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How to Think of Time In a Non-Linear Way: Analysis & Comparison on Husserl's  
Inner Time-Consciousness & Yogacara Buddhist's Conception of Temporality

by

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## **Introduction**

The concept of time is something that is relatable to every single being in the universe, but yet it is a concept that is not clearly defined. Some explain that time is a product of causation. For instance, many scientists assume that time is something higher-ordered and external which can be unfolded by movement, motion, or change. What underpins this external reality sense of time is the external causality of events. Philosopher Franz Brentano believes that time can be explained as a succession of psychological activities. This means that the fact that we can have a sense of time is because of the continuous series of psychological activities which are possible through causation. In other words, time is possible because of mental causality. The view that time is causation shows a linear progression of time since the cause and the effect possess a linear structure. The linear conception of time I refer to in this paper is the view that time is causation.

It is common to assume that time has a linear structure of flowing from the past to the present to the future through causality. However, is it plausible to make such an objective assumption? Do we have other ways to think of time other than causality? In this paper, I will argue how time can be thought of in a non-linear way by introducing two philosophical traditions: Edmund Husserl and Yogacara school of Buddhism. When referring to the non-linear conception of time, I am stating that time is something that cannot be captured objectively by causation. Through analysis on these two philosophical traditions, I will attempt to show that time is rather something internal and temporality is generated as a result of the flow of consciousness. For Husserl and Yogacara Buddhists, time is deeply connected to consciousness.

In chapter 1, I will analyze Husserl's theory of consciousness and time. First, I will discuss that his non-linear theory of time departed as a criticism of Brentano who insisted that

time is a succession of mental activity by mental causality. After that, I will analyze Husserl's inner time-consciousness by taking a closer look at his theory of retention, primal impression, and protention. Then, I will analyze his theory of time further by taking the concept of double embodiment into account. In Chapter 2, I will analyze Yogacarins' theory of consciousness and time. I will start by introducing their interlocutors, whose view of time is underpinned by causation. After that, I will explain Yogacara's conception of time with their cyclical act of eight kinds of consciousnesses and karmic seeds. Then, I will explain how Yogacara's theory of time is part of achieving enlightenment by showing the relationship between temporality and the no-self doctrine. In conclusion, I will present the similarities and differences between Husserl and Yogacara Buddhist's time theories and how their theories can contribute to philosophy of time in an intercultural sense.

This paper not only aims to show a non-linear understanding of time from different philosophical traditions, but also allows us to explore questions related to consciousness, temporality, and metaphysics. There have been a number of studies focused on the similarities between Yogacara philosophy and Husserl's philosophy (Lusthaus, 2002; Kohjoh, 2006; Li, 2017). While there has been much research on the comparison between Husserl and Yogacara's theories of consciousness, few philosophers have focused deeper on comparing their theories of time. Therefore, this project will contribute to the field of comparative philosophy of Husserl and Yogacara by directly comparing their theories of time.

## **Chapter 1: Analysis on Husserl's Theory of Consciousness & Time**

### **1.1 Husserl's Criticism on Brentano & Scientific Reductionism**

To analyze Husserlian theory of consciousness and time, I will first clarify the context in which Husserl argues for his non-linear conception of time. His theory of time departed from the criticism of Brentano. Brentano explains his linear view of time through a succession of psychological activities. He insists that the existing temporal objects (which means the objects that appear across time such as a melody) bring about "stimuli" in the mind and "cause" sensations in the mind (Husserl, 1991, p.16). In other words, Brentano explains that a temporal object is the source that causes sensation (or impression) in the mind. Brentano's view of time presents itself as "a theory of the psychological origin of the representation of time" (Husserl, 1991, p.16). This means that the experience of time as well as a temporal object is governed by a causal process which is internal within the psychological activity. This theory assumes that the temporal objects are mind-independent. The mind or "I" has to be separated in order for the temporal object to cause psychological stimuli on the mind. This entails the objective status of the temporal object in the sense that it has its own time. That is to say, the temporal object with its objective status causes stimulation to the mind and it turns into the inner experience of time. In this sense, Brentano's theory of time and the temporal object has a realistic view.

Brentano's theory is part of scientific reductionism, meaning that the problems of epistemology can be solved by science and empirical studies. Husserl is critical towards this sort of scientific reductionism inherent in naturalism since naturalists assume that objective knowledge independent from our mind is possible. Husserl shows that it is philosophically naive to assume that things possess such objective and mind-independent knowledge status.

Also, he is concerned about scientific reductionism because the assumption of mind-independent objective knowledge disconnects the mind from the world and creates dualism between the mind and the world. This dualistic worldview creates an existential crisis for human beings where a human may lose meaning within the external world due to the mind-independent status of the world. Because of this concern, Husserl is interested in the philosophical investigation of the world from a subjective viewpoint which led him to explore human consciousness.

In conclusion, Husserl is critical of Brentano's view that the essence of time can be reduced to causality since it entails the dualism between the mind and the object. For Husserl, time is not a mere scientifically objective topic, but rather an epistemological topic. It is only through our inner experience that we are able to know that we are in time, but the inner experience of time is not triggered by the external temporal object. In this sense, time is dependent of our mind and, therefore, internal. Husserl also insists that the essence of time is not something capturable or measurable with numbers (such as 5 minutes ago, 90 years old, 2021, etc.) and that it is philosophically naive to assume that time essentially possesses such an objective standard. Here, it is not the case that Husserl denies the scientific higher-order sense of time but he rejects time as an objective measure of passing time. This criticism towards a Brentanian scientific reductionism marks the prelude of his non-linear theory of time.

## **1.2 Retention- Primal Impression- Protention**

How can we think of time not through the lens of causality? Since Husserl thinks that it is philosophically naive to assume the mind-independent time of the experienced world, he assumes the existence of time as the immanent time of the flow of consciousness (Husserl,

1991, p.5). Husserl's non-linear view of time explains that our consciousness of the punctual now has a temporal horizon and that time is possible because of this sense of inner time-consciousness. Husserl (1991) claims that a temporal object such as a melody is possible because the human mind is conscious of the past phase, present phase, and future phase of an object. This means that human consciousness is not trapped in the punctual now. For instance, if our stream of consciousness is trapped and only focused on the now, we will not be able to hear a melody. Instead, we will only be able to hear a single, independent sound at a time. Furthermore, the fact that we hear a harmonious melody indicates that humans are not only conscious of a tone in the present but also conscious of other tones in the past and future phases. Husserl (1991) explains the reason why humans can hear a continuous melody with his theory of *retention-primal impression-protention*. This retention-primal impression-protention is his description of the structure of inner time-consciousness. In other words, Husserl shows that the temporal object is possible as a result of inner time-consciousness. The term primal impression refers to our consciousness directed towards the object that is in the punctual now phase, which means an experience of here and now. The term retention is an intuition that is conscious of the "just now" phase of an object. The term protention is an intuition that is conscious of the now "yet to come" phase of the object.

Here, retention, primal impression, and protention constitute a unique type of *intentionality*. Intentionality is the object-directedness of our consciousness. This means that our personal experiences are experiences of being conscious of something and it is directed towards an object. Consciousness cannot stand by itself independently, because we are always conscious of something. Neither can we be conscious of everything and nothing, since there is always something that we are conscious of. Therefore, retention, primal impression, and protention are the intentionality of the past, present, and future.

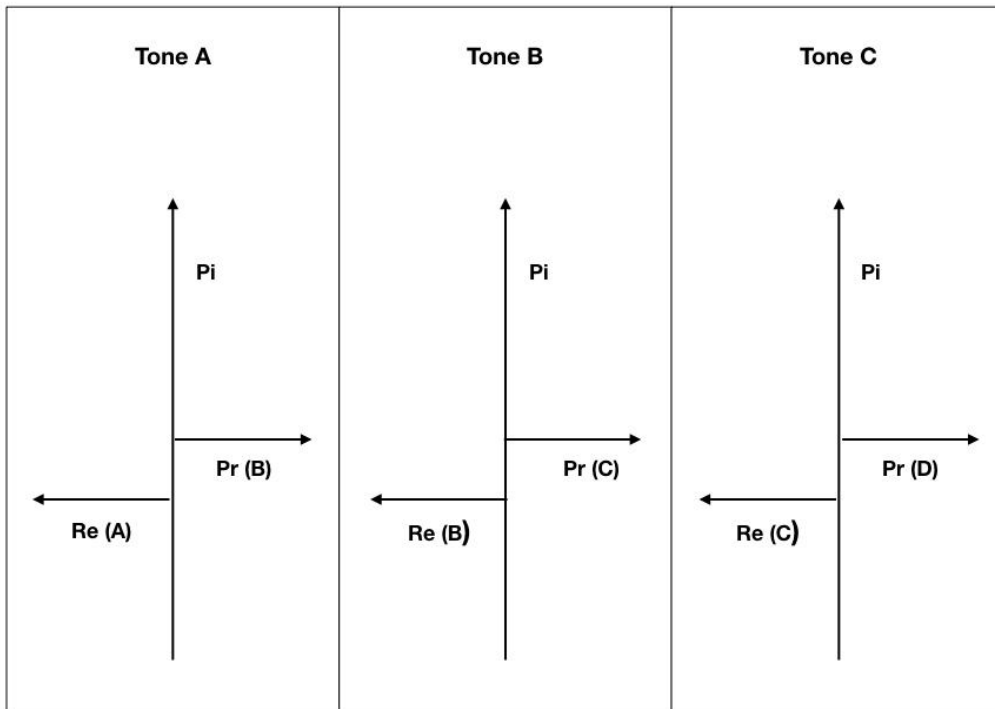


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows how each tone A, B, and C appears to be a melody for us. Pi represents primal impression, Re represents retention, and Pr represents protention. According to Husserl, primal impression is not enough for us to hear a harmonious melody since primal impression is only conscious of the now phase of the object. Instead, he insists that we are also conscious of the phase that has just been (retention) and the phase that is about to come (protention). Our consciousness is directed towards these three directions simultaneously in the punctual now. When we hear tone A, we are aware that tone A will be in the past phase and tone B will move to the now phase from the future phase. This consciousness in three directions allows us to be conscious of the temporal horizon of the present object.



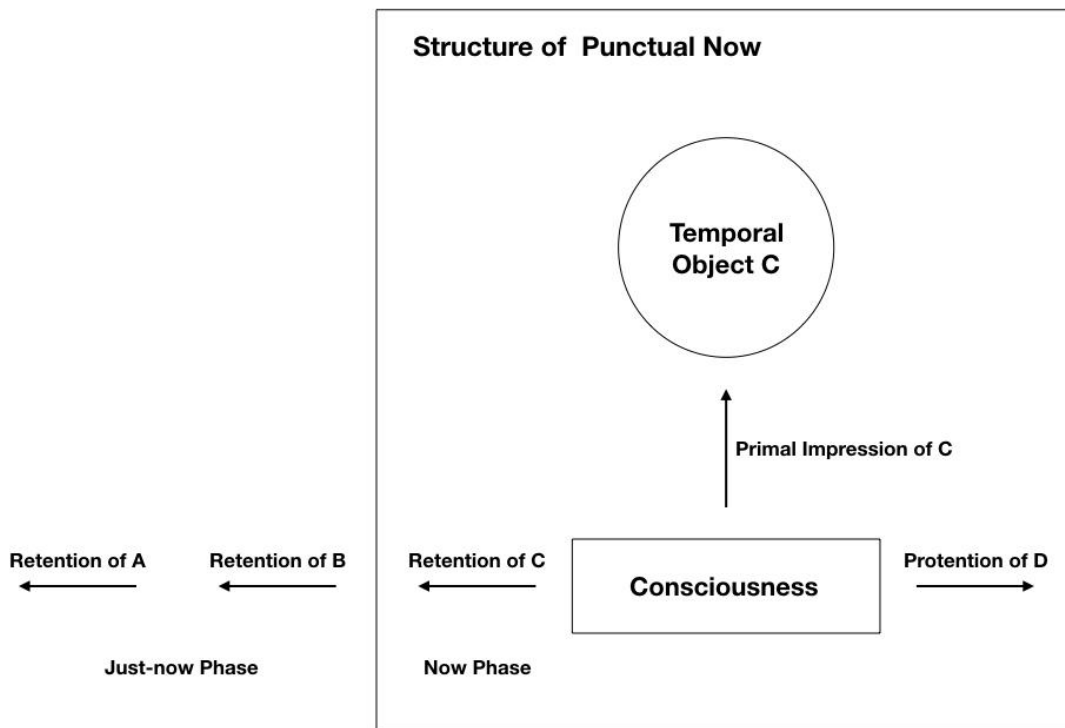


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows a further explanation of retention, primal impression, and protention. The structure of the punctual now consists of three directions of primal impression of tone C, retention of C, and protention of tone D. Protention can be understood as the anticipation of the continuation of the temporal object. Retention can be understood as the passive memorization of the temporal object and intuition of the present temporal object to be retained. However, retention is not merely a consciousness of the tone that has just been. Retention is simultaneous with primal impression but what is retained has temporal order. In other words, retention also preserves what is given in primal impression and preserves the order of the temporal objects. In Figure 2, tone A moved from the present to the past and it is retained in the mind. Similarly, tone B ceased to be in the present and became the past. The order of what is retained (in this case, tone A and B) is preserved and creates an unchangeable structure. Therefore, although retention, primal impression, protention are

simultaneous in the punctual now, what is retained in the mind has temporal order. For example, the temporal distance between now and the memory of being a kid can be seen as farther than the temporal distance between now and the memory of graduating from university. This is because primal impression is retained and preserved in chronological order. Due to this unchangeable structure that is constituted by retention, recollection is possible. This is the basis of objective time such as “30 years ago” or “ 9 pm.”

So far, I have explained how inner time-consciousness (retention-primal impression-protection) allows us to observe a temporal object and allows us to create the unchangeable structure of the past that can be recollected repeatedly. Here, an important thing to note is that, for Husserl, the past only exists as the consciousness of the past (Al-Saji, 2007, p.185). This means that the past only exists because it is derived from our consciousness.

### **1.3 The Double Embodiment of Temporality & Inner Time-Consciousness as Pre-Reflective Self-Awareness**

The fact that inner time-consciousness creates the unchangeable structure of the past shows that consciousness is not only conscious of time but also has a time-constituting function. In contrast to time-constituting inner time-consciousness, there is a constituted time for objects, acts, and experiences. This means that humans are able to experience intentional objects because inner time-consciousness constitutes time. In other words, inner time-consciousness is the underlying pre-phenomenal stream that allows the experience of a phenomenon.

This relationship between constituted time and the constituting time of inner time-consciousness can be analyzed through the double embodiment of human beings. Our existence in reality involves a double embodiment of subjectivity and objectivity. Humans

possess the double aspect (mind and body) of existence and this means that we are both subjects of the world and objects in the world. Reality is possible because of our subjectivity, but at the same time, we exist physically in the world that has been constructed by our own subjectivity. In other words, human existence involves both *being a body* and *having a body* (Wehrle, 2019, p.501). *Being a body* refers to the aspect of being a lived and material body, and *having a body* refers to the ability to objectify the body. In order for one to *have* a body, one must *be* a body first.

Wehrle (2019) states that an aspect of *being a body* refers to *operative intentionality* and an aspect of *having a body* refers to *object-intentionality*. *Being a body* is a subjective dimension of embodiment and *having a body* belongs to an objective dimension of embodiment. According to Wehrle, operative intentionality has a constituting dimension of objectivity and object-intentionality represents an already constituted object (Wehrle, 2019, p.506). This also means that *being a body* refers to the domain of constituting time, and an aspect of *having a body* refers to constituted time. Humans are both constituting time and shaped by time simultaneously. Wehrle states that “Without being temporal, we could not refer to ourselves as objects in time. However, without experiencing ourselves as objects, we would never be able to grasp this very temporal structure explicitly” (Wehrle, 2019, p.510). This means that humans are constituting time through inner time-consciousness and therefore we can perceive our bodies as objects in both space and time. However, in the meantime, humans cannot grasp the constituting time of inner time-consciousness if we are not able to perceive ourselves as objects in both space and time.

This mutual constitution of the subjective act (constituting time of inner time-consciousness) and objective phenomenon (constituted time of human experiences) is what supports Husserl’s theory of non-linear time. Based on this point of view, Husserl’s time theory can be further analyzed as ego theory. Zahavi (2003) states that the notion of

self-awareness is deeply connected to the constituting time of inner time-consciousness and the constituted time of acts and experiences.

To be a human subject is to be self-aware. Being a subject includes “I” and the fact that we can capture this concept of “I” means that we are self-aware of ourselves.

Self-awareness is deeply connected to the double aspects of embodiment. Humans not only possess the first-person perspective, but also possess the third-person perspective and thus are able to objectify our acts and experiences. The way we capture the concept of “I” is through our ability of objectification. For instance, we can say that “I went to school and met my professor yesterday.” Here, we can capture “I” because we can objectify the first-person act which has been done yesterday. The act of grasping the self from the third-person perspective belongs to the subjective aspect of embodiment, and the objectifiable empirical act from the first-person perspective belongs to the objective aspect of embodiment. We can capture “I” through a reflection of ourselves. In other words, self-awareness is possible by the reflection of a moment from the past.

Here, in order for reflection to be possible, there has to be a temporal horizon already present. In other words, reflection presupposes the existence of a temporal horizon since past actions and experiences have to be retained before reflection to be possible. This means that consciousness can become an object because of retention. In summation, the fact that we can thematize and be aware of ourselves through the reflection of ourselves in the past is possible because the temporal horizon has already been established by inner time-consciousness. The temporal horizon established due to inner time-consciousness is the condition to be self-aware in the constituted time. In this sense, time-constituting inner time-consciousness can be said to be a pre-reflective self-awareness.

Husserl’s metaphysical position is the subject and object correlation in experience and this view is part of his philosophical idealism. In contrast to Brentano, Husserl’s non-linear

theory of time does not involve any dualism. As I mentioned earlier, psychological causality is what underpins Brentano's linear theory of time and this involves the mind-independent status of the temporal object. This is because the temporal object needs to be mind-independent in order to cause stimulation to the mind. Brentano's metaphysical position involves Cartesian dualism where mind and body become separated and cause an existential crisis. Husserl is critical towards this Cartesian dualistic view, and instead, he shows that the experience consists of a mutual constitution of the subject and object. He argues that reality requires intersubjectivity of the subject and the object since reality consists of the validity and meaning of objects appealing to the subject. In this sense, Husserl merely denies an objective interpretation of intentional objects.

So far, in Chapter 1, I first explained Brentano's linear conception of time and why he is Husserl's interlocutor. Then, I showed Husserl's theory of inner time-consciousness including intentionality and triple intention of retention-primal impression-protention. When one is conscious of something such as tone, one is not only conscious of tone but also conscious of primal impression of the tone (the fact that tone is experienced here and now). Furthermore, one is also conscious of the temporal horizon (retention and protention) of the tone. This triple intention is Husserl's structure of the inner time-consciousness. Additionally, retention allows to retain primal impressions in chronological order and create an unchangeable structure of the past experiences that can be recollected repeatedly. Then, I explained how the double embodiment of human existence relates to the time-constituting inner time-consciousness and the constituted time of the acts and experiences. The time-constituting aspect belongs to the subjective dimension of the double embodiment (*being a body*) and the constituted-time belongs to the objective dimension of the double embodiment (*having a body*). Based on this definition, I analyzed that the time-constituting inner time-consciousness is also a pre-reflective self-awareness. One can objectify and

capture “I” through a reflection of one’s past acts and experiences. However, this self-awareness through reflection is only possible because of retention. Since the temporal horizon is already established through inner time-consciousness, self-awareness through reflection is possible. In this sense, the temporal horizon established by inner time-consciousness is an underlying condition of reflective self-awareness. In this sense, inner time-consciousness can be called pre-reflective self-awareness. In the end, I summarized Husserl’s metaphysical position as a kind of idealism where experiences are mutually constituted by both subject and object. This comes from Husserl’s criticism of the Cartesian dualistic view by Brentano.

## **Chapter 2: Analysis on Yogacara’s Theory of Time**

### **2.1 Yogacara’s Criticism on Sarvastivadins & Direct Realism**

Yogacara’s criticism of the linear conception of time is a part of the critique of *Sarvastivadins* who pertain to a specific group of Buddhism inside the Abhidharma tradition. The term *sarvastivada* in Sanskrit can be translated as “the theory of all is real” and they are known to hold direct realism. They insist that the past, present, and future are all real in their doctrine of the existence of three times (*sarvakalastita*). An important thing to note is that, for Sarvastivadins, everything in the universe consists of *dharma*s (law of the universe), and the *dharma*s exist throughout the past, present, and future permanently. This is because *dharma* possesses intrinsic nature (*svabhava*) which means that *dharma*s can exist independently (Gethin, 1998, p.242). Since *dharma*s exist independently throughout time, it is in this sense that they call the past, present, and future “real.” Although *dharma* exists eternally in the past,

present, and future, we can only experience and recognize it in the moment of the present.

Therefore, the past, present, and future are equally real, but they appear to us impermanently.

Sarvastivadins' understanding of the twelve links of dependent origination represents the linear notion of time that flows eternally from the past, to the present, to the future (Osaki, 1979, p.155). The twelve links of dependent origination show how ignorance of the impermanent nature of reality causes eleven different causal chains of phenomenon that ultimately end with rebirth. In Buddhism, life is defined as suffering so the only way to cease suffering is by realizing the impermanent nature of reality and by ceasing each causal chain. Since the twelfth link is rebirth, the realization will cease the cycle of rebirth in the end. Accordingly, the past cause determines the present, and the present cause determines the future in the twelve links of dependent origination. In this context, what supports Sarvastivadins' conception of time is causality and determination. The past, present, and future are equally real in an ontological sense, but the experience is limited to the moment. This limited momentary experience moves towards the future in a linear manner due to causation and thus the future is determined by the past and the present.

Yogacarins are critical of Sarvastivadins' notion of time because the external causation assumes the existence of the external world. Sarvastivadins show that ignorance of the impermanent reality causes other actions in reality and causes the cycle of rebirth in the end. This means that the future is determined by the past and the present actions by causality in the external world, and this process assumes the existence of the external world.

In contrast, Yogacarins deny the existence of the external world. They insist nothing independent can appear to us other than in consciousness. So, unlike Sarvastivadins, they negate the existence of any mind-independent phenomenon and object. For Yogacarins, it is not the case that the phenomenon and the object in reality directly present themselves to the mind, but rather the phenomenon and the object in reality are the product of the

consciousness and the mental act. In this sense, Yogacara philosophy holds an idealistic view of the world. Since everything is mind-dependent, there is no external world, and therefore, external causation is impossible for Yogacarins.

## **2.2 The Structure of Eight Kinds of Consciousnesses & Karmic Seeds**

The Yogacara school of Buddhism is the school of “consciousness-only” (*vijnaptimatra*) and they are a group of Buddhists inside the Mahayana tradition. Their main philosophical theory is that all existing entities consist of eight kinds of consciousnesses and it is in this context that they are called “consciousness-only.” In other words, Yogacarins insist that no mind-independent entity exists. Yogacara’s conception of human existence is nothing but a continuation or a flow of consciousness (*citta-santana*). Reality is in the mind in the sense that it is constructed by the consciousness, but the momentary mind disappears when the next momentary mind rises at the next moment. Since things are impermanent in Buddhism, even the mind itself is momentary for Yogacarins. However, the mind that constantly rises and disappears forms a stream of flow and this is how there is a consistent flow of consciousness (Kohjoh, 2006, p.157).

According to *Ch’eng wei-shih lun* 成唯識論 (Dharmapāla, Xuanzang and Vasubandhu, 1973), the eight kinds of consciousnesses are a combination of five consciousnesses related to our five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching), *manovijnana*, *manas*, and *alayavijnana*. Yogacarins insist that every entity in the universe depends on the eight kinds of consciousnesses in order to appear as a phenomenon or an object for us. The sixth consciousness *manovijnana* is a mental consciousness that cannot function through time but organizes and synthesizes the information gained through five consciousnesses. The seventh and eighth ones are deeper layers of consciousness and these



exist throughout time. *Manas* functions as a basis for the continuation of the sixth consciousness. It also observes *alayavijnana* and thinks of it as a self which results in subject-object dualism. *Alayavijnana* is the most fundamental part of the whole eight types of consciousnesses. It is a subliminal stream of awareness and is also said to be a storehouse consciousness since this is where karmic seeds are stored and create rebirth. Osaki shows that *alayavijnana* not only works as a storehouse for the karmic seeds but also is a subject of the cycle of reincarnation, a subject of the acts, a subject of perception, and the very root of existence (Osaki, 1979, p.162).

To understand Yogacara's theory of time, it is necessary to understand the function of *karma* and karmic seeds (*bija*) in relation to the eighth consciousness *alayavijnana*. The literal meaning of *karma* in Sanskrit is "action." When there is an action (*karma*), there is a causal consequence (*phala*) to its action and the relationship between them is a causal relationship (Siderits, 2019). *Karma* indicates physical, mental, and verbal acts. There is a causal condition for *karma* to become *phala*, and this is the karmic seed (*bija*). A seed can be understood as a potentiality or possibility of the rise of any phenomenon. The intentional action leaves a possibility for the next karmic action in the mind and becomes a causal condition to cause an effect. The seed does not necessarily ripen all the time, but when it does, it becomes a "fruit" (*phala*). To sum up, our physical, mental, and verbal action (*karma*) leaves a potentiality (*bija*) in our mind, and this potentiality conditions an effect (*phala*). These seeds are stored in the eighth consciousness of *alayavijnana* until it ripens and becomes a "fruit."

What supports Yogacara's non-linear view of time is the structure of eight kinds of consciousnesses and seeds. Tamaki shows the process of how karmic seeds stick to the storehouse consciousness (*alayavijnana*) in the framework of eight kinds of consciousnesses and this is the structure of the momentary consciousness (Tamaki, 2009, p.39).

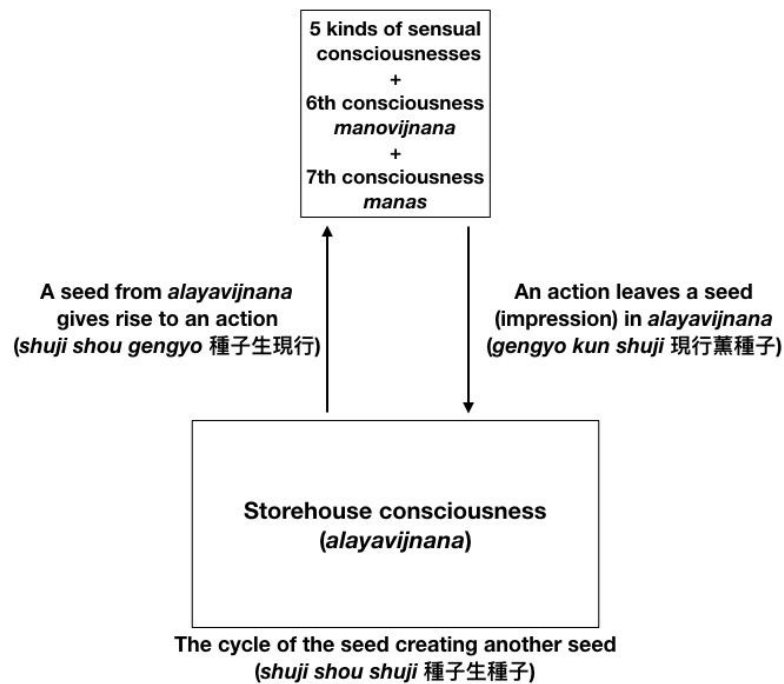


Figure 3. A translated version of the figure in Tamaki (2009)

Figure 3 is an English translation of the figure in Tamaki (2009) and it shows the relationship between the seven consciousnesses and the storehouse consciousness (*alayavijnana*).

*Alayavijnana* stores all the past karmic seeds and a seed from *alayavijnana* gives rise to an action which appears to the seven consciousnesses (*shuji shou gengyo* 種子生現行). Because of the action that appears due to a karmic seed, this also creates other seeds and sticks or “perfumes” to *alayavijnana* (*gengyo kun shuji* 現行薰種子). Here, the reason why they use the verb “perfumes” (*kun* 薰) is that the way karmic seed sticks on *alayavijnana* is analogous to how the smell gets absorbed by clothes. Ultimately, it is the cycle of the karmic seed that ends up creating another karmic seed (*shuji shou shuji* 種子生種子). This is the basic structure of the eight consciousnesses and also a structure of the moment of now. Tamaki states that this structure is comparable to Husserl’s phenomenology in the sense that the seven kinds of consciousnesses are related to primal impression, an action leaving a seed to

*alayavijnana* (*gengyo kun shuji* 現行薰種子) as retention, and the seed from *alayavijnana* giving rise to action (*shuji shou gengyo* 種子生現行) as protention. *Alayavijnana* is a combination of what is retained through retention and the temporal horizon of protention (Tamaki, 2009, p.39-40). However, this structure itself does not create a sense of temporality. There needs to be further analysis in order to understand Yogacara's conception of temporality.

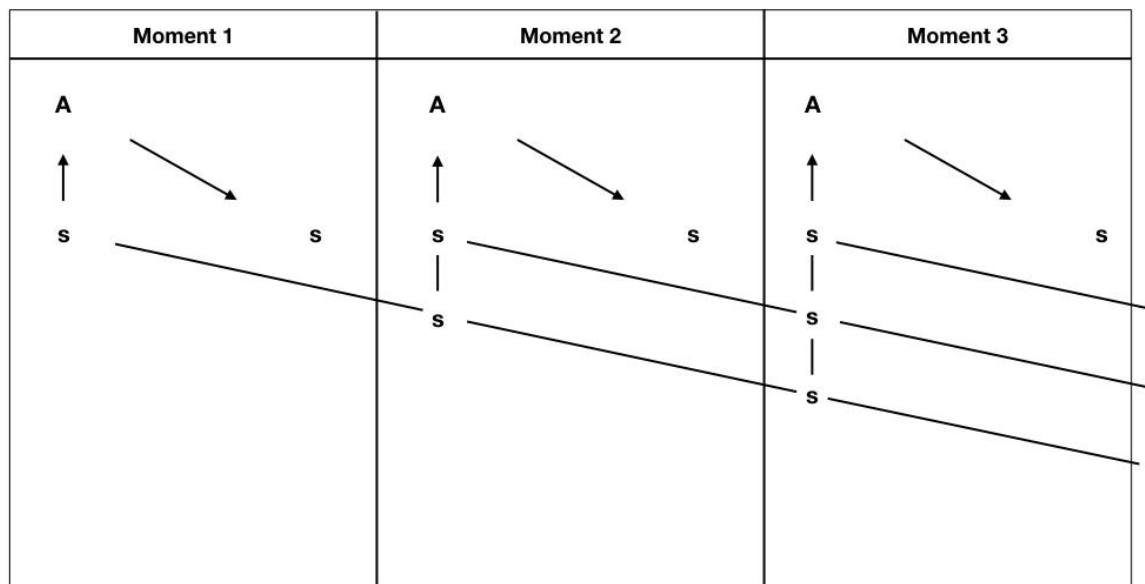


Figure 4. A translated version of the figure in Tamaki (2009)

Figure 4 shows the structure of the moment with a temporal aspect. 'A' represents seven kinds of consciousnesses and 's' represents karmic seed. The left one shows the first moment, the middle one shows the second moment, and the right one shows the third moment. Here, the moment disappears before the next moment rises so the only thing that stays throughout time is the vertical line of karmic seeds. The figure shows how the karmic seed gives rise to the action through seven kinds of consciousnesses and the potentiality of

the effect of action sticks or “perfumes” *alayavijnana* as a new seed. In Moment 1, the karmic seed gives rise to the action and it leaves a karmic seed in *alayavijnana*. The new seed created by the action gives rise to the next action in Moment 2. The very first karmic seed in Moment 1 is retained in *alayavijnana* throughout time and stored as a past seed. The flow of consciousness here is the vertical layers of karmic seeds shown in Moment 3. Because the past seeds are retained in our deepest level of consciousness, the continuous flow of consciousness is possible even though every moment disappears when the next moment rises. The important thing is that the relationship between each seed is “past retention by past retention.” Tamaki claims that in order for time to appear from the structure shown in Figure 3, it is necessary to have the cycle of the seed giving rise to another seed (*shuji shou shuji* 種子生種子) as a continuation of consciousness throughout time (Tamaki, 2009, p.42). He also notes that this single flow of consciousness, which is possible through retention of karmic seeds in *alayavijnana*, is the selfless absolute subjectivity which is thought of as a unified self by the seventh consciousness *manas* (Tamaki, 2009, p.43). In a sense, *alayavijnana* is a selfless time-constituting flow of consciousness that sits in the deepest level of our consciousness, and therefore, can be thought of as a root of our existence. Kohjoh mentions that ultimately, the “consciousness-only” doctrine indicates *alayavijnana*-only (Kohjoh, 2006, p.162).

For Yogacarins, time humans can experience is limited to the moment and the moment disappears when it rises and will be exchanged for the next moment. In this impermanent view of the experience, temporality is possible because of the cycle of seeds creating new seeds through seven kinds of consciousnesses and *alayavijnana*. Retention of the past seeds creates the continuous stream so this is the source of time. Therefore, even though the moment rises and falls, temporality is generated through retention of seeds in *alayavijnana*.

### 2.3 No-Self Doctrine & Temporality

Yogacara Buddhists' goal is to realize no-self and compassion and their theoretical framework is a part of their religious goal of enlightenment. It is important to understand their no-self doctrine since their theory of time is also part of this bigger project. The Buddhist notion of no-self refers to the non-existence of something that can be called a solid and unified self-identity such as a soul. This thought stems from the core Buddhist teaching: Four Noble Truths. Four Noble Truths show that 1) the reality is suffering, 2) the origin of suffering is attachment and clinging to delusional things, 3) the cessation of suffering is possible through enlightenment, and that 4) enlightenment can be achieved through the noble eightfold path (Gethin, 1998).

For instance, if you think that "I am young," you will suffer if you become old because you define yourself as "young" and cling to "youngness." This kind of suffering arises because there is a false belief that the unified identity of "I" exists. The cling to youngness arises because there is something to cling to. If you stop defining yourself as such and realize that the unified self does not exist, you will not cling on to anything and start accepting everything as it is. This means that suffering will not arise. Therefore, realizing that the unified self is delusional because everything is constantly changing (or nothing is permanent) is one of the most important parts of Buddhist teaching in order to get rid of suffering.

According to the book *Ch'eng wei-shih lun* 成唯識論 by Yogacarins, there is a theory of four *bhagas* which presents the structure of the mental act and phenomenon. *Nimittabhaga* is the perceived aspect of the mind, *darsanabhaga* is the perceiving aspect of the mind, *svasamvittibhaga* is the knowledge or awareness of the perception has taken place, and

*svasamvitti-samvitti-bhaga* is the awareness of *svasamvittibhaga* (Dharmapāla, Xuanzang and Vasubandhu, 1973, p.141-142). This fourfold structure shows the structure of human cognition and shows how consciousness transforms itself into a phenomenon when the mental act perceives the object (Li, 2017, p.189).

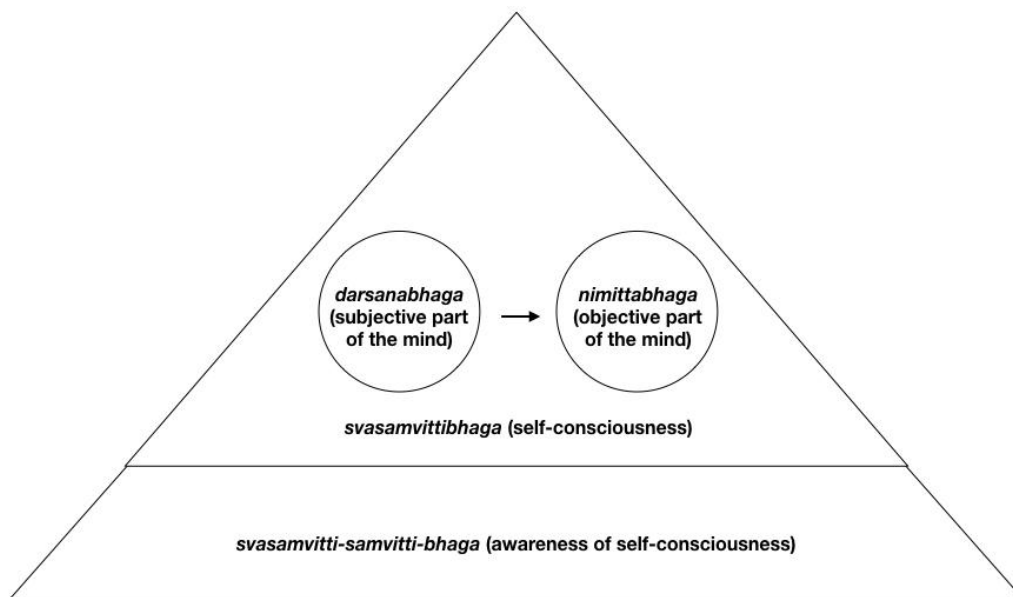


Figure 5

Figure 5 shows the structure of the four *bhagas*. The subjective aspect of the mental act (*darsanabhaga*) is directed towards the objective aspect of the mental act (*nimittabhaga*). Because the external world is not relevant for Yogacarins, the subject looking at the object is within the realm of consciousness. Therefore, when the subject is looking at the object, it is divided into the subjective aspect and the objective aspect of the mental act. This division of *darsanabhaga* and *nimittabhaga* is possible because *svasamvittibhaga* gives rise to them. *Svasamvittibhaga* is self-aware of subjectivity and objectivity as a transformation of consciousness. Furthermore, *svasamvitti-samvitti-bhaga* is aware of *svasamvittibhaga* which

means that it is aware of self-consciousness. Every mental act possesses these cognitive faculties, but since there are different types of cognitive capacity to mental acts (i.e. thinking is a different mental act than intuition), eight kinds of consciousnesses hold eight kinds of cognitive capacity.

The fourfold structure of *bhagas* and eight kinds of consciousnesses explain the reason why we tend to misunderstand that the unified self exists. Our physical experiences are possible because of the transformation of *alayavijnana* into every phenomenon.

*Alayavijnana* transforms itself into *darsanabhaga* which is a subjective aspect of the dual embodiment. It also transforms itself into *nimittabhaga* which is an objective aspect of the embodiment. This means that the fact that one possesses the double embodiment of both *being a body* and *having a body* is due to the transformation of *alayavijnana*. For instance, when I touch my left arm with my right hand, I can have both the subjective feeling of touching the left arm and the objective feeling of being touched by the right hand. Yogacarins explains that this is because the deepest layer of our consciousness, namely *alayavijnana*, is transforming itself into both the subjective and objective aspect and thus allows us to have this dual experience.

Furthermore, these dual aspects of the embodiment done by the transformation of *alayavijnana* associate with the sixth and seventh consciousness and as a result create the delusional thought that the unified self-identity exists (Li, 2017, p.191). The sixth consciousness, *manovijnana*, gathers the sensual information from the first five consciousness about the objective aspect of the embodiment (*nimittabhaga*), and thinks of it as a unified self. The seventh consciousness, *manas*, observes the subjective aspect of the embodiment (*darsanabhaga*) and thinks of it as a unified self. Because of this, one misunderstands the transformation of *alayavijnana* into a subjective and objective physical experience as a unified self-identity. However, all kinds of consciousnesses are also aware of

itself (*svasamvittibhaga/svasamvitti-samvitti-bhaga*) so this is why we are able to realize that the unified self-identity is a false understanding.

*Karma* and karmic seeds rise because of this false understanding of the unified self. In this sense, for Yogacarins, temporality exists because of a false understanding of the unified self. Temporality appears from retention of the past seeds in *alayavijnana*, and the seeds appear because of a false understanding that unified identity exists. If one realizes that there is no unified self, one can reduce the cycle of karmic seed generating *karma*. For instance, if you think that “I am young,” the experience of this self-attachment creates the possibility (or karmic seed) of the other consequences of self-attachment. The seed will not ripen and cause an effect unless the seed was generated and stored by the delusional self. Accordingly, if one realizes that there is no unified self-identity, the seed will not be generated and one is able to break the cycle of rebirth, which means that one can achieve enlightenment. When one achieves enlightenment, temporality disappears for this person because temporality for Yogacarins is the result of retention of seeds.

So far, in Chapter 2, I have explained that the temporal flow of consciousness is underpinned by the past retention of karmic seeds through the cycle of eight kinds of consciousnesses. This theory of seeds reflects that time is within the structure of consciousness. However, as I explained earlier, the rise of the karmic seed as well as temporality stems from the misunderstanding of the delusional self-identity. Temporality cannot appear if there are no karmic seeds generated by the misunderstanding of the unified self-identity. This misunderstanding of the unified self-identity stems from the sixth and the seventh consciousness. The sixth consciousness observes the objective aspect of double embodiment and thinks of it as a unified self, and the seventh consciousness observes the subjective aspect of double embodiment and thinks of it as a unified self. Although the construction of temporality is directly through the past retention of the karmic seeds, this



whole structure of time appears because of the seeds generated by the misunderstanding of the unified self. This misunderstanding is done by the sixth and seventh consciousness.

## **Conclusion**

There are significant similarities and interesting differences between Husserl and Yogacara's theory of time and consciousness. In terms of similarity, first of all, both Husserl and Yogacara have different interlocutors but they both share similar concerns on the critique of the linear view of time. Husserl's interlocutor is Brentano and his theory of linear time shows that time is a succession of psychological activities which is possible through mental causation. It shows that the temporal object brings about stimuli and causes a sensation in the mind. This is to say that, for instance, the melody is a mind-independent temporal object and it causes a sensation in our mind so that we are able to experience the melody throughout time. Brentano's theory of time assumes the mind-independent status of the objects. Yogacara Buddhist's interlocutors are Sarvastivadins and their theory of time is also underpinned by causation. They insist that the past, present, and future are all real but our experience of time is limited to the moment. Our experience of the moment has a linear progression since the past causes the present and the present causes the future. This causal progression of time in a linear manner is shown in the twelve links of dependent origination. In this sense, both Husserl and Yogacarins criticize time to be reduced to causation.

Another similarity between Husserl and Yogacara Buddhists is that they are both critical of the mind-independent status of the objects and phenomena. Husserl claims that it is philosophically naive to assume the mind-independent status of objects and phenomena. Here, he does not necessarily deny the existence of the mind-independent external world but

he thinks there is more depth to it. This is why he thinks it is philosophically naive to take the mind-independent status of the world for granted. Additionally, assuming the mind-independent status of the objects and phenomena will lead to mind-body dualism. Husserl is concerned about this sort of Cartesian dualism since it will create an existential crisis and we will lose the meaning of the external world. Yogacarins deny the external world altogether. They insist that there is nothing mind-independent in this world and every object and phenomenon is dependent on eight kinds of consciousnesses. Accordingly, both Husserl and Yogacarins are critical towards the assumption of the mind-independent status of the objects and phenomena.

Furthermore, Husserl's theory of inner time-consciousness and Yogacara's conception of *alayavijnana* are comparable. The absolute streaming inner time-consciousness rests in the deepest part of human consciousness and it is a pure flow of consciousness. It is also a pre-reflective self-awareness in the sense that one can capture "I" thanks to retention. Additionally, the absolute flow of inner time-consciousness is a time-constituting process through retention, primal impression, and protention. These are comparable to Yogacarins' claim of *alayavijnana*. It is also the deepest consciousness of human existence that presents phenomenon and experienced objects through the interaction with seven other consciousnesses. The storehouse consciousness is a selfless and pure flow of consciousness that makes the seven other consciousnesses possible. Since it creates a flow of temporality through retention of the karmic seed, it is also itself a time constructing consciousness. Especially, the Husserlian theory of retention and the Yogacara conception of the karmic seed can be seen as parallel. Husserl shows that the past is created because of what has been retained through retention. The fact that primal impressions are retained in order so that they can be recollected repeatedly is one of the processes of time constitution. Similarly, Yogacarins claim that the karmic seed retaining other karmic seeds that have been generated

from karmic action creates a consistent flow within *alayavijnana*, and this is how time is constituted. Both theories explain the appearance of time within the deepest layer of consciousness by retention. Without the past retention, a stream of consciousness as well as time construction is not possible.

There are a lot of differences between these two theories, but the most interesting differences are the religious aspect of Yogacara philosophy and the root that underpins Husserlian temporal flow of consciousness. In contrast to Husserl, Yogacarins' theory of consciousness and time is part of their bigger project. It is not the case that Yogacarins were curious about how consciousness works but it is the case that they developed the theory of consciousness in order for their moral and religious goal to be achieved. One of their aims is to realize no-self in order to save people from suffering and stop the cycle of reincarnation. Realizing no-self is essential to cease suffering through getting rid of the *karma* and karmic seed of self-attachment. All of the past karmic seeds are stored in *alayavijnana* and the past seed retains another past seed. This creates a flow of consciousness even in a non-permanent world, and the existence of such continuous flow necessitates time. Their theory of temporality is deeply connected to morality since it developed within the method to reach enlightenment to get out from the cycle of reincarnation. Therefore, the concept of time for Yogacarins always has to do with morality. This is radically different from Husserl's since his conception of time has nothing to do with morality.

Furthermore, since Yogacarins' investigation of time is part of their religious goal, their notion of temporality exists because of a false understanding of the unified self. Their notion of time is necessitated by the continuous flow which is created by retention of seeds. *Karma* and karmic seeds rise because of the self-attachment by the false understanding of the unified identity, and this is what creates the cycle of rebirth. Life is suffering in Buddhism, so Buddhist's goal is to break the cycle of rebirth by realizing the no-self doctrine and get rid of

the conditioning by karmic seeds. Here, Yogacara's temporality is generated from retention of the karmic seeds, so temporality exists because of the false understanding of the unified self-identity. In other words, time cannot exist for the person who achieves enlightenment because temporality is a result of the past retention of seeds. If the seeds are not generated by self-attachment, there cannot be temporal flow. Their theory of time is subservient to the enlightenment which is also radically different from Husserl's theory of time.

Another interesting difference between Husserl and Yogacara's theory of time is the root that underpins Husserlian temporal flow of consciousness. For Husserl, temporality has been discussed as an ego theory. He claims that because of the structure of inner time-consciousness, retention of the primal impression is possible, which means that one can retain phenomena as past memories. Because of what is retained, reflection and recollection are possible. In this sense, inner time-consciousness can be defined as a pre-reflective self-awareness because self-reflection from the past memory is possible due to the existence of inner time-consciousness. In other words, for Husserl, the temporal horizon is given to the ego as a space to reflect on itself. On the other hand, Yogacarins do not talk about temporality as an ego theory like Husserl. For Yogacarins, what creates time within the human mind is retention of karmic seeds by the cyclical act of eight kinds of consciousnesses. The past seeds are retained in *alayavijnana* and this creates a consistent flow of consciousness. Since this consistent flow exists throughout time, it also creates temporality. Yogacara's time theory was developed in order to realize the no-self to get out from the cycle of death and rebirth. Therefore, in contrast to Husserl, their time theory is a part of a theoretical process to realize that the unified self does not exist.

In conclusion, it is important to consider a non-linear conception of time because it gives an alternative way to think of time as part of our lived experience. Time is not a mind-independent entity that exists outside of our existence. Time is not an external reality

that sits in the higher realm. Time is interconnected with our existence in the sense that time cannot exist without our consciousness and consciousness cannot exist without time.

Thinking that time is part of our lived experience avoids mind-world dualism and reconnects us and the world once again.

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