological reflection but through empirical studies (in both the social and biological sciences) coupled with rigorous critical analysis.[46]

So to return to our initial question—is Yogācāra phenomenology?—we can now respond: it depends on whose Yogācāra we are talking about. The tradition that followed the lead of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti would reconfigure the notion of non-conceptual knowledge (*nirvikalpajñāna*), transforming it from an exalted state known only to buddhas and advanced yogis, to an essential component of all conscious experience, both mundane and supramundane. And this in turn would provide doctrinal legitimacy for notions such as the "matrix of buddhahood" (Sk. *tathāgatagarbha*), "buddha nature" (Chin. *foxing* 佛性), "abiding luminosity" or "clear light" (Tib. *'od gsal*), and so on. Indeed, the idea that non-conceptual cognition is the essence of both mind and buddhahood would galvanize later traditions of Buddhist thought, including Chan in China and Dzogchen in Tibet. Clearly, the rhetoric of immediate, unconstructed, pre-reflective experience had broad appeal. And this strand of Mahāyāna thought may indeed have parallels with modern phenomenology, particularly in its struggle to gain a conceptual toehold on

[46] In one regard, early Yogācāra and Heidegger do share a common concern: both aspire to collapse the distinction between mind and world. My point is that this mind/world is constituted intersubjectively and thus is transcendental to the individual. Any attempt to investigate it through phenomenological reduction and reflection—a technique that privileges what shows up for me—may be wrongheaded from the start.

the *non-conceptual*. But it sits uncomfortably with earlier de-reificationist strands of Buddhist thought, including both Sarvāstivāda and Madhyamaka.[47]

In contrast, I would characterize the *Cheng weishi lun* as closer to the "classical" Yogācāra of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, a Yogācāra more closely aligned with the insights and methods of Abhidharma and Madhyamaka.[48] The *Cheng weishi lun* discussion of the omnipresent factors and self-awareness does not reference anything like non-conceptual cognition, the *Lebenswelt*, or *Dasein*; it does not privilege the givenness of our conscious experience. The text remains part of the earlier Buddhist project insofar as it presumes that what is known to us is the result of conceptual construction, that what is conceptually constructed is ultimately illusory, that freedom from illusion involves relinquishing attachment to phenomenal appearances, that such detachment is gained through an understanding of the interdependent cognitive processes that beget the illusion, and this understanding leads ultimately to *nirvāṇa*—the cessation of the phenomenal world. And for this, sacred scripture, authoritative exegesis, deductive logic and analysis trump phenomenological reflection.

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References

[Note: texts in the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932) are indicated by the text number ("T.") followed by the volume, page, register (a, b, or c), and line number(s).]

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[47] On the Madhyamaka side, see esp. Bhāviveka's critique of Yogācāra notions of non-conceptual knowledge in Eckel (2008, pp. 73–77).

[48] For readings of Vasubandhu that foreground continuities between his Abhidharma and his Yogācāra writings, see Gold (2015) and Kritzer (2005).

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