

Louise Williams
Phil Mind

Reading Questions for March 30

These questions cover a chapter by John Powers called “Yogacara” from a book titled *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy* edited by Jay L. Garfield and William Edelglass. The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

Background:

Now we turn to a specific flavor of Buddhism known as Yogacara. This form of Buddhism is still widely practiced today and can most frequently be found in East Asia. Buddhism is a diverse tradition with many different attitudes toward philosophical inquiry. Some traditions heavily emphasize philosophy, while others focus more on directly experiencing truth. An older form of Buddhism, known as Madhyamika, played a critical role in the early development of Yogacara thought. Since Madhyamika thought heavily emphasized philosophical inquiry, this emphasis can also be found in the Yogacara tradition. In class, we will review the Yogacara position and see how its understanding of the relationship between the alaya-vijnana and the physical world might relate to Russelian Monism. This assignment is designed to help you understand the Yogacara view.

Questions:

1. (*) What are some of the similarities and differences between Madhyamika and Yogacara Buddhism? What is the Madhyamaka criticism of Yogacara?
2. (*) What is the alaya-vijnana and what is it composed of? How does alaya-vijnana relate to the other 7 consciousnesses? How does this relate to Western Philosophy’s use of the term ‘consciousness’?
3. (*) Do Buddha’s words enjoy a privileged status of truth? How does this relate to the inquisitive character of Western Philosophy? Is Buddhism different than other religions in its attitude toward the founder’s views? Why or why not?