

What is Time?: Yogācāra-Buddhist Meditation on the Problem of the External World in the *Treatise on the Perfection of Consciousness-only* (*Cheng weishi lun*)

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Abstract

Because it asserts that there is consciousness-only (*vijñapti-mātratā*), the difficulty in philosophically approaching the Yogācāra-Buddhist text *Cheng weishi lun* centers on the problem of the external world. This paper is based on a review by Lambert Schmithausen that, specifically with regard to the problem of the external world, questions Dan Lusthaus's phenomenological investigation of the *CWSL*. In it I point out that the fundamental temporality of consciousness brought to light by the Yogacaric revelation of the incessant differentiation of consciousness (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*) calls into question every temporally conditioned, and hence appropriational, understanding of *vijñapti-mātratā*. Therefore, the problem of the external world cannot be approached without taking into account the temporality of consciousness, which, furthermore, compels us to face the riddle of time.

Keywords: time, *vijñapti-mātratā*, *Cheng weishi lun*, Dan Lusthaus, Lambert Schmithausen

Izveček

Budistično jogijsko besedilo *Cheng weishi lun* zagovarja trditev, da obstaja samo zavest (*vijñapti-mātratā*), zato se filozofski pristop tega besedila usmeri na problem zunanjega sveta. Ta članek temelji na recenziji Lamberta Schmithasena, ki se ob upoštevanju problema zunanjega sveta ukvarja s fenomenološkimi preiskavami *CWSL*-ja Dana Lusthausa. V njem sem poudaril, da je zaradi odvisnosti zavesti od časa, ki jo poudarja razodevanje nenehnega spreminjanja zavesti pri jogi (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*), vprašljivo vsako časovno po-gojeno, in zato večkrat prisvojeno, razumevanje pojma *vijñapti-mātratā*. Tako k problemu zunanjega sveta ni mogoče pristopiti brez upoštevanja časovnosti zavesti, ki nas poleg tega sooča tudi z uganko časa.

Ključne besede: čas, *vijñapti-mātratā*, *Cheng weishi lun*, Dan Lusthaus, Lambert Schmithausen

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Introduction

A main ground for scholars to talk about philosophical phenomenology developed by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Buddhism together is that both of them have undertaken a very profound analysis of consciousness, which is characterized by its intentionality. In Buddhism, the concept that corresponds to intentionality is *karman* or *karma* (業). Inspired by the intentionality of *karman*, Dan Lusthaus has attempted a phenomenological investigation of (Yogācāra) Buddhism taking the *Treatise on The Perfection of Consciousness-only* (*Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論, *vijñapti-mātratā-siddhi*)¹ as an example (See Lusthaus 2002, especially 11–36; 168–94). In his critical response to Lusthaus' research, Lambert Schmithausen also accepts the phenomenological rendering of *karman* as intentionality,² but he does not agree with Lusthaus on the problem of the external world as presented in the *CWSL*.³

Following the debate between Schmithausen and Lusthaus, I will try to demonstrate in this paper that the *temporality of consciousness*, which is brought to light by revelation of the incessant differentiation/evolution/alteration of consciousness (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*), not only helps deepen our comprehension of the concept of intentionality or *karman* but also compels us to further meditate on the problem of the external world. The problem of the external world looked at in light of the temporality of consciousness, which generally puts into doubt the experiences of time in everyday life, necessarily and radically highlights the riddle of time. It should be stressed that there would be no problem concerning the external world at all, if the recognition of the radical temporality of consciousness had not already compelled us to face the riddle of time.⁴

1 *Cheng weishi lun* or *Cheng wei-shih lun* is abbreviated as *CWSL* in the following discussion.

2 Regarding the intentionality of *karman*: "In Buddhism karmically productive action is defined as consisting in either intention (*cetanā*) itself or intentional (*cetayitvā*) acts, which means that in any case intention, hence a *mental* factor is decisive" (Schmithausen 2005, 50–51).

3 Dan Lusthaus' *Buddhist Phenomenology. A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Cheng Wei-shih lun* has evoked much discussion. (See, for instance, Waldron 2003, Gray 2003, Muller 2004, Eckel 2004, Gradinarov 2005 and Lau 2007) In the following, however, I will focus on Lambert Schmithausen's response to this book (Schmithausen 2005).

4 The question of time has threaded the phenomenological movement and become another meeting point in the phenomenological investigation of Buddhism. For example, Rolf Elberfeld, especially with reference to the Zen-Buddhist meditation on time by Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), has made a contribution to the phenomenology of time in Buddhism (Elberfeld 2004). And partly in his newly finished dissertation Li Jianjun has, with regard to the responsive phenomenology of Bernhard Waldenfels, discussed the universal tension between existential temporality and spiritual freedom in religious discourse. Buddhism is also integrated into his analysis. In his opinion, a crucial difference of Mahayana-Buddhism (The Yogācāra in question in this paper is one of the two main streams of Mahayana-Buddhism, the other one is Madhyamika) from the early Buddhist schools is its cognition and implicit emphasis on the necessity of being-rooted in everyday life and the ac-

The Impossibility of Scientific Indifference with Regard to the Temporality of Consciousness

The *CWSL*, a key Yogācāra-Buddhist text compiled by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), has attracted much attention from scholars.⁵ Interest in this text has not been limited to philological and religious studies, but has, from the beginning, gone beyond the usual deciphering of words and pointed to the *CWSL*'s subtle and profound way of philosophizing.⁶ We can say that, in its religiously-flavored

tualization of spiritual freedom in everyday life in this world (Li 2015). The assertion sounds quite anti-conventional and needs to be explained. Although is not the actual task of this paper to verify this assertion, it is not irrelevant in the following analysis.

- 5 Since its earliest translation from Chinese into French by Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1928–1929), we have today at least two more complete English translations by Wei Tat 韋達 (1973) and Francis H. Cook (1999) respectively, as well as some fragmentary translations such as those by Wing-Tsit Chan 陳榮捷 (1963) and Derk Bodde (1937). With regard to the significance of this text Wei has said: “*Ch'eng Wei-shih lun* is a creative and elaborate exposition of the *Trimsika* and a synthesis of its ten commentaries. It received the most careful attention of Hsüan Tsang and his most eminent disciple K'uei Chi (窺基, 632–682). It represents the flower of their literary and spiritual genius. It was received with acclaim by later scholars who extolled it as a work of outstanding excellence and as the cornerstone of the doctrine of the Wei-shih of Yogacara School.” (Wei 1973, LIII)
- 6 Dan Lusthaus's debate with de La Vallée Poussin (Lusthaus 2002, 492–3) and Lambert Schmithausen's questioning of Lusthaus's philosophical investigation of the *CWSL* (Schmithausen 2005, 11) are two recent examples of an intrinsic tension in the reading of the text: on the one hand we have to literally decipher what the text talks about. On the other hand, by reading it in order to comprehend what *vijñapti-mātratā* means, we are forced to philosophize, that is, to be aware of the actual dilemma in approaching the idea of *vijñapti-mātratā*: we have to ask ourselves, for the sake of examination, if *vijñapti-mātratā* is reasonable or not, but by thinking we are already entangled in the decisive problem of attachment and appropriation, which one hopes to overcome, through the recognition of, or awakening to, *vijñapti-mātratā*. Thinking is based on mental attachment and appropriation. Apparently this intrinsic tension accompanied Lusthaus when he, through his philosophical reading of the *CWSL*, “challenged the traditional understanding, and especially its ontological aspect” (Schmithausen 2005, 10). Schmithausen says, “Yogācāra thought has traditionally been understood as advocating the epistemological position that mind, or consciousness, does not—at least not directly—perceive or cognize anything outside itself, but rather cognizes only its own image of an object, and as propounding the ontological position that there are no entities, especially no material entities, apart from consciousness, or, more precisely, apart from the various kinds of mind (*citta*) and mental factors or mind associates (*caitta*)” (Schmithausen 2005, 9). Actually, Lusthaus has to agree with him, although he finds the expression “ontological position” not very exact. As a matter of fact, we can feel Schmithausen's unavoidable intrinsic tension in approaching the idea of *vijñapti-mātratā*. According his statement, not being a philosopher, he does not discuss Lusthaus's philosophical interpretation of the *CWSL*, but rather re-examines the main passage on which Lusthaus grounds his thesis of the independent existence of matter from a philosophical point of view. At the same time, he concedes, “I agree with his (Lusthaus's) view that the teaching of *vijñapti-mātratā* is basically not a theoretical aim in itself but a ‘therapeutic device’, a soteric strategy, directed against attachment and appropriation” (Schmithausen 2005, 11). In any case, the *CWSL* is aware of this intrinsic tension in approaching *vijñapti-mātratā* and has therefore repeatedly pointed out that it is definitely improper to say that there is a teaching/theory/position called *vijñapti-mātratā*. By discussing this in light of the temporality of consciousness, I will reveal this tension further.

descriptions of the complicated evolution or alteration of consciousness and its possible transformation and purification in terms of Buddhism, in reality it has tried, analytically and critically, to touch the most fundamental and ultimate “thing” pertaining to life and the world.

Yogācāra-Buddhism is apparently a highly formalized theoretical system. Its elucidation of *viññapti-mātratā*, usually rendered as consciousness-only or mind-only, is also very scholastic and shows a strong connection with the Abhidharmic tradition. However, Yogacaric texts such as the *CWSL* cannot be read and analyzed without attention to their spiritual dimension.⁷ The text’s denial of the independent existence of the world outside consciousness sounds preposterous and radically challenges our everyday experiences. If we take the prejudicial view that this is nonsense, it will be very hard for us to follow the Yogacaric train of argumentation, and even with extraordinary scientific patience we will miss its main point. That means Yogācāra-Buddhism cannot be treated solely as an object of the philological and religious studies. It compels us to integrate the study of it into our own lives and thoroughly examine all our opinions and knowledge of life and the world as we interpret them. We have to seriously ask ourselves if Yogācāra-Buddhism is really talking about something true or not.⁸

7 Despite his criticism of Lusthaus’s ambiguous insistence on some kind of real existence of matter that is independent of mind, Schmithausen appreciates his consideration of Yogācāra’s spiritual aspect: “It is one of the merits of Lusthaus’s study that he indeed tries to take into account, in his interpretation of Yogācāra thought, central concerns of the *Buddhist* tradition, especially karma (...) and attachment (...)” (Schmithausen 2005, 49). And like Lusthaus, he gives much attention to “the spiritual context of *viññaptimātratā*”, pointing out that “Buddhism is concerned with *sentient* beings and their *intentions*, which result in either karmic effects or liberation. It is therefore *mental* factors that produce their world or their experience of the highest truth or true reality (*tathatā*). This strengthens the argument for mind-only (*viññaptimātratā*) understanding of the nature of the world. To regard it as independent of mind is, from this point of view, a misconception from which Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are free even when they enter the karmically produced worlds/minds (*vipākaviññānas*) of other beings to help them transform their impure worlds into pure ones and share with them their Buddha fields or the final freedom”. (Werner 2009, 268)

8 Even today the concept of idealism, often criticized as solipsism, is usually used to talk about Yogācāra-Buddhism (see e.g. Werner 2009, 268). Many discussions center on the question of whether Yogācāra-Buddhism is idealistic or not (see e.g. Lusthaus 2002, 492–3; 533–4). Concerning this disputation, Chan Wing-cheuk 陳榮灼 has given a brief summary of this dispute in his clarification of Ueda Yoshifumi 上田義文’s non-idealistic interpretation of Yogācāra-Buddhism in terms of a comparison with Sartre’s phenomenology (Chan 2005, 127–44; Ueda 1967). But the uncritical use of such a crucial concept in Western—especially German—philosophy has made the “matter itself” even more unclear. The difficulty in reading German philosophers like Kant and Hegel, who have comprehensively expounded the richness and subtly of idealism—also susceptible to misunderstanding, unfortunately (see also footnote 10)—is the same as that in comprehending Yogācāra-Buddhism, which excludes some *view* that the reader can simply accept as a result of book learning. Therefore, the present paper emphasizes that our ordinary life must be taken into account if we do not want to naively play with words. Because of this, a kind of trivial study of

Nevertheless, according to the highest insight of Buddhism, spiritual attitudes and positions are beyond the intellectual distinction between true and false in the ordinary sense.⁹ But we must admit that actual everyday existence including scientific activities cannot be so. Though not arbitrarily, we always take various positions for the sake of everyday life and are therefore somehow prejudiced, consciously or unconsciously. Yogācāra-Buddhism systematically criticizes the function of human cognition and thoroughly examines the essence of consciousness with all its possible contents, showing them to be cognitive constructions or mental fictions (*parikalpi-ta*). So it would be self-contradictory and unscientific to naively take Yogācāra-Buddhism as a neutral object of investigation, forgetting to put our own conditioned and always karmically functioning consciousness under scrutiny as well. Therefore a total *indifference* is not only impossible in principle, but, especially in dealing with the Yogacaric analysis of consciousness, seriously misleading and self-delusive.

This impossibility of indifference is rooted in the essential *temporality of consciousness*, which is to be understood in terms of the Yogacaric revelation of the incessant *vijñāna-pariṇāma* (*shibian* 識變, the differentiation/evolution/alteration of consciousness). I will highlight this fact in my reading of the *CWSL*. The constantly ongoing intentional/karmic activities of consciousness imply its fundamental temporality, which in principle is tantamount to the existence of a sentient being. As I will point out, all forms of the human experience of time are based, according to the *CWLS*, on the fundamental temporality of consciousness. Because of it, we, as readers, researchers, scientists or thinkers, are at all times in a process of change

Yogācāra-Buddhism, which often misleads researchers to sink into speculation and wordplay, is criticized strongly by Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968) in his *Xin weishi lun* 新唯識論 (*A New Treatise on Consciousness-Only*); he also frequently emphasizes “the transformation of life and the realization of enlightenment” (my personal rendering of the concept *shizheng* 實證 by Xiong) as prerequisites to comprehension of the truth of *weishi* (*Consciousness-Only*). Of course, Xiong carries out an emendation of Yogācāra-Buddhism with recourse to the philosophy of the *Yijing* 易經 (*Book of Changes*), which I cannot recount here. For further details see Xiong 2001.

9 Here and also in footnote 8 above we see that the concept “true” as used in this paper is unavoidably, but also expediently and provisionally, ambiguous. Logical Positivism, for instance, adopts a “criterion of verification”. It says that “a sentence is factually significant to any given person if, and only if, ... he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false” (Ayer 1952, 35). This “criterion of verification” is not significantly different from the ordinary attitude of people in everyday life. Whether an assertion or proposition is true in ordinary sense or in the sense of Logical Positivism as summarized by Alfred J. Ayer (1952) is actually not what Yogācāra-Buddhism challenges. By the radical revelation of the intentionality and temporality of consciousness, which differentiates and judges constantly, Yogācāra-Buddhism admonishes sentient beings to free their intentional and temporal consciousness from attachments to the true or the false. So the question at the end of the last paragraph, namely “is Yogācāra-Buddhism really talking about something true or not?”, actually means: “does the Yogacaric ‘beyond true and false’ correspond to the reality of an enlightened life?”

that is intentionally or karmically conditioned, even though we seem to continue to be the same and think we are. This brings to light the fact that we absolutely are not and cannot be indifferent in the study of Yogācāra-Buddhism. Accordingly, it is not consciousness in general, but rather the consciousness of an experiencing and thinking “I”, here and now, that is in question.

Consciousness-only and the Problem of the External World

In his investigation of the *CWSL*, Dan Lusthaus stresses that the denial of the independent existence of the world in general goes against its *externality*. That means that the ordinary objects around us in themselves cannot be denied.¹⁰ What Yogācārins challenge is their *externality* at all: nothing can appear anywhere other than in consciousness. Here it is important to note that in talking about Yogācāra-Buddhism many popular formulations such as “the *denial* of the independent existence of the world outside consciousness”, “*there are no material entities apart from consciousness*”, etc., are themselves not really definite. It is because of the temporality and intentionality of thinking by virtue of names and concepts that each appropriated understanding of *vijñapti-mātratā* is paradoxically caught up in a problem from which Yogācāra has just admonished us to refrain. So it must be clarified that in every mentally conducted *negation* of the existence of a thing, the existence of the thing has in fact been somehow already *assumed* and thus *affirmed* in advance.¹¹ It is the unconscious or unnoticed assumption itself

10 This reminds us of Kant, who carried out a thorough critique of pure reason in human beings. All that we can know—due to space and time as *a priori* forms of sensibility and due to certain categories (e.g. causality, substance etc.) as *a priori* forms of understanding—are things as they appear in the “phenomenal world”. The “noumenal world” of things-in-themselves is outside our experience and not available to us by pure reason. But Kant has, very interestingly and surprisingly, emphasized that it would be a total misunderstanding of his philosophy if people were to imagine metaphysically that behind the phenomenal world there still exists somewhere and somehow a noumenal one (see Kant 1998, A 255/B 311). The difficulty and challenge of Kant’s philosophy has induced many to philosophize or meditate further. In addition, the “phenomenological *epoché*” (suspension) or “bracketing” of Husserl could inspire us to deepen our research on Yogācāra-Buddhism. Husserl has also emphasized that the actual suspension of all judgments before philosophizing is not easily realized and that we should practice (Übung) trying to do so, and that the result of it could be “a thorough personal transformation” (“eine völlige personale Wandlung”) as in the case of “a religious reversal” (“eine religiöse Umkehrung”) (see Husserl 1956, 139–40). Naturally I do not want to hastily compare Yogācāra-Buddhism with Kant’s philosophy or Husserl’s phenomenology. What I mean here is only that it is very important for us to pay equal attention to the nuances in a subtle philosophy like Yogācāra.

11 That means temporally beforehand consciousness has appropriated and presupposed something in order to make a negation or affirmation. It needs time to construct something and to go on, and vice versa: it goes on and needs constructs so that it has the time-experiences. Here the innate or inborn temporality of consciousness is implied already.

that becomes exactly the problem that the *CWSL* tries to get rid of through its persistent emphasis on *viññapti-mātratā*. Such an assumption contributes to *attachment* (*grāhaka/upānāda*). Attachments are necessary conditions for thinking or experiencing in general but often become unconscious. The ceaseless evolution or alteration of consciousness is not only based on attachments, but constantly produces new attachments. In this sense the world experienced by every sentient being is a world of mental projections formed of words and concepts.

In addition, the Yogacaric statement about the non-existence of the external world is always connected to its emphasis on the existence of internal consciousness. This pivotal nuance is pointed out near the beginning of the *CWSL*:

What the ignorant imagine to be “real” *atman* and “real” *dharmas* are devoid of all objective existence. They are simply fictitious constructions based on erroneous opinions and conceptions. Hence we say that they are “fictitious constructions” ... Thus, the seeming *atman* and the seeming *dharmas* which evolve out of internal consciousness, although they exist as a product of various causes, are not really of the nature of a real *atman* and real *dharmas*, despite their semblance. This, then, is the reason for calling them “fictitious constructions”. ... What we take to be external objects are result of our erroneous opinions, and do not “exist” in the same way as consciousness does. ... Internal consciousness, born by reason of causes and conditions, ... is not ... non-existent in the same way as are external objects. ... Thus, we exclude the two (extreme) ... doctrines (which either affirm additional reality of objects or reduce everything to emptiness). ... External objects, since they are mere fictitious constructions arising from internal consciousness, exist purely from a worldly point of view. On the other hand, inasmuch as consciousness is the essential basis from which false appearances of an external world spring, it really exists.¹²

The highest insight into emptiness (*sūnyatā*), for which Madhyamika is famous, is not abolished by Yogācārins. But, “for Madhyamaka, emptiness is the ultimate analytic device; for Yogācāra, it is one of several corrective tools, one

12 愚夫所計實我實法都無所有，但隨妄情而施設故說之為假。內識所變似我似法，雖有而非實我法性。然似彼現故說為假。外境隨情而施設故非有如識。內識必依因緣生故非無如境。由此便遮增減二執。境依內識而假立故唯世俗有，識是假境所依事故亦勝義有 (Wei 1973, 12–13; *CWSL* 1b07–13). Wei’s explanatory addition due to Kuiji 窺基’s commentary is omitted and all Sanskrit words are put in lowercase letters and italics for the sake of conformity. The same is true of the following citations from Wei’s translation of the *CWSL*.

Concerning this point see also: “*Atmans* and *dharmas* are non-existent, *tathata* and consciousness are not in-existent. Therefore, beyond (the attachments to existence and non-existence), we are on the middle way.” 我法非有，空識非無。離有離無，故契中道 (*CWSL* 39b01–02).

which points to the conditionality (*paratantra*) out of which phenomenality (*saṃvṛti*, *viññapti*) is constructed” (Lusthaus 2002, 465). Lusthaus designates the existence of internal consciousness as the *facticity of phenomenality* (ibid., 463). Why is it so crucial to recognize that “empty consciousness is not non-existent” (*kongshi feiwu* 空識非無, *CWSL* 39b01–02)? Or why is consciousness phenomenally not empty? Consciousness and all of its activities and contents, which are the “conventional, enclosed experiential domain” and the ground for the appearing of a mundane world, can perhaps be emptied theoretically, but they are always emerging and stay always as lived problems for sentient beings. The karmically-conditioned constantly emerging stream of consciousness is the actual focus of Yogācāra. Lusthaus argues, “without some acceptance of the facticity (of phenomenality) which is never anything or anywhere other than consciousness, nothing whatsoever can be affirmed or denied, nothing can be known or understood (ibid.).”

Therefore,

for Yogācāra, existence and non-existence are not ontological assertions, but phenomenological descriptions. ... The claim that consciousness is the only existent is made for epistemological and therapeutic, not ontological reasons. (ibid., 465–6)

Furthermore, he stresses:

The claims made in the name of *viññapti-mātra* are only antidotes to a specific, deep-rooted, ubiquitous type of attachment, one that involves positing an external world ripe for appropriation. Emptiness is posited as an antidote to attachment; and *viññapti-mātra* is charged with the same task. ... Thus merely critiquing propositions, as Mādhyamika does, inevitably fails to reach the source of the problem that generates those propositions (*prapañca*). To do that, according the *Ch'eng wei-shih lun*, one must contemplate one's own mind (*zi guanxin* 自觀心) (ibid., 466).

Viññapti-mātratā is a kind of soteriological warning of “cognitive narcissism” (ibid., 540) and Yogācāra-Buddhism consistently centers on the purification of consciousness and liberation from karmic conditioning; it does not talk about anything ontological at all. Accordingly, *mātra* does not mean

an approving affirmation of mind as the true reality. ... Consciousness (*viññāna*) is not the ultimate reality of solution, but rather the root problem. This problem emerges in ordinary mental operation, and it can only be solved by bringing those operations to an end. (ibid., 533)

Therefore, “to prove ‘only mind exists’ as a sort of doctrine or dogma, a position to take because it is the ‘correct’ position, is to thoroughly miss the Yogācārins’s point” (Lusthaus 2002, 488). However, the *CWSL* itself also implies that all possible understandings as outcomes of mental activities—and therefore as appropriations and attachments to the appropriated views—should be given up, as it clearly admonishes:

In order to refute the false belief that external to the mind (*citta*; *xin* 心) and its associates (*caitta*; *xinsuo* 心所) there exist real objects, it is said that there is nothing but Mere-Consciousness. But to believe in the genuine existence of Mere-Consciousness is like believing in that of external objects; it too is a kind of dharma-attachment (*dharmagraha*). (Wei 1973, 87)¹³

Ultimately, the emphasis on *viññapti-mātratā* in the *CWSL* is also typical Buddhist provisional expediency (*upāya*; *fangbian* 方便). Therefore it is very important to see what Yogācāra says about consciousness-only as a device/means/antidote/corrective tool to attachments (Lusthaus 2002, 462–4).

Divergence between Lusthaus and Schmithausen Examined with Reference to the Temporality of Consciousness in Everyday Life

The divergence of views between Dan Lusthaus and Lambert Schmithausen regarding the problem of the external world in the *CWSL* helps to bring to light some dilemmas in our examination of the doctrine of *viññapti-mātratā* (See Lusthaus 2002 and Schmithausen 2005). We can say that Lusthaus has made a compromise in his interpretation of the *CWSL*, because what Schmithausen finds problematic by Lusthaus is persuasively supported through the texts to which he has referred. The *CWSL* definitely acknowledges that by *viññapti-mātratā* it does not mean that there is only *one* consciousness (cf. *CWSL* 39c9–20). On account of this, all criticisms of Yogācāra as solipsism are indefensible. This citation from the *CWSL* is decisive proof that Yogācāra is not solipsism and supports Lusthaus’ challenge of the traditional reading of the text, represented, for example, by de La Vallée Poussin (de La Vallée Poussin 1928–1929; Lusthaus 2002, 492–3). Accordingly, the minds of other sentient beings in themselves cannot be reduced to one’s own consciousness and the way one knows other minds is the same way that one knows all other things in the world.¹⁴ Therefore, neither the things in the

13 為遣妄執，心心所外，實有境故，說唯有識。若執唯識，真實有者，如執外境，亦是法執 (*CWSL* 6c24–26). I have slightly changed Wei’s translation.

14 “It seems as though one’s own mind perceives another person’s mind as an object, as it perceives material things, etc.” (如緣他心，色等亦爾. *CWSL* 39c16)

world nor the minds of others can be the immediate and direct objects (*qinsuoyuan* 親所緣緣) of one's own consciousness. This leaves room for Lusthaus to deduce that it is equally assumable that, though nothing that we know can be apart from consciousness, it does not indicate whether there is something there in itself or whether it is independently outside consciousness. The point here is we cannot make any judgment about it. All that we know is the product of the karmic or intentional evolution of consciousness. In my opinion Lusthaus has tried to lessen the tension between the teaching of consciousness-only and *everyday life*, in which spiritual/religious practice is inescapably situated. On the one hand, in order to realize freedom in life it is undoubtedly significant and urgent for a human being to meditate on his factual *enslavement* by the intentional or karmic closure of consciousness in everyday life.¹⁵ On the other hand, radical-sounding talk about consciousness-only that fails to take everyday life into account will not be taken seriously by people not only in their ordinary discussions and communications but also even in the academic study of Buddhism.¹⁶ That is, however, not only a problem for Yogācāra. Generally, in all kinds of religious and metaphysical discourse, the assertions to be demonstrated are usually argued in such a radical-sounding way that it, without obvious sympathetic connection to the reality of everyday life, diverts attention from its earnestness and seriousness.

Although it is mixed with strict logical argumentation, the Yogacaric way of reasoning already contains some unquestioned assumptions such as: the cycle of repeated reincarnation/rebirth, the various forms of life (there are other sentient being besides human beings and animals), the doubtless truth of *nirvana*, and so forth, which are not self-evident to ordinary consciousness and presumably are not either to Schmithausen and Lusthaus. In addition, Yogacaric reasoning has recourse partly to authoritative Buddhist Sutras (*shengjiao* 聖教), and—most

15 The Buddhist concern for the spiritual aspect in contrast to philosophical phenomenology is generally noticed (see also footnote 7). Obviously different from the latter, the revelation of the intentionality and temporality of consciousness in (Yogācāra)-Buddhism urges liberation from general sufferings in everyday life of sentient beings, which are manifested concretely in different forms of *kleśa* (pollution or contamination) of consciousness. Briefly, the consciousness, which functions intentionally and temporally, is enslaved in this sense. Li (2015) especially highlights this point in his analysis of consciousness in light of Waldenfels' responsive phenomenology and Buddhism.

16 David Hume (1711–1776) is a very good example of someone who recognizes the distance between theory and life. In his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, he argues that causality as one principle of the association of ideas is nothing more than habit or custom, and so does not necessarily have anything to do with the real world. "But (Hume) acknowledges that his own practice does not always reflect his philosophical position. (He) recognizes that despite his causal skepticism, it would not be wise to 'throw himself out at the window'. As he wrote early in this work, we must 'be modest in our pretensions; and even to discover the difficulty ourselves before it is objected to us. By this means, we may make a kind of merit of our very ignorance.'" (Kaufmann and Baird 1994, 682)

importantly—religious experiences such as *samadhi* and awakening, which have not yet been experienced by many people, play a conclusive role in Yogācāra. In a word, Yogācāra is not and cannot be persuasive purely logically. But this is not a shortcoming of Yogācāra. On the contrary, the fact that at decisive points it has little to do with reasoning dependent on temporal consciousness can inspire us to search more deeply.¹⁷ Briefly, the transformation of our life itself is presupposed in order to realize a possible comprehension of Yogacaric truth. Recognition of the fact that there are obstructions to approaching Yogacaric teaching in our present life should not become an excuse for us to speculate metaphysically, but should rather impel us to come back to our actual karmically/intentionally conditioned life. In ordinary daily life filled with conscious activity it is a vicious cycle to talk about whether a world outside one's consciousness exists or not, because the one who is questioning here and now is enclosed in his constantly differentiating consciousness and in reality has no safe standpoint to make a clear distinction between outside and inside.

Because of this intrinsic paradox, any extreme affirmation of *viññapti-mātratā* is in fact a disturbance to the final awakening to it through the self-observation of consciousness (*zi guanxin* 自觀心).¹⁸ The ceaseless differentiation or objectification of

17 For example: in talking about the principle of interdependent origination it stresses, “the principle of interdependent origination as taught in Mahayana ... is profound and subtle, beyond description and explanation; such names as cause, effect/fruit and so on are only provisional designations” (大乘緣起正理 (...) 深妙離言, 因果等言皆假施設. *CWSL12c27–28*); and by verbalizing the original *nirvana* of all *dharmas* it also similarly emphasizes that “the *nirvana* that is pure in its essential nature is ... the *bhutatathata*, the ultimate principle or essential nature of all *dharmas*. Despite adventitious contaminations, it is: (a) pure in itself; (b) possessed of innumerable and measureless excellent qualities; (c) free from birth and destruction, being absolutely tranquil and placid, like space; (d) equal and common for all sentient beings; (e) neither identical with all *dharmas* nor different from them (for it is the *dharmata*); (f) free from all *nimittas* (because it is not apprehensible, the *grahyanimitta* is lacking in it); (g) free from all *vikalpa* (mental discrimination) (because it does not apprehend; the *grahakavikalpa* is lacking in it); (h) beyond the path of intellect (that is to say, it is ‘realized’ internally; it transcends ideation and ratiocination); (i) beyond the path of names and words; and (j) realized internally by *aryas* (saints and sages). This *tathata* ... being ‘essentially peaceful’, receives the name of *nirvana*” (Wei 1973, 759; 本來自性清淨涅槃, 謂一切法相真如理, 雖有客染而本性淨, 具無數量微妙功德, 無生無滅湛若虛空, 一切有情平等共有, 與一切法不一不異, 離一切相一切分別, 尋思路絕名言道斷, 唯真聖者自內所證, 其性本寂故名涅槃. *CWSL55b07–12*).

18 Cf. *CWSL* 59a10–14: 識唯內有, 境亦通外, 恐濫外故, 但言唯識. 或諸愚夫, 迷執於境, 起煩惱業, 生死沈淪, 不解觀心, 勤求出離, 哀愍彼故, 說唯識言, 令自觀心, 解脫生死, 非謂內境, 如外都無 (“Because consciousness is exclusively internal while objects are both internal and external. Fearing that sentient beings may admit the reality of external objects, the Buddha teaches *viññaptimatratā*; because the ignorant misunderstand and cling to objects, produce *kleśha* and *karman*, are sunk in *samsara*, and do not exert themselves to obtain deliverance by the contemplation of the Mind. The Buddha, out of compassion, teaches *viññaptimatratā* to enable them to obtain deliverance from *samsara* by dedicating themselves to the contemplation of the Mind. But that is not to say that internal objects are absolutely non-existent in the same way as are external objects.” (Wei 1973, 807)

consciousness (*xianxing* 現行) is the everyday life of sentient beings. Any discussion of the Yogācāric view must take everyday life into consideration. No matter how it is explained, we, as embodied humans living a *lifetime* in “an adamant, unwieldy material world” (Schmithausen 2005, 56) have inexhaustible questions and doubts, which are principally rooted in the temporality of consciousness. The radical separation between theory and practice itself is a suffering that, ironically, is again caused by consciousness.

The Intrinsic Paradox in Approaching *vijñapti-mātratā* Intellectually

I have said that Lusthaus made a compromise in his reading of the *CWSL* because Schmithausen’s resolute excluding of the possibility of “an existence of matter that is independent of the cognizing mind” is more faithful to the text. But Lusthaus’s compromise divulges an intrinsic tension in a philosophical investigation of Yogācāra that takes its spiritual aspect into account, as mentioned above. It seems that for Schmithausen it is enough to be as faithful as possible to the text. But actually, even for him, this is not so easy, if all that one can say comes from nowhere else than from natural, everyday consciousness.

Firstly, Schmithausen’s refutation of Lusthaus is ultimately grounded in his reference to the eighth ālaya-vijñāna (storehouse consciousness). For Lusthaus, “Yogācāra does not posit any single overarching ‘mind’ or ‘consciousness’ as the source or solitary existent of or in the world. There is no ‘Cosmic ālaya-vijñāna’ of which we are all parts or manifestations” (Lusthaus 2002, 487). It is not necessary to agree with what Lusthaus says about the eighth consciousness in his philosophical investigation. In any case, he does not accept uncritically the description of ālaya-vijñāna in the *CWSL*, whereas Schmithausen takes it as his crucial argument in opposing Lusthaus’s deviation from the original text in the *CWSL*. Schmithausen, through his faithful reference to the *ālaya-vijñāna*, especially in regard to the seemingly ambiguous verbal distinction between “internal” (*nei* 内) and “external” (*wai* 外),¹⁹ puts an end to any “going too far” in talking about Yogācāra Buddhism. He does this through his clarification “in light of sufficiently explicit and unambiguous statements of the position of the *CWSL* in the *CWSL* itself” (Schmithausen 2005, 17). In the *CWSL* it says:

When *ālayavijñāna* itself arises due to its causes and conditions it develops internally into ... the body possessed of sense-faculties, and

19 Regarding Schmithausen’s detailed clarification of the distinction between “external *dharmas* 外法” and “internal *dharmas* 內法” and between “external *skandhas* 外蘊” and “internal *skandhas* 內蘊”. See Schmithausen 2005, 25–38.

externally into the surrounding (world) (*bhājana*), and it takes these very [images] into which it has developed as its object (*ālambana*) (Schmithausen 2005, 35–36).²⁰

Thus we can see that reference to the *ālaya-vijñāna* can actually stop all discussions, just as in philosophy inference to God can stop all argumentation. Theoretically all relevant problems of the external world can be resolved through reference to the *ālaya-vijñāna*, but such explanations may have little to do with our everyday life. The point here is not whether the statements regarding *ālaya-vijñāna* are right or wrong, but rather that such a discussion is out of the reach of the temporal consciousness of an ordinary human being. Or to put it in another way, if we say that everything evolves from *ālaya-vijñāna* and nothing can exist independently outside of consciousness, or, on the contrary, if we try to dispute that in spite of the argumentation of the *CWSL*, it is not unreasonable for sentient beings to still imagine something outside consciousness, we are, nevertheless, engaged in actual thinking and discussion, which is always limited to the sixth consciousness (*mano-vijñāna*; *yishi* 意识). Hence, in the *CWSL* the analysis of the experiential sixth consciousness constitutes the main part of the entire text. The sixth consciousness and its fifty-one associated activities (*caitta*) have very much to do with our everyday life and are the primary contents which every concrete spiritual practice must face.

Secondly, the consequence of the whole argument of the *CWSL*, with its ultimate reference to the *ālaya-vijñāna*, is to assert that the life of all sentient beings before true awakening is a dream or illusion. The dream metaphor is also used as the main argument in Vasubandhu's *Vimsatika* to prove *vijñapti-mātrata*.²¹ The *CWSL* asks now, since we definitely know when we have had a dream in sleep and we know that it was a dream, why can we not believe, even if we are awake and are conscious of a world around us, that everything is only consciousness, like in a dream? The *CWSL* argues that we are unable to know that

20 阿賴耶識，因緣力故，自體生時，內變 [...] 根身，外變為器。即以所變，為自所緣 (CWSL 10a17–19).

21 Cf. T vol. 31 no. 1590 《唯識二十論》 (Twenty-Stanza Treatise on the Consciousness-Only Doctrine) 74c3–4; 15–16: 若識無實境，即處時決定，相續不決定，作用不應成。處時定如夢，身不定如鬼，同見膿河等，如夢損有用 ((Objection): If there were only representations of consciousness and no (extra-mental) objects, then there would be no experience of (the same) determined space and time, nor would there be (ground for) the indeterminacy of consciousness-continuum (i.e. an individual), nor would there be determined effects of actions (by individuals). (Reply): The determination of space and time is experienced just as in a dream. And (the same world, in spite of) the indeterminacy of consciousness-continua embodied as individuals is experienced (by different individuals) just as in the case (of the experience) of ghosts (in hell): All of them seem to see the same river of pus, etc. And the determined effects of actions are like the experiences of a dreamer).

life is a dream because we have not yet reached true awakening or enlightenment; it is not only this entire life but also the ceaseless cycle of birth and death before awakening that is a long dream.²² In the end, Schmithausen's rectification of Lusthaus's interpretation of the *viññapti-mātrata* comes back to the dream metaphor. Therefore, Buddhas, as the truly enlightened, he says, "for the sake of other sentient beings ... fall back into an experience of the emerging world of multiplicity" and experience it "as *illusory* or as nothing but mind (and mind-as-sociates)" (Schmithausen 2005, 54–55). With regards to a certain surrounding world as the basis for spiritual practice, he continues, "it is precisely on account of its being an image (dream/illusion) in mind that its transformation from an impure world into a pure, sublime one through individual spiritual practice becomes plausible" (ibid., 56). But we have to ask, if ordinary consciousness contains nothing more than dreams and illusions, how is it possible for consciousness ultimately to be transformed? We can only conclude that illusion must be inseparable from truth. In any case, unless we are enlightened like Buddhas and have broken through our dream consciousness, all that we have said about the *viññapti-mātrata* belongs to dream consciousness.

Thirdly, Schmithausen has not really overcome Lusthaus's challenge regarding CWSL's acknowledgement of the existence of the minds of others (*taxin* 他心), although he has begun his response to the latter with a correction of Lusthaus's problematic translation of the text in question (ibid., 13–18). According to Yogācāric insight into the dream-like reality of the world, not only the minds of others that I know are images in my mind, but also my own mind is essentially illusory.

22 Cf. CWSL 39c03-09: 若覺時色皆如夢境不離識者，如從夢覺知彼唯心，何故覺時於自色境不知唯識？如夢未覺不能自知，要至覺時方能追覺。覺時境色應知亦爾。未真覺位不能自知，至真覺時亦能追覺。未得真覺恒處夢中，故佛說為生死長夜，由斯未了色境唯識 (“(Objection): You have said that the things seen during one's waking state are all like objects in a dream and are inseparable from consciousness. But, on awakening from a dream, we know that the dream is only in our mind. Why, then, is it that, when we are awake, we do not know that the sphere of objects perceived by us is Mere-Consciousness? (Reply): As long as we have not awakened from the dream, we are incapable of realizing that the objects of the dream are unreal. It is only after we have awakened that, in retrospect, we come to realize this. We should know that the same is true of our knowledge regarding the sphere of material objects in our waking life. Until we have truly awakened, we cannot ourselves know, but, when we reach the state of true Awakening (Enlightenment), we shall be able, in retrospect, to realize it. Before this genuine Awakening is achieved, we perpetually remain in a dream. This is why the Buddha spoke of the long night of transmigratory existence, characterized by ceaseless rounds of birth and death. He did so because of our failure to understand that the sphere of material objects is Mere-Consciousness.” (Wei 1973, 521)) Also, cf. T vol. 31 no. 1590 《唯識二十論》76c08: 未覺不能知，夢所見非有 (Before (a man) is awakened, (he cannot know that) everything experienced/seen is just like in a dream and not existent).

Vasubandhu mentions this point noticeably in the last verse of his *Vimsatika*.²³ It implies that we do not know that everything we know is in reality illusions and dreams, including all knowledge of ourselves. This being the case, what we have to cast doubt upon is not the external world, but ourselves, who think and speak about illusions. Consequently all debate around the problem of the external world is secondary and entangled already with intrinsic paradoxes.

Temporally Ongoing Differentiation of Consciousness and the Riddle of Time

As shown above, any interpretation of *vijñapti-mātratā* falls easily into a dilemma. The subtlety here lies in the momentarily occurring self-revocation in every appropriating understanding of *vijñapti-mātratā* due to the temporality of consciousness, as I already mentioned at the beginning of the treatise. *Vijñapti-mātratā* is not a static theory that we can appropriate as some fixed knowledge; this would inevitably result in more attachments in us. Living and knowing are a dynamic process of appropriation, which is the root concern of Yogācāra. This dimension of time implies that, for a sentient being, the fundamental attachment happens in every moment; otherwise it is impossible to live further and to know anything.

The whole complicated analysis of consciousness in the *CWSL* is described as *vijñāna-pariṇāma*, the differentiation/evolution/alteration of consciousness. The subtle differentiation of consciousness, in other words, the realization or actual emergence of every experience, is temporal. In this sense the *vijñāna-pariṇāma* points to a philosophy of time. This basic time-dimension penetrates all experiences of sentient beings in general and is different from and more essential than the ordinary time concept, which belongs for Yogācārins to the twenty-four *citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra-dharmas* (embodied-conditioning not directly perceived by *citta*; (Cf. Lusthaus 2002, 544)). Time as such in ordinary life is not directly perceived by mind, but indirectly experienced through the observation of the change or movement of some thing *out there*. Therefore, for such an experience of time there is no problem of an external world. Even to imagine the possibility of infinitely sectioning the consciousness-stream/continuum into infinitely short moments, called *ḷṣanas* (*chana* 刹那/*nian* 念) in Indian discourses on time,

23 Cf. T vol. 31 no. 1590 《唯識二十論》77a22–23: 他心智云何, 知境不如實? 如知自心智, 不知如佛境 ((Objection): If (we have) the knowledge of other minds, doesn't it mean that (we have) true knowledge of external objects? (Reply): (We as the Unenlightened) not only have no knowledge of other minds, but also no knowledge (of the true nature) of our own minds as known by the Enlightened).

is essentially not different from the ordinary concept of time in everyday life. Any view or imagination of time as some duration misses easily what the *viññāna-pariñāma*, concerning the essence of time, really implies: because of the radical temporality of consciousness we have in reality *no standpoint* to decide whether the experienced world outside there exists or not. We ourselves are constantly changing, but the ordinary experience of time already presupposes a stable “I” as observer. Without this lived presupposition/assumption there is no experience of world and time.

Moreover, the temporal evolution of consciousness cannot be ignored by a scholar of Yogācāra, especially when the striking description of the *ālaya-viññāna*, the ultimate source for the *viññāna-pariñāma*, is taken into account:

Is the *ālaya-viññāna* permanent or impermanent? It is neither permanent nor impermanent, for ... it is in perpetual evolution like a violent torrent. By “perpetual” it is meant that, since before the beginning of time, this consciousness has evolved into a homogeneous series without interruption, because it is the creative basis of the manifestations of the transmigratory course through the three realms of the existence (*dhatus*), the five directions of reincarnation (*gatis*), and the four forms of birth (*yonis*), and also because in its essential nature it is firm enough to hold *bijas* without allowing them to be lost. By “evolution” is meant that this consciousness, from before the beginning of time, is born and perishes from one moment to another, ever changing. As cause it perishes and as fruit it is then born. Thus, it never remains continuously a single entity. Through the evolution of the other consciousness (*pravṛtti-viññāna*), it is perfumed and thus forms seeds. ... The word “perpetual” rules out the notion of impermanence of discontinuity; the word “evolution” indicates that it is not permanent. ... “Like a violent torrent”: it is the nature of being (*dharmata*) of “causation” which is foreign to permanence and impermanence. In its sequence of cause and effect, it is like a violent torrent which is never impermanence yet never permanence, and which ever flows onward in a continuous series, carrying with it what sometimes floats and sometimes sinks. So too is this *ālaya-viññāna* which, from before the beginning of time, is born and perishes, forming a series that is neither permanent nor impermanent, carrying along sentient beings, sometimes floating, sometimes sinking, without allowing them to attain liberation from the circle of the mundane existence. Again it is like a violent torrent, though beaten by the wind into waves, flowing onward without interruption. So too is this *ālaya-viññāna*, which, though it encounters conditions producing the visual and other kinds of consciousness, perpetually maintains its onward

flow. Or yet again it is like a violent torrent, in whose waters fish are borne along below and leaves of grass above, pursuing its onward course without abandoning it. So too is this consciousness, which perpetually follows its onward evolution, carrying with it the perfumed internal *bijas* and the external *caittas* (*sparsa* etc.). These comparisons show that the *ālaya-vijñāna*, from before the beginning of time, has been both cause and effect, and so is neither permanent nor impermanent. They mean that since before the beginning of time this consciousness has been one in which from moment to moment effects are born and causes perish. Because these effects are born, it is not impermanent; because these causes perish, it is not permanent. To be neither impermanent nor permanent: this is the “principle of conditional causation or dependent origination” (*pratityasamutpada*). This is why it is said this consciousness is in perpetual evolution like a torrent. (Wei 1973, 170–3)²⁴

These happenings in *ālaya-vijñāna* cannot be directly recognized or experienced by natural everyday consciousness. Although we know theoretically that everything, the external world and the internal mind, is changing without pause, we live in a kind of continuity and stability. As a result, the life of sentient beings is in Buddhism usually described as a continuum (*samtāna*). But if principally we are not stable at all by ourselves even in the innermost stratum, how is it possible for us to experience that the world outside as well as our mind inside are temporally always in motion? Thus the temporality of consciousness or stream of consciousness (*vijñāna-samtāna*) is not the last secret, even though, through the emphasis on it, all physical temporal phenomena are already put in doubt.

We have to ask further, what is time in reality? If everything experienced and changes thereto are only images of mind, does it not mean that the time-experience is actually a delusion?²⁵ The ordinary understanding of time in all forms is fundamentally challenged. The riddle of time is intrinsically bound with the analysis of the essence of consciousness. An analysis of the radical concept of

24 阿賴耶識為斷為常?非斷非常以恒轉故。恒謂此識無始時來一類相續常無間斷,是界趣生施設本故,性堅持種令不失故;轉謂此識無始時來念念生滅前後變異,因滅果生非常一故,可為轉識熏成種故。恒言遮斷轉表非常,猶如瀑流因果法爾。如瀑流水非斷非常,相續長時有所漂溺,此識亦爾。從無始來生滅相續非常非斷,漂溺有情令不出離;又如瀑流雖風等擊起諸波浪而流不斷,此識亦爾。雖遇眾緣起眼識等而恒相續。又如瀑流,漂水下上魚草等物隨流不捨,此識亦爾。與內習氣外觸等法恒相隨轉。如是法喻,意顯此識無始因果非斷常義。謂此識性無始時來,剎那剎那果生因滅。果生故非斷,因滅故非常。非斷非常是緣起理。故說此識恒轉如流 (CWSL 12b28–c15).

25 Naturally for Yogācāra not only time, but also space, personal consciousness stream and causality are dream-like and illusory. See footnotes 21 and 22.

time implied in the *CWSL* has therefore been chosen as an approach to comprehending the main subject: *viññapti-mātrata*. If *viññapti-mātratā* proves to be truth, what does it mean to live a life that is principally characterized by its experience of time? Or to raise the question in another way, does the time exploration help us recognize or acknowledge the Yogacaric theme of “*viññapti-mātratā*”?

Lusthaus and Schmithausen have both noticed the impressive time-dimension of Yogācāra. Yet they have not yet really touched the radicality of the Yogacaric philosophy of time. In a footnote Schmithausen explains *pariṇāma* (bian 變) as follows:

it is used as an action noun describing a process taking place in the continuum (*samtāna*, *samtati*) of a person or in the consciousness continuum or its latent stratum. It may also refer to the culmination of this process or to its result (the actual kinds of *viññana*). In the *CWSL*, however, it refers to a *detemporalized* “transformation” or “development” within a single moment of a *viññana* or mental factor, i.e. to the fact that each moment arises in such a way that it has “changed” or “developed”, from the outset, into an image of an object cognized (or into a duality of image 相 and vision 見). (Schmithausen 2005, 13)

It is very interesting that Schmithausen has highlighted the paradoxical “*detemporalized* ‘transformation’ or ‘development’ within a single moment” of the *viññāna-pariṇāma*. His reading is very careful but he has not asked why such a *detemporalization* can happen paradoxically as a “transformation” or “development” that must be temporal? Lusthaus has also not really faced the subtlety of the Yogacaric *viññāna-pariṇāma* and assumed in reality the ordinary understanding of time. Although he has repeatedly indicated the temporality of the evolution of consciousness in such formulations as “one can cling to ideas, but not a fleeting moment of consciousness” (Lusthaus 2002, 488), “consciousness operates at every moment” (ibid., 538), “sensations (...) arise moment by moment in a causal flux” (ibid., 540) etc., his understanding in these cases is, in principle, like that of Schmithausen, not different from the ordinary concept of time in everyday life, even though the ground of the experience of time is moved from external world into consciousness. Both Schmithausen and Lusthaus appreciate the spiritual dimension to which the whole of Yogācāra-Buddhism points. But this spiritual aspect is not far away from actual everyday life and ordinary reasoning. On the contrary, it is rooted in an ultimate doubt about human life and thinking in general. As I have stressed above, the paradox in our discussion of the problem of external world implied in Yogācāra-Buddhism must be traced back to the riddle of time, which touches directly human thinking and living in the moment. Otherwise, Yogācāra-Buddhism would only be teaching nonsense.

Yogacaric Accentuation of *pratyakṣa-pramāna* in Relation to the Riddle of Time

In their enquiry concerning the problem of external world both Schmithausen and Lusthaus have ignored the significance of the radical temporality of consciousness, which is also reflected in the fact that neither of them pays attention to the Yogacaric distinction between *pratyakṣa-pramāna* (immediate knowing, *xianliang* 現量) and *anumāna-pramāna* (inferential reasoning, *biliang* 比量) as two means of knowledge. Lusthaus's interpretation of *anumāna-pramāna* as “inferential reasoning” is no problem, but his understanding of *pratyakṣa-pramāna* as “perception” is careless and misses a special philosophy of time in Yogācāra (see Lusthaus 2002, 455–8). In general, our perception in everyday life is already an interpretation, conducted by consciousness, of immediate experience.

In order to clarify this point, we must ask further: what is *pratyakṣa-pramāna* actually? If not perception, is it sensation? Yogācāra-Buddhism definitely admits that at least the immediate sensations of the five sense-organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body) belong to the *pratyakṣa-pramāna*. Generally speaking, even though pure sensation itself is really immediate, we human beings, whose consciousness is intentional and temporal, usually miss it habitually. If we have known something, then this is already perception, the result of *digested* sensations, which are already influenced through and mixed with other functions of consciousness. To put it in another way, the actual activity of knowing, even if it is the present perception, is hardly possible to be direct and immediate, because the consciousness is almost always in unrest (temporality). In Vasubandhu's *Vimśatika* an objection is raised to the declaration of the doctrine of consciousness-only through an appeal to present perception, which is thought to be *pratyakṣa-pramāna* by an objector. Vasubandhu responds:

The present perception or awareness (of the external world) is just like in a dream, since when the perception (of the external world) originates, the perceiver and the perceived both have already gone away, how is it possible for you to say that [the present perception.] is the *pratyakṣa-pramāna*?²⁶

According to Yogācāra-Buddhism, the *pratyakṣa-pramāna* is regarded as the best among various means of knowledge, because it is pure and free from temporal conditioning. But, given the subtle temporality entangled with perception and other functions of consciousness, the daily way of knowing has little chance to stay by *pratyakṣa-pramāna* or by pure sensation. Therefore, although *pratyakṣa-pramāna* is

26 現覺如夢等,已起現覺時,見及境已無,寧許有現量 (T vol. 31 no. 1590/76b15–25).

never at one moment separated from the knowing of consciousness, sensation is always somehow contaminated and the actual knowing activity of consciousness is by nature inferential (Cf. Liang 2009, 90).

The unusual implication of the Yogacaric emphasis on *pratyakṣa-pramāna* is lastly to be seen in its intrinsic connection with its solution to the problem of the external world and its insistence on consciousness-only. In the *CWSL* a question is asked:

The external spheres of matter, color, etc., are clearly and immediately apprehended and corroborated by the five consciousnesses. ... How can you deny the existence of that which is perceived through immediate apprehension (*pratyakṣa-pramāna*)?

The reply is as follows:

When the external spheres are apprehended through the *pratyakṣa-pramāna*, they are not regarded as external. It is only later that consciousness, through its discrimination, erroneously creates the notion of externality. Thus, the objective spheres immediately apprehended are the ‘perceived division’ of the consciousnesses themselves. Since they are manifestations of consciousness, we say they exist. But inasmuch as they are regarded by consciousness as constituting external and real matter, etc. and are thus erroneously imagined to be existent, we say they are non-existent.²⁷ (Wei 1973, 520; Wei’s translation is slightly changed)

Knowledge based on temporal consciousness is differentiating and is the source of the problem pertaining to the externality of the world. This implies that the Yogacaric distinction between *pratyakṣa-pramāna* (immediate knowing) and *anumāna-pramāna* (inferential reasoning) also points ultimately to the riddle of time or the radical temporality of consciousness. Here we see further the decisive importance of taking the question of time into account in our reading of Yogācāra-Buddhist texts like the *CWSL*.

The above analysis brings us to a surprising conclusion: *pratyakṣa-pramāna*, basically different from the reasoning of temporal consciousness, implies some kind of non-differentiating *timelessness*, which is principally symbiotic with the tranquilization/purification of mind/consciousness. So when Lusthaus says, “the appearance is always immediately present, here, now. The notion of an object extends through time, and (...) takes its significance from its temporal context” (Lusthaus

²⁷ 色等外境,分明現證,現量所得,寧撥為無?現量證時,不執為外,後意分別,妄生外想.故現量境,是自相分,識所變故,亦說為有.意識所執外實色等,妄計有故,說彼為無 (*CWSL* 39b27-c01).

2002, 14–15), he has shown the fundamental temporality (“temporal context”) in ordinary building up of knowledge, which is based on *anumāna-pramāna*. He also touches on the possibility of *pratyakṣa-pramāna* as knowing the appearance immediately here and now, but he has not yet seriously asked what *pratyakṣa-pramāna* actually is and why perception is different from temporal inferential reasoning, if he interprets *pratyakṣa-pramāna* as perception and perception itself is also temporal. What is more, it also becomes understandable why the paradoxical *detemporalization* described by Schmithausen, despite the ceaseless transformation or development of consciousness, is actually requisite for the *anumāna-pramāna*. *Detemporalization* presupposes the temporality of consciousness and together the two make every experience possible. Seeming *detemporalization* is necessary for something to *be there outside*, which paradoxically evolved out of consciousness and to which consciousness tends to attach.

Conclusion

Temporal consciousness must always presuppose something in order to go on thinking. That means even though Yogācārins and Buddhist scholars nowadays try to elucidate critically Yogācāric insight into *vijñapti-mātratā*, there is always something uncritically assumed (the unavoidable attachment). This fact, namely, the time-dimension of thinking itself, here and now, proves consciousness-only. In this sense, for Yogācāra, spiritual breakthrough means a kind of *timely* enlightenment to the emptiness of a temporal consciousness which differentiates in itself ceaselessly and is thus phenomenally not empty. As implied in the *CWSL*, absolute temporality is in reality timelessness, which is destined to be obscure to ordinary consciousness in everyday life.²⁸

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²⁸ Therefore, according to the *CWSL* Lusthaus' idea (2002, 25) that the present moment alone is real is likewise problematic. In any case, the present moment is not the same as *pratyakṣa-pramāna*.

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