Is "Vijñaptimātra" ontological or epistemological idealism?*

Ph.D. Student of Graduate Institute of Religious studies of NCCU

Yang, Chih-Chang

Abstract

There has been no academic agreement on whether "Vijñaptimātra" (Consciousness-only) should be understood to advocate ontological idealism or epistemological idealism. What is amusing and confusing is that there are several occasions that both sides of the debate are reading same texts or even referring to the same paragraph but interpreting it in totally different way. This article is intended to draw attention to those texts and paragraphs from *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhi, Triṃśikāvijñaptimātratā, Cheng Wei Shi Lun* (CWSL), *Sandhinirmocanasūtra, Yogācārabhūmi, Mahāyāna-samgraha* where both sides of the debate confront each other with their competing arguments. The purpose is to understand better where the possible differences are coming from in the hope to reduce some confusion/bias and to find common denominator if any. Discussion finds the debates might be attributed to several factors: the deep-rooted equivocal relationship between cosmology and psychology in Buddhist tradition; different translations of the key term "vijñānapariṇāma"; how to understand the generalization from meditation practice experience to ordinary experience; and what to expect regarding the coherence among Yogācāra texts and within Yogācāra lineage and whether and where the interoperation should be applied. Last, it is suggested that whether ontological idealist theory is making perfect sense and whether "Vijñaptimātra" be understood as ontological idealism should be decoupled and addressed as different topics.

Keywords:

Introduction

Yogācāra is a Buddhist Mahāyāna school that is thought to be founded by Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. There is no agreement/proof on whether there was a historical figure named Maitreya. The most likely scenario would be that there were a group of yogi in India by whom Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were inspired and/or influenced for their theory and/or works. Maitreya seems either one of those yogi or just a representative of them. It is traditionally told that Asaṅga converted his brother Vasubandhu who wrote Abhidharmakośa from the perspective of Vaibhāṣika but did commentary on the same Abhidharmakośa in the view of Sautrāntika to a totally different Vasubandhu who wrote numerous Yogācāra texts and commentaries and promoted the notion of Vijñaptimātra (Consciousness-only) that leads to the formation of the Vijñānavāda - the Conscious-only school. Those shifts of philosophical views occurring to one person are so significant that there are those who claim there is more than one "Vasubandhu". Despite the theory of more than one Vasubandhu were not well received academically, it does indicate the challenges and the complexity of understanding Vasubandhu as a historical person. [1] But this study is not about

---

[1] Kaplan, Stephen. 1992. "The Yogācāra roots of advaita idealism? Noting a

  similarity between vasubandhu and Gauapāda", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp.

Vasubandhu as a historical person, but about the notion of Vijñaptimātra that he invents and makes it well known.

What does "Vijñaptimātra" (Consciousness-only) mean? Does it propound that consciousness does not perceive anything outside itself but rather its own image of objects? Or does it advocate that there is no any external object that existing independently and apart from consciousness? The former is epistemological idealism that does not deny extra-mental object but only emphasizes that all we perceive is mental representation only. The latter is ontological idealism that claims no any extra-mental object and that everything is produced from consciousness including the world that appears as it is independently and apart from consciousness.[2] There is no academic agreement on whether the "Vijñaptimātra" (Consciousness-only) should be understood epistemologically or ontologically. What is more amusing and confusing is there are several occasions that both

---

194-195 and Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass , pp. xi-xiii.

[2] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online,* plato.stanford.edu/

sides of the debate are reading the same text and even referring to same paragraph but interpreting it in totally different way.[3]

Therefore, this study is intended to draw attention to those texts and paragraphs from *Vimśatikāvijñaptimātrata, Trimśikāvijñaptimātratā, Cheng Wei Shi Lun* (CWSL), *Sandhinirmocanasūtra, Yogācārabhūmi, Mahāyāna-samgraha* where both sides of the debate confront each other with their competing arguments. The purpose is to understand better where the possible differences are coming from in the hope to reduce some confusion/bias and to find common denominator if any.

Vimśatikāvijñaptimātratāsiddhi
1. Support for ontological idealism

Griffiths does not hesitate to take a position that the Indian Yogācāra are ontological idealists because they explicitly deny any extra-mental entities and their philosophical interest is to examine the working mechanism of consciousness. His support is first referring to the 2nd verse of the *Vimśatikā* and the auto-commentary where Vasubandhu lists some critical idealist objections that Vadubandhu likes to address. Those objections are like: "... if all there is in the world is mental events how can one explain the (apparent) spatiotemporal location of such events? How is it that these events are intersubjective, that they are apparently perceived and experienced simultaneously by a large number of different experiences? And finally, how is it that mental representations, which have no corresponding external object, can do the kinds of things which (real) external objects can do? One's empty stomach is, after all, not satisfied by food eaten in a dream, and the sword-cuts suffered in a dream-fight are not usually fatal..." [4]   Griffiths just names a few. Secondly Griffiths refers to the 17th verse of the

---

[3] Lin, Chen-kuo 林鎮國. 1994.「唯識無境」的現代爭論, *Dharma Light Monthly* and Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Yogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p. 17 and Kaplan, Stephen. 1992. "The Yogācāra roots of advaita idealism? Noting a similarity between vasubandhu and Gauapāda", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp.197-200.

[4] Griffiths, Paul J.. 1991. *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, Open Court Pub, pp. 82-83.

Viṃśatikā and Vasubandhu's commentary that he translates as below and argues that Vasubandhu already made it very clear that only mental events exist by using examples of dream and collective hallucination to address the objection regarding limitation in time and place, inter-subjectivity and causal efficacy.

17th verse: "...ONE WHO HAS NOT WOKEN UP DOES NOT UNDERSTANDTHAT THE THINGS HE SEES IN A DREAM DO NOT EXIST...." [5]

Commentary: "... in this way the world sleeps, its sleep impregnated with the habit-patterns of false mental construction, seeing unreal objects as though in a dream; not being awake one does not properly understand that these [objects] do not exist. But when one awakes obtaining that transcendent knowledge which makes no false constructions and which acts as an antidote to that [false construction], then, as a result of being face-to-face with a subsequently attained pure mundane knowledge, one properly understands that the objects of sense-perception do not exist. The principle is the

---

[5] Griffiths, Paul J.. 1991. *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, Open Court Pub, p. 83.

same [in the case of awakening from a dream as in the case of realizing that the objects of sense-perception do not exist] ..." [6]

Regardless whether or not the idealism is making sense, Wood also agrees that Vasubandhu does assert at the beginning of *Viṃśatikā* that the mind is real whereas the objects we think we see in external world are not unreal. [7] Woods thinks, in the *Viṃśatikā*, Vasubandhu is intended to navigate his way between dualism and theistically-based idealism by appealing to the notion of karma. Vasubandhu is trying to say that the reason we see the same or similar "tree" is that we share the same karma and because our minds collaborate in hallucinating the same or similar "tree". [8] Also, Wood notices some relatively obvious and standard objections that Vasubandhu mentions in *Viṃśatikā*. The objection examples are like: the normal waking perceptions are not like dreams because there is an orderliness and determinateness. Or the world that we see in normal waking state is commonly perceived, is a public one instead

---

[6] Griffiths, Paul J.. 1991. *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, Open Court Pub, p. 83-84.

[7] Wood, Thomas E.. 2009. *Mind Only: A Phiosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñānavãda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p. 164.

[8] Wood, Thomas E.. 2009. *Mind Only: A Phiosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñānavãda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p. 163.

of a private one in the private dreams.   Even though, Woods mentions that Vasubandhu believed he could handle these objections with his formulation of idealism. Woods even summarizes Vasubandhu's formulation of idealism by five propositions as below and name all these propositions all together as "the doctrine of Collective Hallucination". [9]

 Proposition 1 Mind Only Principle: Everything is mind only - i.e., matter is totally unreal.

 Proposition 2 Many Finite Minds Principle: There are (at least at the level of relative truth) many minds, all finite and all essentially independent of each other. There is no single, supreme, absolute mind.

 Proposition 3 Unreality Principle: Everything is illusory.

 Proposition 4 Determination Principle: The world as it appears to each sentient being is determinate. That is to say, it is stable and collectively perceived (or, more exactly, collectively hallucinated) by the multiplicity of finite sentient beings.

 Proposition 5 Telepathic Principle: The fact that the experiences of the multitude of sentient beings are correlated with each other (i.e. that their perceptions are "determinate") is not simply coincidental or fortuitous. It is accounted for by the hypothesis that sentient beings (with some important qualifications) are always in immediate mind-to-mind contact with each other.
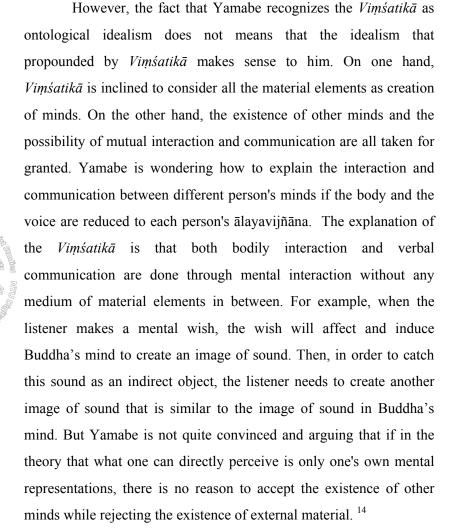
 The reason that Woods spends a lot of effort in doing the above summary is to argue that there is a conflict between the Many Finite Minds Principle and the Determinateness Principle and that the Telepathic Principle got no way to solve the conflict. In other words, in order to explain the features of normal perception, there is so much telepathy need to be involved that the denial of existence of matter is only possible when the world exists in an infinite mind, not in one mind or in the collective mind of independent finite minds. [10]

 In addition, Yamabe mentions that the 8th verse of the *Viṃśatikā* gives him a strong impression that the *Viṃśatikā* propounds ontological idealism. Yamabe notices that *Viṃśatikā*

---

[9] Wood, Thomas E.. 2009. *Mind Only: A Phiosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñānavāda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, pp.171-172).

[10] Wood, Thomas E.. 2009. *Mind Only: A Phiosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñānavāda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p 190.

mainly talks about the cognition of ordinary beings and says little about Buddha cognition. In terms of the cognition of ordinary beings, he thinks the idealist position of the *Viṃśatikā* is relatively explicit. [11] Moreover, if the philosophy of the Yogācāra was realistic, there would be no point to raise all those questions regarding "self and other".[12] Yamabe refers to the questions addressed in *Viṃśatikā* and translates it as below[13].

"…If only consciousness exists, do mind readers know other minds or not? What problem arises from this point? If they cannot know [other minds], how can they be called "mind readers." If they can know [other minds], [the principle of] consciousness only is not established…" Chinese version: (T31-119a-19-20): "…「若唯有識，諸他心智知他心不?」「 設爾何失?」「若不能知，何謂他心智? 若能知者，唯識義應不成!…"

---

[11] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Y ogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p.19.

[12] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Y ogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p. 17.

[13] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Y ogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p. 28).

However, the fact that Yamabe recognizes the *Viṃśatikā* as ontological idealism does not means that the idealism that propounded by *Viṃśatikā* makes sense to him. On one hand, *Viṃśatikā* is inclined to consider all the material elements as creation of minds. On the other hand, the existence of other minds and the possibility of mutual interaction and communication are all taken for granted. Yamabe is wondering how to explain the interaction and communication between different person's minds if the body and the voice are reduced to each person's ālayavijñāna. The explanation of the *Viṃśatikā* is that both bodily interaction and verbal communication are done through mental interaction without any medium of material elements in between. For example, when the listener makes a mental wish, the wish will affect and induce Buddha's mind to create an image of sound. Then, in order to catch this sound as an indirect object, the listener needs to create another image of sound that is similar to the image of sound in Buddha's mind. But Yamabe is not quite convinced and arguing that if in the theory that what one can directly perceive is only one's own mental representations, there is no reason to accept the existence of other minds while rejecting the existence of external material. [14]

---

[14] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Yogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p.34.
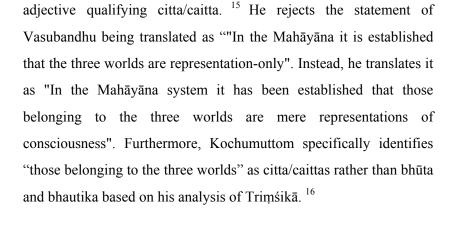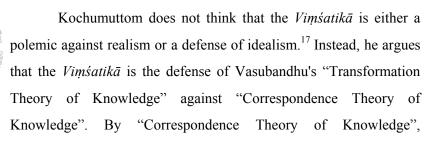
2. Refutation against ontological idealism

Kaplan notices that Vasubandhu in the opening of the *Viṃśatikā* states that traidhātukam is vijñaptimātra/cittamātra and thinks whether one views Vasubandhu as an idealist depends how one interprets the meaning of "traidhātukam". Those who understand "traidhātukam" as the whole world would see Vasubandhu as an idealist. For examples, Schmithausen understands "traidhātukam" as the whole world that is made of three realms of desire, matter, and immateriality so he sees it as an indication of idealism. To Griffith, "traidhātukam" is referring to the lokas-world or cosmos. Since all three worlds equal to cittamātra, Griffith also understands Vasubandhu as an idealist. On the other hand, those who interpret "traidhātukam" in a derivative sense would assert Vasubandhu is not an idealist. For instance, Wayman translates "traidhātukam" as "that which is derived from three worlds" and distinguishes it from "trudhātu" which is three worlds. Wayman argues that Vasubandhu denies what is derived from three worlds because they are "unreal" and representation only, but not denying three worlds themselves. In the same way Kochumuttom also understands "traidhātukam" as an

adjective qualifying citta/caitta. [15] He rejects the statement of Vasubandhu being translated as ""In the Mahāyāna it is established that the three worlds are representation-only". Instead, he translates it as "In the Mahāyāna system it has been established that those belonging to the three worlds are mere representations of consciousness". Furthermore, Kochumuttom specifically identifies "those belonging to the three worlds" as citta/caittas rather than bhūta and bhautika based on his analysis of Triṃśikā. [16]

Kochumuttom does not think that the *Viṃśatikā* is either a polemic against realism or a defense of idealism. [17] Instead, he argues that the *Viṃśatikā* is the defense of Vasubandhu's "Transformation Theory of Knowledge" against "Correspondence Theory of Knowledge". By "Correspondence Theory of Knowledge",

---

[15] Kaplan, Stephen. 1992. "The Yogācāra roots of advaita idealism? Noting a similarity between vasubandhu and Gauapāda", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 198-199.

[16] Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 165-166.

[17] Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, p.230.

Kochumuttom refers to the theory that there is one-to-one correspondence between what we perceive and extra-mental objects. Such theory is too naive to consider. Thus what Vasubandhu is trying to say is that what are taken to be the objects of experience are "representation-only", not that the universe is "representation-only". "Transformation Theory of Knowledge" means that the knowledge comes from the self-transformation of consciousness that carries the seeds of subjectivity and objectivity within itself.[18] Kochumuttom thinks the theme of the *Viṃśatikā* is that the objects experienced by one in the state of saṃsāra are like those experienced by one in a dream or one with bad eye. They are merely one's own mental constructions. *Viṃśatikā* concludes that everyone in the state of saṃsāra is in a transcendental dream and it is meant to establish a bridge between noumenal and phenomenal worlds.[19]

Kaplan's position is that what Vasubandhu says in the *Viṃśatikā* is not about non-existence of an alleged external object but

about the epistemological nature of the perception of cittamātra. The message is that ones who know the falsely constructed nature of ordinary perceptions realize that those perceptions are mind-only. Thus Vasubandhu is talking about neither different types of objects nor the non-existence of objects but about different types of perception and perceptual objects.[20]

In terms of "traidhātukam is vijñaptimātra/cittamātra" in the beginning of the *Viṃśatikā*, Willis firstly traces it back to the six chapter of Daśabhūmikasūtra where she finds well-known phase "cittamātram idam yad idam traidhātukam" and translates it as "the three realms (the realms of desire, corporeal matter, and immateriality) are nothing but minds". Despite the phrase on the surface is interpreted as a denial of all external entities by Yogācāra, all the other sentences preceding and following the phrase in the chapter presuppose the realistic ontology and make this phrase isolated and unusual. Due to this strange scenario, Schmithausen does not think the phrase was probably first formulated in Daśabhūmika and highlights that it also appears in Bhadrapalautra

---

[18] Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 164-165.

[19] Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 21-22.

[20] Kaplan, Stephen. 1992. "The Yogācāra roots of advaita idealism? Noting a similarity between vasubandhu and Gauapāda", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, p. 204.

which was translated into Chinese more than one hundred years before Daśabhūmika. Then, Willis traces it to Bhadrapalautra and emphasizes the term "cittamātra" was first used within the context of the mediation practice by quoting Schmithausen's study as below.

"...Just as these imaginary appearances, the Buddhas visualized in meditative concentration are also not really met by the meditating Bodhisattva but only projections of the Bodhisattva's mind and what the Bodhisattva should realize is precisely this fact that the visualized Buddha is nothing but mind (cittam eva). This ideality of the meditation-images, however, has to be extended to all phenomena: Just as a man, awaking from a dream, comprehends that all phenomena are illusory like dream visions, in the same way the reflection of the Bodhisattva who understands that in his meditation he did not really meet the Buddha culminates in the intuition of the universal ideality: "This whole world consisting of the three spheres is nothing but mind (cittamātram idam [yad idam ?] traidhātukam.) And why? Because [I see in the case of meditation in that] it appears just as I imagine..." [21]

Thus Willis argues that the point of Vasubandhu is that we only see conceptualized thing, not thing as it really is. What we commonly perceive is vijñaptimātra which is only "representation" or "just conceptualization", not ultimate reality. [22]

Triṃśikāvijñaptimātratā
1. Support for ontological idealism

The first time when the concept of vijñānapariṇāma appeared is in the *Triṃśikā* of Vasubandhu. Unfortunately Vasubandhu did not write his own commentary on *Triṃśikā*. Thus it is open up to the interpretations of many commentators afterwards. Among different interpretations, Japan scholars already identified two main streams of thoughts: one was introduced to China by Hsüan-tsang whereas the other was introduced before the time of Hsüan-tsang. [23] Using the 17th verse, Ueda compares the differences of interpretations and argues that Dharmapāla's understanding of vijñānapariṇāma is

---

[21] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 25-28.

[22] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Motilal Banarsidass, p. 34.

[23] Ueda, Yoshifumi Ueda. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, pp. 155-156.

different from what is found in the original Sanskrit text. The difference is that Dharmapāla interprets the word "pariṇāma" as "the evolution of the seeing and seen parts from the vijñāna". By "evolution", Dharmapāla means that the consciousness and its accompanying psychic activities appear in the form of the seeing and of the seen. The seeing part is the "perceiver or knower" while the seen part is "what to be perceived or known". All external objects like mountains, rivers, animals that, we think, exist outside of consciousness are presented to be no more than the seen part of consciousness (vijñāna). There are eight kinds of consciousness. The first six consciousness are not working when one is either fast asleep, or in a faint, or in the Samādhi without consciousness so their seen parts do not exist then. But the eighth consciousness called ālayavijñāna is always on all the time. Thus the external objects as the seen part of ālayavijñāna always exist accordingly. Such a theory of vijñāna evolution is definitely ontological idealism. [24]

2. Refutation against ontological idealism

However, according to Ueda, the Sanskrit of *Triṃśikā* does not mention that the seeing and the seen parts are evolved from the vijñāna. The words "this vijñānapariṇāma" refer to the three kinds of vijñāna (ālayavijñāna, kliṣṭa-manas, and visayasya vijñapti) that are elaborated from 2nd verse to 16th verse. It is all about the explanation of these three kinds of vijñāna and has nothing to do with the evolution of vijñāna. [25] Then what is the meaning of "pariṇāma" and of "vijñānapariṇāma"? By quoting Sthiramati's commentary of the *Triṃśikā*, Ueda states that "pariṇāma" means "being different" and that "vijñānapariṇāma" should be understood as that the present vijñāna is different from the previous vijñāna. Thus Ueda has the rendering of the 17th verse running like as below

> "This vijñānapariṇāma is vikalpa. Anything which is discriminated or conceptualized by the vikalpa does not really exist. Therefore the whole world (which is discriminated or conceptualized by it) is consciousness-only." [26]

---

[24] Ueda, Yoshifumi Ueda. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, p. 157.

[25] Ueda, Yoshifumi Ueda. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, p. 158.

[26] Ueda, Yoshifumi Ueda. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, p. 161.

Because the consciousness of the unenlightened people are either vijñānapariṇāma or vikalpa, Ueda thinks that there is no way for unenlightened people to know things as they really are, but rather the conceptualized things. On the other hand, with prajñā or nirvikalpajñāna which is different in its nature from vijñānapariṇāma vikalpa, the enlightened people could know directly the objects as they really are (yathābhūtārtha). In Vasubandhu's words, such mind abides in vijñaptimātrata because it truly realize that the objects of vikalpa are of the conceptualized nature, that is, consciousness-only (vijñaptimātra).[27] Therefore, vijñaptimātra is more an epistemological proposition than an ontological one.

Kochumuttom also understands that Vasubandhu's transformations (pariāma) of vijñāna in *Trimśikā* are only about citta and caitaa (=mind and its derivatives), not for rūpa which is physical part of phenomena. In other words, the transformations of vijñāna cover not the entire phenomena but only psychic part of it. What is traced to consciousness is not things themselves but their appearances as either subjects or objects of experience. The theory of

---

[27] Ueda, Yoshifumi Ueda. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, pp. 162-163.

transformation of consciousness is only about the analysis of the psyche without any implication of ontological idealism.[28]

Willis emphasizes that Vasubandhu shifts the Yogācāric emphasis from the discourse focusing on cittamātra in a meditative context to that centered around vijñaptimātra in philosophical context. But Vasubandhu brings up the notion of vijñaptimātra not for claiming the absolute idealism, but rather for the realization that all ordinary people perceive is solely constructed images. [29]

Wayman also argues that Vasubandhu does not deny the ālambana by referring to the 28th verse of *Trimśikā* as below. Here Wayman understands ālambana as the meditative object which seems to me is an external object without considering the seen part within consciousness that idealists might make sense with.

"...When perception (vijñāna) does not perceptively reach the meditative object (ālambana), it abides in the state of

---

[28] Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 216-217.

[29] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 33-35.

perception-only (vijñāna-matra), which lacks an apprehendible by reason of not apprehending that meditative object...." [30]

Ueda also mentions the 28th verse of *Triṃśikā* and translates it as below. Ueda's inserted comment identifies two possible scenarios for ālambana: either a natural phenomenon or an idea in the consciousness. That indicates that Ueda takes it into account both external objects and internal objects.

> "...XXVIII: But when his consciousness does not perceive any object [be it a natural phenomenon, or be it an idea in the consciousness], then it has abode in the consciousness-only. For when there is no object to be grasped, there can be no-grasping it..." [31]

Furthermore, Ueda quotes Sthiramati's commentary on the 28th verse and stresses that the dichotomy between the subject and the object must be extinguished. But how to make it happen? Ueda

---

[30] Wayman, Alex. 1976. "Yogācāra and the Buddhist Logicians", *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, p. 68.

[31] Ueda, Yoshifumi. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, p. 163.

---

refers to the 29th verse as below and provides the answer that no-mind (acitta) is to negate the seer and that nothing-grasped (anupalambha) is to negate the object (the seen). When the mind sees the mountain as it really is, it is the mind seeing itself as it really is, and in the meantime when the mind sees the mountain from within by losing itself in the mountain (i.e. no-mind plus the mountain is seen by the mountain without seer outside).

> "...XXIX: This is both no-mind and nothing-grasped, and also it is the supra-mundane wisdom, is the revulsion of abode, because he has already given up the seeds in the two kinds..." [32]

Ueda concludes that the word "consciousness-only" is equivalent to "no-mind" (acitta). Those who truly understand that what is seen by vikalpa is conciousness-only (vijñaptimātrata) deals with reality. Those whose standpoint is not on

---

[32] Ueda, Yoshifumi. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, p. 164.

consciousness-only deals with conceptualized things that is called a kind of idealism.[33]

Cheng Wei Shi Lun (CWSL)
1. Support for ontological idealism

Yamabe believes CWSL clearly propounds ontological idealism because CWSL states that matter is the creation of mind and can be reduced to mind. Yamabe specifically refers to several passages of CWSL as below for support.

T31:10C13-14: "...Because common seeds in the vipakavijñāna [=ālayavijñāna] come to maturation, they transform themselves into color and other images of the receptable-world [bhājanaloka]: namely the external gross elements and matter composed [of these elements.] Although the transformations of individual sentient beings are separate, their appearances are similar and the places [in which the individual transformations are situated] are not different, just as the rays of light from many lamps respectively fill [the

[33] Ueda, Yoshifumi. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*, pp. 164-165.

place and] look like one light...."[34]; Chinese origin: "...謂異熟識由共相種成熟力故，變似色等器世間相，即外大種及所造色。雖諸有情所變各別，而相相似，處所無異，如眾燈明，各遍似一。..."

T31:11a8-11: "...Due to the ripening of special seeds (asadharana-bija), the consciousness which is [the result of karmic] maturation (vijakavijñāna) develops into [an image] appearing as [one's own subtle] material sense-faculties (rupindri) and [one's own gross body which is] the support of [these] sense-faculties (indriyādhiṣṭhāna), i.e. the internal gross elements and secondary matter. There are [other] common seeds due to the ripening of which [the vipākavijñāna develops into yet another image:] where there are bodies of others, it also develops into [an image] appearing as these; otherwise it would not be possible to experience [the physical presence of] others... "[35] ; Chinese

[34] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Yogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, pp. 21-22.

[35] No translation available from Yamabe so to borrow Schimthausen translation from Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp. 36-38.

origin: "... 謂異熟識不共相種成熟力故，變似色根及根依處，即內大種及所造色。有共相種成熟力故，於他身處亦變似彼。不爾，應無受用他義。..."

T31:39c 20-24:"... The word 'consciousness' (識: vijñapti) summarily indicates that in each of all the sentient beings there are (1.) eight [forms of] consciousness (識: vijñāna), (2.) six categories of mind-associates, (3.) image and vision [part] into which they develop, (4.) [their] different states (分位差別: avasthā-viśeṣa, some of which are wrongly hypostatized by the Sarvāstivādins as cittaviprayuktasaṃskāras), and (5.) true Suchness (真如: tathatā) manifested (所顯: prabhāvita) by the principle of their voidness; for these [five items] are [respectively] (1.) what has consciousness (or: [the function of] cognizing) (識: vijñapti) as its specific characteristic (自相: svalakṣaṇa), (2.) what is associated (相應: saṃprayukta) with consciousness (識: vijñāna), (3.) what the two [preceding items] 'develop' into, (4.) specific states of the three [preceding items], and (5.) the true nature of the four [preceding items]. These (lit. such) dharmas, all of them not being separate from consciousness, are summarily designated

as 'consciousness'..." [36] ；Chinese origin: "... 識言，總顯一切有情，各有八識、六位心所、所變相見、分位差別，及彼空理所顯真如; 識自相故，識相應故，二所變故，三分位故，四實性故。如是諸法，皆不離識，總立識名。..."

In terms of T31:39c 20-24 in particular, Yamabe observes that CWSL reduces all of five ontological categories (citta, caitta, rūpa, viprayukta-saṃskāra and asaṃskṛta) into the conscious. To him, these are definitely ontological statements without doubt. [37]

In addition, Schmithausen cites the following passage right after T31:39c 20-24 and suggests no any room left for matter to exist independently. [38]

---

[36] No translation available from Yamabe so to borrow Schimthausen translation from Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp.20-21.

[37] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Y ogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p. 19.

[38] Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp.21-22.

"...The word '-mātra' merely excludes visible matter, etc., as they are conceived of by ill- or untrained people, i.e. as something really existing definitely apart from any form of consciousness." (CWSL 39c24-25: 唯言，但遮愚夫所執，定離諸識，實有色等。...)"

Furthermore, Schmithausen refers to several passages as bellow that deny entities or matter outside or separate from mental factors as the object or objective support of mental factors. [39]

"...Therefore one must know that in reality there is no external object, but only the internal consciousness which arises [in such a way that it] resembles an external object." (CWSL 7a22-23: 由此應知， 實無外境，唯有內識似外境生。...)"

"...An external object, because of being established arbitrarily, does not exist [in the same way] as consciousness [exists]." (CWSL 1b10-11: 外境隨情而施設故，非有如識; ...)"

---

[39] No translation available from Yamabe so to borrow Schimthausen translation from Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp.22-23.

"...In order to dispel the wrong conception that an object exists in reality outside mind and mind-associates, it is taught that there is only consciousness (vijñaptimātra)." (CWSL 6c24-25: 為遣妄執心、心所外實有境故，說唯有識; ...)"

"... [When] they have thoroughly understood that there is no objective support separate from consciousness, then they are taught that the image part [of the respective consciousness itself] is the objective support." (CWSL 10b5-6: 達無離識所緣境者，則說相分是所緣，...)"

In Schmithausen's opinion, to negate external and independent existing material things and to reduce them to the images in form of mind is making good sense from the perspective of Buddhist premises. Saṃsāra starts and ends in the mind because it is the intention and the intentional acts that triggering the karma. The production of a body and sense-faculties is only an intermediate step as a result of karma. The external world functioning as a "container" of sentient beings becomes less important because it is viewed as a kind of by-product of the karma of sentient beings. If everything is said to be produced from the ālayavijñāna which carrying the karmic

seeds, Schmithausen argues that there is no much lost when the connection between the karma and its effect is explained only by mind without external material entities. Such more "economic" theory might have been appreciated then when Yogācāra had the tendency to get rid of theoretically redundant entities.[40]

2. Refutation against ontological idealism

Lusthaus quotes the following paragraph from CWSL and argues that externality as such is not perceived in immediate experience but retrospectively be read into and imposed on immediate experience because of appropriational intent. What is problematic for Yogācāra is not the positing of external objects but the notion of externality (wei-hsiang 外想) which is necessary condition for appropriation. Lusthaus suggests that Yogācāric 'phenomenological description' should not be confused or misconstrued as an ontological description, but rather a psychosophical one.

"... [That] rūpic external perceptual-objects are distinct [entities is] clearly evident and realized in immediate cognition and is perceived [as such]. How can you deny that, and consider them inexistent? ....At the moment [they are] immediately cognized and realized, [one] doesn't hold them to be external. Only afterwards, mano-[vijñānic] discrimination falsely produces the notion of externality (wei-hsiang 外想). Thus, the perceptual-object immediately cognized is altered consciousness, and is [consciousness's] own nimitta-bhaga, and can be said to exist [in this sense]. Mano-vijñāna is attached to external substantialistic rūpas, etc., falsely schematizing (pariklp-,wang-chi 妄計) them as existents. Hence we consider them to be inexistent..." [41] ; Chinese origin: "...「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。..."[42]

[40] Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp. 20-52.

[41] Lusthaus, Dan. 2003. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge, p. 458.

[42] T.31.1585.39b38-39c01

Also, Lusthaus refers to the following paragraph from CWSL arguing that CWSL admits rūpa exists independently as other mind by specifically highlighting the last line "... 如緣他心色等亦爾 ..." which he translated as "... Other mind is this sort of condition; rūpa, etc. are the same case..."

"... It is only like a mirror, which 'perceives' what appears [within it as] external objects. [This kind of perception is the type we] term 'discerning (liao) other minds,' though they can't be immediately-directly discerned. What is discerned immediately-directly is [one's consciousness'] own alterations (so-pien). Hence the [Sandhinirmocana] Sutra says: There is not the slightest dharma which can grasp the remaining dharmas; only when consciousness arises does one project/perceive the appearance of that, which is called 'grasping that thing.' Other mind is this sort of condition; rūpa, etc. are the same case..." [43] ; Chinese origin: "... 但如鏡等似外境現，名了他心，非親能了。親所了者，謂自所變。

故契經言:「無有少法能取餘法，但識生時，似彼相現，名取彼物。」如緣他心，色等亦爾。..." [44]

However, Schmithausen finds it problematic Lusthaus translating the last line "... 如緣他心色等亦爾 ..." as "... Other mind is this sort of condition; rūpa, etc. are the same case..." In addition to quoting two other translations from other sources like "As with having the minds of others as objects, so with form, etc." and "As that which has another's mind as its object, so also [that which has] rūpa, etc., [as its object]", Schmithausen offers his own more explicit rendering as below to refute Luthaus's interpretation that CWSL presupposes rūpa is independent of minds.

"..Just as [in the case of consciousness] having another's mind as [its] objective support （緣 X = X-ālambana）[what is directly cognized is not the other person's mind itself only but only an image of it developed by the cognizing mind itself], so also [in the case of] visible matter （色= rūpa), etc. (i.e. in the case of a consciousness having visible matter, etc.,

---

[43] Lusthaus, Dan. 2003. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge, p. 491.

[44] T.31.1585.39c13-39c16.

as its objective support) [what is cognized directly is only an image developed by the cognizing mind itself..."[45]

What is interesting to note here is that Yamabe takes the same position as Schmithausen and does not share with Lusthaus's opinion that CWSL does not presupposes ontological idealism. Even though, Yamabe is questioning that, if one can directly perceive only one's own mental representations, why can one accept the existence of other minds while having to reject the existence of external material?[46] Thus whether or not CWSL presupposes ontological idealism is one thing. Whether or not one agrees with CWSL proposition is another.

---

[45] Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*, pp. 13-16.

[46] Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Yogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*, p. 34.

Sandhinirmocanasūtra, Yogācārabhūmi, Mahāyāna-samgraha
1. Refutation against ontological idealism

Tattavartha-patalam is one of chapters of Bodhisattvabhūmi of Yogācārabhūmi. Willis refers to Tattavartha-patalam because she thinks it is Yogācārabhūmi's only chapter addressing Mahāyāna doctrine. She argues that the intention that Asaṅga wrote Tattavartha-patalam is to correct and clarify the fundamental notion of Śūnyatā rather than advocating idealism in an absolute sense. In fact, Asaṅga inherited the realism of the Hinayan and Madhyamik's philosophical teaching of Śūnyatā and reformulated it.[47] But why is the Yogācāraic school that Asaṅga founded viewed as only promoting the absolute idealism? One of reasons that Willis provides is that there is little attention paid to the historical fact that there are at least two different streams of Yogācāra thought: one is what Willis calls as "original" thread that propounded by Maitreya, Asaṅga , Vasubandhu and Sthiramati. The other is what she calls as "later" thread that advocated by Dharmapāla and Husan-tsang. Although the "later" stream is "idealistic" in character, the same idealistic

---

[47] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi, Motilal Banarsidass*, pp. 13-15.

characteristic should not be assumed for the early thought.[48] Here Willis just shares Ueda's arguments.

In addition, Willis maintains that the lengthy Yogācārabhūmi clearly presupposes the realistic ontology of the Hinayana schools except for the Bodhisattvabhūmi section and refers to Schimithausen's findings that the concept of "cittamātra are vijñaptimātra" is almost not traceable in the lengthy Yogācārabhūmi. But Willis does notice those terms were used in Asaṅga's Mahāyāna-samgraha when Asaṅga quoted the famous phrase from the Dasabhūmikasutra and the following message from the Sandhinirmocanasūtra. Willis translates the quote as below arguing that those terms were used mainly for the meditative instruction and practice. And the realization that the meditative objective visualized by mind is nothing but mind will simultaneously lead to the realization of Śūnyatā, the emptiness of both the object and the subject.

"...Maitreya asked: Lord, are those images cognized in meditation different from that mind (which cognizes them) or are they not different? The Lord answered: Maitreya, they are not different. And why? Because those images are nothing but conceptualization (vijñaptimātra). Maitreya, I have explained that the meditative object (ālambana) of consciousness (vijñāna) is comprised of (prabhavita) nothing but conceptualization (vijñaptimātra)..."[49]

2. Support for ontological idealism

Hopkins states that Tsongkhapa identifies Asaṅga's view as idealist when Tsongkhapa addresses the relationship between the realization of the emptiness of an imputation nature brought up in the "Chapter on Suchness" of Asaṅga's Bodhisattvabhūmi and the realization of cognition-only. Because Asaṅga denies that a form and the valid consciousness apprehending the form are different entities, Tsongkhapa understands Asaṅga as suggesting that the object and the consciousness apprehending it are all produced from a single internal seed without any external object impinging on the consciousness. But Schmithausen maintains that the idealist doctrine of mind-only does not belong to Bodhisattvabhūmi but to the earlier teaching that is

---

[48] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi, Motilal Banarsidass*, pp. 20-21.

[49] Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi, Motilal Banarsidass*, pp. 28-29.

compiled before Asaṅga. [50] Most parts of Yogācārabhūmi presuppose the realistic ontology of Hinayana tradition that only denies the existence of a substantial Self but not question the reality of dharma yet. There is a kind of nominalistic philosophy found in some portions of Yogācārabhūmi like Bodhisattvabhūmi in particular. According to the philosophy, finite entities are mere denominations (prajnaptmatra). Schmithausen views the nominalistic philosophy as kind of preparation for Yogācāra idealism but not idealism yet. [51]

Also Hopkins states that Tsongkhapa refers to Asaṅga's Mahāyāna-samgraha citing Sandhinirmocana Sūtra as proof of no external objects. Hopkins translates the related paragraphs as below and stresses that Buddha applies the discussion to consciousness in general instead of limiting to conscious in meditation only. Thus the intention to generalize what is true in meditative situation to all conscious experience is clear.

"...How are those who are not awakened through knowledge of suchness to infer [that everything is] just cognition-only? It

---

[50] Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, p. 281.

[51] Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 317-318.

is to be inferred through scripture and reasoning. Concerning this, scriptures are, for instance, the statement by the Supramundane Victor in the [Sutra] on the Ten Grounds, "These three realms are mind-only," and the statement by the Supramundane Victor in the Sutra Unravelling the Thought upon being questioned by the Bodhisattva Maitreya:

"Supramundane Victor, is the image that is the object of activity of meditative stabilization different from the mind or not different?"

The Supramundane Victor spoke, "Maitreya, it is said to be not different. Why? I explain that consciousness is distinguished by (the fact that its) object of observation is just cognition-only."

"Supramundane Victor, if the image that is the object of activity of meditative stabilization is not different from the mind, how does the mind itself apprehend the mind itself?"

"Maitreya, although no phenomenon apprehends any phenomenon, the mind which is generated that way appears as such. For example, with form acting as a condition, form itself is seen (in a mirror), but one thinks,

'I see an image.' In that, the form and the appearance of the image appear as different factualities. Likewise, the mind generated in that way also appears to be a different factuality from that."

These scriptures also indicate a reasoning as follows. When the mind is set in equipoise, whatever images of objects of knowledge - foulness and so forth - are seen are [cases of] seeing the mind; the foulness and so forth do not exist as other factualities. Through this reasoning it is suitable for a Bodhisattva to infer that all cognitions [i.e., all fifteen categories of phenomena given above) are just cognition-only..."[52]

Schmithausen also notices the significance of Sandhinirmocanasūtra because it extends the ideality of the meditation-object to all ordinary objects. Although Sandhinirmocanasūtra does not justify the extension by any rational argument, it at least marks the full transition to ontological idealism and supports the theory that Yogācāra ontological idealism is

primarily generalized from the fact that is observed in the meditation objects. [53]

Based on the above discussion, Hopkins makes an interesting comparison between the position of Willis and of Tsongkhapa. Hopkins argues that Willis tries to make up the consistency between Bodhisattvabhūmi and Mahāyāna-samgraha by downplaying the extension of idealism to ordinary objects and imposing the view of the former on the latter. On the other hand, Tsongkhapa tries to forge the consistency between Bodhisattvabhūmi and Mahāyāna-samgraha by arguing these two texts share similar methods (for examples, the threefold reasoning, the four thorough examinations, and the four thorough knowledges) and by imposing the view of the latter on the former even though there is short of explicit vocabulary connection. [54] Thus Hopkins appreciates that Schmithausen is able to identify the transitional movement from the nominalism found in Bodhisattvabhūmi to the complete idealism in the 8th chapter of

---

[52] Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 314-315.

[53] Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 318-320.

[54] Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 319-324.

Sandhinirmocanasūtra and his insight that sometimes the experience in the meditation could lead to metaphysical doctrines.

Discussion

In terms of *Viṃśatikā*, the arguments to support ontological idealism are all based on the objections that addressed by Vasubandhu in *Viṃśatikā*. If those objections are meant to challenge the feasibility of "vijñaptimātra" as ontological idealism and Vasubandhu takes those challenges and defend it, it could not be more obvious to Griffiths, Woods and Yamabe that "vijñaptimātra" is a concept to mean ontological idealism. That being said, to agree that "vijñaptimātra" is advocating ontological idealist theory is one thing. To believe that the ontological theory of "vijñaptimātra" makes sense is another. Both Woods and Yamabe find a hard time in making sense of "telepathy" or "other mind".

On the other hand, Kaplan argues that how to interpret "traidhātukam" determines whether "vijñaptimātra" is understood as ontological idealism or not. Both Wayman and Kochumuttom refuse to interpret "traidhātukam" as referring to "the whole world" but as what the consciousness derives from three worlds. Thus it is only representation of three worlds instead of three worlds themselves.

Kaplan echoes this view by maintaining that *Viṃśatikā* is not about the external object but the perception of consciousness. Willis also traces the origin of "traidhātukam" down to Bhadrapalautra and emphasizes the term "vijñaptimātra" was used within the context of the mediation practice. Thus the vijñaptimātra, Willis argues, is only "representation" in mind like what is experienced in the meditation, not things as they really are.

The above arguments regarding "traidhātukam" reminds me of Gethin's suggestion that cosmology and psychology have been paralleling each other in Buddhist thought. The ambiguous relationship between cosmology and psychology has been deeply rooted, and taken for granted and as nature in Buddhist tradition.[55] Speaking of three realms (tri-dhātu) which comprises of "realm of desire" " (kāma-dhātu)," realm of form" (rūpa-dhātu) and "realm of formlessness (arumpya-dhātu), Sadakata observes that Buddhism shares many cosmological elements with other Indian religions but is unique in positioning the realms of meditation practitioners- the "realm of form" and the "realm of formlessness"- above the "realm of

---

[55] Gethin, Rupert. 1997. "Cosmology and Meditation: From the Agganna-Sutta to the Mahāyāna," *History of Religions*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 210-211.

desire".[56] Furthermore, Sadakata describes the realm of formlessness as below.

> "…Where, then, is the realm of formlessness (ampya-dhātu)? In that realm, beings no longer have physical, material bodies. There is only spirit, and no form (rūpa) remains. We should not assume that the realm of formlessness is "above" the realm of form, for it transcends all geographical notions. Though we include it in cosmology, it is completely detached from spatial concepts. It is not, however, beyond the reach of time, and the inhabitants of its various levels follow allotted life spans of twenty thousand great kalpas, eighty thousand great kalpas, etc. (A kalpa is a period of time so long that it cannot be calculated in years.)…"[57]

Here it would be difficult to picture what the "realm of formlessness" looks like. Not to mention imaging where those who manage to get out of three realms (tri-dhātu) would end up. If one agreed that Buddhist cosmology is a kind of hierarchy with the

---

[56] Sadakata, Akira. 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins, Kosei Publishing Company*. p. 63.

[57] Sadakata, Akira. 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins, Kosei Publishing Company*. pp. 75-76.

"realm of formlessness" on the top, one might accept that Buddhist tradition does have a relatively strong idealist tendency. At least from Buddhist cosmological perspective.

As far as *Triṃśikā* is concerned, what puts both sides of debates into the crossroads is the key term "vijñānapariṇāma" that first appeared and invented by Vasubandhu. As Ueda points out, if one understands vijñānapariṇāma as "the evolution of the seeing and seen parts from the vijñāna", one goes down the path of ontological idealism. On the other hand, if one understands vijñānapariṇāma as vijñāna changing over time, one goes down the path of epistemological idealism. Ueda chooses to go for epistemological path because he believes that is faithful to the original Sanskrit text. Those who truly understand that what is seen by vikalpa is conciousness-only deal with reality. Kochumuttom follows the same path because he thinks the transformation of vijñāna only cover psychic part of the whole phenomena without touching any physical part. Willis also thinks the notion of vijñaptimātra is used to identify the constructed images, not absolute idealism.

In addition, the CWSL that adopts Dharmapāla's interpretation of *Triṃśikā* as the ultimate view is almost confirmed

by Ueda, Yamabe and Schmithausen as going down the path of ontological idealism except little doubt from Lusthaus who focusing Buddhist phenomenology. If one shared Schmithausen's frustration that Sandhinirmocanasūtra just extends the ideality of the meditation-object to all ordinary objects without giving any rationales/details on why and how so, one might also share Schmithausen's appreciation that Dharmapāla's innovative interpretation of "vijñānapariṇāma" in the CWSL does make Yogācāra ontological idealism a more comprehensible and "economic" theory. And according to Hopkins, such appreciation is only possible if one is able to capture the transitional movements of Yogācāra thoughts over time and among tests. Alternatively, if one did not feel frustrated at all that Sandhinirmocanasūtra is extending the ideality of the meditation-object to all objects without good reasons, one probably would not take the extension literally like Willis, but rather interpret it as kind of convenient generalization from meditation practice experience to ordinary experience. And when the generalization was epistemological only, what would further rationales/details be needed?

As for what to expect regarding the coherence among the texts of Yogācāra texts, Hopkin observes two different methods of interpolation: either imposing the view of the earlier text on the latter or forcing the view of the latter text on the earlier. Such observation also reminds me of another kind of interpolation that is based on the assumed coherence within the lineage of Yogācāra. Both Wayman and Kochumuttom are attempted to suggest that, if, as immediate followers and disciples of Vasubandu, the famed Buddhist logician Dignāga and his successor Dharmakīrti did not deny external object but deemed realistic pluralism essential to their theory, it would be fairly inferred that they inherited the same view from Vasubandu and Asaṅga. Otherwise it would be barely possible for Dignāga and Dharmakīrti to follow Vasubandu.[58] [Note: recently there are scholars who not claiming Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as unequivocally realists like Wayman and Kochumuttom.] [59] Here we see two possible interpolation approaches are in question. No matter whether the interpolation is applied to texts or the lineage, a very important

[58] Wayman, Alex. 1976. "Yogācāra and the Buddhist Logicians", *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, p. 65 and Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain*, Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 25-26.

[59] Kellner, Birit. 2011. "Dharmakīrti's criticism of external realism and the sliding scale of analysis", Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, Birgit Kellner (eds), *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference. Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*. Wien 2011, pp. 291–298.

hidden assumption is that there is always a coherence within the texts and the lineage. Since the validity of the interpolations is determined by the reliability of such hidden assumption, the burden of proof would be on those who made such presupposition. And the proof would be very difficult if not impossible.

Last, since CWSL already made strenuous efforts trying to justify and elaborate "Vijñaptimātra" as ontological theory, does it make perfect sense? Might not necessarily. At least not for Wood and Yamabe. Probably not for many either. But it is not the topic to be covered in this paper. It is suggested that whether ontological idealist theory is make perfect sense and whether "Vijñaptimātra" be understood as ontological idealism should be decoupled and addressed as different topics.

Reference

Gethin, Rupert. 1997. "Cosmology and Meditation: From the Agganna-Sutta to the Mahāyāna", *History of Religions*, Vol. 36, No. 3.

Griffiths, Paul J.. 1991. *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem*, Open Court Pub.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1992. "A Tibetan Contribution on the Question of Mind-Only in the Early Yogic Practice School", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*.

Kaplan, Stephen. 1992. "The Yogācāra roots of advaita idealism? Noting a similarity between vasubandhu and Gauapāda", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*.

Kellner, Birit. 2011. "Dharmakīrti's criticism of external realism and the sliding scale of analysis", Helmut Krasser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco, Birgit Kellner (eds), *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference. Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*. Wien 2011, pp. 291–298.

Kochumuttom, Thomas A.. 2008. *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārain,* Motilal Banarsidass.

Lin, Chen-kuo 林鎮國. 1994.「唯識無境」的現代爭論, *Dharma Light Monthly*

Lusthaus, Dan. 2003. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*, Routledge.

Sadakata, Akira. 1997. *Buddhist Cosmology: Philosophy and Origins*, Kosei Publishing Company.

Schmithausen, Lambert. 2005. "On the Problem of the External World in the CWSL", *The International Institute for Buddhist Studies of The International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies*.

Ueda, Yoshifumi. 1967. "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy", *Philosophy East and West*.

Wayman, Alex. 1976. "Yogācāra and the Buddhist Logicians", *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*.

Willis, Janice Dean. 2002. *On Knowing Reality: The Tattvartha Chapter of Asaṅga 's Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Motilal Banarsidass.

Wood, Thomas E.. 2009. *Mind Only: A Phiosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of Vijñãnavãda*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
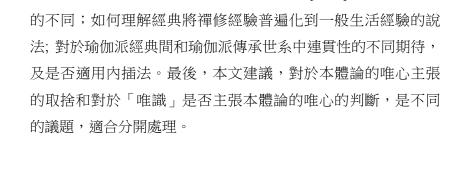
Yamabe, Nobuyoshi. 1998. "Self and Other in the Y ogacara Tradition", *Nihon-bukkyō-bunka-ronshū: Kitabatake Tensei hakushi koki-kinen-ronshū*.

「唯識」是本體論的唯心主張或是

認識論的唯心主張？

政治大學 宗教研究所博士生　楊志常

摘要

關於「唯識」到底是主張本體論的唯心或是認識論的唯心，一直以來學術界都沒有定論而爭論不休。令人既稱奇又困惑的是，辯論的兩造經常引用相同的經文論典，甚至相同的文句，但卻各執全然不同的詮釋和結論。本文試著專注於辯論兩造時常爭鋒相對的經典文獻，包括《唯識二十頌論》、《唯識三十頌》、《成唯識論》、《解深密經》、《瑜伽師地論》和《攝大乘論》，回顧辯論兩造如何援用相同的經文論典，然而卻作不同的論述。希望藉著更了解辯論兩造間的差異的可能來源，以減少不必要的困惑和偏差，並且試著異中求同。回顧文獻發現幾個可能導致爭論的因素: 深植於佛教傳統中的宇宙觀和心理觀間

的模棱兩可的關係；對於關鍵梵文名詞 "vijñānapariṇāma" 翻譯的不同；如何理解經典將禪修經驗普遍化到一般生活經驗的說法; 對於瑜伽派經典間和瑜伽派傳承世系中連貫性的不同期待，及是否適用內插法。最後，本文建議，對於本體論的唯心主張的取捨和對於「唯識」是否主張本體論的唯心的判斷，是不同的議題，適合分開處理。

關鍵詞: 唯識，本體論的唯心主張/認識論的唯心主張，《唯識二十頌論》、《唯識三十頌》、《成唯識論》、《解深密經》