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Jiang/Contexts and Dialogue

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INTRODUCTION

One major attraction of Buddhism to the contemporary world is its therapeutic value, which is derived from its penetrating insights into the human psyche and many of its practices. As David Loy observes, “Buddhism’s main point of entry into Western culture is now Western psychology, especially psychotherapy” (2). This is evidenced by the fact that “Buddhism . . . is increasingly being looked on, not just as a religion, but as a system for understanding and promoting personal growth, and as such it is seen as offering a much more positive idea of the nature of mental health, and a much richer repertoire of methods for attaining a sense of mental balance, well-being, and personal fulfillment” (Clarke 1997, 151). Since Carl Jung’s pioneering engagement with various strands of Eastern thought and the fruitful dialogues between psychologists Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, and Zen Buddhist D. T. Suzuki in the early decades of the twentieth century, many modern psychologists, especially those engaged in various forms of Buddhist practice, have greeted Buddhism with open arms (Claxton, 7). James Coleman even compares the role psychotherapy is playing in the introduction of Buddhism to the West to that of Taoism in bringing Buddhist thought to China two thousand years ago (228–229). Consequently, the psychological approach to Buddhism constitutes a major component of modern Western writing on Buddhism in both popular literature and scholarly works by therapists.

The psychological approach to Buddhism is a multifaceted phenomenon. Mark Finn has identified three general attitudes of modern psychologists toward Buddhism:

The first, or classical, view equates meditative experience and regression, with only the question being whether the experience is adap-

tive or not. The second view, represented by Transpersonal psychology, has argued that meditation represents an advanced state of psychological experience not contained by psychoanalytic categories and requiring new models of human possibility. A third view has been more impressed by the parallels between Buddhist and psychoanalytic therapeutics. (162)

The first view is represented by Sigmund Freud himself, who regards meditative experience as a regressive “oceanic” feeling characterized by “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded” (1961a, 11), and the feeling of “oneness with the universe” (21). According to Freud, such an experience seeks “the restoration of limitless narcissism” (20) and a consolation of “infantile helplessness” (21). Freud was ambivalent about this oceanic feeling because he himself did not experience it and such a feeling is hard to deal with scientifically. This attitude is indicative of a time when there was a general misunderstanding or simple ignorance of Buddhism on the part of modern psychologists. As William Parsons summarizes, “[T]he oceanic feeling is but the psychoanalytic version of the perennialist claim that mysticism is ‘one and the same everywhere,’ and the occasional regression to the preverbal, pre-Oedipal ‘memory’ of unity, motivated by the need to withdraw from a harsh and unforgiving reality, is the explanation behind the transient, ineffable experience of oneness with the universe” (35–36). Curiously though, “the equation of meditation with preverbal, symbiotic union or regressive oneness with the mother has gone virtually unchallenged within the psychoanalytic community. The most recent qualifications of this model have focused only on whether these experiences can be interpreted as adult adaptive ones, rather than purely regressive or defensive flights from reality” (Epstein 1998, 120).

The second view is represented by Jack Engler, who advocates a developmental model to reconcile the conflict between the psychoanalytic practice of trying to strengthen the ego and the Buddhist teaching to transcend it (1984, 27). He argues that psychoanalysis and Buddhism deal with different phases of personal development: “It seems that our Western traditions have mapped out the early stages of that development and the Buddhist traditions have mapped out later or more advanced stages in which ‘decentering’ from the egocentrism of early development culminates in selfless altruism. And

neither tradition knows much about the other. They're talking about the same continuum of development, but about different segments of it" (1998, 112). Engler has famously stated that "*you have to be somebody before you can be nobody*" (1984, 31, original italics). "This has not been clearly understood either by Buddhists or by Western psychologists who tend to see the two traditions as either complementary or competing, but in either case without a clear awareness of the profound differences in their respective methods, aims and outcomes, and the problems they seek to remedy" (1998, 116).

The third view is represented by Carl Jung, Mark Epstein, John Suler, Marvin Levine, Harvey Aronson, and others who put Buddhist theories on par with psychoanalytic theories and see parallels between them. Some, like Epstein, Suler, and Levine, adopt terminologies in modern psychology to interpret Buddhist concepts, while others, like Jung and Aronson, are more cautious in maintaining the different objectives and orientations of theories involved while drawing inspiration from Buddhist theories and practices.

The first view, though still visibly present, no longer represents the dominant attitude of modern psychologists toward Buddhism. In the last several decades, great strides have been made in Buddhist studies in the West, and Buddhism has been exerting a growing influence on Western society. The second and the third views are more recent developments. They represent the increasing maturity and sophistication shown by modern psychologists in their study of Buddhism and the growing recognition of the value of such an approach among psychologists.

The psychological approach to Buddhism, however, is both invaluable and potentially dangerous, as Frederick Streng points out:

Cross-cultural comparisons in therapies for true self-awareness . . . are intellectually exciting and fraught with problems. Such studies are exciting in that they seek to locate and elucidate perennial problems in human self-awareness and in the understanding of one's social and physical environment. Comparisons can provide heuristic devices for probing different cultural imagery and definitions and for constructing analytic tools to examine the coherence and assumptions found in general claims about human experience. By specifying similarities and differences one can clarify issues that may provide the basis for new constructive formulations of recurrent human efforts at understanding and life enhancement. At their best they help to dis-

tinguish structural elements from incidental form, the typical from the culturally accidental.

The dangers arise from oversimplification of important distinctions in vocabulary, assumptions, and structural approaches. The difficulties in determining “original” meanings, in assuming the relative importance of concepts in a more comprehensive structure of understanding, and in intuiting the intention of (especially religious or salvific) claims are legion. (233–234)

Indeed, despite the apparent merit of the psychological approach to Buddhism and its immediate relevance to the contemporary world, such an approach (especially by those who take the third view but of course not all of them) runs the risk of oversimplifying Buddhist theories; ignoring its historical, cultural, and religious contexts; and disregarding its paradigmatic assumptions. That is, some modern psychologists as well as scholars of Buddhism with training in psychology are eager to interpret Buddhism through the lens of modern psychology. For example, psychologist Mark Epstein, in his *Thoughts Without a Thinker: Psychotherapy from a Buddhist Perspective*, tries to “translate” Buddhist ideas into the psychoanalytic framework and terminology with this justification: “In our culture, it is the language of psychoanalysis, developed by Freud and carefully nurtured by generations of psychotherapists over the past century, that has seeped into the general public awareness. It is in this language that the insights of the Buddha must be presented to Westerners” (1995, 7). For Epstein, Buddhism is a form of depth psychology and “the Buddha may well have been the original psychoanalyst, or, at least, the first to use the mode of analytic inquiry that Freud was later to codify and develop” (9). Buddhist scholar and Jungian psychologist Mokusen Miyuki, in his articles “A Jungian Approach to the Pure Land Practice of *Nien-fo*” and “Self-Realization in the Ten Oxherding Pictures,” attempts to challenge “the prevailing psychological view of Eastern religions as aiming at the ‘dissolution,’ or at the least the ‘depotentialization,’ of the ego” (1992, 181) and argues instead that many Buddhist practices also aid “the individual to strengthen, rather than dissolve, the ego through the integration of unconscious contents” (ibid.). Psychologist John Suler, in his *Contemporary Psychoanalysis and Eastern Thought*, also interprets Buddhism through the lens of psychological theories, even though he does recognize the drawbacks of using modern psychology to inter-

pret Buddhism in that it ignores the differences between the two (13–14). Marvin Levine simply regards Buddhism as a form of positive psychology, which is a recent Western psychological movement that “focuses on transforming ordinary living into a richer, more enhanced, more mature happiness” (xv).

As Joy Manné’s critique of Epstein points out, such a practice “does not respect the immense cultural difference between the Buddha’s times and our own” (117) and simply assumes that the Buddhist theories “were highly developed philosophical systems that in many cases espoused similar psychological concepts” (ibid.) without developing a convincing case for making such an assumption. This claim is made in spite of Epstein’s own acknowledgment that “no psychological language *as we know it* existed in the Buddha’s time—no talk of narcissism, no grandiosity, no abandonment depression or mirroring” (1995, 63–64, original italics).

Epstein’s recognition of the vast difference between the vocabularies employed by Buddhism and modern psychology, together with the historical, cultural, and religious contexts existing between the two, partially explains the reluctance on the part of Buddhologists to engage Buddhism with modern psychology. They are aware of the difficulties of many Buddhist concepts and their historical, social, religious, and philosophical contexts, which constitute an intimidating obstacle to understanding them and comparing them with psychological concepts developed in the modern West. Also many Buddhologists, who are often trained specialists in a narrowly defined academic field or subfield, lack sufficient knowledge of psychology. As the psychologist and Buddhist practitioner Jack Engler laments, neither Buddhist nor modern psychology knows much about the other (1998, 112). Psychoanalyst Jeffrey Rubin echoes such a sentiment in his observation that a genuine dialogue between the two has rarely occurred (2003, 388).

Obviously, this mutual ignorance has to be rectified first before any genuine dialogue between modern psychology and Buddhism can take place. What is encouraging is that Buddhologists—for example, De Silva (1973), Kalupahana (1987), and Waldron (1990, 2003)—are making strides in engaging modern psychology from the Buddhist side. Unfortunately, most of the attempts by Buddhologists are dogged by modern psychological frameworks and paradigms, although not as obviously as the work of many psychologists in this regard. That is, even in the writing of Buddhologists comparing mod-

ern psychology and Buddhist theories, the former is, explicitly or implicitly, taken as the norm against which the latter are measured or with which parallels are made without any careful reflection on why certain ones are drawn but not others. This leaves us with the impression that whatever modern psychological theory the Buddhist happens to be familiar with—be it that of William James, Sigmund Freud, or Carl Jung—that is where the parallels are drawn. Consequently, a particular interpretation of Buddhist theories may resemble a Jamesian, Freudian, or Jungian psychology, depending, very significantly, on which psychological system is being used in the comparison. Furthermore, several of the major differences between some Buddhist and modern psychological theories are reconciled either through reconfiguration of the theories involved or by downplaying such differences without sufficient justification. Even though the accidental nature of drawing particular parallels between modern psychology and Buddhism is hard to avoid, if possible at all, there needs to be a more methodic reflection on the very comparative context within which these parallels are made.

This book is written with the above concerns in mind. It is a reflection on both Buddhism and modern psychology that uses each as a mirror to examine the other's assumptions to make the ongoing dialogue between Buddhism and modern psychology a more conscientious and fruitful one. Its primary objective is not to work out specific schemes by which Buddhism and modern psychology can be integrated. Consequently, I will not be concerned with questions regarding which theory may fare better in coping with a particular issue. Put differently, the motivation of this book is not to find a neutral ground or language so that the two systems can be accommodated or integrated within a new framework. Rather, it is to treat the theories involved as they are within their own contexts first and then examine the very presuppositions behind the formulations when they are brought into a new context of a face-to-face dialogical setting. This new setting is meant to recontextualize both Buddhism and modern psychology vis-à-vis each other to reveal certain paradigmatic assumptions embedded in the original contexts of Buddhist and modern psychological theories. Any effort to integrate the two has to be conducted in the full awareness of the assumptions both systems carry with them. It is my hope that this project will help to promote creative imaginations within both traditions in reformulating and regenerating themselves and drawing inspiration from the

other as an initial step toward possible future integration. A rushed integration of the two without a proper understanding and appreciation of the underlying assumptions of the theories involved may compromise their own integrity and original appeals.

At the outset of this dialogue, it is important to realize that, during the last fifty years or so, both modern psychology and Western understanding of Buddhism have gone through many changes:

Western Psychology has undergone successive and simultaneous revolutions in cognitive psychology, systems theory, neuropsychology, evolutionary psychobiology, artificial intelligence, biological psychiatry, attachment theory, object relations theory, self psychology, traumatology, humanistic psychology, and transpersonal psychology. Western Buddhism has, at the same time, been transformed by the arrival of successive waves of Buddhist teachers from within the Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese Zen traditions, the Burmese lay meditation and Thai forest monastery traditions, and from the Tibetan Diaspora. In addition, the West has seen the arrival of a significant number of Asian immigrants who have brought other practice forms (e.g., Pure Land and *Nichiren* Buddhism) along with them. (Segall, 1–2)

As a result of the self-transformation of modern psychology and its increasing appreciation of Buddhism in its multifaceted character, the psychological approach to Buddhism has become much more sophisticated and complex. Due to this complexity, a comprehensive study of the psychological approach to Buddhism within the confines of a single work is all but impossible. Therefore, in order to have a systematic and methodic but manageable treatment of the encounter between Buddhism and modern psychology, I have chosen the Yogācāra Buddhist notion of *ālayavijñāna* and the concept of the unconscious in modern psychoanalysis as the interlocutors of the dialogue.

Ālayavijñāna and the Unconscious

Yogācāra Buddhism presents the most systematic and the most detailed version of the Buddhist theory of mind/consciousness or Buddhist psychology within the Buddhist tradition. It started in fourth-century India and became one of the two major Mahāyāna Buddhist schools, the other being Madhyamika, established by Nāgārjuna in the second century. The most prominent representatives of Yogācāra

Buddhism include Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. This school, in its various strands, pushes Mahāyāna Buddhism to its climatic conclusion by engaging in an extensive discussion on the nature and activities of our mental life and its potential for transformation from delusion to enlightenment. It has exerted a profound impact on the overall development of Buddhist philosophical deliberations and meditative practices. Although Yogācāra is not quite a “living” tradition in the way Zen Buddhism or Theravāda Buddhism is today (it is not associated with any monastic community), it is very much alive in some Asian Buddhist scholastic traditions, especially in Japan, and remains a source of inspiration for contemporary Buddhist practitioners as well as Buddhist scholars. Even in China, where Yogācāra did not survive as a continuing scholastic tradition, the early twentieth century witnessed its revival. Several prominent scholars both within and without the Buddhist tradition, such as Xiong Shili, Zhang Binglin, and Ouyang Jingwu among others, turned to Yogācāra in their effort to deal with intellectual challenges from the West precisely because of the sophistication of the Yogācāra system. Furthermore, the philosophical and psychological insights exhibited by Yogācāra have gained real traction among modern Western Buddhist scholars who in turn have influenced the way Buddhism has been received in the West, where most of the dialogue between Buddhism and modern psychology has been taking place. Therefore, an engagement between Buddhism and modern psychology cannot afford to disregard the contribution of Yogācāra Buddhism.

Ālayavijñāna, usually translated as the storehouse consciousness,¹ is a key concept in the Yogācāra system. It is a subliminal reservoir of memories, habits, tendencies, and future possibilities. The subliminal nature of *ālayavijñāna* renders it susceptible to being interpreted as the Buddhist version of the unconscious. On the other hand, the notion of the unconscious looms large in modern psychology as well as in popular parlance. As John Suler rightly points out, “One of the single most important insights of psychoanalysis is the realization of the unconscious” (1–2).

Due to the eminence of the unconscious in modern psychology and its powerful influence in the West and the rest of the world as well as Buddhism’s overwhelming concern for the mind and mental activities, since the early days of the encounter between modern psychology and Buddhism there has been an underlying desire to find a Buddhist version of the unconscious. Francisco Varela records

a vivid moment in the search for a Buddhist unconscious by a modern psychologist:

Joyce McDougall did not lose a moment in launching a question that was clearly burning for her, and for many of us: “I would like to ask Your Holiness if the Freudian concept of the unconscious has any corresponding ideas in Tibetan philosophy?” (265)

This moment captures one underlying impulse of modern psychology in its encounter with Buddhism, namely the search for corresponding concepts, especially core concepts, across cultural systems. Psychologist Elbert Russell recounted his own expectation in his encounter with the Indian tradition during the 1950s: “It was inconceivable to me that a people, a substantial portion of whom had spent thousands of years involved with the inner world, could not have discovered centuries ago what Freud and other psychoanalytic theorists had only discovered during this last century [namely, the unconscious]” (51). However, Russell’s search for an Eastern notion of the unconscious was destined to be frustrated from the start. In his article on Eastern and Western approaches to the unconscious he notes, “Western psychodynamic concepts will be used as criteria for determining what understanding of the unconscious is found in the literature of Eastern psychological systems” (53). He lists four criteria derived from the modern psychoanalytic system. After surveying some literature on Eastern traditions, he concludes that “the Eastern psychologies have yielded very little in the way of an understanding of the unconscious or its dynamics” (57). Russell goes on to argue that “the Eastern meditation systems focus on higher states of consciousness, while the Western psychotherapies generally deal with the unconscious” (61).

We should point out that Russell’s study of Asian sources in his search for an Eastern theory of the unconscious is by no means exhaustive. Padmasiri De Silva, in his comparative studies of Buddhist and Freud’s theories, does identify several candidates for the Buddhist version of the unconscious: *bhavaṅga*, *anuśaya*, *āsava*, *saṅkāra*, *saṃvatta nika viññāṇa*, *bhavasota*, and *viññāṇasota* (1973, 50). However, no other concept is more ideal in this regard than *ālayavijñāna*, which has been postulated, developed, and systematically elaborated by the Yogācārin (Waldron 2003, 91). The subliminal nature of *ālayavijñāna* makes it a natural choice for a Buddhist equivalent of the unconscious, both personal and collective (Smart, 58).

In some respects, the Western interpretation of *ālayavijñāna* is the culmination of the search for a Buddhist notion of the unconscious. In other words, the immense popularity of the notion of the unconscious schematized in modern psychology tends to color modern scholarship on *ālayavijñāna* in varying degrees. The fact that the question “Is there a Buddhist or Eastern notion of the unconscious?” has been raised at all points to the wide currency of the notion of the unconscious in modern psychology.

To be fair, modern scholarship on *ālayavijñāna* (e.g., the work of Lambert Schmithausen and William Waldron) has made great progress in understanding and appreciating the concept within its own cultural, historical, religious, and philosophical contexts. It has come a long way in better comprehending this key Yogācāra idea. There has clearly been a turn of the tide from the earlier approach to *ālayavijñāna*, which attempted to make it resemble the modern notion of the unconscious as much as possible, to an in-depth study of the concept itself within its own context. To help us better appreciate the change that has taken place in the West’s encounter with *ālayavijñāna*, I have schematized the evolution of the modern psychological approach to *ālayavijñāna* into three “stages” in terms of the questions that have been posed to it. The stages are not meant to be strictly chronological. Rather, they provide us with different contexts within which modern interpretations of *ālayavijñāna* have been experimented. There is, more often than not, overlapping among these stages, or contexts. Sorting them in this manner will facilitate our understanding of how modern Western scholarship has evolved in its approach to *ālayavijñāna* through a series of contexts and questions.

In the first stage of encountering *ālayavijñāna*, the underlying question that is raised or implied tends to be: What is the Buddhist notion of the unconscious (De Silva 1973, 49; Smart, 58)? Padmasiri De Silva observes that Jung’s “notion of the ‘collective unconscious,’ shrouded as it is in speculative theories, bears some kinship to the *ālayavijñāna* concept of later Buddhism, whereas the Freudian Unconscious, rooted in a scientific and empirical framework, resembles the concept of the Unconscious in early Buddhism” (1973, 65). According to De Silva, by virtue of such associations with Freud and Jung, the early Buddhist notion of the “unconscious,” like the Freudian unconscious, is more scientific and empirical, whereas the

Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna*, like the Jungian unconscious, is more speculative and obscure. Chapter titles in De Silva's work, such as "The Early Buddhist Concept of the Unconscious in the Light of the Freudian Theory of the Unconscious," are very suggestive of the underlying frame of reference that takes Freud's theory of the unconscious as the norm against which Buddhist theories are measured, even though the latter might fare better on particular issues (1973, 74–75). The question "What is the Buddhist version of the unconscious" is an imposition by modern scholars so that the answers are already framed within the context of the responses to such an underlying question.

At the second stage the question evolves into: What issues are raised within the Buddhist tradition that give *ālayavijñāna* its current shape? In other words, what problems are the postulation of *ālayavijñāna* designed to address? What questions do the Yogācārins ask themselves in conceptualizing *ālayavijñāna*? No concept arises out of a vacuum. All conceptual formulations are raised to address certain specific concerns of a cultural tradition at a particular historical juncture when facing particular challenges to particular audiences. Hence, instead of asking how much *ālayavijñāna* resembles the modern notion of the unconscious, efforts have been made (e.g., Schmithausen, Waldron 2003), to examine the kinds of questions the Yogācārins themselves are raising at the time of formulating *ālayavijñāna* and why they are raising such questions. As a consequence of this reorientation in interpreting *ālayavijñāna*, the following question is raised: Is the notion of *ālayavijñāna* adequate in addressing the challenges that it is formulated to answer? Obviously the questions raised at the second stage are an advance over the first because the former tries to study *ālayavijñāna* on its own terms, within its own context, instead of being framed as a response to questions raised by the concerns and interests of a modern interpreter.

However, even after studying *ālayavijñāna* in its own context, when scholars draw parallels with the modern notion of the unconscious, their efforts are still colored by the latter. That is, the modern notion of the unconscious remains the norm against which *ālayavijñāna* is measured, albeit implicitly in some cases. This marks the third stage in the Western encounter with *ālayavijñāna*. Hence, the following question tends to be raised: How much does *ālayavijñāna* resemble the Freudian and/or Jungian notions of the unconscious?² When dif-

ferences are found between the two, interpreters either try to minimize them through a reconfiguration of the theories involved or assume that *ālayavijñāna* represents a less advanced formulation in that it falls short of the modern notion of the unconscious because it does not account for certain common modern psychological phenomena (e.g., repression). Of course, scholars are generally careful not to pronounce the inadequacy of the Yogācāra formulation of *ālayavijñāna* when comparing it with the notion of the unconscious in modern psychology. Nevertheless, they spare no effort to make the storehouse consciousness look like the unconscious as much as possible. Let us take a look at William Waldron's comparative study in this connection.

Waldron's dissertation, "The *Ālayavijñāna* in the Context of Indian Buddhist Thought: The Yogācāra Conception of an Unconscious," is a fine piece of scholarship tracing the development of *ālayavijñāna* within the context of Indian Buddhism. As such, it can be deemed a continuation of Lambert Schmithausen's seminal work *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*. At the end of Waldron's dissertation, he compares *ālayavijñāna* with the modern notion of the unconscious.³ Despite his careful contextualization and meticulous argument, which generate many insightful observations, Waldron ultimately falls prey to his eagerness to make *ālayavijñāna* as akin to the notion of the unconscious in modern psychology as possible. Accordingly, the differences between the two are "based more upon the great gulf of divergent terminology than on overall design and conception and when the ideas behind their technical vocabularies are examined a bit the divergences, though still real, turn out to be considerably smaller than first appears" (1990, 438).⁴

Nowhere is Waldron's effort to make *ālayavijñāna* look like the modern notion of the unconscious more pronounced than in his endeavor to account for the lack of the conception of repression in the formulation of *ālayavijñāna*: "[I]n the Buddhist tradition there is nothing quite like the concept of repression. But there is an approach to it; it is 'homologizable'" (442). Waldron appeals to the general Buddhist teaching of the frustrating and ignorant nature of existence as a way to account for an implicit idea of repression in Yogācāra Buddhism. This is not to dispute the value of Waldron's effort to bring Yogācāra Buddhism and depth psychology together. However, the fact that he feels the need to justify the lack of an

explicit account of repression in the Buddhist theory of the subliminal consciousness points to an underlying frame of reference on Waldron's part that takes modern psychology as the norm against which the Yogācāra theory is measured. His effort to put forth *ālayavijñāna* as a viable formulation of the unconscious from a Buddhist perspective, admirable as it is, cannot escape the shadow of modern psychology in terms of how the discussion is framed. Hence, a new approach to engage *ālayavijñāna* and the unconscious is called for and that is what the present work will strive to do.

I propose that if we are to get out of the framework set by modern psychology in discussing *ālayavijñāna*, we need to change the way we question it. The new overarching question I am posing to *ālayavijñāna*, and to the unconscious, is this: What do the differences between *ālayavijñāna* and the unconscious tell us about the presuppositions of the modern psychological notion of the unconscious and the Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna*? Put differently, instead of using the modern notion of the unconscious as the norm to approach the Yogācāra Buddhist notion of *ālayavijñāna*, I use both concepts as mirrors to reflect each other. That is, I am not taking either the Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna* or the modern notion of the unconscious as the norm against which the other is measured. Rather, I switch between them so as to look at the modern notion of the unconscious from the Yogācāra Buddhist perspective and at *ālayavijñāna* from modern psychological perspectives represented by Freud and Jung. My purpose is not to reconcile the differences between them. Instead I use those very differences to expose certain taken-for-granted presuppositions of both that come to light using this approach. In this way, we will not supplant the earlier "Eurocentric" attitude to the study of the subliminal mind with an "Orientcentric" one.⁵

A New Context: Orientalism and Dialogue

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in the late 1970s, the asymmetrical power relationship in the dialogical discourse between the West and the East has been brought to the forefront of cross-cultural studies: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 2). It is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Said's powerful critique of the Western construc-

tion of the “Orient” in the West’s search for self-definition and the domination over the Orient reveals a deeply troubling condition—namely power and domination—underlying all academic discourses that involve the East and the West.

However, as J. J. Clarke points out, Said’s presentation of Orientalism, while potent and justified, is guilty of being too narrow and reductionistic (1997, 27). It does not offer a complete picture of Orientalism:

European hegemony over Asia represents a necessary but not a sufficient condition for orientalism. . . . Orientalism . . . cannot simply be identified with the ruling imperialistic ideology, for in the Western context it represents a counter-movement, a subversive entelechy, albeit not a unified or consciously organized one, which in various ways has often tended to subvert rather than to confirm the discursive structures of imperial power. (9)

Accordingly, Said’s picture of Orientalism reduces it to European hegemony alone without paying due attention to the other aspect of Orientalism that is subversive to the very imperial power Said critiques. Clarke argues for an alternative to Said’s picture of Orientalism, pointing out two affirmative Orientalist themes in the relationship between East and West:

The first theme is the search for parallels between Eastern and Western thought, leading to the postulation of a universal religion or philosophy underlying all cultural differences, which in turn can be linked to the concept of the oneness of mankind. The second theme concerns the critique of Western civilization, of its decadence and narrowness, and the mounting of a challenge to the uniqueness of the Christian message, of the belief in progress and in European superiority. The East has . . . provided the West with a mirror with which to scrutinise itself, an external point of reference with which to conduct its agonising obsession with self-examination and self-criticism. (1994, 36)

My book somewhat echoes the second theme in facilitating the self-examination and self-criticism of modern psychology through the lens provided by the Yogācāra Buddhist theory of the subliminal mind, *ālayavijñāna*, and vice versa. It focuses on how modern psychology and Yogācāra Buddhism can shed light on each other’s formulation of the subliminal mind. It will first discuss both the

Yogācāra concept of *ālayavijñāna* and the modern notion of the unconscious within their respective contexts. By bringing them together I will introduce a new context within which the idea of the subliminal mind can be discussed to reflect presuppositions, which are not so readily exposed if left to themselves and their own contexts.

My work is therefore a comparative study of Yogācāra Buddhism and modern psychology on their radically different formulations of the subliminal mind. On the Yogācāra side, I use seventh-century Chinese Yogācāra Buddhist Xuan Zang's formulation in his celebrated *Cheng Weishi Lun (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi-śāstra, The Treatise on the Establishment of the Doctrine of Consciousness-Only)*. I chose Xuan Zang because his treatment of *ālayavijñāna* has not yet been adequately studied in modern scholarship on the subject despite his prominence within the Buddhist tradition. One goal of this book is to make known Xuan Zang's contribution to the conceptualization of *ālayavijñāna*. On the side of modern psychology, I involve Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, both of whom are known as psychologists of the unconscious and whose works laid the foundation and continue to serve as sources of inspiration. As we shall see, the engagement between Buddhism and modern psychology on the formulation of the subliminal mind will produce refreshing insights into the well-critiqued notion of the unconscious within Western intellectual discourse.

I will start by asking the following questions: What is the context within which Yogācārins like Xuan Zang are working and, given that context, what issues are they concerned with in the conceptualization of *ālayavijñāna*? In other words, what kinds of questions does Xuan Zang himself raise? How well are these questions addressed theoretically in his deliberation of *ālayavijñāna*? The same questions will be asked of Freud and Jung: What is the context within which they are working, and, given that context, what issues do they address in their conceptualizations of the unconscious?

The next series of questions involves the new dialogical context into which I am bringing Xuan Zang, Freud, and Jung: Where does the modern notion of the unconscious, formulated by Freud and Jung, differ from the Yogācāra notion of the storehouse consciousness? Why are there such differences and how are they carried out in terms of the principles behind their formulations? This is the crucial stage of my inquiry. I will focus on the what, why, and how of the theories involved in the dialogue. Specifically, the what refers to the con-

tent of the theory, the why its objective, and the how its method. The overall assumption here is that these aspects, namely, the content, the objective, and the method, are interrelated and they all contribute to the merits as well as the limitations of a given theory. Through the new dialogical context, we will come to the realization that the modern notion of the subliminal mind vis-à-vis the unconscious is vastly different from the Yogācāra notion of the subliminal mind vis-à-vis *ālayavijñāna*. I will examine what those differences are in terms of their contents, why the differences exist in terms of their objectives, and how their methods of theorization contribute to their differences.

On a larger scale, this is an attempt to expose how philosophical arguments—broadly defined here—are constructed, refined, and defended within the context of different cultural orientations and how a new context of dialogical inquiry into these arguments can help to reveal such different paradigms with respect to their assumptions, insights, and limitations. Despite its increasing popularity, a comparative study of distinct conceptual systems across cultural boundaries is a risky endeavor because there is the danger of doing disservice to the systems involved; my project—a cross-cultural dialogue bringing together classical Yogācāra Buddhism and modern psychology—is by no means an exception in this regard. However, such a risk is worth taking because the motivation of most, if not all, scholarly approaches to a classical work is colored by modern perspectives and concerns in any case, irrespective of whether such perspectives or concerns are explicitly dealt with or not. It is therefore better to thematize these very factors coloring our approach to a classical work rather than simply leave them operative without any clear reflection on them.

My approach is different from the typical traditional comparative one that tends to postulate parallels and draw analogies between different theoretical frameworks across cultural boundaries. A unique feature of the approach I have adopted in this book “involves mediating Western philosophical concepts through Eastern ideas rather than, as has traditionally been the case, the other way around” (Clarke 1997, 125). In fact, such a mediation goes both ways in this work, namely mediating modern psychological concepts of the unconscious through the Yogācāra Buddhist notion of *ālayavijñāna* as well as the other way around.

In order to conduct this dialogical inquiry into different formu-

lations of the subliminal consciousness, I will treat the dialogue as a new context that brings them together. If the prevailing issue that drives the formulation of the subliminal mind within the original contexts is the truthfulness of such a concept, the issue that arises in the new dialogical context is reoriented toward probing into the perspective within which such a truth claim can be justified. It is my hope that this dialogical inquiry into the conception of the subliminal consciousness will shed new light on a notion that is well known in modern intellectual discourse as well as popular parlance. Since it was made known by Sigmund Freud in the early twentieth century, the notion of the unconscious has been thoroughly critiqued from perspectives of various disciplines within the Western intellectual world. What I am hoping to accomplish in this book is to investigate this seminal concept from the perspective of comparative thought by bringing it into a much broader context of intercultural dialogue. I will argue that many of the underpinnings of a key concept—in this case the subliminal mind—that operate within a given theoretical paradigm—here Yogācāra Buddhism and psychoanalysis, respectively—and the mode of reasoning by which it is conceptualized can be revealed by introducing it into a new context of cross-cultural comparative study and dialogue. To be more specific, my inquiry will show that the three theories have vastly different thematic contents formulated to address different audiences and their concerns. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how Xuan Zang, Freud, and Jung intend their theories to be used by thematizing different modes of access to the subliminal mind allowed in their systems, and I will argue that such a difference in these modes is due to the different roles the principles of transcendence and immanence play in the three conceptualizations of the subliminal mind.

Given the magnitude of the study, I have neither the ambition nor the ability to make this research exhaustive or definitive. Neither is it my intention to judge the validity of the theories involved. This inquiry is only meant to be a tentative step toward shedding light on the way our theoretical efforts are colored by interpretive objectives and the modes of reasoning we resort to, thus offering a new way to look at a well-critiqued notion, the unconscious. It is my position that the primary purpose of a comparative approach to philosophical systems across cultural, historical, and social boundaries is not to solve each other's problems, even though it does not necessarily preclude that. Rather, it is a powerful way to bring

awareness to certain implicit assumptions a theory makes and, therefore, to shed new light on that theory, however well known and thoroughly critiqued within an intellectual tradition it may be. I hope that the insights gained from a mutually challenging dialogue will help us become more aware of these presuppositions so that we may find ways to transcend their limitations without compromising the integrity and appeal of the original formulations or to move toward a possible future integration.

Summary of the Chapters

I begin with the Yogācāra Buddhist concept of *ālayavijñāna*. Chapter One examines the origination and the rationale of *ālayavijñāna* by spelling out certain key problematics in some of the pre-Yogācāra Buddhist discourse, whose solutions call for the postulation of a concept like *ālayavijñāna*. The Yogācārins are trying to deal with a set of problematics and doctrinal conflicts that their Buddhist predecessors are unable to solve, such as the conflicts between the doctrines of *karma* and *anātman*, between continuity and momentariness, between succession and causality. Yogācāra offers the most complex Buddhist examination of consciousness, employing analytical scrupulousness and encyclopedic inclusion of earlier Buddhist theories, in an effort to smooth out these doctrinal conflicts. However, as Buddhists, the Yogācārins' theoretical endeavors are circumscribed by the accepted doctrinal orthodoxies, the most important of which is the taboo on substantialization and reification. That is, they have to find ways to reconcile the above-mentioned doctrinal conflicts without resorting to any form of reification or substantialization, as prescribed by the Mahāyāna Buddhist principle of *śūnyāta*, or emptiness. They achieve this goal by postulating a subliminal layer of the mind, what is known as the storehouse consciousness, or *ālayavijñāna*, which is both momentary and continuous, and as such effectively accounts for continuity while avoiding the pitfall of reification.

Chapter Two offers a detailed analysis of *ālayavijñāna* in its more mature formulation as presented by Xuan Zang in his *Cheng Weishi Lun*. The conceptualization of *ālayavijñāna* lies at the very foundation of Yogācāra's demonstration of the possibility of Buddhist enlightenment. The issues covered are: What is the nature, structure, and function of *ālayavijñāna*? What is its relationship with other forms of consciousness in the traditional Buddhist discourse?

What is achieved in the Yogācāra postulation of the concept of *ālayavijñāna*?

In Chapter Three, I will deal with the context within which the notion of the unconscious is theorized by Freud and Jung, respectively, highlighting the connections as well as the distinctions between the two formulations. This is done with an eye on the subsequent dialogical inquiry of the three theories of the subliminal mind that is carried out in the next two chapters. Assuming that many readers already have some knowledge of Freud and Jung, my discussion of them will be less extensive compared with my treatment of *ālayavijñāna*.

The next two chapters are devoted to the discussion of the subliminal mind in the new context of dialogical and comparative discourse. My comparison will focus on three questions: what, why, and how. That is, what are the major differences between the three theories of the subliminal mind? Why are they different? How are such differences formulated? Chapter Four deals with the what and the why aspects of the comparative study. I will look at the three theories from the perspective of the individual and collective dimensions of the subliminal consciousness and the dynamics between these two dimensions within each theory itself. We will see that the differences between the three are, in large part, due to the fact that Xuan Zang, Freud, and Jung, in their respective formulations, are trying to accomplish vastly different objectives, appealing to very different audiences and their concerns. Three radically different pictures of what a human being is and/or should be, as implied by the three theories, will emerge.

Ultimately, my inquiry will lead to the question: What does the difference in the formulations of the subliminal mind tell us about a “typical” person reflected in modern psychological formulations in contrast with one reflected in the Yogācāra formulation? It will become clear to us that both are constructs, socially, historically, and culturally conditioned. That is, the theories of the subliminal mind, on the one hand, are conditioned by their contexts, while, on the other hand, they help to shape that very condition to a greater or lesser extent.

Chapter Five examines the “how” component of the comparative study. It deals with the question of how different modes of reasoning contribute to their differences. I will focus on the different modes of access to the subliminal consciousness that the three the-

ories allow within their frameworks. Xuan Zang allows a direct access to the subliminal consciousness whereas Freud and Jung only allow an indirect access. Such differences have to do, at least partially, with how they intend their theories to be used: Direct access to the storehouse consciousness is a necessary condition for a Buddhist practitioner to reach enlightenment according to Xuan Zang's Yogācāra theory; in contrast, the denial of direct access in Freud's and Jung's theories saves room for psychoanalysts in treating their patients. I will examine this from the perspective of the different roles played by the principles of transcendence and immanence and see how transcendence and immanence have greatly shaped the modes of access to the subliminal mind in the three theories.

I will conclude by reflecting on the emerging new world as the ultimate new context for our dialogical inquiry. Even though the cross-cultural dialogical discourse might have been dogged by Western power and domination, as Said has acutely observed, we need to be reminded that such an observation is itself the result of the ongoing Orientalist discourse Said has critiqued. Therefore, instead of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, we should be encouraged by the fact that the Orientalist discourse has promoted some mutual understanding between cultures as well as enhancing the self-understanding of a culture in the face of another while being mindful of the risk involved.