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### Astronomy in Buddhist Idealism Perspective

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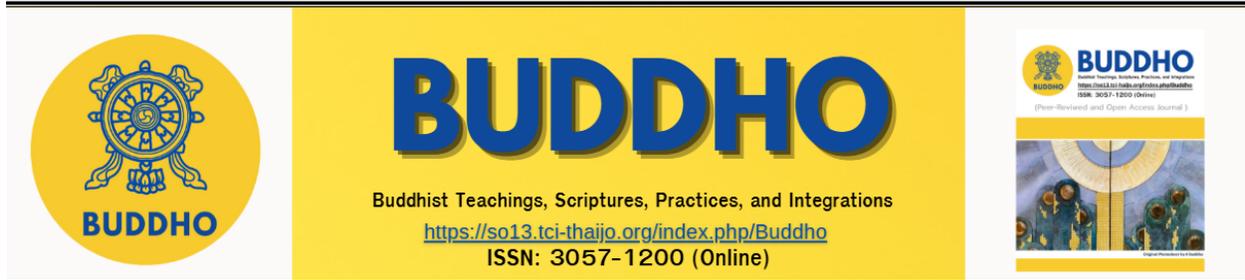
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## Astronomy in Buddhist Idealism Perspective

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### Abstract

This academic article investigates the epistemological and ontological intersections between modern astronomy and Buddhist Idealism, with a particular focus on the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka traditions. While astronomy traditionally relies on empirical observation and mathematical modeling to understand the cosmos, Buddhist Idealism offers a mind-centered view of reality, positing that all experiences, including celestial ones, arise within consciousness and are shaped by karmic imprints (vāsanā), conceptual constructions (abhilāpa), and the absence of inherent nature (niḥsvabhāvatā). By reinterpreting astronomical phenomena through the three natures (trīsvabhāva) and the principles of dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), this study reveals that the cosmos, as perceived by science, is not an objective entity but a conditioned appearance arising within awareness. Rather than opposing scientific cosmology, Buddhist Idealism provides a contemplative and phenomenological framework that complements astronomy, promoting a holistic vision that integrates empirical knowledge with introspective insight.

**Keywords:** Astronomy, Buddhist, Idealism, Perspective

### Introduction

The profound relationship between cosmological inquiry and spiritual thought has long shaped humanity's understanding of the universe. Astronomy, as one of the oldest sciences, seeks to explain the nature, origin, and mechanics of celestial phenomena through empirical observation and rational analysis (Seeds & Backman, 2014). In contrast, Buddhist Idealism, rooted in the profound teachings of the Buddha, approaches the cosmos from the standpoint of mind-centric philosophy, emphasizing the primacy of consciousness over material reality (Garfield, 2015). While these perspectives may appear divergent, their intersection reveals compelling insights into both the external universe and the internal landscape of perception.

This article explores astronomy through the lens of Buddhist Idealism, aiming to bridge scientific cosmology with the contemplative worldview of Buddhist thought. By examining how mind and perception are central to the construction of reality in Buddhist philosophy, particularly within the Yogācāra tradition, the study considers how such principles might reinterpret or complement astronomical knowledge (Lusthaus, 2002; Williams, 2009). The inquiry also addresses how Buddhist cosmological models, such as Mount Meru and the multiverse concept, can be seen not merely as ancient mythologies but as symbolic or psychological maps aligning with idealist metaphysics (Kalupahana, 1987; Sopa, 1972).

Through a critical dialogue between modern astronomy and Buddhist Idealism, this study contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship that seeks to harmonize scientific and spiritual worldviews. The ultimate goal is to cultivate a deeper understanding of reality that encompasses both outer space and inner awareness, challenging materialist assumptions and inviting a more holistic vision of the cosmos (Wallace, 2010).

### **Astronomy in Yogācāra Phenomena**

Yogācāra Buddhism, also known as the Vijñaptimātra (Consciousness-Only) school, provides a profound epistemological and ontological framework through which one may reexamine astronomical inquiry. Central to this school is the thesis that all experiences—sensory (indriyārtha), mental (manovijñāna), or cosmic—are not direct encounters with external reality but are instead projections or constructions (vijñapti) within consciousness (citta). This phenomenological model does not outright deny the conventional existence (saṃvṛtisatya) of external phenomena (bāhya-artha), but asserts that what is perceived as external is fundamentally mediated and constructed within the field of consciousness, informed by karmic seeds (bīja) stored in the ālayavijñāna (storehouse consciousness).

As Lusthaus (2002) observes, Yogācāra is not idealism in the Western metaphysical sense but a sophisticated phenomenology, emphasizing the mental processes by which we construct experience. In this light, celestial bodies—stars, planets, nebulae, and galaxies—are not encountered as things-in-themselves (svabhāva), but as cognitive impressions shaped by perception, karmic imprints (vāsanā), and linguistic-conceptual structures (abhilāpa). Thus, when astronomers measure cosmic background radiation or observe supernovae, they are not engaging with an objective cosmos as such, but with a field of appearances (ākāra) constructed within and through the operations of consciousness (Lusthaus, 2002).

This model aligns with Garfield's (2015) explanation of dependent origination (pratīyasamutpāda) and the rejection of inherent existence (niḥsvabhāvatā). From this standpoint, the cosmos is not a stable, mind-independent reality waiting to be discovered, but an ever-evolving interplay of causes and conditions (hetu-pratyaya), deeply interwoven with cognition. The act of cosmic observation is thus a participatory event, a fusion of observer and observed—a view that challenges the Cartesian dualism underpinning classical astronomy.

Yogācāra's doctrine of the three natures (trisvabhāva) offers further interpretive tools for understanding astronomical experience. The parikalpita-svabhāva (imagined nature) corresponds to conceptual projections such as heliocentric models, gravitational waves, or

multiverse theories. In the Yogācāra tradition, *parikalpita-svabhāva* refers to the imagined or constructed nature of phenomena—those appearances that are falsely conceived as existing independently or inherently (Kitagawa, 1968). This level of reality arises due to conceptual superimposition, dualistic perception, and the habitual projections of consciousness. It is the mode of apprehending things as having *svabhāva* (self-nature or own-being), when in fact, all phenomena lack inherent existence (Kopt, 2024). *Parikalpita* is not reality itself, but the illusion fabricated by mind, mistaking names, signs, and dualistic structures (subject vs. object, inner vs. outer, etc.) as ultimately real.

In terms of astronomical perception, *parikalpita-svabhāva* corresponds to the mind's reification of celestial phenomena—for instance, perceiving stars, galaxies, or the universe as solid, independent entities “out there” (Kataoka, 2022: 284-302). In reality, these are appearances mediated by cognitive construction, sensory conditioning, and karmic imprints (*vāsanā*). The telescope and scientific models do not escape this layer of construction—they are embedded within it. According to Yogācāra, liberation comes through realizing that this imagined nature is empty (*śūnya*)—not that phenomena don't appear, but that they do not exist in the way they are imagined to.

The *paratantra-svabhāva* (dependent nature) represents the conditioned perceptual processes through which such models arise, shaped by empirical instruments, cognitive biases, and sense faculties. The *paratantra-svabhāva* is the dependent or conditioned nature of phenomena, which arises through causal interdependence (Chandima, 2024). It represents the level of reality where things appear due to causes and conditions, particularly the flow of consciousness (*viññāna*) shaped by *karman* and *vāsanā* (latent tendencies). Unlike *parikalpita*, which is false and wholly illusory, *paratantra* is a relative truth—not ultimately real, but not entirely delusory either. It describes how appearances arise in dependence on the complex interaction between subject and object, sensation and cognition, perception and conception. This interdependent arising is empty of self-existence, yet functionally real at the level of conventional truth.

In the context of astronomy and modern scientific observation, *paratantra-svabhāva* corresponds to the operational field of dependent origination. The stars and galaxies we observe arise in dependence on many conditions: physical (light, gravity), psychological (perception, memory), technological (telescopes, data), and karmic (the observer's conditioned mind). Their existence is contingent, not autonomous (Hershock, 2021). *Paratantra* thus serves as the middle ground between illusion and truth. It is the platform on which both illusion (*parikalpita*) and realization (*pariṇiṣpanna*) can be discerned. As the Yogācāra texts suggest, realizing the emptiness of *paratantra* leads to insight into the true nature of reality.

The *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* (perfected nature) reveals the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of all distinctions, signifying that cosmic phenomena are ultimately non-dual manifestations within awareness (Williams, 2009). The *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva* is the perfected or consummate nature—the ultimate reality as it truly is, free from conceptual construction, duality, and subject-object bifurcation. It refers to the realization of the non-dual nature of consciousness: that there is no independent object apart from the perceiving mind, and that the apparent separation between subject and object is a mental fabrication (Powers, 2023). In contrast to the *parikalpita*-

svabhāva (imagined nature) and paratantra-svabhāva (dependent nature), the pariniṣpanna represents the truth realized when the imagined nature is seen through and the dependent nature is understood as empty of self-existence. It is emptiness (śūnyatā) itself—not as a nihilistic void, but as the absence of inherent existence in all phenomena and the recognition (Arihiro, 2021) that all appearances are mind-only (cittamātra).

From the perspective of Buddhist Idealism, pariniṣpanna is the awakened insight into the nature of experience—where dualistic perception ceases and the ultimate nature of things is known as pure awareness, unconditioned and indivisible. When applied to the study of astronomy, pariniṣpanna-svabhāva offers a radical shift in epistemology: the stars, galaxies, and cosmic phenomena are no longer perceived as “external realities” existing independently of the observer. Instead, they are seen as manifestations of dependent cognition, and their ultimate nature is recognized as lacking inherent existence (Horiuchi, 2022). The perfected nature is the non-dual realization that the cosmos we perceive is not separate from the mind that perceives it. In the words of the Yogācāra masters, pariniṣpanna is the realization that “there is no duality; it is only a conceptual fabrication.” This realization marks the attainment of liberating knowledge (jñāna)—a knowing beyond conceptuality that is synonymous with nirvāṇa (Keng, 2022). The realization of this perfected nature dissolves the boundaries between seer and seen, self and universe.

Kalupahana (1987), in his psychological reading of Buddhist cosmology, interprets traditional models such as Mount Meru (Sumeru) and the thirty-one planes of existence not as primitive astronomical maps but as internal metaphors for moral and psychological states. The lokadhātu (world-system), in Yogācāra terms, is not a fixed objective reality but a spectrum of experience shaped by karmic causality and consciousness. Scientific constructs such as cosmic inflation or the multiverse theory resonate with this model—suggesting parallel realms (sahasralokadhātu) co-existing in the vast expanse of the ālayavijñāna (Lu, 2015). Wallace (2010) supports this convergence by proposing that consciousness is not merely an epiphenomenon of brain activity but a fundamental dimension of the universe. From a Yogācāra standpoint, the cosmos is not “out there” but is co-arising with cognition itself. The cakṣurvijñāna (eye-consciousness) and the telescope through which it sees are functionally entangled, forming a non-dual process of co-dependent origination (idampratrayatā) (Salvini, 20215).

In the end, viewing astronomy through the Yogācāra lens transforms it from a purely physical science into a phenomenological inquiry—one that prioritizes awareness, intentionality (cetanā), and karmic causation. The cosmos, then, is not a vast expanse to be measured but a mirror reflecting the structures of consciousness. Such a view does not invalidate the empirical insights of astronomy but places them within a more inclusive paradigm—one that harmonizes the outer world of stars with the inner world of awareness.

**Astronomy in the Mahayana Vision of Svabhāva, Vāsanā, and Abhilāpa**

In the Mahayana tradition, particularly within the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools, the cosmos is not interpreted merely as a domain of objectively existing phenomena but as a field of interdependent and conditioned appearances shaped by consciousness, language, and karma. This vision offers a critical reinterpretation of astronomy and its epistemological assumptions through the lens of three key concepts: svabhāva (inherent existence), vāsanā (karmic imprints), and abhilāpa (linguistic-conceptual construction).

1. Svabhāva and the Denial of Cosmic Objectivity The rejection of svabhāva (intrinsic nature) in Madhyamaka philosophy carries profound implications for how we understand not only subjective experience but also the nature of the cosmos itself. Nāgārjuna’s radical śūnyatā (emptiness) doctrine posits that nothing possesses an independent, unchanging essence; instead, all things exist interdependently, conditioned by other phenomena in a vast web of pratīyasamutpāda (dependent origination). This foundational principle challenges the metaphysical underpinnings of classical astronomy, which often assumes the objective reality of celestial entities. From this Madhyamaka standpoint, stars, planets, black holes, and galaxies are not self-existent entities lying “out there” in a metaphysical vacuum. Their being is contingent—arising through causal relations, linguistic designation, and mental imputation. As such, the cosmos is not an independently real structure waiting to be discovered, but a conceptually constructed phenomenon, whose apparent solidity dissolves upon critical analysis (Garfield, 2015). This challenges the scientific assumption that stars, galaxies, and other astronomical entities exist “in themselves” independently of observation. This position destabilizes the notion of cosmic objectivity in a manner akin to certain interpretations of quantum physics, which suggest that the act of observation affects what is observed. Yet Madhyamaka goes further: it doesn’t merely question the process of measurement, but denies the intrinsic being of the measured altogether. Even the observer, in this view, lacks svabhāva.

This ontological stance reshapes cosmology by asserting that cosmic structures are not ontologically prior to cognition but are co-arisen with our conceptual frameworks. The galaxy, for instance, does not exist independently of our concepts of “galaxy,” “light,” “distance,” or even “space.” These are dependently arisen constructs, not indicators of absolute reality. Moreover, Madhyamaka’s two truths doctrine—conventional truth (saṃvṛti-satya) and ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya)—offers a framework to reconcile the empirical efficacy of astronomy with its ontological unreality. At the conventional level, scientific models and observations are valid and useful; at the ultimate level, however, they point to no inherently existing entities. This duality invites a humbling epistemic stance, where the success of scientific models does not equate to the absolute existence of what they model (Pawitan, 2024). However, the Madhyamaka view undermines this stance by asserting that even cosmic entities lack ontological independence and are devoid of svabhāva.

In essence, the denial of svabhāva is not a denial of the utility of scientific inquiry, but of its metaphysical certainty. It suggests that the cosmos as we know it is a conceptual and perceptual phenomenon, not a self-existing absolute. This aligns Buddhist idealism with a non-objectivist cosmology, where reality is relational, fluid, and ultimately empty of inherent nature.

2. *Vāsanā* (Karmic Imprints and Perceptual Diversity in the Cosmos) In Yogācāra philosophy, the concept of *vāsanā*—subtle karmic imprints that shape cognition—plays a crucial role in understanding the non-objective nature of the cosmos. Far from being a passive receptacle of sensory input, consciousness is an active, karmically conditioned matrix that filters and constructs all perceptual experiences. These *vāsanās*, deeply embedded within the *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness), influence not only how individuals perceive objects in their immediate environment but also how they experience vast cosmic phenomena. As Lusthaus (2002) explains, Yogācāra holds that “perception is not of an independent world, but of one’s own consciousness, structured by karmic habits and tendencies” (p. 246). This means that space, time, planetary systems, and even the structure of galaxies are not directly apprehended as external realities, but as phenomenal appearances conditioned by karmic residues. In this light, what modern astronomy describes as “objective” observations—e.g., the curvature of space-time or the formation of nebulae—are, from the Yogācāra standpoint, manifestations of collective karmic seeds ripening in shared consciousness streams.

Betz (2024) supports this by arguing that karmic conditioning informs the construction of perceptual schemas, thereby modulating how reality is experienced across different beings and contexts. This not only explains interpersonal perceptual differences but also accounts for the plurality of cosmic realms (*lokadhātu*) described in Mahāyāna cosmology—such as *Sukhāvātī*, *Abhiratī*, or *Akanisṭha*. Each world-system is not an independently existing domain but a karmically co-arisen field of experience accessible only to beings whose *vāsanā* resonate with that particular realm (Williams, 2009). Furthermore, the Yogācāra view relativizes the epistemic authority of scientific cosmology. While modern astronomy often assumes that it unveils a singular, objective cosmos, Yogācāra suggests that such a model represents the consensus projection of human karmic imprints, not a universal truth. In this way, *vāsanā* functions as a mediator between consciousness and cosmos, shaping not only private mental contents but also shared experiential realities—including what is seen through telescopes or calculated in astrophysical models.

This approach also opens space for a cosmic pluralism, where the diversity of life-worlds (*lokas*) and their inhabitants reflects the infinite variability of karmic conditioning. For instance, beings with vastly different karmic inheritances might perceive entirely different cosmologies, governed by laws, temporalities, and even forms of space that are incommensurable with human perception (Williams, 2009). This resonates with the Buddhist soteriological goal, which is not to uncover an objective universe but to purify consciousness such that one transcends karmically constructed reality altogether.

In the concept of *vāsanā* underscores the subjective and karmic nature of cosmic experience, emphasizing that what is taken as “cosmos” is ultimately a karmically-generated appearance. Rather than offering a transparent window into an external reality, cosmological observation becomes a mirror reflecting the imprints of consciousness—a view that calls for a radical epistemological humility in the face of cosmic knowledge.

3. *Abhilāpa* (The Constructive Power of Language and Concept) In the Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions—particularly in *Madhyamaka* and *Yogācāra*—the concept of *abhilāpa* (designation or linguistic construction) plays a pivotal role in understanding how reality, including cosmic reality,

is shaped. Far from being a neutral descriptor of independently existing entities, language in these systems is a constructive force, actively shaping and mediating our perceptions of the universe. Thus, when we speak of phenomena such as “black holes,” “event horizons,” or “galactic clusters,” we are not uncovering a mind-independent reality but rather engaging with conceptual fabrications (*prajñapti*) that arise interdependently with consciousness. Kalupahana (1987) emphasizes that designation (*abhilāpa*) does not correspond to intrinsic essence, but rather functions as a pragmatic tool grounded in dependent origination. What we call a “star” is not a self-existent entity (*svabhāva*), but a linguistically and culturally conditioned phenomenon, arising within the interpretive frameworks of human cognition and scientific paradigms. This critique resonates with Madhyamaka's insistence—especially as articulated by Nāgārjuna—that all conceptual constructs are empty (*śūnya*) and merely conventional (*saṃvṛti-satya*), not ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*) (Garfield, 2015).

From the Yogācāra perspective, *abhilāpa* is inseparable from *vikalpa*—the mental tendency to fragment and label reality. Perception is never “raw” or direct, but is always overlaid by conceptual filters that categorize and limit experience (Lusthaus, 2002). These linguistic overlays obscure the non-dual nature of experience, reinforcing a dualistic ontology between observer and observed, cosmos and consciousness. The result is a constructed universe, linguistically mediated and shaped by collective *vāsanā* (karmic imprints) and culturally embedded narratives. In modern science, particularly astronomy, such linguistic constructions are often mistaken for empirical discoveries. Terms like “dark matter,” “multiverse,” or “gravitational lensing” are treated as objective realities, but from a Buddhist epistemological stance, they are empty signifiers, dependent on human cognition, instrumentation, and conceptual imagination (Kabat-Zinn, 2011). The Mahāyāna view thus calls for a hermeneutics of humility, recognizing that scientific models—though operationally useful—are never ontologically absolute.

Moreover, *abhilāpa* functions as a bridge between perception and social cognition. As Siderits (2007) notes, language not only labels but also generates consensus reality by embedding concepts within cultural and intersubjective norms. In the context of cosmology, this suggests that what we collectively call “the universe” is a semiotic network of signs and references, grounded not in objective presence but in linguistic interdependence. This view destabilizes the notion of a cosmos “out there” waiting to be discovered and emphasizes instead the linguistic performativity of cosmological knowledge.

Ultimately, *abhilāpa* reminds us that the cosmic order perceived by human beings is not ontologically pre-given, but hermeneutically emergent—arising from a complex interplay of consciousness, karmic dispositions, and conceptual designations. In this way, Buddhist thought offers a profound critique of realist cosmologies and provides an alternative epistemology that honors the constructive and contingent nature of knowing.

4. Synthesis and Philosophical Implications The convergence of *śūnyatā* (emptiness), *vāsanā* (karmic imprints), and *abhilāpa* (linguistic-conceptual construction) offers a transformative rethinking of cosmology from the Mahayana Buddhist perspective. These three interwoven concepts challenge the ontological realism often assumed in contemporary astronomy and replace it with a vision of reality that is interdependent, processual, and consciousness-based. In conventional astrophysics, the universe is treated as a vast, mind-

independent structure composed of discrete entities—planets, stars, galaxies—that obey objective, deterministic laws. However, Mahayana philosophy, particularly as articulated in the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra traditions, undermines this metaphysical stance. Nāgārjuna's radical critique of *svabhāva* (inherent existence) in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* affirms that no phenomenon, whether material or mental, exists autonomously; rather, all phenomena arise through *pratītyasamutpāda* (dependent origination) (Garfield, 2015). The stars in the night sky, then, are not fixed substances but empty forms, arising dependently through conditions—perceptual, cognitive, karmic, and linguistic.

Further, the Yogācāra doctrine of *vāsanā* deepens this view by suggesting that perceptions of the cosmos are filtered through karmic residues embedded in the *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness). These latent imprints shape not only psychological tendencies but also the very appearance of the world, including our scientific models of the universe. As Lusthaus (2002) explains, the apparent objectivity of space and time is, from the Yogācāra standpoint, a projection structured by deeply ingrained karmic patterns. The universe that scientists observe through telescopes is, in part, an echo of the observer's own karmic continuum—rendering the scientific gaze itself a conditioned process, not a neutral window into objective reality. The concept of *abhilāpa* brings language and conceptualization into the center of this epistemic critique. As Kalupahana (1987) notes, names and descriptions are not mirrors of intrinsic nature but active agents in constructing the appearance of things. The use of terms such as "galaxy," "supernova," or "dark matter" is not value-neutral; these designations frame and limit what is seen, reinforcing a particular worldview. Mahayana thinkers argue that our linguistic frameworks do not simply describe reality—they constitute it. In this sense, astronomical knowledge is not an uncovering of pre-existing truths but a creative, conditioned event within the cognitive-linguistic field.

Together, *śūnyatā*, *vāsanā*, and *abhilāpa* dissolve the boundary between the observer and the observed, subject and object, consciousness and cosmos. The Mahayana vision posits a radically relational universe in which phenomena do not exist independently of awareness, intention, and interpretation. This has significant implications not only for how we understand the cosmos, but also for how we situate the role of science itself. Rather than dismissing astronomy as illusory, Mahayana thought re-contextualizes it within a broader contemplative framework. Scientific insights are recognized as conventional truths (*saṃvṛti-satya*), valuable within their own domain, but ultimately empty of fixed essence. As Wallace (2010) observes, even in contemporary physics, the role of the observer has become increasingly central—particularly in quantum mechanics and cosmology—suggesting a natural point of dialogue between Buddhist philosophy and modern science.

This integration encourages a more holistic vision of reality—one that honors empirical rigor while remaining open to the depths of subjective and karmic conditioning. It shifts the epistemological paradigm from objectivist certainty to contemplative humility, from an external cosmos governed by rigid laws to an interwoven field of consciousness, karma, and co-dependent construction. In doing so, Mahayana Buddhism offers a cosmology that is not only intellectually rigorous but spiritually expansive, capable of accommodating both scientific discovery and meditative insight.

### **Critical Perspective on Astronomy in Buddhist Idealism**

Astronomy traditionally relies on objective observation, mathematical modeling, and empirical verification to understand the cosmos. However, when placed under the lens of Buddhist Idealism—particularly as developed in the Yogācāra school—this understanding encounters profound philosophical critique. Yogācāra asserts that all experiences of reality, including those of the cosmos, are mediated through consciousness (*vijñapti-mātra*), challenging the independent existence of the external world (Lusthaus, 2002). This idealist view destabilizes the materialist assumptions that undergird much of classical and modern astronomical theory.

From a Yogācāra perspective, celestial phenomena—stars, galaxies, and cosmological structures—are not external realities per se, but dependently originated phenomena that arise within the field of consciousness. Lusthaus (2002) emphasizes that perception is fundamentally intentional and structured by mental imprints (*vāsanās*), which implies that our understanding of space and time is constructed rather than discovered. This undermines the ontological status of astronomical objects as mind-independent entities and opens the door to reinterpret cosmological models as phenomenological rather than physical realities.

Garfield (2015) further develops this critique by arguing that Buddhist philosophy offers a relational ontology in which entities lack inherent existence (*svabhāva*) and only arise in dependence upon causes, conditions, and conceptual frameworks. This perspective resonates with certain interpretations of quantum cosmology, where the observer's role becomes inseparable from the phenomena observed. Wallace (2010), drawing from both Buddhist contemplative science and theoretical physics, proposes that consciousness may be a fundamental dimension of the universe, rather than a byproduct of matter. Such a view invites a radical rethinking of astronomy—not as a purely objective science, but as a discipline in which mind and cosmos co-arise and co-define one another.

Moreover, Buddhist cosmology, as explored by Sopa (1972), introduces symbolic models such as Mount Meru and the multiple world-systems, which, while mythological in appearance, can be interpreted through an idealist lens as cognitive maps of experience and consciousness. Kalupahana (1987) supports this by highlighting the psychological and ethical dimensions embedded within these cosmological narratives, suggesting that their value lies not in empirical accuracy but in their capacity to cultivate insight into the nature of perception and mental formation.

In contrast, Seeds and Backman (2014), representing the classical scientific approach, present astronomy as a discipline grounded in empirical data and governed by natural laws. However, when juxtaposed with Buddhist Idealism, this framework may be critiqued for its commitment to a materialist ontology that neglects the role of the observer. Williams (2009) notes that Mahāyāna traditions, including Yogācāra, consistently reject the bifurcation of subject and object, favoring instead a holistic understanding in which consciousness and phenomena are interdependent.

Ultimately, Buddhist Idealism does not seek to replace astronomy but to offer a complementary perspective that re-situates the cosmos within the mind. This critical lens

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challenges the epistemological foundations of astronomy, urging scientists and philosophers alike to consider how consciousness participates in the unfolding of the universe.

### **Conclusion**

The exploration of astronomy through the lens of Buddhist Idealism reveals a profound recontextualization of cosmological inquiry. Rather than dismissing the empirical rigor of astronomy, Buddhist philosophy—particularly Yogācāra and Madhyamaka—challenges its foundational assumptions about objectivity, materialism, and observer-independent reality. Celestial phenomena, from this perspective, are not ontologically self-existent but are dependently arisen appearances shaped by consciousness, karmic residues, and conceptual designations. The insights of Buddhist Idealism encourage a shift from viewing the universe as an external, fixed reality to understanding it as a dynamic interplay of mind and manifestation. This integration not only broadens the scope of cosmological understanding but also nurtures a contemplative awareness that bridges the outer cosmos with inner consciousness. The dialogue between science and contemplative traditions thus opens a path toward a more nuanced and comprehensive model of reality.

### **Suggestions**

#### **Body of Knowledge**

This study contributes to an emerging field of contemplative cosmology that reexamines scientific inquiry through the philosophical frameworks of Buddhist Idealism. Drawing upon the Yogācāra doctrines of vijñaptimātra (consciousness-only), trisvabhāva (three natures), ālayavijñāna (storehouse consciousness), and the Madhyamaka critique of svabhāva (inherent existence), the research offers a phenomenological critique of objective astronomy. It synthesizes classical Buddhist texts and contemporary philosophical scholarship (Lusthaus, Garfield, Williams, Kalupahana, Wallace) with astronomical models and assumptions (Seeds & Backman), highlighting how linguistic structures, karmic patterns, and perceptual conditioning shape scientific understanding. By doing so, it establishes a dialogical framework where cosmology is not merely the study of the external universe but a co-dependent manifestation arising within awareness. This body of knowledge invites a holistic paradigm in which mind and cosmos are not separate but are intimately interwoven through the processes of observation, intention, and interdependence.

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**The Key Conceptual Contributions to Contemplative Cosmology through Buddhist Idealism**

1. Reconceptualization of Scientific Inquiry Reexamines conventional astronomy through the lens of Buddhist Idealism and phenomenology.

2. Core Doctrinal Foundations Integrates Yogācāra principles such as vijñaptimātra (consciousness-only), trisvabhāva (three natures), and ālaya-vijñāna (storehouse consciousness). Engages Madhyamaka’s critique of svabhāva (inherent existence) to question objective cosmology.

3. Methodological Synthesis Combines classical Buddhist texts and modern philosophical interpretations (Lusthaus, Garfield, Williams, Kalupahana, Wallace). Juxtaposes Buddhist insights with astronomical paradigms (e.g., Seeds & Backman) to interrogate underlying metaphysical assumptions.

4. Phenomenological Critique of Objectivity Analyzes how linguistic structures (abhilāpa), karmic imprints (vāsanā), and perceptual conditioning shape our interpretation of the cosmos.

5. Dialogical Framework for Cosmology Proposes that the cosmos is not an independently existing object but a co-arising phenomenon within awareness. Suggests that cosmological knowledge emerges through interdependence between observer, intention, and the observed.

6. Holistic Paradigm Shift Advocates for an integrated view where mind and universe are deeply interwoven, challenging the dualism of subject and object.

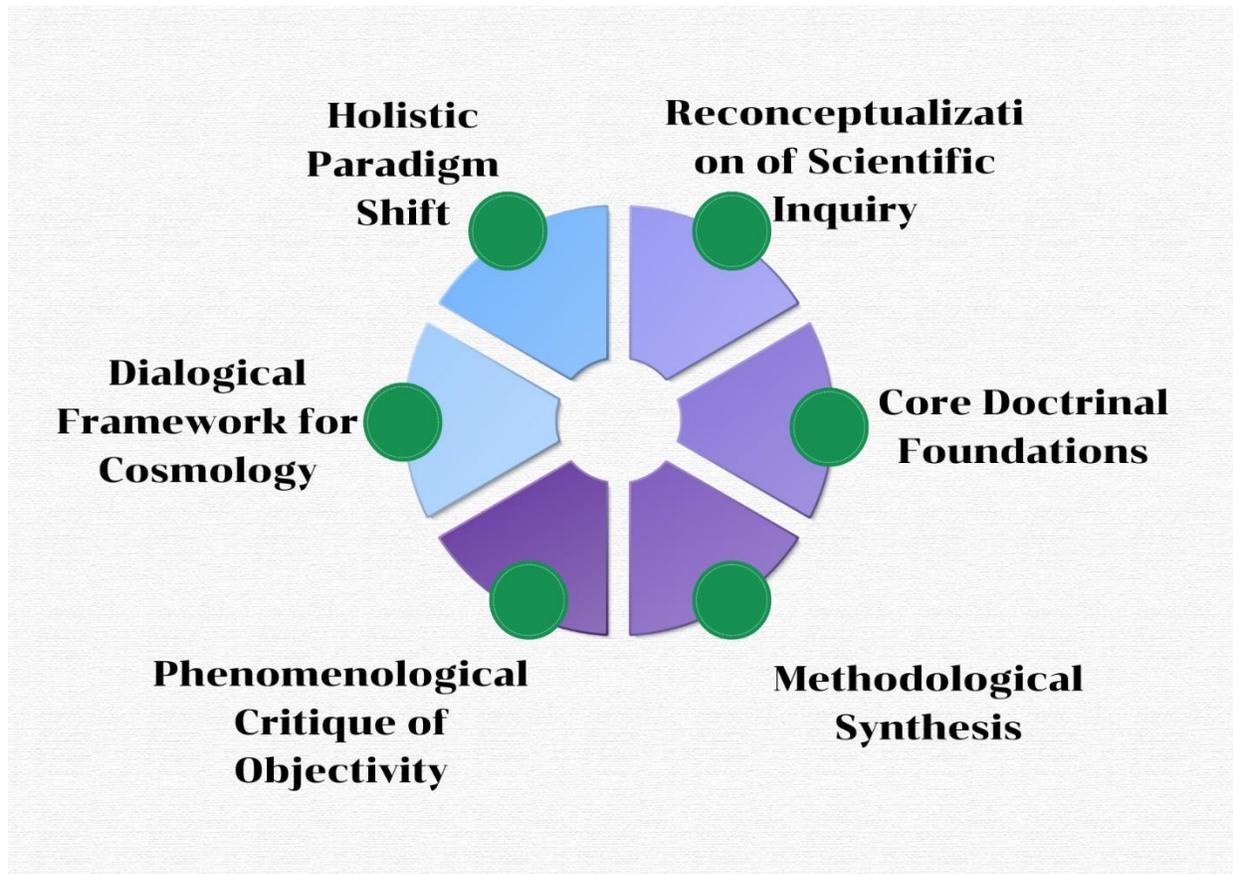


Figure 1 The Key Conceptual Contributions

**For future research**

Future research should delve deeper into interdisciplinary studies that bridge Buddhist epistemology with emerging scientific paradigms, such as quantum cosmology, cognitive science, and consciousness studies. Empirical methodologies can be enriched by incorporating phenomenological and introspective methods rooted in Buddhist meditative practices. Scholars are also encouraged to explore how Buddhist cosmological symbols, like Mount Meru and the thirty-one planes of existence, might serve as psychological and ethical frameworks rather than literal astronomical models. Furthermore, collaborations between Buddhist scholars and scientists can foster innovative educational curricula and research that promote both intellectual rigor and contemplative depth.

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