largely polemical nature have been produced; see, for example, ‘Abd Allāh al-Husaynī’s Al-judhur al-ta’rkhīyāt lil-Nuṣayrīyāt al-‘alawīyāt (Dubai, 1980), and ‘Abd al-Husayn Mahdī al-‘Askarī’s Al-‘Alawīyāna al-Nuṣayrīyān (n.p., 1980), both of which quote extensively from the early heresiographical literature. Umar F. Abd-Allāh’s The Islamic Struggle in Syria (Berkeley, 1983), with foreword and postscript by Hamid Algar, outlines the attempt by the present ‘Alawī military regime in Syria to control the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood there.

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ĀLAYA-VIJÑĀNA (Tib., kun gzhis rnam par shes pa; Chin., a lai ye shì) is the Sanskrit term denoting, roughly, “storehouse” consciousness, a conception of unconscious mental processes developed by the Yogācāra school of Indian Buddhism in the third to fifth centuries CE. Ālaya-vijñāna appears in such “Yogācāra” scriptures as the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra and the Latikāvattārā Sūtra, but is most systematically treated in the scholastic treatises of Asaṅga (c. 315–390) and Vasubandhu (c. mid-fourth to mid-fifth centuries). It originally addressed problems surrounding the continuity of karmic potential (karma-upācaya) and the latent afflictions (anuṣaya) that had been generated by the abhidharma emphasis upon momentary, manifest processes of mind. How, after all, could these two essential aspects of one’s samsaric existence—the potential for karma to ripen and for the afflictions to arise—be uninterruptedly present until their elimination far along the path to liberation if one’s mind (or, more precisely, one’s “mental stream,” santāna) were comprised solely of whatever phenomena (dharma) were manifest at the present moment? Their manifest presence would preclude any salutary states of mind from the seeds (bīja) of karmic potential and the predispositions (vāsanā) of the afflictions that have accumulated “since beginningless time” from the karmic activities associated with the six modes of manifest cognitive awareness. The potential or “seeds” for the future arising of afflictions or of karmically resultant dharmas, such as sensations or consciousness itself, are thereafter “stored” in this evolving ālaya level of mind.

While this subliminal ālaya consciousness thus enjoys a simultaneous and causally reciprocal relationship with the manifest modes of cognitive awareness, it still retained, in most Indian Yogācāra treatises, its original character as the locus of accumulated karmic potential and latent afflictions, virtually defining one’s samsaric existence and serving, in effect, as the “subject” of saṃśāra (also similar to earlier notions of viṣṇu). Sentient beings therefore typically (mis)take ālaya consciousness as a substantive self (atma-dyot), a form of ignorance so continuously present that it too soon came to be conceived as a distinct strata of subliminal—and karmically neutral—afflictions called “afflictive mentation” (Skt., kliṣṭa-manas; Tib., nyan mong pa can gyi yid; Chin., ran wu yi), now considered a “seventh consciousness,” making ālaya-vijñāna the eighth.

More broadly, Asaṅga’s Mahāyāna-saṃgha-graha describes how the “common aspects” (saṃdharana-laṅkāṇa) of ālaya consciousness help to structure the arising of our common “world” (bhājana-loka). Our distinctively human world appears similarly to us because we have accumulated similar karma, which results in both our similar cognitive faculties as well as whatever cognitive and affective formations similarly condition the arising of each individual’s ālaya-vijñāna, such as the impressions of language (adhibhātā-vāsanā). Together, these conditions delimit the range of stimuli that may instigate manifest consciousness, and thus also the very forms in which our common, species-specific world (loka) typically appear. In this way, the ālaya-vijñāna—“the mind with all the seeds” (sarvabuddha-citta) that represents our accumulated potentialities for karmic results—serves as the “common support” (saṃśāraya) of all phenomenal experience (dharma).”

Although in its systematic treatments the ālaya-vijñāna is largely commensurate with traditional Indian Buddhist analyses of samsaric consciousness, as we have seen, the very metaphors used to describe the ālaya-vijñāna—an evolving “repository” form of mind (citta) that receives and “stores” karmic seeds and thereby serves as both support and cause (hetu) of all dharmas—invited its interpretation as a foundational mind serving as the sole basis or ground from which the entire phenomenal world arises. These tendencies were particularly pronounced in certain Chinese and Tibetan tra-
ditions, influenced no doubt by the explicit identification—in scriptures such as the Lankāvatāra Sūtra and, more importantly, the apocryphal Awakening of Faith—of alāya-vijñāna with tathāgatha-garbha, the womb or matrix of the Tathāgatha. Although this identification went largely unchallenged in later Chinese Buddhism, it is not found in the classic treatises of Indian Yogacāra. The sixth-century Indian translator Paramārtha’s response to this discrepancy was to preserve the alāya-vijñāna as a defiled eighth consciousness, which is eliminated upon awakening, while interpolating into his translations an additional, undefiled ninth consciousness, an *amalā-vijñāna, which persists after the alāya-vijñāna ceases. One of seventh-century Xuanzang’s aims in retranslating Yogacāra texts was to recover the earlier, and to his mind orthodox, interpretation of alāya-vijñāna as a locus of defiled consciousness unrelated to the notion of tathāgatha-garbha. Similar tendencies occurred in the Tibetan schools that teach “extrinsic emptiness” (gzhan stong), which extrapolating upon Indian Yogacāra models, posited a primordial alaya wisdom (Skt., *alaya-jñāna; Tib., kun gzhi ye shes) prior to and apart from all defiled and discursive modes of consciousness (Skt., vijñāna; Tib., rnam shes), such as alāya-vijñāna.

These varying notions of post- (or non-) samsaric forms of consciousness, typically expressed as transformations of vijñāna into jñāna, echo similar ideas found in the earliest Buddhist texts in which the consciousness of a buddha or arhat is no longer bound by grasping or appropriation (anupādaṇa), but is said to be “non-abiding” or “unsupported” (appatiṣṭhita-vijñāna; D III 105; S I 122; S II 66, 103; S III 54).

In sum, this core Yogacāra concept touches upon some of the central concerns of Buddhist soteriology and analyses of mind, but its interpretation varies considerably depending upon which century, school, and even which text one is investigating.

SEE ALSO Asaṅga; Dharmapāla; Soteriology; Soul, article on Buddhist Concepts; Tathāgata-garbha; Vasubandhu; Vījnāna; Yogacāra.

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