
Storehouse Consciousness and the Unconscious: A Comparative Study of Xuan Zang and Freud on the Subliminal Mind

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The postulation of storehouse consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*, is a major theoretical accomplishment of the Yogācāra School of Buddhism. It is formulated as a subliminal consciousness to account for our sense of self and the continuity of our experience without resorting to any form of reification, a taboo in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Its subliminal character has tempted some Buddhist scholars to compare it with the unconscious in modern psychoanalysis. However, *ālayavijñāna* was developed in a radically different cultural, historical, and philosophical milieu from the modern notion of the unconscious. Hence, before using the term *unconscious* to interpret *ālayavijñāna*, we should carefully investigate the two concepts and the larger theoretical paradigms within which they are respectively located. Through a comparative study this article addresses several fundamental differences between them and explores some possible reasons behind such differences by revealing certain basic operative presuppositions embedded in the two formulations of the subliminal consciousness.

THE YOGĀCĀRA SCHOOL OF Buddhism is distinguished within the Buddhist tradition by its meticulous analysis of consciousness because of its theoretical preoccupation with the possibility of awakening. It has produced an elaborate theoretical framework designed to demonstrate how the deluded consciousness of sentient beings can be transformed into the awakened consciousness of the Buddha. One of the major

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achievements of this school in the course of its theoretical pursuit is the postulation of the notion of storehouse consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*.¹ It is posited as a subliminal form of consciousness that grounds all other forms of consciousnesses. It provides the crucial continuity from delusion to awakening without resorting to any form of reification or substantialization. Because of the subliminal nature of *ālayavijñāna*, it is tempting to interpret it as the Buddhist equivalent of the unconscious known in western psychoanalysis. In fact, there are some Buddhist scholars who have resorted to the term *unconscious* in their discussions of *ālayavijñāna*, for example, Thomas Kochumuttom (137).² This article is aimed at comparing and contrasting these two concepts so as to examine the feasibility of using the concept of the unconscious to interpret *ālayavijñāna*.

Because the notion of the unconscious is closely associated with Freud, who made it widely known, I will try to engage Yogācāra with Freud in comparing and contrasting their conceptualizations of the subliminal consciousness. On the Yogācāra formulation of *ālayavijñāna*, I will use the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrim and translator Xuan Zang's explanation in his celebrated *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun (Vijñaptimātratāsiddhiśāstra: The Treatise on the Doctrine of Consciousness-Only)*. In the case of Freud, we will focus on his structural theory of the mind presented in his later works, such as *The Ego and the Id* (1960), *Civilization and Its Discontent* (1961a), and so on—here we will concern ourselves only with his structural system under which the earlier topographical system is subsumed.³ Given the magnitude of this study, I have neither the ambition nor the ability to make this article 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

¹ In this article I exempt myself from getting involved in the question of what Yogācāra is, for it will lead the article far astray. I am assuming that the postulation of storehouse consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*, is a Yogācāra contribution. Cf. Schmithausen: 1.

² William Waldron, in his dissertation, has produced a piece of solid scholarship in comparing *ālayavijñāna* with the concept of the unconscious developed by Freud and Jung. He has tried to show the similarities and the differences of the two concepts and, hence, the viability of *ālayavijñāna* as another formulation of the subliminal mentality. However, as meritorious and pioneering as it is in bringing the two together, his work does not deal with the different paradigms vis-à-vis personhood within which the two concepts emerge in the comparative study. I think the paradigms that situate the two theories need to be explicitly dealt with in a comparative study. Hence, my effort, which differs from Waldron's, is geared toward an understanding of the paradigms within which the two theories respectively emerge. I regard this as crucial in order to properly appreciate the integrity of the two theories.

³ The topographical system is laid out in his monumental work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, first published in late 1899 (see 1965), wherein the mind is stratified into unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The structural system represents a major shift in Freud's theoretical endeavor in the 1920s; it is best summarized in his last major theoretical work, *The Ego and the Id*, published in 1923 (see 1960), wherein the mind is structured into id, ego, and superego.

efforts are colored by the interpretive objectives we have in mind. The comparative nature of this inquiry also enables us to gain better insights into some of the operative presuppositions of the two well-known theories, for those operative presuppositions are hard to expose when the theories are left to themselves. I will do so by examining the theoretical paradigms within which the two concepts respectively emerge. I argue that the paradigms that are operative in the two theories are their understandings of what a human being is or should be, namely, personhood.

Personhood has two dimensions, individual and collective, and consequently the study will concentrate on how individuality—understood here as qualities that belong to an individual person—and collectivity are dealt with in the two theories of the subliminal consciousness and will explore possible reasons for the differences between them. At the core of this comparative study are these two questions: What kinds of individuality and collectivity are schematized in the two systems? What is the relationship between individuality and collectivity in the two theories? These two questions crystallize what kinds of human beings are thematized in the respective schemes. That is, the formulations of the two theories are based on two different pictures of what a human being is taken to be. They would therefore throw light on what Xuan Zang and Freud set out to accomplish in their formulations of the subliminal consciousness. Based on the comparative study, we will come to the conclusion that it is difficult, if not impossible, to use the notion of the unconscious as is commonly associated with modern psychoanalysis to interpret the Yogācāra formulation of *ālayavijñāna* because of the different paradigms operative in them.

INDIVIDUALITY

Let us begin with the question concerning individuality in the two theories of the subliminal consciousness. First, what kinds of individuality are schematized by them? For Xuan Zang, it is the sense of self;⁴ for Freud, it is ego.

The early Buddhist model of consciousness consists of five senses, namely, visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile, and the mind, whose objects are mental. The Yogācāra theory of consciousness significantly revises and expands this traditional model.⁵ What it has done is to

⁴ Here the term *self* is used in the most general sense.

⁵ Note: “Some *sūtras* say that there are six consciousnesses only. It should be understood that this is only an expedient way of expounding the truth to less qualified persons. Alternatively, the texts in question take into account only the six special *indriyas* or sense-organs upon which the six consciousnesses depend. In fact there are eight consciousnesses” (Xuan Zang: 337).

split the mind in the traditional model into two: *manovijñāna* and *manas*. *Manovijñāna* is called sense-centered consciousness, and it works in conjunction with the five senses. These six, namely, *manovijñāna* and the five senses, constitute one kind of consciousness that “perceives and discriminates between gross spheres of objects” (Xuan Zang: 97). This means that the objects of this group of consciousnesses are external objects. Any perception of external objects requires the copresence of “such factors as the act of attention (*manaskāra*) of *manovijñāna*, the sense-organs (*indriyas*) (whose attention is directed in accordance with *manovijñāna*), the external objects (*viśaya*) towards which this attention is directed” (Xuan Zang: 479). In other words, the role of *manovijñāna* is to direct the attention of sense organs toward their objects in order to produce *clear* perceptions of those objects. *Manovijñāna* also has a cogitative or deliberative function, but such a function is crude and unstable, and it might be interrupted in certain states.⁶ The uninterrupted mind is called *manas*, which “is associated with the view of substantial existence of *pudgalas* [personhood]” (Xuan Zang: 315). This means that *manas* is responsible for the genesis of the idea of personhood, the essence of a person. Its function is intellection and cogitation: “It is called ‘cogitation’ or ‘deliberation’ because it cogitates or deliberates at all times without interruption in contradistinction to the sixth consciousness (*manovijñāna*), which is subject to interruption” (Xuan Zang: 97). Compared with *manovijñāna*, *manas* is fine and subtle in its activities (Xuan Zang: 479). Hence, the delusion it generates, namely, the idea of personhood, is much more resistant to being transformed in order to reach enlightenment. *Manovijñāna* works with the five senses in cognizing external physical objects; *manas* works with another consciousness, which is for the first time postulated by Yogācāra, storehouse consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) or the eighth consciousness, and *manas* attaches itself to *ālayavijñāna* as the inner self (Xuan Zang: 105).

Storehouse consciousness is also known as ripening consciousness (*vipākavijñāna*) or root consciousness (*mūlavijñāna*): “[It] is the consciousness in which fruits (retribution) ripen at varying times. It is called ‘retribution,’ *vipāka*, or literally, the ‘varyingly maturing consciousness,’ because it possesses in abundance the nature that matures at varying times and in varying categories, that is to say, it is *vipāka* in the largest number of cases” (Xuan Zang: 97). It is clear that this consciousness is meant to account for the karmic retribution within the doctrinal boundary of

⁶ Xuan Zang (481–493) lists five states in which *manovijñāna* is lacking: birth among *asamijñidevas*, two meditation states (*asamijñisamāpatti* and *nirodhasamāpatti*), mindless stupor (*middha*), and unconsciousness (*mūrcchā*).

Buddhism, in that it stores karmic seeds till their fruition. This is a subtle and subliminal kind of consciousness whose activities surface only when conditions allow, that is, when karmic retribution is fulfilled. It is a completely different form of consciousness from those in the traditional model, in that the traditional forms of consciousness are strictly causal, meaning that they are object-dependent in their cognitive activities. *Ālayavijñāna*, by contrast, does not depend on any specific object, and it grounds the other seven consciousnesses, which include *manas* as one group and *manovijñāna* and the five senses as the other: “These three kinds of consciousness are all called ‘consciousnesses that are capable of transformation and manifestation’ (*pariṇāmi vijñāna*). The manifestation (*pariṇāma*) of consciousness is of two kinds: manifestation with respect to cause (*hetūpariṇāma*) and manifestation with respect to effect (fruit) (*phalaparīṇāma*)” (Xuan Zang: 97). The manifestation as cause refers to the seeds, *bīja*, stored in *ālayavijñāna*, and the manifestation as effect, to the eight consciousnesses. In other words, according to the Yogācāra theory, the eight consciousnesses are given birth to by the seeds.

Bīja refers to the dispositional tendencies resulting from previous experiences. It is also called habit energy or perfuming energy (*vāsanā*), and Xuan Zang lists three kinds of *vāsanā*, namely, “image (*nimitta*), name (*nāma*), and discriminating influence (*vikalpavāsanā*)” (137). *Nimitta* and *vikalpavāsanā* refer to the objective and subjective poles of our cognitive activities, respectively, thus pointing to the inherently dualistic structure of our cognitive activities. *Nāma* refers to the linguistic activities that involve naming and conceptualizing.⁷ Xuan Zang (581) sums them up in explaining seeds as the potential proceeding from the two apprehensions, *grahas*, and the potential producing the two *grahas*. The two *grahas* refer to the two aspects of the discriminatory function of the mind, the grasping (*grahaka*) and the grasped (*grahya*). This means that all of our conscious activities, be they perceptual, conceptual, or linguistic, share the same dualistic structure, the grasping and the grasped. Such a discriminatory function of our mental activities is that which produces *bījas*, and the *bījas* thus produced also perpetuate this discriminatory function, dragging us back into the realm of transmigration. Therefore, we find *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* declaring that “the wheel of *saṃsāra* turns by virtue of deeds and the two *grahas*; there is nothing here that is separable from

⁷ *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* lists two kinds of *nāma*: “(1) That which expresses the meaning and makes it known to others; a certain kind of vocal sound that is capable of indicating the meaning. (2) That which reveals or causes the object to be present, that is, the *cittas-caittas* which perceive the object” (Xuan Zang: 583). Xuan Zang is very brief in his explanation and does not give any rationale as to why linguistic activity is singled out in the formulation of the seed theory.

consciousness (*cittas-caittas*), because the cause and the effect are, in their essential nature, *cittas-caittas*” (Xuan Zang; 583). In this way the realm of transmigration, that is, the karmic world, is encapsulated by consciousness rooted in *ālayavijñāna*.

According to *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun*, *ālayavijñāna* has three aspects: the perceiving (*darśanabhāga*), the perceived (*nimittabhāga*), and the self-corroboratory (*svasaṃvittibhāga*) divisions, which are manifested as the external receptacle world, on the one hand, and the internal sense organs possessed by the body, on the other (Xuan Zang; 141). It is the perceiving aspect, *darśanabhāga*, of the eighth consciousness that *manas* takes as its object and misidentifies as the self, but *darśanabhāga* is a homogeneous continuum even though it appears as eternal and one (Xuan Zang; 283).

In order to establish that *ālayavijñāna* is not a substratum of some sort, *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* makes its activities abide by the rule of dependent origination: “To be neither impermanent nor permanent: this is the ‘principle of conditional causation or dependent origination’ (*pratītyasamutpāda*). That is why it is said that this consciousness is in perpetual evolution like a torrent” (Xuan Zang; 173). It is not permanent, in the sense that it is itself an activity, not a substance; it is not impermanent, in the sense that the activity is a continuous and uninterrupted process. Obviously, Xuan Zang reinterprets the early Buddhist principle of dependent origination governing the empirical world as the law regulating the activities of consciousness. In this way he proves that *ālayavijñāna* is not some permanent dwelling place for *bījas* or permanent ground for our experiences but, rather, is itself a continuum of activities.

In delusion, sentient beings misconstrue *ālayavijñāna* as a substance, namely, the substantive self, whereas it is only a continuum of activities. In this way the orthodox Buddhist doctrine of no self, *anātman*, is upheld. That is, through the postulation of *ālayavijñāna*, the Yogācāra Buddhists can explain away the substance of the self and substitute for it the continuity of *ālayavijñāna*. The positing of *ālayavijñāna* is a Yogācāra attempt to explain continuity without substance. Indeed, it can be argued that prior to the postulation of *ālayavijñāna*, the Buddhists did not really have a convincing explanation of the apparent sense of a self we possess. We can clearly see the significance of *ālayavijñāna* in the Yogācāra system, given the “signature” doctrine of *anātman* in Buddhism.

To analyze self *qua* substance into the continuum of *ālayavijñāna* indicates that Xuan Zang shares with Freud (1960: 18) the view that individuality, or ego in Freud’s terminology, is closely related to subliminal mental activities. In Freud’s structural system the human mind is structured into three realms, namely, id, ego, and superego, and this is a revision of his earlier topographical system, which stratifies mental activities into

unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The reason for such a revision does not have an immediate relevance to the current comparative study, hence, we will not go into it here.⁸ According to Freud, ego is a mental entity that “starts out . . . from the system *Pcpt.* [perception], which is its nucleus, and begins by embracing the *Pcs.* [preconscious], which is adjacent to the mnemonic residues” (1960: 16). Clearly, ego is intimately associated with the cognitive activities of the mind, which is externally oriented.

However, the ego is also intricately connected with the unconscious id:

It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the *Pcpt.-Cs.*; in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation. Moreover, the ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. (Freud 1960: 18–19)

The claim that the ego is part of the id is not only to emphasize the continuity between id and ego but also to claim that the ego grows out of the id or that the id is the ground of the ego. This marks a fundamental shift in Freud’s conceptualization of the unconscious. In his earlier topographical system the unconscious is deemed an epiphenomenon of consciousness, for the genesis of the former is the result of the repressive function of the latter. However, to view the ego as an entity that grows out of the id means that the unconscious (the id here) is more than what was previously conscious and that the unconscious is not just the result of repression, forgetting, and neglecting, which are ego-centered activities.

Given their intricate connection, what, then, accounts for the difference between the ego and the id? According to Freud, “what distinguishes the ego from the id quite especially is a tendency to synthesis in its contents, to a combination and unification in its mental processes which are totally lacking in the id” (1964: 95). The ego’s synthetic function is what brings about order and structure in consciousness. The most fundamental orders and structures are temporality and spatiality, both of which are forms of perception that are crucial in the birth of the ego, according to Freud. The synthetic function of the ego means that the ego is an organized and coherent substructure within the mind. This is what Freud (1960: 19)

⁸ Very briefly, according to Freud himself, his unhappiness with the topographical system was twofold: the ambiguity of the word *unconscious* and two new clinical discoveries—unconscious ego resistance and an unconscious need for punishment (Macmillan: 440).

means when he says that the ego follows the reality principle. By contrast, the id, ruled by instincts, follows the pleasure principle (Freud 1960: 19).

However, the similarity between Xuan Zang's and Freud's understandings of individuality is limited to the fact that in both systems the origin of individuality lies in subliminal mental activity. Significant differences remain. According to Freud, subliminal mental activity is chaotic, requiring that order be imposed from without, by the external world, which results in the birth of the ego. So, for Freud, the ego, despite its origin in the unconscious, is the result of the contact between the internal id and the external world. The influence of the external world is decisive in the genesis of the ego. Hence, it is the imposition of structures on the chaotic unconscious process by the external world that is determinative in the birth of the ego. Therefore, in Freud's formulation the conception of individuality or personal identity follows the reality principle. For Xuan Zang, however, subliminal mental activity is, rather, an orderly process. It is ordered succession or continuity, regulated by the law of dependent origination. Such a continuum of storehouse consciousness is mistaken and attached to by *manas* as the inner self. Henceforth, the conception of individuality or personal identity follows the principle of continuity in Xuan Zang's formulation.

To sum up, for Xuan Zang the self is nothing but the continuum of *ālayavijñāna*, misidentified by *manas* as substance; for Freud, however, the ego is fundamentally different from the unconscious id. For Xuan Zang, self *qua* substance is the result of misidentification, but for Freud, ego is the result of the modification of the unconscious id because of the decisive influence of the external world. Put differently, for Xuan Zang, personal identity, if there is to be one, is *ālayavijñāna*, the subliminal consciousness—*manas* is not the self, but it mistakes *ālayavijñāna* as the self *qua* substance; whereas for Freud, personal identity is not the unconscious *per se* but, in fact, its modification by the external world. It should be clear to us by now that the individual/personal dimension of personhood schematized in Xuan Zang's theory of the subliminal consciousness is vastly different from that in Freud's. After our discussion of this individual aspect of personhood, let us now turn to the other, collective aspect, and we will start with Freud.

COLLECTIVITY

Before dealing with Freud's conceptualization of collectivity in his theory of the unconscious, I need to clarify one common mischaracterization of Freud's theory:

A study of the theory of repression as developed by Freud should make it abundantly clear that Jung's repeated statement reducing Freud's repressed-unconscious to nothing other than "a subliminal appendix to the conscious mind" did not do justice to the theoretical concepts of Freud. Jung's remark that the unconscious as described by Freud represented "nothing but the gathering place of forgotten and repressed contents" likewise was not quite fair to Freud's basic concept. (Frey-Rohn: 120)

It is therefore misleading to equate Freud's unconscious with Jung's personal unconscious, which is a reservoir of the forgotten and repressed contents of an individual. Freud's concept of superego, being unconscious, is essentially collective. The conceptualization of the superego in Freud's structural system is a radical shift from his earlier topographical system, in that the superego represents a heightened awareness on Freud's part of the role of the collective in an individual's mental life. Let us have a closer look at Freud's conceptualization of the collective dimension of the unconscious.

What kind of collectivity is schematized in the formulation of the superego? In this connection, we are told that the formation of the superego is the result of the internalization of parental authority into the psyche. When the external restraint is internalized, "the super-ego takes the place of the parental agency and observes, directs and threatens the ego in exactly the same way as earlier the parents did with the child" (Freud 1964: 77). Moreover, we are also told that "a child's super-ego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents but of its parents' super-ego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the *vehicle of tradition* and of all the time-resisting judgements of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation" (Freud 1964: 84, emphasis added). Here Freud is explicit about what kind of collectivity the superego represents; it is the vehicle of tradition. *Tradition* in this context mainly refers to the moral values of a society and culture that are the achievement of human civilization.

As Freud sees it, there is an inherent conflict between the individual and the collective. The individual, driven by pleasure-seeking instinct, always finds him- or herself at odds with the social values that put a check on the pursuit of instinctual gratification. As Freud puts it bluntly, "Every individual is virtually an enemy of civilization" (1961b: 6) because of the instinctual renunciation that civilization demands of a person. As a child, such a demand is issued by the parental authority, especially in the face of the powerful Oedipus complex. The internalization of the parental authority into the psyche as the superego is the product of civilization. That is, civilization "obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire

for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city” (Freud 1961a: 84).

As the vehicle of tradition, the superego contains the germ of all religions (Freud 1960: 33)—it is needless to point out that what Freud had in mind are the Judeo-Christian religions: “Religion, morality, and a social sense—the chief elements in the higher side of man—were originally one and the same thing. . . . [T]hey were acquired phylogenetically out of the father-complex: religion and moral restraint through the process of mastering the Oedipus complex itself, and social feeling through the necessity for overcoming the rivalry that then remained between the members of the younger generation” (1961a: 33–34). Freud is making a crucial observation here. That is, the higher forms of human spirituality, namely, religion and morality, originate from the father complex in the mastery of the Oedipus complex. This means that spirituality is the achievement of the collective unconscious of our psyche epitomized in the formation of the superego. In other words, human spirituality, represented by the superego, is a later acquisition in life, as the result of the internalization of an external authority, despite Freud’s (1964: 77) claim of spirituality being within us. This is tantamount to saying that spirituality is forced on an individual from the outside. That is why, in his critique of Freud, Jung points out that for Freud the spiritual principle appears “only as an appendage, a by-product of the instincts” (55) and is therefore the source of restraint and suppression that works against an individual. As Freud sees it, human beings fail to recognize the true nature of religious ideas, the highest form of human spirituality, which just like all of the other achievements of civilization arise “from the necessity of defending oneself against the crushingly superior force of nature” (1961b: 26–27). Hence, Freud claims that religious ideas

are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes. As we already know, the terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection—for protection through love—which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. (1961b: 38)

Freud immediately clarifies what he means by illusion. He makes a distinction between illusions and delusions: “What is characteristic of illusions is that they are derived from human wishes. In this respect they come near to psychiatric delusions. But they differ from them, too, apart

from the more complicated structure of delusions. In the case of delusions, we emphasize as essential their being in contradiction with reality. Illusions need not necessarily be false—that is to say, unrealizable or in contradiction to reality” (1961b: 39). Put simply, even though both are expressions of human wishes, illusions are more collective, whereas delusions are more private. To claim that religious ideas are illusions is not the same as saying that they are wrong or in contradiction with reality. Delusions, on the other hand, are contradictory to reality.⁹ Nevertheless, Freud still maintains the view that religious ideas are illusory fulfillment of human wishes. They have their origins in the infantile longing for fatherly protection.

In a word, Freud’s view of human spirituality, epitomized in his formulation of the collective unconscious—the superego—can be summarized in three aspects: it is derived from the sexual instinct, is acquired through the internalization of a protective and prohibitive external authority, and is essentially illusory, in that it represents the collective wish fulfillments of humanity. For Freud, a human being is primarily a sexual being, and spirituality is secondary. This is in sharp contrast to Xuan Zang.

There are three kinds of collectivity that Xuan Zang thematizes in *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun*: the physical world, other people’s bodies, and people’s minds. However, where does the spiritual dimension fit into Xuan Zang’s theory of *ālayavijñāna*, for, after all, the Yogācārinś are concerned, more than anything else, with the possibility of Buddhist awakening (*nirvāṇa*)? In light of our discussion of spirituality in Freud, one question naturally arises: Is Buddhist awakening addressed by Xuan Zang’s theory of individuality or by his theory of collectivity? Let us make a closer examination of Xuan Zang’s treatment of spiritual transformation in Yogācāra Buddhism.

The spiritual transformation in Yogācāra Buddhism is called *āśraya-parāvṛtti*. *Āśraya* means “ground” or “basis,” and *parāvṛtti* means “revolving” or “transformation.” Hence, the word as a whole means “the basis on which one relies, revolves, and turns into a different basis (or non-basis); the ground itself on which one stands, overturns, revealing a new world, illuminated by a new light” (Nagao: 115). This basis that needs to be transformed is *ālayavijñāna*, as Xuan Zang points out that the *āśraya* is that “which bears the *bījas*, i.e., the *mūlavijñāna* or the eighth consciousness, because it bears the *bījas* of defiled and pure *dharma*s and because, being always present, it is the supporting basis for defiled and pure *dharma*s” (755).

⁹ James DiCenso observes, “The psychoanalytic distinction between *illusion* and *delusion* is crucial, yet it is one that Freud does not consistently maintain. This inconsistency also reflects differentiations with Freud’s object of inquiry; that is, religion actually falls into both categories. Thus Freud notes that religious forms often lapse into the realm of delusion. Religious statements concerning reality sometimes contradict what has been collectively and empirically established to be the case, especially by the culturally dominant methods and paradigms of science” (33–34).

Parāvṛtti “connotes a ‘rolling towards,’ a becoming intent upon, a reaching for, a happening or occurrence that will lead to a tendency, that will take on a projectorial trait” (Lusthaus: 306). This means that *āśraya-parāvṛtti* is the transformation of storehouse consciousness in reaching a goal, namely, *nirvāṇa* in the Buddhist context. Or, to use Akiko Osaki’s words: “The *āśraya-parāvṛtti* is the turning-up of one’s basis; namely, it is the conversion of the *ālayavijñāna* which stores all seeds” (1067).

For Xuan Zang, there are two kinds of psychic activities: *parāvṛtti* and *pariṇāma*. *Parāvṛtti* is a psychic activity geared toward awakening, but *pariṇāma* refers to the intrapsychic dynamics involving the eight consciousnesses in the Yogācāra scheme, and it “implies an aporia, a movement unsure of its direction” (Lusthaus: 306). What, then, makes it possible for the *pariṇāma* activity of the psyche, which characterizes our everyday mode, to be reoriented toward the *parāvṛtti* activity in order for the spiritual transformation to take place? According to Xuan Zang, two conditions are required in this regard—the pure *bījas* and the perfuming of the pure *bījas* by the pure *dharmas*, which allows for the pure *bījas* to increase: “The pure *dharmas* which are born when he [the ascetic] has entered the Path of Insight into Transcendent Truth have these *bījas* as their cause. These pure *dharmas* perfume in turn and thus produce new pure *bījas*” (121). The pure *bījas* are the seeds of *nirvāṇa*, and the pure *dharmas* mean the Buddha’s teachings directly preached by the Buddha himself. As a supramundane reality, *nirvāṇa* cannot be contained in this world. Being unconditioned, it cannot be supported by the eighth consciousness. But Xuan Zang has to bring it into this mundane world in order for it to be reachable by deluded sentient beings. Hence, we find him (191) claiming that *ālayavijñāna* contains the seeds of awakening but not awakening itself. The pure seeds alone do not constitute a sufficient condition to achieve *nirvāṇa* because they still require the pure *dharmas*’ perfuming for their growth.

In order to establish the theoretical possibility of achieving *nirvāṇa* by way of increasing the pure seeds through perfuming, Xuan Zang has to postulate the inborn pure seeds carried in *ālayavijñāna*.¹⁰ If the *bījas* of pure *dharmas*—only the pure *bījas* are of concern here—were not inborn, then there would be no pure *bījas*, for the pure cannot be born out of the impure by the perfuming, thus rendering it impossible to achieve *nirvāṇa*.¹¹

¹⁰ However, there seems to be an implicit presupposition under this assertion, i.e., the pure *bījas* will never be destroyed by any power, whereas the defiled ones will be destroyed by the power of pure *dharmas*. This is necessary in order to accommodate the possibility of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

¹¹ One of the characteristics of the *bījas* is that they must belong to a definite moral species. Therefore, it rules out the possibility that a cause of one species can engender a fruit of another species (Xuan Zang: 127).

The other indispensable aspect that makes *āśraya-parāvṛtti* possible is the perfuming of the pure *bījas* by pure *dharmas*. The rationale is based on the stipulation that *bījas* depend on a group of conditions in order to actualize their capacity to produce an actual *dharma* (Xuan Zang: 127–129). In other words, without proper conditions, the pure *bījas* cannot by themselves engender their fruit of *nirvāṇa*. In *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* it is the pure *śrutavāsanā*, the hearing of Buddha's teaching, that "perfumes" the pure *bījas* to grow: "When the ascetic listens to the Good Law [True *Dharma*], the innate pure *bījas* are perfumed in such a way that they increase and develop progressively until they engender a mind of supramundane order" (Xuan Zang: 123). The True *Dharma* here refers to "the efflux of the pure *dharmadhātu*" (Xuan Zang: 115) that is heard by the ascetic in meditation.¹²

Two different kinds of teaching are presented in *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun*: impure and pure (Xuan Zang: 123). Rujun Wu interprets the former as the good advice or instruction of any ordinary teachers or even of the vast majority of unenlightened Buddhist monks and nuns because of the fact that their knowledge is not grounded in enlightenment. The latter refers to the direct preaching of the Buddha, the enlightened one (Wu: 55–57). The former, being defiled in nature, is not able to perfume the pure *bījas* of the practitioner, whereas the latter, being pure, has such a capacity.¹³ This suggests that there is a transference of the Buddha's power to the listener when she or he hears the preaching of the Buddha directly. Accordingly, listening to the True *Dharma*, which is the Buddha's direct teaching, is far more than mere listening, for, according to Buddhism, it can drastically facilitate the spiritual transformation of the listener by increasing his or her pure *bījas*.¹⁴

¹² Wei Tat, in his translation of *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun*, defines this pure *dharmadhātu* as "free from the impurities of *klesāvāṇa* and *jñeyavāṇa*; the true and non-erroneous nature of all *dharmas*; the cause which brings to birth, nourishes and supports the *āryadharmas*; the true nature of all *Tathāgatas*; pure in itself from the beginningless past; possessed of diverse qualities more numerous than the atoms of the universes of the ten regions; without birth or destruction, like space; penetrating all *dharmas* and all beings; neither identical with *dharmas*, nor different from them; neither *bhava* nor *abhava*; free from all distinguishing marks, conceptions, cogitation; which is only realized by the pure *āryajñāna*; having as its nature the *tathatā* which the two voids reveal; which the *āryas* realize partially; which the Buddhas realize completely; that is what is called the pure *dharmadhātu*" (in Xuan Zang: 783–785).

¹³ Here the direct preaching of the Buddha from the pure *dharmadhātu* has a "mystical" element to it because it cannot refer to the teaching of the historical Buddha.

¹⁴ As Paul Williams points out with regard to the production of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, which were claimed to be the words of the Buddha himself, "In some cases the followers may have felt themselves in direct contact with a Buddha who inspired them in meditation or in dreams" (33). As a result, all the Mahāyāna *sūtras* have been traditionally attributed to the Buddha himself. The theme of listening to the Buddha's direct teaching in meditation becomes especially important in esoteric Buddhism.

With the necessary and sufficient conditions, namely, inborn pure *bījas* and the increase of those pure *bījas* through the perfuming of the True *Dharma* preached by the Buddha himself, the possibility of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* has thus been established. Achieving *āśraya-parāvṛtti* is a gradual progression, and *Cheng Wei-Shi Lun* schematizes five stages. Because the actual process of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* does not have a direct bearing on this comparative study, I will leave it out here.

What is striking about Xuan Zang's theory of spirituality is that it is not located in the collective dimension of the psyche, as it is for Freud. Rather, it is schematized as that which transcends the mental realm, even though the possibility of achieving spiritual transformation vis-à-vis pure seeds is retained in the collective dimension of *ālayavijñāna*. This means that for the Yogācārins there is a path toward awakening, even though awakening itself is beyond the realm of the deluded mind, personal and collective.

Xuan Zang's positing of the inborn pure seeds, the necessary condition of *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, is indicative of his endorsement of the view that there is an inherent tendency of a human being toward spiritual transformation. In other words, the Buddhist spiritual transformation is not something that is imposed on a practitioner from without, as is the case in Freud's formulation. However, for Xuan Zang that tendency alone does not lead to spiritual transformation, in the Buddhist sense of the term. This means that spiritual transformation is by no means an automatic and natural process of life, as it requires both rigorous cultivation on the part of the practitioner and crucial assistance from an enlightened being. In a word, for Xuan Zang, spiritual transformation is an inherent possibility because of the existence of the inborn pure seeds that render spiritual transformation possible; for Freud, it is a forced necessity because it is necessary for human beings' very survival in society, even though it is against the wishes of the pleasure-seeking id.¹⁵

Let me sum up our discussion so far on individuality and collectivity schematized in the two theories. On the issue of individuality, we have

¹⁵ It can also be argued that for Freud spirituality is an inherent possibility in order for it to happen at all, and for Xuan Zang it is a forced necessity because it is not a natural course of human development. But this does not appear to be the way Xuan Zang and Freud theorize spirituality in their respective system. In other words, they have different concerns in their theorizations of spirituality: Freud emphasizes the aspect of it being forced on individuals—hence, civilization is deemed the enemy of individuals—whereas Xuan Zang stresses the aspect of its inherent possibility because of the religious orientation of his theory. Furthermore, Freud puts emphasis on the necessity of spiritual transformation simply because it is a necessary condition for our very survival in the social world, and Xuan Zang only talks about its possibility because, for him, spiritual transformation, in the Buddhist sense of the term, is not a necessary condition for everyday human living.

seen that in Xuan Zang's system, it is primarily the self resulting from the attachment of *manas* to the ever changing but homogeneous *ālayavijñāna*; in Freud's case, it is the ego, the genesis of which is the modification of the id by the external world. On the issue of collectivity, we have seen that in Xuan Zang's system it includes the receptacle physical world, other people's bodies, and other people's minds and that spirituality is not included in the collective dimension of the psyche, although its seeds are. In Freud's case, it is the superego, which represents tradition and moral values internalized in the course of the socialization of a human being.

Now that we have carried out a preliminary comparison of Xuan Zang's and Freud's theories of the subliminal consciousness with a focus on how individuality, collectivity, and their relationship are schematized in these two theories, one question is still left unanswered: Why are there such fundamental differences in these two formulations of the subliminal consciousness? Although there are many possible answers to this question, it is my observation that one of the major reasons for the differences lies in the fact that the objectives the two theories set out to accomplish and their assumptions of what a human being is are different. We now turn to these objectives and the underlying assumptions of the two theories.

PERSONHOOD: TWO PREMISES, TWO PARADIGMS

What are the objectives that Xuan Zang and Freud set out to achieve in their formulations of the subliminal consciousness? Let us look at this issue from the perspectives of individuality and collectivity in the two theories as outlined above.

On the issue of individuality or personal identity, Xuan Zang, as an orthodox Buddhist, has to defend the Buddhist notion of *anātman*, no self, against the Brahmanical notion of *ātman*, self. In other words, Xuan Zang's analysis of the self is, on the one hand, for the purpose of rejecting the substantive understanding of *ātman* as an obstacle to reaching *nirvāṇa* through meditative practices prescribed by the Yogācārins; meanwhile, on the other hand, it explains the reason for our having the sense of self. Consequently, continuity, following the rule of dependent origination, becomes crucial in Xuan Zang's conceptualization of *ālayavijñāna*, for continuity is misidentifiable as substance and, therefore, can be used both to dispute a substantive interpretation of the self and to explain such a misunderstanding as the result of misidentification. Hence, continuity becomes the principle of the subliminal

consciousness in Xuan Zang's theory. Accordingly, *manas*, whose attachment to *ālayavijñāna* gives rise to the sense of a substantive self, is characterized by four afflictions (*kleśa*): self-delusion or *ātman* ignorance, self-belief, self-conceit, and self-love (Xuan Zang: 289), all of which point to the delusory nature of such a substantive self. But there is no sense of chaos in this formulation of *ālayavijñāna*. Rather, the subliminal consciousness in Xuan Zang's theory is an orderly process, governed by the law of dependent origination. *Manas* does not impose any order on *ālayavijñāna* but, rather, only attaches to it. As a result, there is no sense of conflict—as is prominent in Freud's formulation—between *manas* and *ālayavijñāna* in the genesis of the self in Xuan Zang's theory.

The orderly subliminal process of *ālayavijñāna* is in sharp contrast to Freud's version of the unconscious, which is chaotic, pleasure seeking, or suppressive. Freud's analysis of the ego is meant to find ways to fortify the poor ego against the assault of the unconscious world—be it the superego or the id—in addition to the external world; in doing so he sought to help his patients—mainly those who suffered from neurosis—restore and maintain sanity.¹⁶ Put differently, in Freud's case the unconscious—the chaotic id and the suppressive superego—is the culprit in human insanity, and the strengthening of the ego is essential to restore the psychic order in psychoanalytic practices. The issue of it being substantive or not does not arise at all in the context of psychoanalysis. For Xuan Zang, however, the attachment to a substantive self, *ātman*, is the hurdle that needs to be overcome through rigorous meditative

¹⁶ According to Britannica Online: "Neuroses are characterized by anxiety, depression, or other feelings of unhappiness or distress that are out of proportion to the circumstances of a person's life. They may impair a person's functioning in virtually any area of his life, relationships, or external affairs, but they are not severe enough to incapacitate the person. Neurotic patients generally do not suffer from the loss of the sense of reality seen in persons with psychoses. An influential view held by the psychoanalytic tradition is that neuroses arise from intrapsychic conflict (conflict between different drives, impulses, and motives held within various components of the mind). Central to psychoanalytic theory, which is based on the work of Sigmund Freud, is the postulated existence of an unconscious part of the mind which, among other functions, acts as a repository for repressed thoughts, feelings, and memories that are disturbing or otherwise unacceptable to the conscious mind. These repressed mental contents are typically sexual or aggressive urges or painful memories of an emotional loss or an unsatisfied longing dating from childhood. Anxiety arises when these unacceptable and repressed drives threaten to enter consciousness; prompted by anxiety, the conscious part of the mind (the ego) tries to deflect the emergence into consciousness of the repressed mental contents through the use of defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, or reaction formation. Neurotic symptoms often begin when a previously impermeable defense mechanism breaks down and a forbidden drive or impulse threatens to enter consciousness."

practices in order to reach awakening.¹⁷ The sense of an intense struggle of the ego we see in Freud's theory is completely missing in Xuan Zang's formulation. There is, instead, only attachment.

On the issue of collectivity, we have found that different kinds of collectivity are schematized in the two theories. As noted, Xuan Zang thematizes the external world, other people's bodies, and other people's minds; Freud thematizes the superego as the vehicle of tradition, including morality and religion. The differences in the kinds of collectivity that are schematized by the two are striking. In Xuan Zang's theory, the social, historical, and cultural aspect of the collective is nowhere to be found, whereas it looms large in Freud's theory. There are various possible explanations for such a difference between the two, one of which could be the very development of our theoretical effort in thematizing history, society, and culture in the history of philosophy.¹⁸ However, I would like to suggest that such a conspicuous missing element in Xuan Zang's theory of the subliminal consciousness can also be explained in terms of the objective of his theory, namely, to account for the possibility of awakening. A practitioner's meditative practice is regarded as essential, and the meditative experience is largely individualistic, so that history, society, and culture are not directly involved. In fact, to achieve awakening is to transcend the very conditionality of history, society, and culture, even though it can also be argued that the very possibility of such

¹⁷ Their different concerns also shape the way the body is schematized in regard to the ego. For Freud, "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface" (1960: 20). The primary importance of body in the scheme of an ego for Freud is caused by the dual nature of the body: it is both internal and external; it is where the internal comes in contact with the external. Xuan Zang shares Freud's view that the body has a dual nature, internal and external or personal and collective. The collective nature of the body is the result of the manifestation of the common seeds as the bodily basis of other people (Xuan Zang: 149). As to its personal nature, it is the bodily sense of self that arises out of the attachment of the sixth consciousness's attachment to the five aggregates—form/body, sensation, perception, volition, and consciousness (Xuan Zang: 21). For Xuan Zang, the bodily self is an interrupted self, and it is not as tenacious as the one that is born of *manas*'s attachment to storehouse consciousness. Xuan Zang's view is justified if we take into consideration the self in a dream, wherein the body is not directly involved, or the dreamless state, wherein the self does not appear at all. In the Yogācāra scheme dreams are a higher reality than the physical world. This is evident in the way the self is argued against. The self that is involved in the physical world is one that is subject to interruption—e.g., by a dream state. The highest sense of self is encountered in the dreamless state wherein the self that appears in a dream also disappears. Of course, for the Buddhists, even this highest sense of self is an illusion. Simply put, for Freud the concern in schematizing the body with regard to the ego is the issue of internality/externality, whereas for Xuan Zang it is the issue of continuity.

¹⁸ As J. N. Mohanty notes, "While the question of why the Indian thinkers were indifferent to history remains, one must, while doing comparative philosophy, also keep in mind that Western thought came to take history seriously only in modern times (despite the nascent historicity of Judaeo-Christian self-understanding)" (188). The observation is also applicable to Xuan Zang, for his theory is largely based on his Indian predecessors' work.

a meditative practice lies in a specific historical, social, and cultural ambiance. Nevertheless, this ambiance remains unthematized in Xuan Zang's theory.

For Freud, collectivity, as the vehicle of tradition, and individuality exist in a rather hostile relationship. This is because Freud, in locating the problem of the forced renunciation of an individual's sexual instincts in the collective, was trying to help his psychologically disturbed patients cope with the stifling challenges posed by the collective. Because for Freud collectivity is the source of both spirituality and suppression, spirituality takes on a suppressive character, being imposed from without and resulting in sexual frustration. This explains Freud's observation that the superego "seems to have made a one-sided choice and to have picked out only the parents' strictness and severity, their prohibiting and punitive function, whereas their loving care seems not to have been taken over and maintained" (1964: 78). Because the collective is deemed antagonistic to an individual, the spirituality that is located within the collective can only be strict and severe in the eyes of the individual.

It is conceivable that Freud in his theoretical endeavor proceeded from collectivity to spirituality. This leads to the confusion in his theory, for the two dimensions are not clearly differentiated: where spirituality and collectivity coincide and where they part. Xuan Zang's idea to differentiate spirituality from collectivity, on the one hand, and to place the seeds of spirituality in collectivity, on the other, offers one possible way to avoid the confusion we see in Freud's theory of subliminal consciousness.

There are two common denominators in the two theories of the subliminal consciousness, namely, that consciousness, in the narrow sense of the word, is not the totality of the psychic world and that the genesis of personal identity lies in the subliminal realm. However, their differences are unmistakable, and in my judgment they significantly outweigh their similarities. Clearly, two kinds of persons are schematized in the two theories. In Xuan Zang's theorization we see a lone meditator engrossed in rigorous practice to achieve awakening, and in Freud we find a desperate fighter trying to survive in an antagonistic social environment. Underlying such differences are two different premises about what a human being is and should be. That is, for Xuan Zang, a human being is a deluded being, and the way out of such a delusion is through meditative practices prescribed by the Yogācāra teachings; for Freud, a human being is essentially a sexual being who is trying to be spiritual in order to survive in society. Consequently, for Xuan Zang, as an orthodox Buddhist, sexual desires contribute to and perpetuate the delusory human existence—Xuan Zang does not make a clear distinction between

delusion and illusion the way Freud does—from which we may be liberated by following the practices prescribed in the Yogācāra teachings. For Freud it is the spiritual that is illusory, meaning that it is the illusory fulfillment of the collective human wishes. The differences between the two in terms of their underlying premises regarding what a human being is and should be cannot be any greater.

To conclude, it should become clear to us that Xuan Zang's *ālayavijñāna* is not the Freudian unconscious. To use Thomas Kuhn's term, Xuan Zang and Freud are working within two different paradigms. As such, their theories of the subliminal consciousness follow different rules and address different concerns to different audiences. Yogācāra addresses the problematic of the possibility of awakening, primarily to Buddhist practitioners, whereas Freud addresses the issue of depression, primarily to his neurotic patients. When the theories are stretched outside their applicable domains, problems are bound to arise.

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