

## 本土社會科學研究之佛法詮釋議題-以八識佛法為例

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### 摘要

佛法是源於亞洲的重要宗教與文化傳統，可運用於含攝佛法文化的本土社會科學理論建構，惟進行含攝佛法的本土化研究過程須注意佛法思維的正確詮釋問題，其中八識論佛法之辨明即是值得關切的議題。佛於《入楞伽經》中言：「大慧！阿梨耶識者名如來藏，與無明七識共俱。」其中阿梨耶識名如來藏，亦名阿賴耶識與無明相應之七識共同一處，而七識包含眼、耳、鼻、舌、身等前五識、第六意識以及第七末那識意根，故確知有八個識，是故世尊在經中確實明說人有第七識及第八識。而誤解人只有六個識之六識論者，主張「打得念頭死，許汝法身活」，希冀努力修定，以期能一念不生；因大乘經記載：『法不可見聞覺知』，誤會經文而以為修至一念不生即是開悟，即是證得法身。但人若是時時處於意識一念不生的定境中，如何能了別周遭而生活於世間？反之，若以八識心的知見修學佛法，則無妨證得離見聞覺知的第八識法身的同時，亦能讓前七識在生活中應對進退自如無礙。而如何依佛陀所傳之八識佛法以歷經社會科學本土化詮釋過程之「原典考證」、「析文詮釋」、「歷史詮釋」、「批判詮釋」以掌握佛法思維發展之終極義理，實乃重中之重。其中必須注意對傳統文化經典與思維的正確詮釋問題，若有所誤解則後續的詮釋亦會走上歧路，而可能導致佛法淪於形式上的論議，但所幸佛陀所說三乘經典俱在，在歷經「原典考證」、「析文詮釋」、「歷史詮釋」、「批判詮釋」等詮釋過程中，宜以三乘經典為最終依歸，然後再經「創造詮釋」以將終極義理具創造性的應用於現代社會科學，以符合現代時空所需，最後運用「會通詮釋」以比量的方式將佛法真正義理重新開展於現代名句文身中，此舉不但能糾正似是而非的表相佛法，更能透過跨越本地與外地文化之文化會通，以及跨越學科領域之領域會通，以完成含攝八識佛法之本土社會科學理論建構過程。本期刊登三篇文章分別是：1.洪奕祐（2025）撰寫的「一位佛教女性家庭照顧者的心理轉化敘說研究」；2.杜愛瑾等（2025）撰寫的「人生危機後的療癒：意義建構創傷心理治療模式」；3.鄒姁伶、陳如湘（2025）撰寫

的「新冠疫情下分居夫妻的模糊性失落經驗之初探」。此三篇文章都運用質性研究取向，以探討在人生面臨危機情境的心理歷程與調適之道，其中第一篇研究即涉及佛法詮釋的議題，值得關切。本期主編的話邀請賴榮豐教授共同執筆，特此致謝。

**關鍵詞：**八識論、六識論、阿賴耶識、佛法詮釋、本土社會科學研究

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## 壹、佛法詮釋在本土社會科學研究上的重要性

佛法是源起於亞洲的人類重要宗教與文化傳統，對本土社會科學研究而言是非常重要的文化資產。由於所謂的「本土化」，「本」是指文化傳統、「土」是指在地生活經驗，社會科學的「本土化」即是將社會科學與文化傳統及在地生活經驗相結合（王智弘，2016b；王智弘等，2024），因此，透過將社會科學與佛教文化傳統及在地生活經驗相結合，是可能進行文化融合的本土化（acculturative indigenization）與文化繼承的本土化（enculturative indigenization）之本土社會科學研究，特別是理論建構研究更是如此（王智弘，2016a，2017，2019；王智弘等，2017；王智弘等，2024a，2024b），而主要用來進行本土化理論建構研究的方法論：「建構含攝文化理論的知識論策略（Epistemological strategy for constructing culture-inclusive theories）」（黃光國，2018；Hwang, 2019）以及「本土社會科學創造詮釋學」（Indigenous Social Science Creative Hermeneutics）（王智弘，2020，2023，2024，2025；王智弘等，2024a，2024b），即可運用於進行含攝佛法文化的本土社會科學理論建構之上。惟運用「本土社會科學創造詮釋學」以進行文化含攝的過程中必須注意對傳統文化經典與思維的正確詮釋問題，若有所誤解則後續的詮釋亦會走上歧路，（王智弘等，2024b）。因此，要進行含攝佛法文化的本土社會科學研究，佛法詮釋的正確性是重要的關鍵。

## 貳、佛法詮釋的探索

對於佛教正法之探索，核心的討論重點之一在於對八識論佛法的辯證與詮釋功夫。對於修學或研究佛法者而言，一直有六識與八識之說，以說明人類有情具有六個識，也就是眼識、耳識、鼻識、舌識、身識及意識，或說明人類有情具有八個識，即六個識加上意根末那識及阿賴耶識，此等六識或八識之說，一直是一個令人困擾、須要辨明的問題。佛陀在佛法經典上說明人類有情具有八個識之例，如在《入楞伽經》中所言：「**大慧！阿梨耶識者名如來藏，與無明七識共俱。**」，其意在言明「阿梨耶識」亦名「如來藏」，而與「無明」相應的七識同時同處共在一起，而阿梨耶識即為阿賴耶識。就一般學佛者而言，熟悉六識但對第七識意根：末那識，以及第八識阿賴耶識則較為陌生，對於此二識之運作方式也罕為聽聞，因此較難接受此二識亦存於人類有情身上。

另就《心經》之經文所載：「舍利子！色不異空，空不異色；色即是空，空即是色，受想行識亦復如是。舍利子！是諸法空相，不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減。」則為一般學佛者所耳熟能詳而琅琅上口，其中空本是指空性心阿賴耶識，但若依六識論者修學禪定之經驗，將意識心制於一處或是讓意識處於一念不生之狀態，對人類有情而言，色與空相似乎就沒有差別，以為如此境界就是《心經》所講的「色不異空，空不異色。」

<sup>1</sup>既然色與空沒有差別，意即色等六塵境界就等於是空相（空無一物），如此誤解佛法所謂之空性，而錯將空無一物的空相當作佛法中所說的不生不滅的真如空性，則所得結論便為：諸法乃是不生不滅，不垢不淨，不增不減，似可一路順理成章地解釋下來。然而一般學佛者對於《心經》下文接續所說：「空中無色，無受想行識；無眼耳鼻舌身意；無色聲香味觸法；無眼界，乃至無意識界；無無明，亦無無明盡，乃至無老死，亦無老死盡；無苦集滅道；無智亦無得。」則不知該如何解釋了。尤其對「空中無色，無眼耳鼻舌身意，乃至無老死。」之意義所指，則更說不清楚了。因為無論是將意識制心一處，或是讓意識處於一念不生之狀態，在客觀上，虛空中的色法都是存在的。而六識論制心一處無有了別的說法僅能勉強解釋為覺知心不了別色等六塵境界，依此來說色塵暫時不存在。但無法解釋人類有情身上的眼、耳、鼻、舌、身等五色根都是一直存在的事實，不因覺知心不了別六塵而消失，而人類有情漸漸老死的現象也一直在色身上發生。因此認為人類有情只有六個識的學佛者對於《心經》中此段文字的意義則無法如實理解，以致心中之疑惑也難以獲得解答。

會落入六識論中之緣由，可能由於修習佛法之慧力不足或是無緣得聞八識論之經文解說，因此對人類有情身上有八個識之說法自然難以信受，遑論生起勝解；或者由於對佛法大門不得其門而入而不知如何正確修學佛法，可能誤以為修學禪定即為修學佛法；而修學禪定，若無善知識教導，往往又易於落入打妄想或是昏沉的境界；又或者將行善當成學佛，認為學佛就是要行善，因此行善就是學佛，此皆因未能有因緣以得聞八識佛教正法所導致。

佛法當然包括行善，但不只有行善，佛法除了施論、戒論、生天之論之外更有包含聲聞菩提、緣覺菩提及佛菩提之三乘菩提。若純以施論、戒論、生天之論而言，佛法確實可包含行善、修禪定之行，因為布施、持戒、行十善業都可利益別人或者至少無害於他人，因此可說是一種行善的表現；修禪定則可有生到色界天、無色界天之功用。但佛法更重要的修行目標在於讓人類有情能解脫於三界煩惱的繫縛，因此行善、修定與智慧的修學都是必要的。而定力與慧力修學所須的正確知見都必須從經典中或真善知識處獲得。如《大般涅槃經》說：對於煩惱的去除，僅依靠定力或者慧力是無法成辦的，必須「先以定動，後以智拔。」<sup>2</sup> 因眾生的根本煩惱根深柢固，難以撼動，得要先用定力把煩惱鬆動、再用慧力一股作氣拔除；如一根釘在地上很深的木樁，想要直接拔除很難；所以先要搖動它，前後左右的搖動，讓木樁鬆動後就容易拔除了。而煩惱無形無色到底存於人類有情何處呢？其實人類有情的煩惱存於人類有情心中。所以修行就是修心。

然而心之功能強大，往往超越人類有情的理解與想像。所以佛陀於《華嚴經》卷 19 如是說：「心如工畫師，能畫諸世間，五蘊悉從生，無法而不造……若人欲了知，三世一切佛，應觀法界性，一切唯心造。」此段經文意在解說真實心，像是一個善於工筆畫的畫師，能夠畫生出種種的三界器世間，也能夠畫生出一切有情眾生的五蘊身，三界中沒有一個法不是這個心所造作出來的……。如果想要了知十方三世諸佛之所從來，應該

現前觀察三界內一切法的功能差別、體性，都是由心所直接、間接、輾轉造作出來的。然而能造作一切法的真實心究竟是哪一個，是第八識還是第六識？對於一切學佛者來說，便不可不知。因此正確認知人類有情之心是有六個識或是有八個識可說是修學佛法的重中之重。

### 參、六識與八識

人類有情至少有六個識應是無庸置疑的。從我們日常生活中的體驗，都可以確認有六個識的存在。舉例而言，在進入餐廳用餐時，我們大部份的人首先會用眼睛看看周邊的環境，因此眼識就起動了。接著馬上會感受一下餐廳內冷熱溫度以及音量，身識及耳識也就跟著動轉了。上菜時，舌識及鼻識也開始發揮功用，了別菜是否太鹹，或有沒有香味等等。而在五識運作的同時，意識也同時運作，在五塵上作更深細的了知、分別。例如更一步了別餐廳的環境、溫度及音樂是否令人賞心悅目或令人不適，是哪一種菜餚的香味，每一道菜的甘鹹等等是否適中、美味，有沒有令人覺得值回票價？所以在日常生活中，人類有情是可以隨時隨地感受到六識的存在與運作。然而在六識運作的同時，佛法更說有第七意根末那識及第八阿賴耶識也是同時在運作的，只不過此二識運作的行相微細，一般人難以了知及現前觀察。因此從佛典中尋求答案來加以印證人類有情眾生到底有幾個識，是一個合理且重要的方式，讓學佛人可先大略了知佛陀在二千五百年前是如何論述人類有情是具有幾個識的。而佛陀在印度示現涅槃後，由其弟子所集結佛陀聖教而成的經典大致可粗分為阿含部（二乘經典）及大乘部（大乘經典）。因此可由二乘經典及大乘經典來找尋相關的論述。

### 肆、二乘經典對於八識之描述

在《中阿含經》卷 47 有如是記載：「阿難！若有比丘見十八界知如真：眼界、色界、眼識界，耳界、聲界、耳識界，鼻界、香界、鼻識界，舌界、味界、舌識界，身界、觸界、身識界，意界、法界、意識界。阿難！見此十八界知如真。」意思是說：如果有比丘能夠如實了知十八界的內涵及功能，那他的知見就是正確真實的；而十八界就是六根界、六塵界與六識界，也就是六根、六塵及六識的功能差別。六根為眼根、耳根、鼻根、舌根、身根及意根，六塵為色塵、聲塵、香塵、味塵、觸塵及法塵，而六識為眼識、耳識、鼻識、舌識、身識及意識。在這一段經文中佛陀明確指出人類有情有六根及六識。對於一般學佛人認知人類有情有五個有色根，即眼根、耳根、鼻根、舌根及身根是比較容易觀察及理解的，然而對於無色根意根，則比較難以體會。在大乘法中意根即是末那識，後文中將進一步探討。

在此，我們先探討六識是如何現起的？在《雜阿含經》卷 9，佛告訴比丘：「眼因緣色，眼識生。所以者何？若眼識生，一切眼色因緣故，耳聲因緣、鼻香因緣、舌味因緣；意法因緣意識生，所以者何？諸所有意識，彼一切皆意、法因緣生故。是名比丘：眼識因緣生，乃至意識因緣生。」意思是說：緣於眼根、色塵而出生了眼識，所以同樣的道理，如果眼識的生起是以眼根及色塵為因緣。那耳識、鼻識、舌識、身識及意識的生起，也同樣是以耳根、鼻根、舌根、身根及意根，分別接觸聲塵、香塵、味塵、觸塵及法塵為因緣而生起。此等根塵相觸而生識，意根和法塵接觸而有意識之理，在阿含部經典中處處可見。<sup>3-8</sup> 如此，六識加上意根，已有七識。

進而言之，六識之外，在阿含部經典中確已隱說有第七識及第八識之存在。《中阿含經》卷 24 即有如是經文：「……若有問者：『名色有何緣？』當如是答：『緣識也。』當知所謂緣識有名色。阿難！若識不入母胎者，有名色成此身耶？」答曰：「無也。」「阿難！若識入胎即出者，名色會精耶？」答曰：「不會。」「阿難！若幼童男、童女，識初斷壞、不有者，名色轉增長耶？」答曰：「不也。」經文意思是說：「名和色二個法必須有個識作為緣，方能存在。這個識若不入母胎的話，就不會有名色的成就。如果這個識入胎後即離開，不住於母胎中，名色就不可能生長成為一個胎身。如果這個識出生了童男、童女胎身以後中斷或是壞滅離身的話，童男、童女的名色五陰就無法增長為成人。」亦即人類有情在受精卵時已有名、色二法。此時的色陰當然就是受精卵，此時的名不會是前六識，因為此時五色根尚未成長成形，五識無法依根和塵的相觸而產生，也不會有意識的生起。所以，這個「緣識有名色」的名，不會是前六識。但受精卵名色的名也不會是入胎的這個識，因為經文明確指出：「若識入胎即出者，名色不會精」也就是意味著：名、色與識三法同時共存。而這也意味著入胎的這個識在出生了童男、童女胎身以後不中斷或是壞滅離身的話，童男、童女的名色五陰就會持續增長而成就五色根。此時有情就可以藉十八界的功能作用而在人間生活，也就是俱足了六根，六塵和六識。然而從入胎識入母胎到童男、童女的名色五陰增長成人，意根在哪裡？其實在受精卵位時意根就存在了，意根就是受精卵位中的名。意根是無色根，在大乘經典中又稱為「末那識」；而入住母胎的入胎識就是第八識。

佛除了在《中阿含經》卷 24 隱喻而說第七意根及第八入胎識（即阿賴耶識）外，在二乘經典中，佛對於阿賴耶識的體性也有更進一步的說明。《雜阿含經》卷第 23：「佛告羅睺羅：『善哉！善哉！能問如來：『云何知、云何見我此識身及外境界一切相，能令無有我、我所見、我慢使繫著』耶？』羅睺羅白佛言：『如是，世尊！』佛告羅睺羅：『善哉！諦聽！諦聽！善思念之，當為汝說。羅睺羅！當觀若所有諸色，若過去、若未來、若現在，若內、若外，若麤（粗）、若細，若好、若醜，若遠、若近，彼一切悉皆非我、不異我、不相在，如是平等慧正觀。如是受、想、行、識，若過去、若未來、若現在，若內、若外，若麤、若細，若好、若醜，若遠、若近，彼一切非我、不異我、不相在，如是平等慧如實觀。』」在此，佛答覆羅睺羅應該如何看待我這個識身及識身外的

一切境界相。其目的就是要令佛弟子能夠斷除我見，不為我所見及我慢所繫縛。佛告訴羅睺羅：應該要觀察我們這個五陰也就是色、受、想、行、識陰，不管是過去、現在、未來，或內、或外，或粗、或細，或好、或醜，或遠、或近的所有五陰都不是真實我，但也不是異於真實我。五陰和我同時同處存在但不能混同為一法。這就表示除了五陰假我之外，另有一個真我存在；而這個真我和五陰假我不是互相混合為一體的。所以五陰死了，這個真我不會死，而與意根一起離開五陰這個假我。在未來合適的因緣際會中就入胎而有另一個五陰假我出生。如此只要三界愛未斷，有情就是這樣不斷的在三界中輪迴生死。

## 伍、大乘經典對於八識的描述

在二乘經典中對於第七識—意根末那識及第八識—阿賴耶識只是隱覆而說。而在大乘經典中對此二識之體性則有詳細的描述。除在《入楞伽經》卷 8 中明確指出人類有情具足八識外。<sup>9</sup>在《成唯識論》卷 3 玄奘菩薩更引用了《大乘阿毘達磨契經》進一步說明其能生萬法的體性，經中說：「**無始時來界，一切法等依；由此有諸趣，及涅槃證得。**」意思是說，人類有情的阿賴耶識具有功能差別（界），從無始劫以來就已經存在，而且是一切法的根本，一切法都是依阿賴耶識而起，也因為有阿賴耶識的存在，眾生所造的業種不失不壞，因此有情才会有六道輪迴的產生以及有涅槃可以證得。在《華嚴經》卷 6，佛陀又開示：「**又由未來諸根、五塵境界斷滅，凡愚之人以為涅槃。諸佛菩薩自證悟時，轉阿賴耶得本覺智。**」意思是說：沒有佛法正知正見的一般凡夫或二乘愚人，認為出離三界生死之苦就是讓未來五陰不出生，以為五陰的斷滅就是涅槃；由於不知或不見有心體不生不滅第八識阿賴耶識的真實存在，不知涅槃本際乃阿賴耶識獨住之境界，誤以為涅槃就只是五陰斷滅境界。然而佛陀所說的涅槃並不是斷滅空，而諸佛菩薩所證的涅槃本際其實就是阿賴耶識，叫作「本來自性清淨涅槃」，是不必將諸根、五塵境界斷滅，即可現前觀察、現前領受的「性淨涅槃」。當悟後轉依阿賴耶識這個本來就在、自性清淨圓滿的無分別心，生起了清淨無執無分別的智慧，就叫「得本覺智」。

在《維摩詰所說經菩薩品》中，對阿賴耶識在三界中之體性有更詳細的描述：「**不觀是菩提，離諸緣故；……知是菩提，了眾生心行故；不會是菩提，諸入不會故。**」意思是說：有一個菩提心不見色、不聞聲、不嗅香、不嚐味、不受觸、不知法，不緣於六塵境界，於六入處的六塵諸法都知不會，所以維摩詰大士說：「不會是菩提，諸入不會故」。但這個菩提心卻了知眾生七轉識心行所覺知感受的一切需求而配合運作，所以維摩詰大士又說：「知是菩提，了眾生心行故」。而這個菩提心當然不是六識心，也不是七轉識中的意根，而是第八識阿賴耶識，因為六識心及意根都是了知境界法的。這樣對阿賴耶識不知不會六塵的描述和《心經》所說：「空中無色，無受想行識；無眼耳鼻舌身意；無色聲香味觸法；無眼界，乃至無意識界；無無明，亦無無明盡，乃至無老死，

亦無老死盡；無苦集滅道；無智亦無得」的「空」法性，是相通而沒有不同。《心經》又說：「色不異空，空不異色，色即是空，空即是色，受想行識亦復如是。」這也意味著一切色法、心法背後的本質都是「空性心」阿賴耶識。也就是「空性心」阿賴耶識即是出生色法與心法的根源，故說阿賴耶識是法界的實相，是真實存在的。所以阿賴耶識之體性雖在不同經典中有不同面相的陳述，其描述文字雖然不同，但所陳述之體性都是一致而沒有絲毫的相互抵觸。

再者，一般學佛者對於意識能夠了知外面的境界，應該能夠理解，但對意根於外在境界也有了知性的認知則是比較模糊。在《大乘起信論》卷上中，馬鳴菩薩如此說：「此『意』復有五種異名：一名業識，謂無明力不覺心動。二名轉識，謂依動心能見境相。三名現識，謂現一切諸境界相；猶如明鏡現眾色像，現識亦爾，如其五境對至即現，無有前後，不由功力。四名智識，謂分別染淨諸差別法。五名相續識，謂恒作意相應不斷，任持過去善惡等業，令無失壞，成熟現、未苦樂等報，使無違越。」意思是說：意根有五種不同的名稱，其中之一叫做業識，因為執藏在阿賴耶識之中的無明業種，可以和意根相應而引動，導致覺知心等種子的流注，稱為無明力不覺心動，致使見聞覺知六識心因此而現行、而造業，意根有這種特性，所以稱為業識。意根的第二個別名叫做轉識，由於六識可在三界塵境之中運轉，而六識的和合運作導致意識可以分別六塵境的美醜、勝劣以及好壞，而意識對六塵境了知的同時，意根也藉六識而同時了知，並產生持續享受或遠離此一境界的決定。所以，意根稱為轉識並且和前六識合稱為七轉識，因為七識是隨著客塵境界而運轉的。

意根的第三個別名叫做現識，即意根是可令第八識阿賴耶識顯現一切六塵境界相的識，就好像一面鏡子映現出眾生的影像一樣，當人類有情藉著自身的五根而面對五塵時，無須任何事前事後加行，第八識就會顯現六塵的內相分，意根與之相觸後，意識就會現行，然而阿賴耶識不會自動現起五塵與法塵，必須有意根作意才能成辦，所以意根稱為現識。至於何謂意根作意呢？在《大乘起信論》卷 1，馬鳴菩薩如是說：「復次，生滅因緣者，謂諸眾生依心意識轉，此義云何？以依阿賴耶識有無明不覺，起能見、能現、能取境界，分別相續說名為意。」意思是說：一切法相生起或滅壞的因緣都是依阿賴耶識心及意根、意識的運轉而產生，這樣陳述的意義所指為何？因為阿賴耶識含藏著無始無明上煩惱隨眠及煩惱障一念無明的緣故，意根便會依於阿賴耶識中的無明種而起作意，令阿賴耶識現起有情之能見、能現、能取境界的功能，對境界不斷分別執取的作意相續不斷，能使一切境界相持續現起，所以名為意根。意根的第四個別名叫作智識，這是指意根和意識在同時現起的狀況之下，意根可稱為智識。換句話說，原本意根的了別性很差，只能了別法塵上的大變動，但與意識同在一起運作時，此時的意根就能分別染淨諸法，而做出直接迅速的反應，所以稱意根為智識。因為意根是意識的俱有依，所以在人間生活之中，除了睡著無夢、悶絕、進入無想定、滅盡定等意識不生起的情況之外，只要有意識存在，意根和意識一定是互相配合而運作著。



意根的第五個別名叫作相續識，為什麼有這樣的別名呢？馬鳴菩薩說意根是「恒作意相應不斷」，也就是說意根永遠都有一個作意常在，希望自己不間斷，永遠可以處處作主、時時作主，而且這個作意從過去無量劫以來，直至未來無量世以後，都是如此。除非是在阿羅漢入無餘涅槃位，否則意根一直永遠都是這樣的作意相續不斷，也因為意根恆不間斷遍計執取的體性，使得過去所做的善惡業種都不會散失敗壞，都被意根執取而收藏在第八識中，因緣成熟時就會現行而酬償業果。因此，應該受苦或是受樂的果報，不會相互違背超越，而這些都是因為意根是相續識的緣故。

## 陸、八識佛法之辨明

不論是在二乘經典或是大乘經典中皆已指出第七識意根及第八阿賴耶識在人類有情色身之中與前六識合和運作。但是，由於此二識行相極微細，眾生難以了知。因此，認為人類有情只有六識的六識論者，在佛門中相當普遍，並且以修定的方式做為修學佛法的主要手段及目標。而最為大眾熟悉的方式即是努力增強定力，希望能做到一念不生，將妄念徹底制伏，希望能「打得念頭死」、「許汝法身活」而讓法身活過來。六識論者之所以會有這種誤解，乃因誤解了大乘經典聖教之故。《大方等大集經》卷 11 如是說：「法不可見聞覺知，若行見聞覺知，是則見聞覺知，非求法也。」意思是說，真正不生不滅的法也就是第八阿賴耶識是離見聞覺知的，是對六塵是沒有了知性的，此等說法和維摩詰大士的聖教：「不會是菩提，諸人不會故」是相互呼應的。

學佛若真的打得念頭死，就是讓意識制於一念不生或是制意識心於不動的狀態，這樣的意識如何能了別周遭的環境？就像影片內容消失了或是影片都停在同一格的位置，人類有情如何能了知影片所要表達的意思以及內容？不能了別周遭的環境，人類又如何能夠應對進退而在人間順利生活？所以認為人類有情只有六個識，認為將意識心修到一念不生的境界就是在修學佛法，明顯不是正確的方式，因為即使將意識修到離念而證得禪定，也仍然還是意識境界；打一針麻醉藥，睡著意識不見，禪定境界就消失了，與大乘佛菩提開悟的內涵「大龍常在定」不同，當然也與成佛無關，此等六識知見與佛教正法有別。因此，以六識論的知見來修學佛法，認為將意識修至一念不生即是開悟的境界，然而處於此等所謂「開悟」境界，不僅無法在人世間作正確的應對進退，對於佛所說義理亦無法生起勝解，徒生似是而非之相似佛法知見，則會誤己、誤人。

佛說：「阿羅漢入無餘涅槃位時十八界全部滅盡」，因為佛說無餘涅槃就是「後有永盡」<sup>10</sup>，而後有就是後世的十八界，即是六根、六塵以及六識，這意味著人類有情是依六根、六塵以及六識的運作才能在人間生活。而為了要解釋此一聖教，部派佛教的六識論者便將意根說成是意識落謝的種子，如同花謝了以後產生種子一般，如安慧論師在他所著的《大乘廣五蘊論》卷 1 如是說：「意界者，即彼無間滅等，為顯第六識依止，及廣建立十八界故。」意思是說：為了顯示第六識依止之所在，以及為了建立十八界的

緣故，所以將前一個無間隔滅失的意識（即意識消失後的種子作為意識的依止）建立為意根。換說的話，安慧所謂的意根，其實就是已滅的前一個意識種子，所以他認為意根只是意識的別名，為了能圓滿十八界（六根，六塵以及六識）的說法才有意根這個名相，並沒有第七識意根方真實存在。

而這樣的說法是和大乘經典互相違背的，例如前已提及的《大乘起信論》，馬鳴菩薩不但明確指出意根的存在，還詳細描述了意根的體性。但令人不解的是安慧論師有時說意根只是意識的別名。但在同一本論中卻又詳細描述了意根的體性，如在《大乘廣五蘊論》卷 1 中，安慧論師如是說：「**最勝意者，謂緣藏識為境之識，恆與我癡、我見、我慢、我愛相應，前後一類相續隨轉。**」意思是說：最殊勝的意根是緣第八識的種種功能差別作為自己境界的識，祂從無始劫來，永遠不間斷的與我癡、我見、我慢、我愛相應，前後都是像這樣一類地不改變祂的體性。從安慧論師的這兩段論文可以明確發現其所說之論述前後顛倒，其前文指出：意根只是意識落謝的種子，種子既已落謝如何能不間斷地與我癡、我見、我慢、我愛之煩惱相應？如果依安慧論師等六識論者之解釋一意根是意識的種子，所以這些自性是潛藏、未生起的，等到意識生起後才會現行，若是如此則無須另立意根，乃至另立與意根相應的煩惱，因此，安慧論師等之解釋無法自圓其說，因為意識對六塵之了別性是殊勝的，與意根對六塵了別慧劣之自性顯不相符。

然主張六識論者，不只古人如安慧論師，近代亦有持類似見解者，如印順法師（2011）在其所著的《我之宗教觀》中如是說：「意識（實在也是五識）所依的意根呢！這可說是過去的認識活動（或稱之為『過去滅意』），而實是過去認識所累積，形成潛在於內的意（或稱為『諸識和合名為一意』——『現在意』）。這是一般人所不易自覺的，卻是一切一六識的根源。舉例說（過去舉波浪所依的大海水喻）：六識如從山石中流出的泉水，而意根卻如地下水源。地下水是一般所不見的，卻是存在於地下深處的。地下水從何而來？這是從雨水，及水流浸潤而潛存於地下的。意根也是這樣，源於過去的認識，過去了，消失了，卻轉化為潛在於內的『細意識』。在大乘佛法中，更分別為末那識與阿賴耶識。**過去意識**（總括六識）所轉化的，統一的，微細潛在的意根，在『人心』的了解中，極為重要！『人心』，不只是一般的五識與意識而已。」在此段文字中，印順法師明確的主張末那識意根與阿賴耶識都只是意識的一部份，其影響所及，人類有情只有六識之說法便廣為流行。

但主張人類有情只有六識的六識論者，必須要面對的法義難題之一便是：只能存在一世的意識在人類有情輪迴的過程中如何連結三世業果？宗喀巴在《入中論善顯密意疏》卷 7 中如是說：「**許能取後有之心是意識故。復許意識，是一切染淨法之所緣故。**」意思是說：能取後有的是意識，而且意識也是一切染淨諸法的所緣。宗喀巴以此說法來解決其所面對的法義難題，但基於現前的觀察，我們可以認知意識是了別染淨諸法的識，意識能緣一切染淨諸法，而不是染淨法緣於意識。在以八識論為基本架構的大乘佛法中，阿賴耶識才是一切染淨諸法的所緣，也就是說一切染淨諸法之所以能夠現起都是緣於阿

賴耶識種子流注的緣故，而阿賴耶識種子能夠流注需源於意根末那識的作意。所以宗喀巴這句話很明顯的是將原屬於意根末那識和阿賴耶識的自性都轉而歸屬於意識所有。

然而，意識的生住異滅是很容易觀察的。在睡著無夢的時候，人類有情是無法了知周遭環境的微細變動。例如在三更半夜時，房間裡來了一隻蚊子，並在人類有情身上咬了好幾口。在被蚊子咬的當下，人類有情往往是不知不覺的。直到發覺身上被咬了好多處又腫又癢，才不得不醒過來驅離蚊子。而這和在白天情況是完全不同的，在白天如有蚊子接近，人類有情馬上就會將之驅離。由現前觀察的現象與現代醫學證明，在睡著無夢之時，人類有情的意識是消失不存在的，所以人類有情的意識是有中斷而不連續的。既然是中斷而不連續，上一個意識如何叫醒下一個意識而能延續原有的記憶，一定要依於意識以外的心識，也就是意根與阿賴耶識，這個道理是明顯易懂的。再者，如果末那識意根與阿賴耶識都只是意識的一部份，那當人類有情意識有中斷時，末那識意根與阿賴耶識也會隨之中斷，如此人類有情的三世業果又要如何連結呢？

印順法師（2011）在所著的《我之宗教觀》卻主張末那識與阿賴耶識只是一種細意識，相關文句如下：「意根也是這樣，源於過去的認識，過去了，消失了，卻轉化為潛在於內的『細意識』。在大乘佛法中，更分別為末那識與阿賴耶識。」然而印順法師繼承自宗喀巴之此等認知，其實是違背了大乘佛法的論述。<sup>11</sup> 六識論者由於對末那識與阿賴耶識的錯誤認知，並以為末那識與阿賴耶識的自性只是六識自性中的一部分，稱為細意識。因此誤認為將意識心制於一念不生的境界，認為就是佛法的開悟境界，就是在修學佛法，也就不足為奇了。所以六識論者才会有「打得念頭死，許汝法身活」的說法。由此證明依於不正確的六識論來修學佛法是無法開悟的，也無法真正解脫煩惱，因為只是將意識心制於一處對於外境不加以了知的緣故。既然無法觀察到煩惱的現起，當然也就無法思索而加以對治，因此也無法真正解脫煩惱。

然而依於以八識心的知見來修學佛法時，對於外在環境又是如何應對進退呢？唯識的一首偈說得是唯妙唯肖：「八個兄弟共一胎，一個伶俐一個呆；五個門前做買賣，一個家裡把帳開。」意思是說指每個人類有情都有八個識，意根（第七識）在意識的配合下可以很伶俐隨時隨地應對周遭的環境的變化而應對進退，而第八識呆呆的，對六塵境界不見聞覺知，只對意根、意識所思唯命是從。眼、耳、鼻、舌、身（五個識）則負責對外了別色、聲、香、味、觸五塵，意識則根據五識提供的五塵資訊及相應的種種法塵加以了別、分類、判斷，提供給意根做參考，以便讓意根對環境做出如何應對進退的決定。也就是說八識論的佛法修學者，對於八個識如何互相連結，互相配合來應對於人間的種種變化，都是需要經長時間修習，須藉由聞、思、修、證而能漸漸如實觀察煩惱的生起。並藉由佛的教誡教授思考如何有效的對治這些煩惱，再經由身體力行調整自己的心態來滅除這些煩惱而證解脫，並能證明佛陀所說的都是真實不虛。而六識論者，唯求將意識心制於一處，或想處於一念不生的狀態，以為即是解脫煩惱，即為開悟，實為對佛教正法之誤解。

《瑜伽師地論》卷 51〈攝決擇分〉中五識身相應地意地之一，第二章問答正決擇二地：「問：前說種子依，謂阿賴耶識，而未說『有』、『有之因緣』、『廣分別義』。何故不說？何緣知有？廣分別義，云何應知？」「答：由此建立是佛世尊最深密記，是故不說。如世尊言：『阿陀那識甚深細，一切種子如瀑流；我於凡愚不開演，恐彼分別執為我』」佛陀所說此偈乃出自《解深密經》卷 1〈心意識相品〉第三，偈中所謂阿陀那識即是阿賴耶識，此偈的意思是說：「阿陀那識非常深奧與微細，祂所執藏的一切種子猶如廣大河流的水一樣瀑流不停；當我面對凡夫與二乘愚癡的聖人時都不為他們開示或演繹阿陀那識，是因為恐怕他們聽了反而產生虛妄的分別，錯把阿陀那識執著為五陰等自我」《成唯識論釋（第三輯）》（平實導師，2024，213 頁）。

也就是，由於「沒有菩薩性的凡夫或二乘法中的凡聖有情們都不能窮究這個底蘊，所以第八識的義理說為甚深；趣向寂滅境界種性的二乘聖人不能通達此第八識的義理，所以名為甚細。此第八識是一切法的真實功能差別，遇到外境界緣襲擊之時便出生七轉識及煩惱等波浪，心體恆常而沒有間斷猶如廣大流水一般流注種子出來。凡夫說得是沒有菩薩性的有情，愚人即是趣向寂滅的二乘聖人；恐怕他們對於此第八識生起錯誤的分別與執著，死後墮落於三惡趣中、或是會障礙他們未來世生起聖道，所以我們的世尊不為他們開示演說此第八識的深妙義理。」《成唯識論釋（第三輯）》（平實導師，2024，212 頁），由於擔心沒有菩薩性的凡夫或二乘聖人，對第八識生起錯誤的分別與執著而生惡果，所以佛陀慈悲不為他們開示，因此，未能證得阿陀那識的眾生，不論是學佛者或研究佛法者，未逢善知識或錯讀不如法義之佛法論著，誤以六識論為真，亦情有可原。惟建構含攝佛法文化之本土社會科學理論學者，不可不加以辨明。

## 柒、含攝八識佛法之本土社會科學理論建構

依「建構含攝文化理論的知識論策略」以建構含攝佛法文化之社會科學理論，運用「本土社會科學創造詮釋學」以進行含攝佛法文化的過程中必須面對正確詮釋佛法文化之議題（王智弘等，2024b），如何依佛陀所傳之八識佛法而歷經「原典考證」，以確認原典文字之真實性、「析文詮釋」以確認原典文字之實際內涵、「歷史詮釋」以確認原典文字意涵之後續思維發展、「批判詮釋」以批判性的掌握文化經典思維發展之終極義理，此等詮釋過程中，宜以三乘經典為最終依歸，再經「創造詮釋」以將終極義理具創造性的應用於現代社會科學，以符合現代時空所需，最後運用「會通詮釋」，以比量的方式將佛法真正義理重新展於現代名句文身中，此舉不但能糾正似是而非的表相佛法，更能進行跨越本地與外地文化之文化會通，以及跨越學科領域之領域會通，並提出含攝文化的本土社會科學創造詮釋學之會通義理（王智弘，2020，2024，王智弘等，2024a，2024b；傅偉勳，1986，1999），如此以完成含攝八識佛法之本土社會科學理論建構，應該是本土社會科學學者的重要任務與挑戰。

本期刊登三篇文章分別是：1.洪奕祐（2024）撰寫的「一位佛教女性家庭照顧者的心理轉化敘說研究」；2.杜愛瑾等（2024）撰寫的「人生危機後的療癒：意義建構創傷心理治療模式」；3.鄒炯伶、陳如湘（2024）撰寫的「新冠疫情下分居夫妻的模糊性失落經驗之初探」。此三篇文章都運用質性研究取向，以探討在人生面臨危機情境的心理歷程與調適之道，其中第一篇研究即涉及佛法詮釋的議題，值得關切。

## 註釋

註 1.必須說明的是，對以一念不生、或者離念靈知的境界為開悟，除了誤解開悟 之外，其實也並不是意識不生起，也不是意識不起分別，而是大部分的狀況是不起語言文字的分別，實質上意識仍然會有了別。

註 2.「善男子！菩薩摩訶薩具足二法能大利益：一、定，二、智。善男子！如刈菅草，執急則斷；菩薩摩訶薩修是二法亦復如是。善男子！如拔堅木，先以手動，後則易出；菩薩定、慧亦復如是，先以定動，後以智拔。善男子！如浣垢衣，先以灰汁，後以清水，衣則鮮潔；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。善男子！如先讀誦，後則解義；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。善男子！譬如勇人先以鎧仗牢自莊嚴，然後御陣能壞怨賊；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。善男子！譬如巧匠鉗錘盛金，自在隨意[打-丁+毛]攪融消；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。善男子！譬如明鏡照了面像；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。善男子！如先平地，然後下種；先從師受，後思惟義；菩薩定、慧亦復如是。以是義故，菩薩摩訶薩修是二法能大利益。」善男子！菩薩摩訶薩修是二法，調攝五根，堪忍眾苦，所謂飢、渴、寒、熱、打擲、罵辱、惡獸所嚙、蚊虻所螫，常攝其心，不令放逸，不為利養行於非法，客塵煩惱所不能污，不為諸邪異見所惑，常能遠離諸惡覺觀，不久成就阿耨多羅三藐三菩提，為欲成就利眾生故。

註 3.《雜阿含經》卷 11：緣眼、色，生眼識，三事和合觸，觸俱生受、想、思。

註 4.《中阿含經》卷 28：緣意及法，生意識。

註 5.《雜阿含經》卷 11：意、法因緣，生意識。

註 6.《正法念處經》卷 62：因意、因法而生意識。

註 7.《根本說一切有部毘奈耶》卷 30：意、法為緣，能生意識。

註 8.《雜阿含經》卷 9：諸所有意識，彼一切皆意、法因緣生故。

註 9.《入楞伽經》卷 8：復次，大慧！言善不善法者，所謂八識；何等為八？一者阿梨耶識，二者意，三者意識，四者眼識，五者耳識，六者鼻識，七者舌識，八者身識。

註 10.《中阿含經》卷 18：世尊告曰：「阿難！多聞聖弟子作如是觀：若現世欲及後世欲，若現世色及後世色，若現世欲想、後世欲想，若現世色想、後世色想及不動想、無所有處想、無想想，彼一切想是無常法，是苦，是滅，是謂自己有。若自己有者，

是生，是老，是病，是死。阿難！若有此法，一切盡滅無餘，不復有者，彼則無生，無老、病、死。聖如是觀若有者，必是解脫法；若有無餘涅槃者，是名甘露。彼如是觀、如是見，必得欲漏心解脫，有漏、無明漏心解脫；解脫已，便知解脫：生已盡，梵行已立，所作已辦，不更受有，知如真。」

註 11.《顯揚聖教論》卷 1：眼識者，謂從阿賴耶識種子所生，依於眼根，與彼俱轉。……意識者，謂從阿賴耶識種子所生，依於意根，與彼俱轉。意思是說，識陰中的全部六識，都是以根、塵為緣，然後從根本因阿賴耶識中，流注種子而出生；並且都是必須依止於所依根，和所依根共同存在與運作，所以說識陰六識都是因緣所生法，不是常住不滅的。佛開示：一切有情都有八個識，那就是識陰六識、意及阿梨耶識，其中意就是意根，阿梨耶識就是阿賴耶識。

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## Issues in the Hermeneutics of Buddhism in Indigenous Social Science Research: Taking the Eight Consciousnesses of Buddhism as an Example

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### Abstract

Buddhism is a significant religious and cultural tradition that originated in Asia. Its principles can be applied to the formulation of indigenous social science theories that integrate Buddhist culture. Nevertheless, the endeavor to indigenize Buddhist research necessitates careful consideration of the accurate interpretation of Buddhist thought. Notably, the elucidation of the Buddhist theory of the eight consciousnesses emerges as a subject worthy of attention. In the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the Buddha states, “Mahāmati! The *Ālī yé shí* [*ālayavijñāna*] is called the *tathāgatagarbha*, coexisting with the seven ignorant *vijñānas*.” This indicates that the *ālayavijñāna* coexists with the seven *vijñānas*. The *Ālī yé shí* is the *ālayavijñāna*, and the seven *vijñānas* refer to the five sensory consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, and tactile), the sixth mental consciousness, and the seventh consciousness (*manas*). Some, misunderstanding the Buddhist teachings, assert that the Buddha did not explicitly mention the *ālayavijñāna* in the *Āgama Sūtras*. They contend that the *manas* is merely the seed remaining after the manifestation of mental consciousness and posit that human beings possess only six consciousnesses. However, the *Madhyama Āgama* records that if the embryo-entering consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) does not enter the womb (i.e., the fertilized ovum) successfully, then the name-and-form would not develop into the subsequent physical body. At the stage of the fertilized ovum, “form” refers to the fertilized ovum itself, while “name” does not refer to the six consciousnesses. Therefore, “name” metaphorically refers to *manas*. The World-Honored One has thus taught the existence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses in the *Mahāyāna* or *Two Vehicles sūtras*. Proponents of the six-consciousnesses theory inevitably fall into the misconception of equating meditative concentration (*samādhi*) with Chan (unique contemplative wisdom) in their cultivation. They advocate that “when thoughts are extinguished, the dharma body (*dharmakāya*) comes alive,” hoping to achieve a state of no thought. Nevertheless, they refer to the conscious mind in such a state as the *dharmakaya*, based on a passage in the *Mahāyāna sūtras* that states, “The dharma does not see, hear, perceive, or know.” However, is the *dharmakaya* or the dharma beyond the sensory perception equivalent to the state of no thought? Is the telos of Buddhist practice really the pursuit of a conscious



mind devoid of cognition and sensation? If so, how would they differentiate and comprehend their surroundings and then engage with mundane existence, comprehending and studying the sūtras and dharma? This demonstrates that cultivating Buddhist dharma based on the six-consciousnesses theory is incorrect. Conversely, how might one navigate the complexities of practice if one were to cultivate and realize the dharmakāya of eighth consciousness based on the eight consciousnesses while allowing the first seven consciousnesses deal with daily life easily? To follow the Eight Consciousnesses of Buddhism as taught by the Buddha, most importantly, one should engage in "text study," utilize "linguistic-analytic hermeneutics," "historical hermeneutics," and "critical hermeneutics" to understand the profound meanings behind the development of Buddhist thought. One must pay attention to the correct interpretation of traditional cultural classics and thinking. If there is any misinterpretation, subsequent elucidations will go astray and may cause Buddhism to become a formalistic discussion. Fortunately, the extant Three-Vehicle scriptures are still available. Then, one should apply "creative hermeneutics" to adapt these meanings to contemporary times and contexts, fostering innovative interpretations. Finally, one should employ "integrative hermeneutics" to facilitate cultural convergence across local and international cultures, as well as academic fields, culminating in the creation of an indigenous social science theory that reflects the Eight Consciousnesses of Buddhism. This issue features three articles: 1. "A Narrative Study on the Psychological Transformation of a Buddhist Female Family Caregiver" by Hung (2025); 2. "Healing After Life Crises: The Meaning-Making Trauma Psychotherapy Model" by Du, et al., (2025); and 3. "A Preliminary Study of Couples Who Lived Separately Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic" by Chor and Tan (2025). Each article adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the psychological processes and adjustment strategies employed during life crises. The first article, which addresses Buddhist interpretation, merits special attention. Professor Lai was invited to collaboratively author the "From Editor in Chief" for this issue, and we, the editors-in-chief, wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to him.

*Keywords: eight-consciousnesses theory, six-consciousnesses theory, ālayavijñāna, Buddhism Hermeneutics, Indigenous Social Science*

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## I. The Importance of Buddhist Interpretation in Indigenous Social Science Research

Buddhism is a significant religious and cultural tradition that originated in Asia and serves as a valuable cultural asset for indigenous social science research. The term "indigenization(本土化)" involves the notions of "root(本),"referring to cultural traditions, and"earth(土),"pertaining to local life experiences. The indigenization of social sciences aims to integrate these disciplines with cultural traditions and local life experiences (Wang, 2016b; Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, by combining social sciences with Buddhist cultural traditions and local life experiences, it is possible to conduct indigenous social science research on acculturative indigenization and enculturative indigenization, especially theoretical construction research (Wang, 2016a, 2017, 2019; Wang et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2024a, 2024b). The principal methods used for indigenization theory construction research are: "Epistemological strategy for constructing culture-inclusive theories" (Hwang, 2018, 2019) and "Indigenous Social Science Creative Hermeneutics" (Wang, 2020, 2023, 2024, 2025; Wang et al., 2024a, 2024b). These approaches can be used to construct indigenous social science theories that incorporate Buddhist culture. However, in the process of using "indigenous social science creative hermeneutics" to promote cultural inclusion, we must pay attention to the correct interpretation of traditional cultural classics and perspectives. If there is any misunderstanding, the subsequent interpretation will also go astray (Wang et al., 2024b). Therefore, to conduct indigenous social science research that incorporates Buddhist culture, ensuring accurate Buddhist interpretation is crucial.

## II. Exploration of the Interpretation of Buddhism

One of the core discussion points in exploring the true Dharma of Buddhism is the dialectical and interpretive work of the Eight-Consciousnesses Theory. For those who practice or study Buddhism, there has always been a theory of six consciousnesses or eight consciousnesses. This theory explains that human beings have six consciousnesses, namely visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, olfactory consciousness, gustatory consciousness, tactile consciousness, and mental consciousness, or eight consciousnesses, consisting of the six consciousnesses plus the *manas* consciousness and *Alaya* consciousness [*ālayavijñāna*]. The theory of six or eight consciousnesses has long been a puzzling issue that requires clarification. The Buddha mentioned in Buddhist scriptures that human beings have eight consciousnesses, as seen in the *Lankavatara Sūtras*: "Mahāmati! *Ālī yé shí [ālayavijñāna]* is called

*tathāgatagarbha*, and it is present together with the seven consciousnesses corresponding to ignorance." This means that the "*ālayavijñāna*" is also called "*Tathagata-garbha*," and the seven *vijñānas* corresponding to ignorance exist simultaneously in the same place. Most Buddhist learners are familiar with the six consciousnesses but are relatively unfamiliar with the seventh consciousness, the *manas*, and the eighth consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*. Additionally, they seldom hear about how these two consciousnesses function, making it difficult for them to accept that they also exist in human beings.

In the *Heart Sūtras*, the following is written:

"Shariputra! Form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form; form is emptiness, emptiness is form; the same is true of feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness. Shariputra! These dharmas are empty in nature, neither arising nor ceasing, neither defiled nor pure, neither increasing nor decreasing."

The foregoing passage is well known and easy for most Buddhist learners to remember, as it contains the secret meaning of the *ālayavijñāna*. However, if, based on the experience of practicing Zen meditation, the conscious mind is focused on one place or the consciousness is in a state free from thoughts, then for human beings, there seems to be no difference between form and emptiness. They might think that such a state reflects what the *Heart Sūtras* states: "Form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form." As there is no difference between form and emptiness, the six realms of sense, such as form, are equivalent to emptiness. Suppose we misunderstand the concept of emptiness in Buddhism and mistakenly interpret the emptiness of nothing as the true emptiness that is neither born nor destroyed. In that case, the conclusion is that all dharmas are neither born nor destroyed, neither dirty nor clean, and neither increasing nor decreasing, which seems self-explanatory. However, most Buddhists struggle to explain the following subsequent statement in the *Heart Sūtras*:

In the void there is no form, no feeling, no perception, no volition, no consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, or touch; no eye realm, and even no consciousness realm; no ignorance, nor an end to ignorance, even no old age and death, nor an end to old age and death; no suffering, no accumulation, no cessation, no path; no wisdom, and no attainment."

The meaning of the line "There is no form in the air, no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind, and even no old age and death" remains particularly unclear. Whether you focus your consciousness on one thing or let your consciousness remain in a state where no thoughts arise, objectively speaking, the material world in the void still exists. The statement of the Six-Consciousnesses Theory, which places the mind in one place, can only be roughly explained as the conscious mind being unable to distinguish between the six realms of dust, such as form.

Based on this understanding, form does not temporarily exist. However, this cannot adequately explain the fact that the five sense organs of human beings—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—always exist and do not disappear simply because the conscious mind cannot distinguish between the six sense objects. Moreover, the phenomenon of human beings gradually aging and dying also occurs in their physical bodies. Therefore, Buddhists who believe that human beings possess only six consciousnesses cannot truly grasp the meaning of the aforementioned passage in the *Heart Sūtras*, leaving their doubts unresolved.

The reason one may fall into the theory of six consciousnesses could stem from insufficient wisdom in practicing Buddhism or a lack of opportunity to hear about the eight consciousnesses in the *sūtras*. Consequently, it becomes naturally difficult for someone to accept the idea that human beings have eight consciousnesses, let alone attain a deeper understanding of this idea. Alternatively, if individuals are unable to enter the realm of Buddhism or are unaware of the correct practice of Buddhism, they might mistakenly believe that engaging in meditation equates to practicing Buddhism. However, practicing meditation without the guidance of a good teacher could lead to delusions or drowsiness. Additionally, they may confuse the act of doing good deeds with learning Buddhism and assume that learning Buddhism is synonymous with performing good deeds, thereby equating good deeds with Buddhist practice. All of these may explain why such individuals lack the conditions to hear the true Buddhist Dharma of the Eight Consciousnesses.

Buddhism certainly includes doing good deeds, but it is not limited to them. In addition to the theories of giving, precepts, and rebirth in heaven, Buddhism also encompasses the Three Vehicles of Bodhi: the Bodhi of the Śrāvakas, the Bodhi of the Pratyekabuddhas, and the Bodhi of the Buddhas. If we consider purely the theories of giving, precepts, and rebirth in heaven, we can say that Buddhism includes doing good and practicing meditation, as giving, observing precepts, and performing the ten good deeds can benefit others or, at the very least, not cause harm, thus manifesting the essence of doing good. Practicing meditation can lead to rebirth in either the realm of form or the realm of formlessness. However, the more important goal of Buddhist practice is to liberate human beings from the bondage of the three realms of afflictions. Therefore, doing good deeds, cultivating concentration, and practicing wisdom are all essential. The correct knowledge and insights required to cultivate concentration and wisdom must be acquired from scriptures or true, virtuous teachers. As the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtras* states: To remove afflictions, one cannot rely solely on concentration or wisdom. One must "first move them with concentration, then remove them with wisdom." Because the fundamental afflictions of sentient beings are deeply rooted and difficult to shake, it is necessary to first use concentration to loosen them, and then apply wisdom to eliminate them entirely. Just like

wooden stakes nailed deep into the ground, it is hard to remove them directly. One must first shake them, moving them back and forth, left and right, to loosen them, and then they can be easily removed. As troubles are invisible and formless, where do they exist among human beings? In fact, the troubles of human beings reside within their hearts. Therefore, cultivation focuses on nurturing the mind.

However, the power of the mind is so profound that it often transcends the understanding and imagination of human beings. Therefore, the Buddha said in Volume 19 of the *Avatamsaka Sūtras*:

"The mind is like a skilled painter, able to paint all the worlds. The five aggregates are all born from them, and nothing is not created.... If one wishes to know all the Buddhas of the past, present, and future, one should contemplate the nature of the Dharma Realm, for everything is created by the mind alone."

The above scripture passage explains the true mind. The true mind is like a painter who excels at detailed paintings, capable of depicting all kinds of material worlds in the three realms and representing the five aggregates of all sentient beings. There is no dharma in the three realms that is not created by this mind. If you want to know the origins of the Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time, you should observe the differences in the functions and natures of all dharmas within the three realms. They are all created directly, indirectly, and sequentially by the mind. However, all Buddhists must understand which is the true mind that can create all things. Therefore, correctly understanding that the human mind has six or eight consciousnesses can be said to be the most important aspect of practicing Buddhism.

### **III. Six and Eight Consciousnesses**

There is no doubt that human beings have at least six levels of consciousness. We can confirm the existence of these six consciousnesses from our daily experience. For example, when entering a restaurant to eat, most of us will first use our eyes to observe the surrounding environment, thereby activating our visual consciousness. Next, we immediately feel the temperature and noise in the restaurant, prompting our bodily and auditory consciousnesses to respond accordingly. When the food is served, our tongue and olfactory consciousness also begin to engage, helping us determine whether the food is too salty, has a pleasant aroma, and so on. While the five senses are active, the mental consciousness functions simultaneously, providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of them. For instance, we can further discern whether the restaurant's environment, temperature, and music are pleasing or uncomfortable, assess the aroma of the dishes, determine if the sweetness and saltiness of each

dish are just right and enjoyable, and evaluate whether the price is justified. Therefore, in daily life, human beings can sense the existence and operation of the six consciousnesses at any time and in any place. However, while the six consciousnesses are functioning, Buddhism further posits that the seventh mind root—*manas*, and the eighth *ālayavijñāna* are simultaneously at work. The operations of these two consciousnesses are so subtle that most people find it difficult to comprehend or observe them. Consequently, seeking answers from Buddhist scriptures to verify how many consciousnesses human sentient beings possess is a reasonable and acceptable approach. This allows Buddhists to gain a preliminary understanding of how the Buddha addressed the question of the number of consciousnesses of human sentient beings, 2,500 years ago. After the Buddha attained Nirvana in India, the scriptures compiled by his disciples can be broadly categorized into the Hinayana (the scriptures of the Two Vehicles) and the Mahayana (the scriptures of the Great Vehicles). Relevant discussions can thus be found in the sūtras of both the Two Vehicles and the Mahayana.

#### **IV. Description of the Eight Consciousnesses in the Two-Vehicles Sūtras**

In the 47th volume of the *Madhyama Āgama sūtras*, the following is stated:

"Ananda! If a bhikkhu sees the eighteen realms and knows them as they really are: the realm of eye, the realm of form, the realm of visual consciousness; the realm of ear, the realm of sound, the realm of auditory consciousness; the realm of nose, the realm of fragrance, the realm of olfactory consciousness; the realm of tongue, the realm of taste, the realm of gustatory consciousness; the realm of body, the realm of touch, the realm of tactile consciousness; the realm of mind, the realm of dharma, the realm of mental consciousness. Ananda! See these eighteen realms and know them as they really are." The foregoing means that if a monk can truly understand the connotation and function of the eighteen realms, then his knowledge and understanding are correct and true. The eighteen realms consist of the six faculty realms, the six sense object realms, and the six consciousness realms, which represent the functional distinctions of the six faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses. The six sense organs are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; the six dusts are the form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharma; and the six consciousnesses are the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousnesses. In the above passage, the Buddha clearly points out that human beings have six sense organs and six consciousnesses. It is relatively easy for ordinary Buddhists to observe and understand that human beings have five material roots, namely the eye root, ear root, nose root, tongue root, and body root. However, it is more difficult to

understand the non-material root of the mind. In Mahayana Buddhism, the mental root is the *manas* consciousness, which will be further discussed later.

Let us first discuss how the six consciousnesses arise. In Volume 9 of the *Samyukta Āgamas*, the Buddha tells the bhikkhus the following:

The eye is conditioned by form, and visual consciousness arises. Why? If visual consciousness arises, then the eye is conditioned by form, the ear is conditioned by sound, the nose is conditioned by fragrance, the tongue is conditioned by taste, and the mind is conditioned by dharma then the conscious mind arises. Why? All various conscious minds arise because they are conditioned by the mind and dharma. This is called a bhikkhu: Visual consciousness is born due to causes and conditions, and even up to the conscious mind is born due to causes and conditions. "

The above passage means that the arising of visual consciousness is dependent on the eye faculty and visual objects. By the same logic, just as visual consciousness arises due to the eye faculty and visual objects as causes and conditions, the auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and mental consciousnesses also arise when the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind roots come into contact with sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharma, respectively. The principle that consciousness arises from the contact between these roots and dust, and that the mental consciousness arises from the contact between the mind-root and the dharma dust can be seen everywhere in the *Āgamas sūtras*. In this way, the six consciousnesses plus the mind-root make seven consciousnesses. Furthermore, in addition to the six consciousnesses, the existence of the seventh and eighth consciousnesses is implicitly mentioned in the *Āgamas sūtras*.

The 24th volume of the *Madhyama Āgama Sūtra* contains the following passage: "...If someone asks, 'What is the cause of name and form?' The answer should be 'It is caused by consciousness.' You should know that name and form are caused by consciousness. Ananda! If consciousness does not enter the mother's womb, would there be name and form to form a body?" The answer is no. "Ananda! If consciousness enters the womb and then comes out, will name and form be refined?" The answer is no. "Ananda! If the consciousness of a young boy or girl is initially destroyed and no longer exists, will name and form gradually increase?" The answer is no.

The meaning of the above scripture passage is that two dharmas of name and form must have a consciousness as a condition to exist. If this consciousness does not enter the mother's womb, there will be no achievement of name and form. If this consciousness leaves after entering the womb and does not remain in the mother's womb, the name cannot be combined with the fertilized ovum (form) to become a fetal body. If this consciousness is interrupted or destroyed after giving birth to a boy or girl's body, the name and form of five aggregates of the

boy or girl will not be able to grow into an adult. That is to say, human beings already have the two concepts of name and form when they are fertilized in the ovum. The material form at this time is, of course, the fertilized ovum, and the name element at this time cannot be the first six consciousnesses because the five material sense organs have not yet developed. Thus, the five consciousnesses cannot arise from the contact between sense organs and sense objects. In addition, because there are no five dusts, there are no dharma dusts, so there will be no consciousness. Therefore, the name of "the conditioned consciousness with name and form" cannot be the first six consciousnesses, but the name in the fertilized ovum name-and-form cannot be the consciousness that enters the womb because the sūtras clearly states: "If the consciousness enters the womb and then exits, the name and form will not be refined." This means that the three dharmas of name, form, and consciousness coexist simultaneously. It also means that if the consciousness that enters the womb is not interrupted or does not perish after the birth of a boy or girl, the name and form of the five aggregates of the boy or girl will continue to grow and create the five form roots. At this time, sentient beings can live in the human world by relying on the functions of the eighteen realms, that is, they have all six sense organs, six dusts, and six consciousnesses. However, from the time that the consciousness enters the mother's womb to the time that the five aggregates of name and form of the boy or girl grow into an adult, where is the root of the mind? The mind root already exists in the fertilized ovum position. In fact, the mind root is the name of the fertilized ovum position. The mind-root is a formless root, which is also called "*manas*" in Mahayana sūtras and the embryo-entering consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) that enters the mother's womb is the eighth consciousness.

In addition to the implicit reference to the seventh consciousness (*manas*, mind-root) and the eighth embryo-entering consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) in Volume 24 of the *Madhyama Āgama Sūtra*, the Buddha also provided further insight into the nature of the *ālayavijñāna* in the sūtras of the Two Vehicles. The 23rd volume of the *Samyukta Āgamas* states the following:

"The Buddha said to Rahula, 'Well done! Well done! You can ask the Tathagata: 'How can I know and see my consciousness and all external phenomena so that I can be free from the attachment to myself, my perceptions, and my pride?'" Rahula replied to the Buddha, 'That's right, World Honored One!' The Buddha then said to Rahula, 'Well done! Listen carefully! Listen carefully! Think about it carefully, and I will tell you. Rahula! You should observe all the forms, whether past, future, or present, whether internal, external, coarse, or subtle, whether good or bad, whether far or near. All of them are not me, not different from me, and do not include each other. This is the correct view of equal wisdom. In the same way, feelings, perceptions, volitions, and consciousness—whether they are past, future, or present, internal or



external, coarse or subtle, good or bad, far or near—are not me, not different from me, and do not include each other. This is the correct view of equal wisdom."

In the foregoing passage, the Buddha addresses Rahula's question regarding how to perceive the consciousness body and all the states outside it. The purpose is to help Buddhist disciples rid themselves of the ego and not be held back by ego and arrogance.

The Buddha instructed Rahula: We should observe our five aggregates, namely form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness. Whether they are past, present, or future, internal or external, coarse or fine, good or ugly, or far or near, all five aggregates are not the real self, but they are not different from the real self either. The five aggregates and the self-coexist but cannot be confused as one. This indicates that beyond the conventional self-comprised of the five aggregates, there exists a true self, but this true self and the conventional self of the five aggregates are not merged as one entity. Therefore, when the five aggregates perish, the true self will not perish, and the true self and the mind root will leave the false self of the five aggregates. In the future, when the right conditions arise, the true self will enter the fertilized egg, and another false self with five aggregates will be born. In this way, as long as the craving for the three realms is not severed, sentient beings will continue to reincarnate within the three realms of birth and death.

## **V. Overview of the Mahayana Sūtras on the Eight Consciousnesses**

In the Two-Vehicle sūtras, the seventh consciousness—the *manas* consciousness—and the eighth consciousness—the *ālayavijñāna*—are mentioned briefly. The Mahayana sūtras provide a detailed description of these two consciousnesses. Volume 8 of the *Lankavatara Sūtras* explicitly states that human beings possess eight consciousnesses. Bodhisattva Xuanzang quotes the *Mahayana Abhidharma Sūtras* in Volume 3 of the *Vijnaptimatratasiddhi Sastra* (Cheng Wei-Shih Lun) to elaborate on how the eight consciousnesses give rise to all dharmas. The sūtras declares: "Since time immemorial, all dharmas depend on it. Due to this, there are various destinies and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*." This indicates that the *ālayavijñāna* has existed since the beginning of time and serves as the root of all dharmas, which originate from it. Because of the *ālayavijñāna*, the karma generated by sentient beings persists, leading to their experiences across the six realms of reincarnation and different paths to attain *nirvana*. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtras*, the Buddha teaches the following:

"In addition, because of the annihilation of the future roots and the five sense objects, ordinary and foolish people believe that they have attained *nirvana*. When the Buddhas and

Bodhisattvas attain self- enlightenment, they transform the *ālayavijñāna* and obtain the original enlightenment."

The above passage suggests that misguided individuals from the Two Vehicles, lacking a proper understanding of Buddhism, mistakenly think that escaping the suffering caused by birth and death in the Three Realms involves stopping the birth of the five aggregates in the future, equating their annihilation with *nirvana*. Unaware of the eighth consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, which is unborn and indestructible, they fail to see that the true state of *nirvana* is the existence of *ālayavijñāna* alone. They wrongly believe that nirvana is merely the destruction of the five aggregates. Because they do not recognize the true existence of the eighth consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, which is an unborn and indestructible mind, they do not realize that the true state of *nirvana* is the state in which the *ālayavijñāna* exists alone. They mistakenly believe that *nirvana* is simply the annihilation of the five aggregates. However, the *nirvana* described by the Buddha is not about obliterating emptiness. The genuine nature of the *nirvana* attained by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is the *ālayavijñāna*, known as "the original pure *nirvana* of one's nature." This "pure *nirvana* of one's nature" can be perceived and experienced without needing to extinguish all roots or the five sense realms. After attaining enlightenment, one turns toward the already pure, perfect, and non-discriminatory *ālayavijñāna*, which fosters wisdom without discrimination. This is referred to as "attaining the original enlightenment."

In the *Vimalakīrti Sūtras*, there is a more detailed description of the nature of the *ālayavijñāna* in the three realms, as follows:

"Not perceiving is Bodhi, because it is free from all causes; ... knowing is Bodhi, because it understands the minds and actions of all sentient beings; not knowing is Bodhi, because it does not know all the entrances."

The above passage means that there is a Bodhi mind that does not see forms, hear sounds, smell fragrances, taste flavors, feel touch, or know dharma. It does not know or understand the six dusts of the six sense organs. Therefore, Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti said: "Not knowing is Bodhi, because it does not know all the entrances." However, this bodhicitta is aware of all the needs of sentient beings' seven consciousnesses and works in coordination with them. Therefore, Bodhisattva Vimalakīrti also said: "Knowing is Bodhi, because it understands the minds and actions of all sentient beings." This Bodhicitta is certainly not the sixth consciousness, nor is it the mind-root among the seven consciousnesses, but the eighth consciousness, the *ālayavijñāna*, because the six consciousnesses and the mind-root are both aware of the state of the mind. This description of the *ālayavijñāna* as being unaware of the six dusts is consistent with the "emptiness" Dharma nature as stated in the *Heart Sūtras*:

"In the void there is no form, no feeling, no thought, no consciousness; no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no form, sound, smell, taste, or touch; no eye realm, and even up to no consciousness realm; no ignorance, nor an end to ignorance, even up to no old age and death, nor an end to old age and death; no suffering, no accumulation, no cessation, no path; no wisdom, and no attainment."

There is no difference between the *ālayavijñāna*'s lack of awareness of the six dusts and the "emptiness" Dharma nature. The *Heart Sūtras* also says: "Form is not different from emptiness; emptiness is not different from form. Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. The same is true of feeling, perception, volition and consciousness." This also means that the essence behind all material and mental laws is born from the "empty mind" *ālayavijñāna*. That is to say, the "empty mind" *ālayavijñāna* is the root of the birth of material and mental laws. Therefore, the *ālayavijñāna* is said to be the reality of the Dharma Realm and it really exists. Therefore, although the nature of the *ālayavijñāna* is described in different aspects in different sūtras, and although the descriptions are different, the nature described is consistent without any contradiction.

Additionally, most Buddhist practitioners have already developed a robust understanding of how consciousness interprets the external world. Yet, the idea that the mind root has some awareness of external conditions remains somewhat unclear. In the "Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana," Bodhisattva Aśvaghōṣa states the following:

"This 'mind' has five different names. One is karma consciousness, which signifies that the mind is unaware of its movements due to ignorance. The second is revolving consciousness, meaning that the mind perceives the external environment based on its movements. The third is present consciousness, which acknowledges all environmental appearances, similar to how a bright mirror reflects various images. When the five sense objects are present, they are immediately reflected, without sequential order and without effort. The fourth is wisdom consciousness, which differentiates between defilement and purity. The fifth is continuous consciousness, which consistently aligns with intention, preserving past good and bad karmas to avoid destruction and nurturing present and future suffering and happiness without transgression."

The above passage implies that the mind-root has five different names. One of them, "karma consciousness," arises because the ignorance karma stored in the *ālayavijñāna* can align with the mind-root, leading to the flow of seeds, as in the conscious mind. This relationship is linked to the power of ignorance, which causes the six consciousnesses—seeing, hearing, and knowing, and so on—to emerge and generate karma. Given this attribute, the mind-root is termed "karma consciousness."

The second designation for the mind-root is evolving consciousness. As the six consciousnesses engage within the three realms of dust, their coordinated actions allow the conscious mind to discern beauty and ugliness, superiority and inferiority, as well as good and bad in the six dust realms. While the conscious mind observes the six dust realms, the mind-root is concurrently aware of them through the six consciousnesses, influencing decisions about whether to continue enjoying or avoid this realm. Hence, the mind-root is known as evolving consciousness, and the six consciousnesses and it are collectively called the seven evolving consciousnesses because these seven functions operate with the guest dust realm.

The third alias of the mind-root is “present consciousness.” This means that the mind-root is the consciousness capable of manifesting the *ālayavijñāna*, which can reflect all six dust realms like a mirror showing images of all beings. When humans encounter the five dusts through their five roots, without any preceding or succeeding actions, the eighth consciousness will reveal the internal aspects of these six dusts. Once the mind-root interacts with this, the conscious mind becomes evident. However, the *ālayavijñāna* does not inherently showcase the five dusts and dharma dusts; its manifestation requires the intention of the mind-root. That is why the mind root is termed present consciousness. What does the mind-root's intention consist of? In Volume 1 of the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana*, Bodhisattva Nagarjuna states the following, "Furthermore, the cause and condition of birth and death is that all living beings are dependent on the mind and consciousness. What does this mean? The *ālayavijñāna*, burdened by ignorance and unawareness, generates the capacity to perceive, manifest, and grasp the realm. This ongoing distinction is termed the ‘mind.’"

The above passage indicates that the causes and conditions for the emergence or cessation of all dharmas arise from the interplay of the *ālayavijñāna*, the mind-root, and the conscious mind. What is the significance of this statement? The *ālayavijñāna* holds the tainted latent ignorance from endless time and momentary ignorance, prompting the mind-root to respond to the seeds of ignorance within the *ālayavijñāna*. This interaction allows the *ālayavijñāna* to bring forth the functional potentialities of sentient beings to perceive, manifest, and comprehend the realm, enabling the mind-root to persist in distinguishing dharmas. The fourth alias of the mind-root is “wisdom and consciousness,” referring to the coinciding presence of both. The inherent discernment ability of the mind-root is initially limited to recognizing significant changes in dharmas. However, when it collaborates with the conscious mind, it can effectively differentiate between pure and defiled dharmas and respond swiftly. Thus, the mind-root is termed “wisdom and consciousness.” The mind-root serves as the foundational basis for the conscious mind. In human life, except in instances where the mental consciousness does not

manifest, such as in dreamless sleep, fainting, entering states of no-thought, or extinction, the mind-root and the mental consciousness must work in conjunction with one another.

The fifth alias of the mind-root is “successive consciousness.” Why this name? Bodhisattva Nagarjuna suggested that the mind-root is “constantly in accordance with intention,” indicating that it always harbors an intention: to remain uninterrupted and to be in control at all times and everywhere. This intention has existed since countless past kalpas and will persist into infinite future kalpas. Unless and until an arhat achieves *nirvana*, the mind-root will continually retain this intention. Furthermore, due to the mind-root’s inherent tendency to grasp, past accumulated good and bad karma will neither fade nor vanish; instead, it will be held by the mind-root and stored in the eighth consciousness. When the circumstances are favorable, this karma will surface and manifest consequences. Thus, suffering and happiness results are inherently linked, as the mind-root represents continuous consciousness.

## **VI. Clarification of the Eight Consciousnesses in Buddhism**

Both *Hinayana* and *Mahayana sūtras* convey that the seventh consciousness, known as the mind-root, along with the eighth consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*, works in harmony with the first six consciousnesses present in human beings' physical bodies. However, due to the very subtle nature of these two consciousnesses, it can be challenging for sentient beings to grasp their essences. As a result, the theory of six consciousnesses, which suggests that humans have only six consciousnesses, is widespread in Buddhism, where meditation serves as the central method and objective of practice. The most well-known approach is to improve concentration rigorously, hoping to reach a thought-free state that subdues delusions completely and “kills thoughts,” allowing the Dharma body to be rejuvenated. Supporters of the six-consciousness theory often misunderstand it by misreading the *Mahayana sūtras* and teachings. For example, Volume 11 of the *Mahāvaiṣṭya Sūtras* states: “The Dharma cannot be seen, heard, felt, or known. If one practices seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing, then seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing are not the pursuit of the Dharma.” This highlights that the true Dharma, which is neither born nor destroyed—namely, the eighth *ālayavijñāna*—is devoid of seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing, and does not recognize the six dusts. This teaching echoes the wisdom of Bodhisattva Vimalakirti: “Not knowing is Bodhi, because it does not know all the entrances.”

If learning Buddhism can truly eradicate thoughts, then people would either permit their conscious minds to exist in a thoughtless state or control them to remain undisturbed. But how can such a conscious mind perceive the environment around it? It resembles a video that either disappears entirely or freezes on a single frame. How can individuals understand its meaning

and content? Without the ability to perceive their surroundings, how can they navigate life's challenges and thrive? Therefore, the notion that humans possess just six consciousnesses and that cultivating one's conscious mind to achieve a thoughtless state denotes practicing Buddhism is evidently flawed. Even if one reaches a state free of thoughts and succeeds in meditating, it remains within the state of the conscious mind; similar to how the conscious mind diminishes after anesthesia, it differs significantly from the essence of Mahayana Buddha Bodhi enlightenment, as encapsulated in the phrase, "the great dragon is always in meditation," and has little connection to Buddhahood. This interpretation of the six consciousnesses strays from the authentic teachings of Buddhism. Thus, someone who practices Buddhism rooted in the six-consciousnesses theory, believing that achieving a state where no thoughts arise equates to enlightenment, will not only struggle to engage appropriately in the human realm but also misunderstand the Buddha's teachings upon reaching this so-called enlightened state. This misunderstanding will lead to erroneous views and knowledge about Buddhism, ultimately misguiding both themselves and others.

The Buddha explained: "When an arhat achieves complete nirvana, the eighteen realms are entirely extinguished." This implies that complete nirvana signifies that "the future existence is forever extinguished," which encompasses the eighteen realms related to future life—specifically the six sense organs, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses. It emphasizes that human existence relies solely on the functioning of these six components. To clarify this sacred teaching, adherents of the six-consciousness theory in Sectarian Buddhism liken the mind-root to the seed of fading conscious mind, analogous to seeds that emerge after flowers wilt. For instance, Sthiramati remarks in Volume 1 of his *Mahayana Five Aggregates Treatise* that "The mind-realm is that which is extinguished without interval, etc., to illustrate the foundation of the sixth consciousness and to define the eighteen realms." This denotes that to highlight the foundation of the sixth consciousness and delineate the eighteen realms, it is the preceding conscious mind that extinguishes without discontinuity (i.e., the seed after the conscious mind fades serves as the foundation of the conscious mind) that is recognized as the mind-root. In essence, what Sthiramati identifies as the mind-root is essentially the seed of the former mental consciousness that has been extinguished. He thus contends that the mind-root is merely another term for the mental consciousness, utilized to round out the theory encompassing the eighteen realms (consisting of six faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses).

The foregoing statement contradicts *Mahayana sūtras*, such as the previously mentioned 'Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana,' where Bodhisattva Āśvaghoṣa not only clearly points out the existence of *manas* (mind-root), but also describes its nature in detail. What is puzzling

is that Venerable Sthiramati sometimes says that *manas* is merely another name for the conscious mind. Yet in the same treatise, he describes the nature of *manas* in detail, as in Volume 1 of '*Mahayana Extensive Five Aggregates Treatise*,' where he states: **'The supreme *manas* refers to the consciousness that takes *ālaya-vijñāna* as its object, and is perpetually associated with self-delusion, self-view, self-conceit, and self-love, continuing in this manner from before to after.'** This means that the most supreme *manas* is a consciousness that takes the various functional distinctions of the eighth consciousness as its own realm. From beginningless time, it has been continuously associated with self-delusion, self-view, self-conceit, and self-love, maintaining this nature without changing throughout.

From the two aforementioned passages by Venerable Sthiramati, we can clearly discover contradictions in his statements. His earlier text indicates that *manas* is merely the fallen seed of the conscious mind. If the seed has already fallen, how can it be continuously associated with the afflictions of self-delusion, self-view, self-conceit, and self-love? If we follow the explanation of Venerable Sthiramati and other six-consciousness theorists—that *manas* is the seed of the conscious mind—then these inherent qualities would be latent and not yet arisen, manifesting only after the conscious mind arises. If this were the case, there would be no need to establish *manas* separately, or even to establish afflictions associated with *manas*. Therefore, their explanation is not self-consistent because the mental consciousness's superior discernment of the six sense objects is incompatible with *manas*'s inferior discerning wisdom regarding the six sense objects.

Proponents of the six-consciousness theory include not only ancient figures such as Venerable Sthiramati but also modern scholars with similar views. For example, Venerable Yin shun (2011) states the following in his book '*My religious views*':

“As for the *manas* that the conscious mind (in fact, also the five consciousnesses) depends on, this can be described as past cognitive activities (or called "past extinct mind"), but it is actually the accumulation of past cognition, forming a latent internal mind (or called "the combination of various consciousnesses named as one mind"—"the present mind"). This is not easily self-evident to ordinary people, yet it is the source of everything—the six consciousnesses. To give an example (previously using the analogy of ocean water that waves depend on): The six consciousnesses are like spring water flowing from mountain rocks, while *manas* is like an underground water source. Underground water is generally invisible, yet it exists deep below the ground. Where does underground water come from? It comes from rainwater and water flow that seep and store beneath the ground. *Manas* is the same, originating from past cognition, which has passed away, disappeared, yet transformed into a latent "subtle consciousness" within. In Mahayana Buddhism, it is further differentiated into *manas-vijñāna*

and ālayavijñāna. **What is transformed from past mental consciousness** (encompassing the six consciousnesses), unified, subtle and latent manas, is extremely important in understanding the "human mind"! **"Human mind" is not merely the ordinary five consciousnesses and the mental consciousness."**

In the above passage, Venerable Yin shun clearly asserts that manas-vijñāna and ālayavijñāna are merely parts of the mental consciousness, and under his influence, the theory that sentient humans have only six consciousnesses has become widely popular.

However, one of the difficult doctrinal problems that proponents of the six-consciousness theory, who advocate that human beings have only six consciousnesses, must face is this: How can the conscious mind, which can exist for only one life, be connected to the karma of the three lives during the process of human reincarnation? In Volume 7 of the Madhyamika-karika, Tsongkhapa said: "It is allowed that the mind that can take on a future existence is the conscious mind. It is also allowed that the conscious mind is the object of all defiled and pure phenomena." This means that what can take on the afterlife is the conscious mind, and the conscious mind is also the object of all defiled and pure dharmas. Tsongkhapa used this statement to solve the difficult doctrinal problems he faced, but based on current observations, we can recognize that the conscious mind is the awareness that distinguishes between defiled and pure dharmas. The conscious mind can relate to all defiled and pure dharmas, rather than that defiled and pure dharmas are related to the conscious mind. In Mahayana Buddhism, which is based on the theory of the eight consciousnesses, the ālayavijñāna is the object of all pure and defiled dharmas. That is to say, all pure and defiled dharmas can appear is due to the flow of the seeds of the ālayavijñāna, and the flow of the seeds of the ālayavijñāna is due to the intention of the manas consciousness. Therefore, it is obvious that Tsongkhapa's words transfer the self-nature that originally belonged to the manas and ālayavijñāna to the conscious mind.

The arising, abiding, changing, and extinction of the conscious mind are readily observable. During dreamless sleep, humans cannot notice subtle changes in their environments. For instance, mosquitos may enter their rooms at night and repeatedly bite them. In such moments, individuals often remain oblivious to their feelings. It is only when they notice swelling and itchiness from several bites that they wake up to swat away the mosquitoes. This experience sharply contrasts with daytime situations. When a mosquito approaches during the day, people typically react swiftly to repel it. This behavior suggests that sentient human mental consciousness is absent during dreamless sleep. Consequently, human sentient mental consciousness is fragmented and discontinuous from one day to the next. Given this interruption, it becomes evident how past conscious mind can awaken the subsequent conscious mind in relation to the next state. Moreover, if manas and the ālayavijñāna are merely components of



the conscious mind, then the interruption of human conscious mind would also disrupt *manas* and the *ālayavijñāna*. This raises the question of how the karmic outcomes of the three lives of humans are interconnected.

In his book, *My Religious Views*, Venerable Yin shun (2011) contends that *manas* and the *ālayavijñāna* are merely subtle forms of consciousness. He notes, "The mind-root is the same. It originates from past cognition, which has passed and disappeared but has been transformed into a 'subtle consciousness' latent within. In Mahayana Buddhism, they are further divided into *manas* and the *ālayavijñāna*." However, the understanding of cognition from Tsongkhapa that Venerable Yin shun inherits contradicts Mahayana Buddhist principles. Misinterpreting *manas* and the *ālayavijñāna*, supporters of the six-consciousness theory argue that both represent only a fraction of the essence of the six-consciousnesses, which they label subtle consciousness. Consequently, it is easy to see why some erroneously think that silencing the conscious mind results in enlightenment and represents true Buddhist practice. This misunderstanding is illustrated by the following saying among proponents of the six-consciousness theory: "Kill thoughts and your Dharma body will live." This highlights that one cannot attain enlightenment or genuinely escape suffering by practicing Buddhism based on an inaccurate understanding of the six consciousnesses. The conscious mind, confined to a single location, remains unaware of the outside world. Without the ability to observe and address the emergence of afflictions, true contemplation or remediation of them becomes impossible, making real liberation from afflictions unachievable.

When practicing Buddhism with an understanding of the eight consciousnesses, how can we effectively navigate our surroundings? A verse from the Yogacara school helps illuminate this: "Eight brothers are born from the same womb. One is smart and the other is stupid; five perform business at the door while one manages the accounts at home." This suggests that everyone has eight consciousnesses. The mind-root (seventh consciousness) excels at adapting to environmental changes and making decisions swiftly, thanks to the collaboration of the consciousnesses. On the other hand, the eighth consciousness has limitations; it neither sees, hears, nor perceives the six sense realms, merely following the mind-root and the mental consciousness's thoughts. The five consciousnesses - represented by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body - interpret the external objects of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. These consciousnesses and the conscious mind process, categorize, and evaluate the information about the five sense objects and related Dharma sense objects, thereby relaying this to the mind-root for decision-making regarding how to respond to the environment, including whether to move forward or retreat. Therefore, practitioners of the eight consciousnesses must engage in long-term practice to understand how these consciousnesses interact and complement each other in

managing life's changes. They are required to observe the rise of afflictions by listening, contemplating, practicing, and verifying. Through the teachings of the Buddha, we can discover effective methods of tackling these challenges and adjust our mindset with actionable steps to overcome obstacles, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the Buddha's teachings. Conversely, supporters of the six-consciousnesses theory often stress the importance of focusing the conscious mind in a singular state or achieving thought-free mental clarity, believing that this will liberate them from suffering and lead to enlightenment. This interpretation distorts the true essence of the Buddhist Dhamma.

In Volume 51 of the *Yogacarabhūmi Sūtras*, Chapter 2, Questions and Answers on the Second Stage of Right Determination, it is mentioned that the basis of seeds is the *ālayavijñāna*. However, it does not specify its existence, the causes and conditions for its existence, or a detailed definition of it. Why is this the case? How do we know that it exists? How should we come to understand its detailed definition? "The answer is: This is the most profound secret of the Buddha, the Tathagata, and therefore, it is not mentioned. As the Tathagata said, '*ālayavijñāna* is very profound and subtle, and all seeds flow like waterfalls. I do not explain it to ordinary people, fearing that they will discriminate and regard it as self.'" This verse, spoken by the Buddha, comes from the third chapter of the "Abhidharmakośa Sūtras," Volume 1. The so-called *ālayavijñāna* in the verse refers to the *ālayavijñāna*. The meaning of this verse is as follows: "The *ālayavijñāna* is very profound and subtle. All the seeds it holds are like the water of a vast river that flows continuously. When I face ordinary people and ignorant saints of the Two vehicles, I do not explain or interpret the *ālayavijñāna* for them because I am afraid that they will develop false distinctions after listening to it and mistakenly cling to the *ālayavijñāna* as the self, such as the five aggregates." (*Commentary on the Cheng Weishi Lun*, Vol. 3, Venerable Pingshi, 2024, p. 213).

In other words, because "ordinary individuals who lack a bodhisattva nature, as well as ordinary and noble sentient beings of the two vehicles, cannot fully comprehend this essence, the eighth consciousness is deemed very profound. The two-vehicles saints aiming for quiescent extinction fail to grasp the significance of this eighth consciousness, rendering it extremely subtle. This eighth consciousness signifies the true functional distinction of all dharmas. When it interacts with external conditions, it will generate the seven evolving consciousnesses and waves of afflictions. The mind-body perpetually abides without interruption, incessantly effusing seeds like a vast flowing stream. Ordinary people refer to sentient beings without bodhisattva nature, while fools reference the two-vehicles saints striving for quiescent extinction. The World-Honored One, fearing that they might develop erroneous discriminations and attachments regarding this eighth consciousness—thereby risking post-mortem descent into

the three evil destinies or obstructing the arising of the noble path in their future existences—chose not to expound its profound and subtle doctrinal principles to them. " (*Commentary on the Cheng Weishi Lun*, Vol. 3, Venerable Pingshi, 2024, p. 212). The Buddha, aware that ordinary individuals or two-vehicle saints lacking a bodhisattva nature might develop incorrect discrimination and attachments regarding the eighth consciousness, leading to negative outcomes, compassionately chose not to elaborate on it. Thus, sentient beings who have not come to grips with the *ālayavijñāna*—whether they are Buddhist students or scholars—might not have had access to good teachers or may have encountered Buddhist writings that lack a solid dharma foundation, leading to their misconception that the six consciousnesses are true. However, it is essential for scholars constructing local social science theories that incorporate Buddhist culture to clarify this.

## **VII. Developing an Indigenous Social Science Theory that Integrates Buddhism's Eight Consciousnesses**

To create a social science theory that reflects Buddhist culture, we adopt an “epistemological strategy for constructing a culturally inclusive theory” and apply “indigenous social science creative hermeneutics” to incorporate this culture effectively. Accurately interpreting Buddhist culture is essential (Wang et al., 2024b). We must engage with the eight consciousnesses articulated by the Buddha and conduct textual analysis to authenticate the original texts. This involves using “linguistic-analytic hermeneutics” to clarify their meanings, applying “historical hermeneutics” to trace the evolution of thought around these texts, employing “critical hermeneutics” to understand the broader significance of classical cultural ideas, and, finally, using “creative hermeneutics” to imaginatively apply these classical concepts to modern contexts, thus generating new meanings. We conclude with “integrative hermeneutics.” The goal of this hermeneutic process is to promote cultural convergence between local and foreign cultures, as well as to encourage disciplinary convergence across various fields. This approach allows us to propose convergent principles of local social science creative hermeneutics that weave in cultural elements (Fu, 1986, 1999; Wang, 2020, 2024; Wang et al., 2024a, 2024b). Hence, the task of developing indigenous social science theories that integrate the Eight Consciousnesses of Buddhism is crucial and represents a significant challenge for scholars in the field.

This issue features three articles: "A Narrative Study on the Psychological Transformation of a Buddhist Female Family Caregiver" by Hung (2024); "Healing After Life Crises: The Meaning-Making Trauma Psychotherapy Model" by Du, et al., (2025); and "A Preliminary

Study of Couples Who Lived Separately Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic" by Chor and Tan (2025). Each article adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the psychological processes and adjustment strategies employed during life crises. The first article, which addresses Buddhist interpretation, merits special attention.

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