



Anti-Hegelian Bias in Yogācāra Studies

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Abstract

One of the central questions of Yogācāra studies is whether Yogācāra should be understood as a form of idealism. In addressing this question, scholars frequently invoke Hegel's philosophy as a type of idealism fundamentally incompatible with Yogācāra. But those references are often made without direct engagement with Hegel's texts, relying instead on reductive accounts of his philosophy. In this paper, I aim to uncover this reductivism and show that it does not withstand critical analysis. I begin by examining a recent example of anti-Hegelian scholarship, followed by a broader survey of similar positions over the past decades. I then bring these positions into a conversation with Hegel's texts, revealing tensions between Hegel's philosophy and its representation in Buddhist philosophy. On this basis, I advocate for a new interpretation of Yogācāra texts through a Hegelian lens.

Keywords Hegel · Vasubandhu · Yogācāra · Indian philosophy · Idealism · Ancient philosophy

My aim in this paper is to critically examine the claim that Yogācāra, a late ancient Indian Buddhist philosophy with idealist implications, is incompatible with the form of idealism promoted by German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. This claim emerged from Anglo-American Yogācāra scholarship in the 1980s and merged with other, mostly analytic and phenomenological trends in contemporary Buddhist philosophy. It has resurfaced in contemporary scholarship, most recently in Szilvia Szanyi's entry on Yogācāra (2024) in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. It seems that it has

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spread into the mainstream of philosophical scholarship on Yogācāra and set a new standard there, supplanting the older paradigm proposed by Stcherbatsky (1930), who saw significant parallels between Yogācāra and Hegelian idealism and whose position remained influential among Indian scholars until the 1960s.

The idea that Hegel's philosophy and Yogācāra are incompatible is problematic insofar as there has never been a thorough engagement with Hegel's idealism in Yogācāra studies. Scholars tend to reiterate anti-Hegelian tropes without questioning or critically examining their underpinnings. There are only two notable exceptions to this tendency: Ashok C. Chatterjee (1975) and Scarfe (2006). Chatterjee, whose scholarship I shall discuss in the last section, has been largely disregarded by Yogācāra scholars because of his sympathies for traditional Western metaphysics, similarly to T. R. V. Murti, whose work on Nāgārjuna is often belittled by Madhyamaka scholars.¹ Scarfe's investigation, to which I shall return below, constitutes one of the most thorough systematic and comparative explorations of Yogācāra. Scarfe's focus lies on the fact that Hegel himself attempted to distinguish his idealism from Buddhist idealism (2006: 48–9). He argues that this distinction does not withstand a comparativist reading of the source texts and that both philosophies share more ideas than Hegel was ready to admit. My interpretation follows Scarfe's analysis closely but tackles the problem from the opposite direction, criticizing scholars of Buddhism for their attempt to exacerbate the distinction between Hegel and Yogācāra.

There are many historical reasons to the tenacity of anti-Hegelian sentiments among scholars of Buddhist philosophy. Many of these scholars have a background in Anglo-American analytic philosophy or are influenced by the analytic rejection of metaphysics. One of the historical hallmarks of analytic philosophy, as popularized by its initiators G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, lies in its opposition to idealism. In fact, the analytic movement historically emerged from Russell's and Moore's revolt against the predominant philosophical school of their time, which was the school of British idealism. British idealism was championed by thinkers such as James H. Stirling, F. H. Bradley, James M. E. McTaggart, the translator of Plato and Aristotle A. E. Taylor, and G. R. G. Mure, one of the last adversaries of Russell's analytic project.² Most of these philosophers referred to Hegel as the forefather of idealist philosophy. For example, Stirling's seminal (1865) work *The Secret of Hegel* acclaimed Hegel as a prophetic voice lending itself to the fight against the rise of atomistic materialism (1865, 747)—which, interestingly, corresponds to the position of which Indian scholars of Buddhism such as Murti accused analyticism.³ In their opposition to these idealist philosophers, Russell and Moore present a highly simplified and problematic account of idealism, basically reducing it to the claim that existence is the same as being an object of perception.⁴ It appears likely that Russell's and Moore's aversion to Hegelian idealism, combined with their highly simplified and polemical account of idealist

¹ For example, Mark Siderits cautions against Murti's claim that Madhyamaka is spiritual and not analytic, finding that claim "ideological" (Siderits, 2016: 44).

² Russell states that his and Moore's shift happened around 1898 (Baldwin, 1984: 357).

³ See Siderits's critique of Murti above, no. 1.

⁴ Moore (1903) reduces idealism to the claim that *esse est percipi*.

arguments, influenced the way that Anglo-American philosophers conceptualize the relation between Yogācāra and Western idealism, and in particular Hegelian idealism.

Uncovering the contemporary influence of these anti-Hegelian sentiments is useful in that it offers a way to deconstruct the dominance of Anglo-American paradigms in the academic field of Buddhist philosophy and to suggest more positive and constructive ways of doing comparative philosophy. In Hegel's case, the dominance of analytic or anti-metaphysical ideas does not only run the risk of repressing a worthwhile comparativist investigation into Buddhist philosophy but also threatens to keep audiences specializing or interested in Western philosophy away from Buddhism. In response to these dangers, the present paper aims to use a critique of anti-Hegelian bias as a key to highlight the positive potential of Hegel's philosophy to interpret Yogācāra.

I shall begin the present investigation by analyzing Szanyi's statement on idealism in her SEP entry and isolating its main claims. The aim of this analysis is to uncover the conceptual implications and the possible tensions between these concepts and their history in Western philosophy. In a second step, I shall contextualize Szanyi's engagement with anti-idealist tropes by surveying antecedents in Yogācāra scholarship. Finally, I shall connect the elements gained in the first two sections with Hegelian source texts and suggest that there are, in fact, more similarities than differences. I shall conclude with some observations on possible future perspectives for Yogācāra studies.

One of the central questions in Yogācāra scholarship is whether Yogācāra may be interpreted as a form of idealism. The difficulty raised by this question is that Yogācāra does not follow the dynamics of Western philosophy, from which the label "idealism" emerged. Hence, applying such a label to Yogācāra—an Indian, non-Western tradition—requires certain conceptual adjustments.

To determine whether Yogācāra can be seen as a form of idealism, it is necessary to analyze how it resonates with philosophies that have been labelled as idealism in the West. The strenuous, occasionally fierce discussions around the modalities of that analysis suggest that those modalities are not at all self-evident and require extensive groundwork. Scholars have proposed various points of reference to carry out that groundwork, among which Berkeley and Husserl have been most prominent (recently Gäb, 2023 and Li, 2022). Other scholars refuse to commit to a certain point of reference and try to navigate interpretations without mobilizing a predetermined vocabulary and philosophical methodology.

Among both groups of scholars, one frequently encounters a negative reference to Hegel's philosophy. Hegel is, as we shall see, an idealist, which means that he thinks of the true form of reality as a "Mind" or "Spirit" (Geist). Certain parallelisms between this concept of the Mind and similar concepts in Yogācāra brought early scholars in Buddhism, such as Stcherbatsky (1930) and Chatterjee (1975), to compare Yogācāra to Hegelian idealism. However, the general discomfort of the Anglo-American tradition with idealism made those scholars' proposals seem suspect or unpracticable. As a result, Hegel's philosophy is frequently considered, as I shall show in the second section, as an inappropriate hermeneutical model to approach Yogācāra idealism.

To investigate the criticism of Hegel, I want to begin with Szanyi's encyclopedic entry in the *SEP*. I want to clarify that I do not take Szanyi's statements as an example of bad scholarship—on the contrary, her introduction must be seen as one of the most lucid and helpful overviews of Yogācāra to date. Her further work on Yogācāra, to which I will refer below, is grounded in careful historical and philological work. I want to use her statements on idealism specifically because they so aptly express ideas that may be considered as reflective of a general scholarly consensus:

But even if we accept that Yogācāra-Vijñānavāda authors questioned the mind-independence of reality, it is still controversial whether labelling their view as ontological *idealism* is helpful or illuminating. As many have noted, we are dealing with a peculiarly *Buddhist* form of idealism. [...] Although the Yogācāras often emphasise that consciousness really or fundamentally exists, it is not to be understood (in line with the Buddhist *anātman* or no-self doctrine) as either an individual or a universal mental *substance*, as we typically find in the works of Western idealist philosophers. In particular, the Yogācāra concept of mind differs equally from Berkeley's perceiving souls and Hegel's absolute spirit (not to mention the theistic connotations of these Western theories, which are generally alien to the Buddhist tradition). (Szanyi, 2024)

This statement presents several different threads, or argumentative layers, of which each relates to a distinct problem. These problems may be reformulated in the following way:

- 1) The problem that Buddhist idealism possesses specific (linguistic and conceptual) characteristics that make it difficult to compare it to Western philosophies,
- 2) The problem that the “consciousness” exists in Buddhism, but that the Buddhist concept of consciousness does not resemble the Western concepts of (a) individual mental substance or (b) universal mental substance,
- 3) The problem that certain implications and assumptions, for example about the existence of a soul, found in Berkeley and Hegel make their idealisms incompatible with Yogācāra,
- 4) And ultimately, the problem that Western philosophy tends to have theistic connotations.

To prepare the analysis of the Hegelian problem (3) in the third section of this paper, I shall first give a brief account of the other, adjacent issues in (2) and (4), viz. substance and theism, since these issues concern concepts and ideas that also inform Hegel's system. Based on this preparatory analysis, I shall then go over to the history of anti-Hegelian arguments in the next section.

The problem of substance (2) may be seen as one of most common tropes in Yogācāra scholarship. It is perhaps the issue to which Western interpreters of Buddhism most frequently return, in an occasionally almost obsessive manner. Szanyi makes two contiguous points: while Yogācāra admits that some kind of “conscious-

ness” exists,⁵ that existence is not comparable to Western individual mental substance, supposedly the soul, or universal mental substance, supposedly the divine Mind, *intellectus divinus* or Platonic-Aristotelean *nous*, which pervades late ancient, medieval and early modern Western philosophy, and constitutes the basis of Hegel’s notion of “Geist” or Spirit.

Szanyi’s thesis that the Buddhist no-self theory eliminates the existence of the soul is rather unproblematic. More problematic is the fact that she does not come back to the problem of the universal mind but makes it disappear in the middle of her argument. The no-self argument only excludes individual substance, and only in the sense of a “soul.” But there seems to be an implicit assumption that the Buddhist no-self doctrine generally and universally excludes the existence of any immaterial substance, including the universal mind.

One could argue that in order to understand Szanyi’s rejection of universal mental substance, one must investigate the notion of substance more closely. In the *Thirty Verses* (henceforth TVK), Vasubandhu talks about ultimate reality in terms of an ultimate attainment through which the duality of a perceived object and a perceiving subject is transcended, identifying it as a *dhātu* (TVK 30). *Dhātu* is a form of a ultimate reality identical to the Buddha’s dharma-body (*dharmākhyo...mahāmuneh*). In Vasubandhu’s abhidharmic terminology, a *dhātu* is defined by the fact that “it supports its immanent characteristic and the derived forms.”⁶ This definition is the same as the definition of *dharma*, as KL Dhammajoti observes in his introduction the AKBh (Dhammajoti, 2012: 11). In the case of *dharma*, the definition is even more salient because of the etymological relation between the dharma and the quality of “bearing” (*dhāraṇa*) certain characteristics. A *dhātu* or *dharma* is something fundamental that acts as the support or “bearer” (from the root *dhr*) of certain characteristics.

If we look at Aristotle’s definition of a substance (οὐσία), at *Met.* 1017b24-5, in which the Western notion of substance originates, we can see that Aristotle defines it, simply put, and without going into the details of his metaphysics, as something that lies at the root of every individual thing (τό θ’ ὑποκείμενον ἔσχατον) and that, contrary to attributes—or accidents, in the Aristotelian terminology—, cannot be predicated of any other thing (ὁ μήκετι κατ’ ἄλλου λέγεται). A substance is a support or a bearer of characteristics or accidents. It is evident that with this understanding of substance, we find ourselves very close to Vasubandhu’s abhidharmic idea of a substance. In both cases, the *dhātu*’s function of acting as a support of inherent characteristics (*svalakṣaṇa...dhāraṇa*) and the οὐσία’s function of constituting an “underlying” (ὕποκειμενον) support, substantiality lies in the function of acting as the bearing of certain characteristics. This parallelism suggests that the notion of substance offers a parallelism rather than a distinction between Buddhist and Western mental substance.

One could still argue that this parallelism is ultimately precluded by the fact that Buddhist and Western philosophies frame substance differently, which leads over to element 4) in Szanyi’s statement, which is theism. It is doubtlessly the case that in Aristotle as well as most of premodern Western philosophy, substance is connected

⁵ Which its correct: *dravyato* ‘st[i], TVKBh 42.16-7 (ed. Buescher, 2007).

⁶ *svalakṣaṇopādāyārūpadhāraṇād dhātavaś*, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* I,11, 8.13 (ed. Pradhan, 1975).

to the theological notion of God or divine reality as the most fundamental form of substance. But it seems to me that this distinction owes more to Szanyi's and other scholars' assumptions about which categories are admissible, and which aren't, than to the Buddhist ideas.

In book Λ of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle situates the primary and archetypal form of substance or οὐσία in the primordial intellect, which is the divine Mind or unmoved mover. One could speculate that Szanyi's argument for a distinction between Western idealism and Buddhism draws on this "theistic" assumption. Aristotle's substance indeed presents theological traces, as is evident, for example, in *Metaphysics E*, where Aristotle says that the discipline that describes first substance is "theological philosophy" (φιλοσοφία θεολογική, 1026a18-9). Only theology can describe the "eternal" (ἄϊδια) characteristics of first substance.

However, as suggested above, one could argue that the real problem does not lie in Western theism but in the assumption of scholars of Buddhism to exclude theism from Buddhist philosophy. In fact, looking at Vasubandhu's *Thirty Verses* again, we can see that the essential characteristics connected with universal mental substance as "God" in Western philosophy can also be found in Yogācāra. Vasubandhu's *dhātu* is a form of higher substance with distinctively "mental" or noetic traits. It is "transcendent knowledge" (*jñānaṃ lokottaraṃ*, TVK 29), a form of knowledge, as Sthiramati comments, empty of representation (*nirvikalpa*, TVKBh 140), which may be compared to Aristotle's divine Mind that thinks its own thinking (νοήσεως νόησις, *Met.* 1074b34). These significant similarities suggest that it would not be as absurd or devious, as Szanyi's formulation seems to suggest, to call the Yogācāra absolute a "universal mental substance," a *dhātu* existing as a form of transcendent *jñāna*.

Ultimately, speaking of "theology" or "theism" or refusing to do so is a matter of words. The ideas expressed in these words are present in Yogācāra as much as they are in the Western philosophies that Szanyi rejects as theism. It would be inconsequential to deny that Yogācāra is theistic, seeing that the texts involve a form of ultimate, mental reality, simply because the idea of theism is out of fashion in philosophy, or is not perceived as practicable anymore. Szanyi's hesitation to address this issue, which, one could argue, is not unimportant, makes the reader think that she is aware of this terminological ambiguity but does not consider it urgent or relevant.

Having investigated the terminological and historical context of Szanyi's mention of Hegelian "absolute spirit," we may now go over to exploring the antecedents to Szanyi's position within the environment of Yogācāra studies since the 1960s. The analysis in the first section has led us to believe that Szanyi's rejection of idealism and Hegel's philosophy in particular is motivated by implicit conventions rather than by a reading of Hegel. To make these implications visible, I propose to survey other examples from recent scholarship and analyze their possible influence on Szanyi. I shall then use these findings as a foil in the final section, that will allow us to see why the rejection of Hegelian idealism appears unwarranted in the light of the many profound parallelisms with Yogācāra.

In his *SEP* entry on Vasubandhu (2022), Jonathan Gold expresses his worry that the "mind" as ultimate reality or substance might not be an adequate concept to frame Buddhist philosophy, agreeing in that respect with Szanyi's *SEP* analyzed in the first section:

Vasubandhu explicitly denies that “mind” has ultimate reality. He is not a Hegelian idealist. But not all idealists are Hegelian, absolute idealists. Among idealisms, Vasubandhu’s is more closely aligned with Kant’s, in that both assert that the objects of our experience are only representations, while both also affirm the reality of unknowable things in themselves (*Ding an sich*).

Gold here conflates the two meanings of “mind” as a subjective and as universal mental substance, which are two meanings that we distinguished with Szanyi above. While one could argue that Buddhist no-self theory excludes the existence of the soul as an individual mental substance, Vasubandhu’s concept of transcendent knowledge, which is free of the “afflicted mind” (*kliṣṭam manaḥ*, TVKBh 62.12), i.e., the principle of subjectivity from which the illusion of the self emanates, and of the “perception of objects” (*viśayasyopalabdhi*, TVK 8), i.e., the principle of objectivity on which the assumption of an exterior world is based, belongs to a different category, unaffected by claims regarding an individual “mind” or “soul.” To distinguish Vasubandhu from Hegel—which Gold wants to accomplish here—it is necessary to account for that distinction and justify why transcendent knowledge cannot be a mental substance. But Gold does not provide such a justification, instead associating Vasubandhu with a rough interpretation of Kantian idealism, notwithstanding the profound problems brought along by these references. Gold’s confidence in stating that Vasubandhu rejects the idea of an ultimate mind and assumes Kantian *Dinge an sich* appears rather abrupt.

Lusthaus (2018) is outspoken about his rejection of Hegel and other “absolute idealists.” He argues that there is a fundamental difference between metaphysical and epistemological idealism and claims that Yogācāra involves epistemological but not metaphysical idealism.⁷ He criticizes: “Mainstream Western philosophy since Plato and Aristotle has treated ontology and metaphysics as the ultimate philosophic pursuit, with epistemology’s role being little more than to provide access and justification for one’s ontological pursuits and commitments.”

There is a certain irony in this statement. Hegelian philosophy is specifically concerned with the problem of the dichotomy between knowledge and being, or, as Lusthaus calls it, epistemology and ontology. As I shall argue in the next section, the first chapter of the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* seeks to provide an argument not for the primacy of ontology but for an overcoming of this very dichotomy. This also corresponds to Scarfe’s critique of anti-Hegelianism: scholars tend to transform Hegelian idealism into something that it simply is not, continuing to cultivate the “naïve, but common, misconception that Hegel’s Absolute Idealism is simply the most extreme form of idealism, devoid of any reference to empirical reality.” (2006: 57) Lusthaus in a certain way breaks down the Hegelian synthesis into the elements that it aims to sublimate—or refuses to understand that these elements cannot have the final say in their non-sublated, primitive form. Some of Szanyi’s formulations suggests that she, too, projects a dichotomic form of idealism that does not correspond to the texts: “Ontological idealism differs from epistemological idealism and phenomenology in that it straightforwardly rejects anything beyond our minds and mental states.”

⁷ A claim upheld, among others, by Ratić (2014) and Ferraro (2020). I criticize this claim in Muller (2023).

(Szanyi, 2024) Idealist philosophers in the West, for example Neoplatonists or German Idealists, do not claim that individual mental contents possess ultimate reality or exclude extramental reality. Rather, their idealism is grounded in the idea that there are potential ways to deconstruct the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity, and that this deconstruction happens in a higher form of intellectual reality. The dichotomy of epistemology and ontology cannot reflect the complexity of this deconstruction.

Despite Hegel's opposition to the Brahminic tradition and his explicit criticism of certain Indian texts, for example in the last chapter of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Saam Trivedi thinks that Hegelian philosophy falls into the same category as Brahminic idealism:

Absolute idealism, very roughly, is the view that what exists ultimately (and, in some versions of absolute idealism, creates all that exists) is one overarching mentalistic or spiritual thing or principle or force, whether the Absolute or Mind or Brahman. Advaita Vedanta as well as Hegel and later Hegelians such as Bradley provide examples of this variety of idealism. (Trivedi, 2005: 232–3)

Admittedly, Hegel's rejection of Brahminism lacks any kind of grounding in first-hand source material or scholarship. His outline of Brahminic thought in the *Encyclopedia* and other works presents substantial flaws, drawing a dark and pessimistic image of Indian philosophy as an atavistic, crude form of monism.⁸ But independently of this lack of accuracy, Hegel's outline of what he conceives as Indian philosophers' mistaken position paradoxically corresponds to the standpoint that Trivedi attributes to him. Trivedi confuses Hegelian idealism with a theory of some ultimate, objective principle of reality, which is a kind of theory that Hegelian idealism actively aims to overcome. As in the cases of Szanyi, Gold, and Lusthaus, Trivedi manifests a certain degree of confusion about Hegel's ideas on the ultimacy of the "absolute Spirit." The position that these scholars impute to Hegel turns out to be the very position that Hegel aims to deconstruct.

Harris (1991) accuses Theodor Stcherbatsky of being influenced by "Kant and Hegel" (66) and of introducing Western ideas into the study of Buddhism: "For him authors like Vasubandhu are expounding a species of absolute monism." Harris thinks that the other Buddhologists who were positive about a Hegelian reading of Buddhists texts, such as Chatterjee, "follow the line taken by Stcherbatsky." (67) However, Harris fails to give any kind of explanation as to why Hegel should be associated with "absolute monism," why Vasubandhu should not be seen as a monist, or why Stcherbatsky's position should be rejected. He seems to not even admit the possibility that both Hegel and Vasubandhu could actually be thinkers whose takes on idealism go further than "absolute monism" and thereby resemble each other.

Mark Siderits talks about Hegel in terms so close to Szanyi's own that one can suspect that he either influenced Szanyi, or that they both rely on the same source:

⁸ Jon Stewart (2016) and Sahota (2016) investigate Hegel's vision of Hinduism. Sahota sees the main issue in the fact that Hegel presents Hinduism as if it constituted a uniform system, which evidently it is not.

The stance of Yogācāra concerning the external world is more like Berkeley's subjective idealism (minus the theism) than it is like Hegelian absolute idealism. It would, however, be misleading to call Yogācāra's a subjective idealism, given the Buddhist denial of the self. If one needed to distinguish it from the Hegelian variety, one might call it 'subjectless idealism.' Here I shall simply call it idealism. (Siderits, 2021: 127 nr. 1).

Siderits rightly assumes that Hegel's idealism is marked by a strong emphasis on the subjective constitution of the Absolute. According to Hegel, one must "understand and express what is true not only as a *substance* but as a *subject*."⁹ However, Siderits's objection to the interpretation of Yogācāra as idealism is not rooted in Hegel's subjective vision of the Absolute. Rather, he is concerned that the Buddhist rejection of individual subjectivity might make the idealist label inadequate for Yogācāra—the same assumption as that made by Szanyi and Gold. This is a problem insofar as Hegel's argument in the *Phenomenology* is precisely that individual subjectivity—the individual Self as the kind of subjectivity that Indian Buddhism usually rejects—is inextricably connected to the absolute subjectivity of the Spirit: "Thus, each individual passes through the different levels of education that lead to the universal Spirit, but as shapes through which this Spirit has already passed, as the different parts of a path that has already been prepared and leveled off."¹⁰ The notion of subjectivity thus assumes a role in Hegel that differs fundamentally from the role that Siderits attributes to it: The Self is a "shape" of the Spirit and not an ultimate instance of a mental substance. While Hegel's Spirit is not "subjectless," it is not identical to the Self that Buddhists reject, either.

In parallel with Szanyi, Siderits also mentions theism as a component of idealism with which Buddhism is allegedly incompatible. Interestingly, he connects theism with Berkeley rather than with Hegel, situating Vasubandhu closer to the former than to the latter. But Berkeley makes it very clear that his idealism depends wholly on the notion of a divine mind:

To me it is evident for the reasons you allow of, that sensible things cannot exist otherwise than in a mind or spirit. Whence I conclude, not that they have no real existence, but that, seeing they depend not on my thought, and have all existence distinct from being perceived by me, there *must be some other mind wherein they exist*. (Berkeley, 1996: 152).

It seems impossible to conceive of Berkeleyan idealism "minus the theism," unless one agrees to uphold an incoherent position.

In a footnote, Szanyi's reveals that her direct reference for her claim about Hegel is Thomas Kochumuttom:

⁹ "Es kömmt...alles darauf an, das Wahre nicht als *Substanz*, sondern eben so sehr als *Subject* aufzufassen und auszudrücken," *GW* 9, 22.3-5.

¹⁰ "So durchlaufft jeder einzelne auch die Bildungsstufen des allgemeinen Geistes durchlaufen, aber als vom Geiste schon abgelegte Gestalten, als Stufen eines Wegs, der ausgearbeitet und geebnet ist," *GW* 9, 25.1-3.

It should be noted that Dasgupta (1933) and Chatterjee (1975) proposed an absolute idealist reading of Yogācāra idealism, but this has been compellingly refuted by scholars (e.g., Kochumuttom, 1982). While this interpretation is implausible for various reasons, the attempt to interpret ultimate consciousness in absolute terms has some obvious benefits in explaining our intersubjective experiences of a ‘shared world’. (Szanyi, 2024: footnote no. 34)

One can only speculate about the “various reasons” “compellingly” mobilized by Kochumuttom to “refut[e]” other scholars’ “absolute idealist reading,” for Kochumuttom mentions Hegel only twice: Once in relation to Stcherbatsky, whom he criticizes vehemently, and once in relation to *dharmadhātu* (1982, 199 and 200). Kochumuttom does not refer to any Hegelian text and does not back his rejection with a singular scholarly source or argument. He just takes Hegelian idealism as a symbol of what he considers to be the purest form of a doctrine that poses some mental substance and describes it metaphysically as ultimate reality. It does not come as a surprise, in the light of this distressing disengagement from actual evidence, that Kochumuttom sees the closest correspondent to Hegel’s system—as in the scholarship quoted above, e.g. Trivedi—in the “Brahman of Vedānta” (200). Despite Hegel’s explicit rejection of Brahminic metaphysics and his insistence of the fact that what he does stands at the opposite of what Brahminic philosophers do, Kochumuttom here inaugurates a tradition of bringing these two opposite standpoints together.

It is noteworthy that Even Bruce C. Hall, who certainly did not sympathize with metaphysical and idealist approaches to Vasubandhu, calls Kochumuttom, in his devastating review, “annoy[ing to] specialists” and “mislead[ing] to students”. He diagnoses “more than sloppiness” in Kochumuttom’s translation: “Kochumuttom’s examiners should have checked his translations against reliable texts and saved him this embarrassment.” (Hall, 1988: 181) In fact, Kochumuttom’s work is riddled with overstatements and hasty generalizations. Parts of these may be explained by the intention of his work. Kochumuttom was a Catholic theologian in the Syro-Malabar church and member of a religious order known as the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate. Kochumuttom’s rhetoric is coherent with, and supposedly indebted to, the Catholic discourse in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. In the 1960–1980s, a new wave of modern theologies emerged in response to the scholastic tradition and its strong attachment to Aristotelian and other premodern Western metaphysics. The new generation of theologians was interested in presenting Christian teachings in a more modern and philosophically appealing way, for example through phenomenology, philosophy of experience, intercultural philosophy, etc. With his strong case against idealist ontology, it seems likely that Kochumuttom positions himself in this tradition.

Szanyi’s readers are left to wonder what the “compelling” arguments against “absolute idealism” that she found in Kochumuttom are. There is a danger that, since these arguments are spelled out neither by Szanyi, nor by Kochumuttom or any other of the scholars surveyed in this section, the thesis is left to stand by itself and to be reiterated without any new evidence. This might, in turn, provoke a “misleading” situation for students and scholars—to use Hall’s expression—who will find themselves led to accept a problematic hypothesis as evidence.

Up to this point, I have accepted certain assumptions made by anti-Hegelian scholars and avoided comparing these assumptions to Hegel's texts. In this section I shall engage these texts more closely and show how his system contrasts with the anti-Hegelian claims surveyed in the previous sections.

It is true that Hegel's philosophy culminates in an "absolute Spirit" ("absoluter Geist," GW 20, 542.2). However, Hegel's originality does not lie in this notion—a notion that has its roots in Plato's and Anaxagoras's philosophies of the cosmic intellect or *nous*, as well as in other ancient and late ancient theories of the mind¹¹—but rather in the way that he conceptualizes the constitution and ontological status of the Spirit. Many premodern philosophers posit God as a kind of infinitely transcendent, intellectual entity that remains, in a certain way, separate from the world and the human being. In particular, medieval scholasticism, with its synthesis of biblical creationism with Aristotelian theology, could potentially make comparisons with Yogācāra philosophy difficult. But Hegel's philosophy deals differently with the notion of Spirit and even rejects its status as a simple "entity." The fundamental principle of Hegel's philosophy is to approach the knowledge by which the Spirit or Geist is constituted as a "pure self-knowledge in absolute other-being."¹² The human mind seeks to discover the ground of reality. At every step in its discovery of reality, it incorporates these discoveries, recognizing that they are not in a world outside itself but part of its immanent knowledge. At the beginning of its inquiry, the mind consists of "the immediate spirit...the spiritless, the sensual consciousness."¹³ It does not know that what it perceives is not something that exists in separation from it. It supposes that perception includes an element of mind-independent objectivity, or, in Hegel's world, it "has the two moments of knowledge and of the objectivity that is the negation of knowledge."¹⁴ At every step in the attainment of knowledge, the mind becomes "its own object, according to what it is, and the abstract element of immediacy and of the separation between knowledge and truth is overcome"¹⁵ to an increasingly higher degree. Hegel sees the completion of his philosophical process in the attainment of a state in which being itself has turned into something that is "absolutely mediated" ("absolut vermittelt") and that has become "the concept" ("der Begriff") itself. Being becomes conceptual, or more precisely: being reveals its inherent fundament and structure to be conceptual. This state of being, in which existence and conceptuality are mutually pervasive, is the Spirit.

Hegel uses different perspectives to establish this point and to show that being and concepts do not constitute separate realms. In the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he describes the path leading from the idea of perception to absolute knowledge—that is, from the idea that there is sense perception to the awareness that all knowledge and perception are a manifestation of the Spirit—in the language of both epistemologi-

¹¹ A thesis for which Halfwassen (2005) has provided extensive historical evidence.

¹² "Das reine Selbsterkennen im absoluten Andersseyn," GW 9, 22.21.

¹³ "der unmittelbare Geist [...] das geistlose, das sinnliche Bewußtseyn," GW 9, 24.3-4.

¹⁴ "Das unmittelbare Daseyn des Geistes, das Bewusstseyn, hat die zwei Momente, des Wissens und der dem Wissen negativen Gegenständlichkeit." GW 9, 29.14-5.

¹⁵ "er ist sich Gegenstand, wie er ist, und das abstrakte Element der Unmittelbarkeit und der Trennung des Wissens und der Wahrheit ist überwunden." GW 9, 30.2-3.

cal progress and the history of philosophy. He narrates how the mind starts with the assumption that there is a world ‘out there’ that functions as an object of knowledge and that provides the concrete content for perception and thought. He then describes the different developments that the mind undergoes to discover that truth lies in itself and in the different steps of its philosophical inquiry. At the end of this path, the individual mind attains a form of knowledge that is not just its own, but “absolute knowledge” (“absolutes Wissen”), i.e. the knowledge of the Spirit that “knows itself...as it is in and for itself.”¹⁶ With this conclusion, Hegel positions himself in the tradition of Aristotelian metaphysics, which I have briefly addressed in the first section, in the context of the divine mind’s thinking itself (νοήσεως νόησις, [Met 1074b34](#)).

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel takes the idea of absolute knowledge that he gained from the *Phenomenology* as a starting point to analyze the structure and constitution of the categories of logic. Instead of accepting the common assumption that categories such as quantity, quality, relation etc. are the forms of our ideas, he investigates these categories and discovers that they constitute the very forms of reality. Thus, Hegel rejects Kant’s project to reduce metaphysics to logic and to give logic an “essentially subjective meaning” (“wesentlich subjektive Bedeutung,” [GW 21, 35.13](#)), as he states in the *Encyclopedia*. He places himself in the older tradition of, for example, Anaxagoras’s philosophy, in which the divine intellect, the *nous*, acts as the principle of the world, and contains ideas that are connected to structure of reality, and not just empty representations of things.¹⁷

Hegel’s speculative project is to use the very structures of perception and thought to show that the world that seems to exist outside of perception and thought actually draws its existence from a process through which the Spirit comes to a full awareness of its own constitution. It is true that Hegel borrows concepts from different premodern philosophical traditions to establish this point, such as substance, soul, mind, and so forth. But Hegel’s use of these terms is so singular that they cannot just be swept off on the ground of theistic or other connotations seen as problematic. To clarify this point, I want to give some examples of Hegel’s atypical dealing with these concepts.

One of these stereotypes is that Hegel’s Spirit is a substance and therefore incompatible with the Yogācāra notion of consciousness. I have argued above that the classical notion of substance should not be dismissed by Buddhist scholars and that it presents more points of contact with Buddhism than they seem to suppose. Hegel’s notion of substance presents even more extensive parallelisms with Buddhism. Hegel does not consider substance synonymous with ultimate, objective existence. On the contrary, he states about substance that:

it is...being that is, in reality, a subject or, which is the same, that is real only insofar as it is a movement of self-positing, or the mediation of the process through which it becomes something different from itself, with itself. It is, as a subject, pure, *simple negativity*.¹⁸

¹⁶ “denn in ihr kommt der Geist dazu, sich zu wissen...wie er *an und für sich* ist.” [GW 9, 425.20–22](#).

¹⁷ See [GW 21, 34.12–19](#).

¹⁸ “Die lebendige Substanz ist ferner das Sein, welches in Wahrheit Subjekt oder, was dasselbe heißt, welches in Wahrheit wirklich ist, nur insofern sie die Bewegung des Sichselbstsetzens oder die Vermittlung des Sichanderswerdens mit sich selbst ist. Sie ist als Subjekt die reine *einfache Negativität*,” [GW 9, 18.18–21](#).

In contrast to ordinary interpretations of substance, Hegel does not present substance as something that is simply posited and asserted to be real. On the contrary, he sees the main characteristic of substance in its “negativity.” Substantial negativity constitutes the dynamic that makes things manifest their inherent contradictions, overcome these contradictions, and transition to a higher level of reality. As such, substance is not reducible to any of these levels. It is to be sought in the dynamic principle leading from immanent contradictions to a unified state of existence. These contradictions are not constructed from an extrinsic perspective—they are not just imagined by the human mind—, but they result from the working of reality itself. Hence, rather than constituting a static, hypothetically self-grounded thing, Hegelian substance represents a form of negative “self-positing” expressive of the immanent structure of reality.

With such a concept of substance as “pure, *simple negativity*,” Hegel positions himself at the opposite of what the scholars of Buddhism to whom I referred above attribute to Western metaphysics. For Hegel, substance is not just assumed as a speculative ground of existence or as a property divine existence, but something far more complex and dynamic. The *Encyclopedia* identifies substance as “absolute power and, at the same time, richness of all content.”¹⁹ It is the “power” (“Macht”) that underlies and determines reality—not a thing but an act through which the Spirit unfolds and realizes itself. Substance represents richness of the Spirit’s content.

This interpretation of substance allows for different perspectives on a dialogue between Yogācāra and Hegelian philosophy. Both systems try to overcome the notion of an “immediate substance” or of a “pure self-contemplation of the divine.”²⁰ Hegel aims to overcome metaphysical theories and arguments whose insufficiency had been uncovered by Kant. Hegel wants the Spirit to be something more complex than just a lofty, divine intellect, contained in an unattainable, transcendent realm above ordinary reality.

Yogācāra philosophers such as Vasubandhu and Śāntideva, too, fight against the Brahminic notion of a thinking, non-dual being that represents the sum of all reality. Vasubandhu argues that the notion of *viññaptimātra*, representation-only, cannot be understood in the sense of a directly ascertainable, objective fact: “When one affirms, as if standing before it and perceiving it, ‘this is representation-only,’ then, one does not abide in representation-only.”²¹ One cannot just point to the fact of representation, or to the mind (*viññāna*) through which that representation is processed, and affirm that it is the only thing that really exists—precisely because any such act would be an instance of representation. Vasubandhu and other Yogācārins are careful not to make their idealism appear like Brahminic idealism. One could say that it is precisely this cautiousness that makes their idealism resemble Hegel’s ‘cautious’ idealism, for Hegel, too, seeks to avoid the metaphysical entanglement that Kant had overturned.

¹⁹ “absolute Macht und zugleich als [...] *Reichtum alles Inhalts*,” *GW* 20, 170.8-9.

²⁰ “als unmittelbare Substanz oder als reine Selbstanschauung des Göttlichen,” *GW* 9, 19.8-9.

²¹ *viññaptimātram evedam ity api hy upalambhataḥ | sthāpayann agrataḥ kiñcit tanmātre nāvatiṣṭhate*, *TVK* 27.

There are further concomitant elements in Yogācāra philosophy that corroborate the idea that Hegelian and Buddhist philosophy share more characteristics than contemporary Yogācāra scholars seem willing to admit. I want to focus on three elements here: (1) dependent origination in the context of the (2) three-nature theory, and (3) the revolution of the basis.

Yogācāra philosophers emphasize the importance of dependent origination, thereby excluding the idea that any specific thing could exist in a self-sustaining way, independently of causes and conditions. This implies that even transcendent knowledge cannot exist in such a way. Dependent origination plays a key role in the so-called three-nature theory, which Vasubandhu explores in TVK 20–25. In this passage he explains that the superior nature, the perfected *svabhāva*, is “neither different nor non-different from the dependent [nature]” (*naivānyo nānanyaḥ paratantrataḥ*, TVK 22). With this theoretical construction, Vasubandhu manages to avoid falling back into first-degree idealism, which would postulate some kind of higher reality—the reality that Hegel calls “immediate substance”—in which the tension of causal determination is simply abolished. Rather than abolishing it, Vasubandhu thinks that in order to understand the structure of *svabhāva* from which reality is made, one has to understand that there is nothing independent of dependent origination. That act of understanding is the principle of Yogācāra idealism.

Seeing that Yogācāra idealism follows the attainment of a realization incommensurable with our ordinary epistemic configuration, that configuration needs to undergo a change before it can give way to genuine idealist awareness. Such a change happens through what Yogācāra philosophers call the “revolution of the basis” (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*).²² In Yogācāra, the mind is imagined as a construction of three superposed realms: the “storehouse consciousness” (*ālayavijñāna*, cf. TVK 2) that is constituted by the “all the seeds” (*sarvabījakaṃ*, TVK 2) of conscious activity, subjective awareness (*manonāma vijñāna*, TVK 5), and objective awareness (*viśayasyopalabdhi*, TVK 8). To reconfigure this construction, the root consciousness needs to be overturned (through a *vyāvṛtti*, TVK 5), which also leads to the subjective and objective awareness being uprooted. This uprooting takes place when the “inadequacy of the basis” (*āśrayasyākarmaṇyatā*, TVKBh 140.11) has been overcome. At that moment, the illusions of subjective and objective perception cease. This element of Yogācāra could be likened to the last step in Hegel’s Phenomenology, the attainment of “absolute knowledge” (*absolute Wissen*). Hegel himself opposes absolute knowledge to “systems that present the absolute as the *substance*.”²³ The absolute does not fall within a dichotomic model in which subjectivity and objectivity remain separated from each other. It corresponds more closely to knowledge in Yogācāra, which lies beyond any subjective or objective assessment, than to the form of first-degree idealism postulated by the scholars surveyed in the previous section.

²² See in particular Radich (2007, 1153–1181), who analyzes this notion against the background of bodily analogies and as an instance of the “absolute” in Buddhist philosophy. One of the most remarkable studies of the notion of *āśraya*, central to the idea of the “revolution of the basis,” in Vasubandhu’s early work is Szanyi (2021), who offers a detailed account of *āśraya*’s abhidharmic origin.

²³ “Systeme...welche das Absolute nur als die *Substanz* fassen,” GW 20, 565.3–4.

Moving onward from the notion of substance, another issue pointed out by Szanyi is the connection between idealism and theism. In fact, Hegel's early writings, *The Life of Christ (Das Leben Jesu)* and *The Positivity of Christian Religion (Die Positivität der christlichen Religion)* address questions concerning Christian religion.²⁴ Hegel maintained a deep interest in the connections between religion and philosophy throughout his oeuvre, and his most important followers, among which one finds figures such as Christian F. Baur, David F. Strauss, Carl Daub, and others, were all theologians. However, the theistic or religious implications of Hegel's system are much more complex than the categories that the above scholars use—the theistic West vs. non-theistic Buddhism—make it seem.

A prominent example of Hegel's complex views on religion can be found in the last chapter of his *Encyclopedia*, on the role of philosophy for the “absolute Spirit” (“absoluter Geist”). Here, Hegel not only criticizes the kind of theistic presuppositions that Szanyi describes but even connects these presuppositions with ideas from Indian texts such as the *Bhagavadgītā*, which some of the scholars in the previous section attempt to impute to him. He criticizes that these texts tend to reduce finitude to the realm of the accidental, and that, while they admit an “intellectual God” (“geistige[r] Got[t],” *GW* 20, 561.21), their “idea of God is not determinate in itself in a deep manner” (“die Idee Gottes [ist] nicht tief in ihr selbst bestimmt,” *GW* 20, 561.28). Brahman appears as the simple and immediate negation of finitude. The world is an illusion and Brahman alone is real. The idea of “determination” that Hegel opposes to this this simplistic view has to do with the idea of substantial negativity explained above. If God is just posited as the one absolute, objective substance—which Hegel thinks Indian philosophers do—that substance will “fall short of the patience and working of the negative” (“wenn... die Geduld und Arbeit des Negativen darin fehlt,” *GW* 9, 18, 31–2). The idea of God can only gain full determination when it rises above the simple notions of position and negation. Any religion or philosophy that rejects this determination—which is what Hegel has been accused of—remains, in Hegel's thought, shallow.

To be meaningful, religion needs to provide a more consistent vision of reality and God. According to Hegel, such a vision can only be achieved by means of an analysis of the dialectic constitution of the Spirit. The Spirit “at the same time realizes its concept, but remains, throughout its realization, in its concept.”²⁵ The Spirit is not something to which a concept can be attached from the outside, or, to put it differently, it cannot just correspond to a certain concept as to an extrinsic description, but the concept must be identical to what the Spirit inherently is. This idea may be likened to the idea on which Vasubandhu insists in his explanation of *vijñaptimātra* in the *TVK*. One does not attain representation-only by pointing to a certain fact, he says, and identifying that fact with the concept of representation-only: “This is representation-only” (*vijñaptimātram evedam*, *TVK* 27). Rather, the attainment excludes such extrinsic conceptualizations that involve a duality of knowing subject and known object (*grāhadvaya*, *TVK* 26). Only when representation-only is realized to such a

²⁴ See the edition Nohl (Hegel, 1907), as well as the edited volume Sembou (2017).

²⁵ “seinen Begriff ebenso realisirt, als er in dieser Realisirung in seinem Begriffe bleibt,” *GW* 9, 427.29-30.

degree that the concept is not exterior to it anymore, but *inherent* to its realization, can it be said to be fully realized.

Hence, one could say that Hegel and Vasubandhu agree in their repudiation of naive or first-degree idealism that identifies ultimate reality with a certain form of intellectual or noetic entity. They both think that the response that naïve idealism offers to the question of what can ultimately be seen as real is insufficient, and that the structure of consciousness requires a more complex theory. Notably, Hegel takes Brahminic views, against which Buddhists also argue, as an example of such idealism.

From this we may conclude that Yogācāra's and Hegel's engagement with theism or religion withstands straightforward categorization. On the one hand, Hegel insists that religion is essential to philosophy and human knowledge, and his idealism bears the traces of that insistence. But he also thinks that "absolute knowledge" bridges the gap between God, conceived as a transcendent being, and the intellectual constitution of the human being. His theism has strongly intellectualistic connotations, which have raised suspicions among Christian thinkers throughout history. On the other hand, the engagement with notions of the absolute or ultimate reality on the part of Yogācāra and, more generally, Mahāyāna philosophers has been shown to withstand paradigms that simply equate Buddhism's rejection of Brahminic substantialism with atheism.²⁶ Yogācāra authors such as Vasubandhu undeniably admit an ultimate form of reality with distinct metaphysical characteristics. These characteristics allow for parallelisms with Western traditions and sources such as Neoplatonism and Hegel, as I have argued above. My overall claim is not that these parallelisms provide enough evidence for both Hegelian and Yogācāra philosophy to fall into the same category of theistic idealism, but rather, that the argument that Yogācāra is incompatible with Hegelian idealism because of Hegel's theistic implications is not tenable. Both philosophies present theistic implications—but in both cases, those implications are problematic and complex.

In lieu of a conclusion, I want to make a few observations on the long-term effects of anti-Hegelian bias on Yogācāra studies and on a potential overcoming of that bias.

There is an unequivocal need in intercultural and comparative philosophy to criticize and deconstruct Hegel. Hegel tends to talk about Indian and non-Western philosophy in a derogatory manner, for example in the chapter of the *Encyclopedia* analyzed in the previous section. Hegel must be held accountable for introducing Eurocentric ideas about the history and essence of philosophy into Western thinking.²⁷ However, criticism and deconstruction cannot arise from prejudice or from superficial engagement. If Yogācāra scholars want to discuss possible interactions between Yogācāra philosophers such as Vasubandhu and Hegel, they need to confront the substance of Hegel's philosophy. Such a confrontation cannot content itself with commonplaces or biased views, such as those discussed in the second section, but must penetrate the core of Hegel's system. The form of criticism to which such a comparison is suscepti-

²⁶ For example, the edited volume by Schmücker and Nitsche (2023) includes different perspectives on Buddhism's theistic implications, with notable contributions from Robert Gimello, Perry-Schmidt Leukel, Klaus-Dieter Mathes, and Dennis Hirota. Zappulli (2023) compellingly uses the Chinese *Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna* to criticize the claim that Buddhism is atheistic.

²⁷ Purushottama Bilimoria has recently called for a revision of Hegel's "wrestling with the Orient" in his analysis of Hegel's appeals to Western and Indian logic (Bilimoria, 2018).

ble of giving rise is not that Hegel is a first-degree idealist and therefore incompatible with Yogācāra, but that he is in fact much closer to Yogācāra than he himself thought, and that his own dismissive statements about Buddhism can, to a certain degree, be refuted. But such a refutation is only possible if scholars are ready to assess Hegel's standpoint in an objective and detached manner.

Secondly, there is a need, in Yogācāra studies, to reevaluate the work of Ashok K. Chatterjee. Chatterjee's knowledge of Hegel is unequalled in Yogācāra scholarship (see Chatterjee, 1975: 216–22). He is, with Scarfe, one of the only scholar to ever engage Hegel in depth, and to give an extensive account of the possible discrepancies and points of contact between Yogācāra and Hegel's philosophy.

As regards discrepancies, Chatterjee estimates that Hegel deals with negativity differently than Yogācāra. He sees in Hegelian negation—which I explained above in the context of substantial negativity—a

prelude to a greater and more perfect affirmation. But negation, i.e., a self-conscious rejection of a mistake, totally and absolutely, cannot even be conceived of by Hegel...[He] welcomes the diversification of the (universal) Reason as a necessary moment for achieving a more 'concrete' unity with self, i.e., self-consciousness. (221-2)

This general characterization of Hegelian negativity is valid insofar as Hegel would not simply reject the concept of objectivity because of its incommensurability with thought. Rather, his aim is to show that objectivity and subjectivity are the two poles of a process that passes through affirmation and negation and that gradually evolves toward a more complete unity. Yogācāra on the other hand identified “the Absolute [with] the reality of appearance, i.e., of the illusory; it is the illusory itself perceived in its true form.” (222-3) The difference between the Hegelian and the Yogācāra concept of the mind is that in Hegel, the mind passes through the object only to come back to itself and discover in its own constitution the root of that object, whereas in Yogācāra, the object appears as something that has no reality at all, apart from its being an illusion. Thus, Yogācāra deals with objects in a negative way, while Hegel thinks that the mind attains a better knowledge of its own reality through objects.

But Chatterjee emphasizes that the points of contact between the two systems are more profound and significant. Reality is ideal. Subjectivity and objectivity are tied together in an intellectual unity. Ultimate reality is a form of higher, non-dual knowledge, or “absolute knowledge,” as Hegel calls it. This conclusion largely coincides with Scarfe's conclusion that the parallelism between Yogācāra and Hegel draws from the fact “that Hegel's Absolute Idealism involves the working out of the dialectical opposition of idealism and realism,” (2006, 60), and not just a simple, mono-dimensional idealism. That is also the idea that I want to support in conclusion of the present paper.

Thirdly and ultimately, anti-Hegelian bias in Yogācāra studies must be understood as a symptom of a greater problem in the study of Buddhist philosophy. While on the one hand, Buddhist philosophy becomes more and more specialized and develops its own methodologies, it still relies—and will, most probably, continue to rely—on Western vocabulary and comparative models that involve Western ideas. Despite the autonomy of, for example, Buddhist philosophy as an academic field, the language

employed will continue to bear the traces of premodern and early modern Western traditions. There is no neutral or historically uncommitted space to discuss Buddhist philosophy. Scholars in Yogācāra tend to downplay these commitments or to assume that they can be circumnavigated by focusing on comparative perspectives more easily accessible to philosophical readers today or more compatible with their own cultural assumptions. But one could argue that this implicit quest for agreement deprives philosophies of their critical potential. Manifesting the complexity and sometimes positive character of the relations between Hegel and Yogācāra allows us to revitalize that critical potential.

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