

# **Edmund Husserlian's Transcendence of the Early Buddhist Theory of Consciousness**

**Saman Pushpakumara<sup>1</sup>**

Philosopher, Edmund Husserl, the founding father of western philosophical movement known as phenomenology, had formulated a theory of the structure of phenomenological consciousness. Gautama, the Buddha, too as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., had provided an analysis of the conscious phenomena. Many scholars who trace parallels between Buddhist view of consciousness and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of the structures of consciousness trace mostly the similarities between the two, which are not only possible but also could be regarded as a worthwhile contribution to the field of comparative philosophy. But the present paper, while falling within comparative philosophy, argues that Husserl's analysis of consciousness, despite its limitations, as shown, for example, by Derrida, (and also by Heidegger), is more advanced than the Buddha's formulation of the same. Husserl articulated his phenomenology of consciousness as a result of his encounter with Cartesian cogito, (or the Cartesian psychology) on the one hand and the positivistic foundation of empirical sciences on the other. Husserl developed his notion of phenomenological consciousness situating within an industrially advanced capitalist society and nurturing by scientific epistemology, despite his criticism of its underlying positivism, which set the basis for his philosophy of internal consciousness. He had been living in a different Time-Space paradigm, which has to be taken seriously when assessing his philosophy of consciousness. The Buddha, in contrast, theorized his notion of consciousness within a backward, slow-moving, agricultural and feudal setting, and

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<sup>1</sup> Dept. of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Peradeniya  
E-mail-saman.pushpakumara534@gmail.com

developed his notion of consciousness as a normative concept, which lays the foundational stone for achieving the spiritual objective he envisaged. While admitting the fact that no other philosophy existed during that time, the Buddha had articulated such a meticulous and an in-depth analysis of the phenomenology of consciousness. His analysis, when assessed and compared with the twentieth century phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, seems less advanced and subjacent to Husserl.

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