

as the characteristic twist or surprise—sometimes, indeed, a theological epiphany—that he built into the denouement of nearly every poem, often via the penultimate or final “signature line.” Hawley also regularly displays, in these analyses, tour-de-force sleuthing, as when in poem 289—one of the “Bee Messenger” series in which the *viraha*-tormented gopis both long for and, not infrequently, revile their absconding lover—he convincingly traces a sarcastic allusion to Kṛṣṇa’s blue color all the way back to the *Pañcatantra* tale of a jackal who, after falling into a dyer’s vat of indigo, attempted to brazenly lord it over the other animals in the forest (*ISO* p. 637).

Awe-inspiring as it is, *Into Sūr’s Ocean* has minor flaws of its own. Assiduous copyediting, such as the MCLI books enjoy through their generous endowment, has fallen by the wayside at most academic presses, and no one seems to have noticed certain typos, particularly in the introductory section (such as hyphens inserted in words that are not line-breaks: “acknowl-edges,” “elabo-rates,” even “Krish-na”—all on p. 41; or, in one translated poem, the confusing substitution of “peaks” for “speaks,” p. 59). There are also rare instances when Hawley’s translation does not match Bryant’s *Braj bhāṣā* text in *SO*, as in poem 424, line 4; there is an explanation for this, to be sure, but it is absent from the bilingual edition and can only be found in the commentary on p. 908 of *ISO*. But if even Homer is said to sometimes nod—and Sūrdas to slip in a second-rate poem—the small glitches noted here cannot significantly mar Bryant and Hawley’s monumental achievement. The “sun” of Sūr rises out of these two “oceans” with a brilliance and clarity that is, in English, nowhere else to be seen.

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*A Yogācāra Buddhist Theory of Metaphor.* By ROY TZOHAR. Oxford: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. xvi + 296. \$99 (cloth).

“Put simply,” Roy Tzohar writes in the introduction to this provocative book, “according to the Buddhists, at the root of human suffering lies a deep discord between how we ordinarily conceive reality and how it truly is” (p. 1). Because of its innate tendency to reify the fluidity of events in experience, language and the conceptual schemes it articulates help to foster a false view of the self and its world. In this sense, language “is the metaphorical workshop in which entities are forged and, once produced, are erroneously believed to be real” (*ibid.*). To escape the grip of such erroneous beliefs is the ultimate, soteriological goal of all Buddhist thought and practice, a goal facilitated, in part, through the deployment of various forms of salvific discourse. In this respect, however, as Tzohar points out, language contributes both to the solution and to the problem: “Buddhist philosophical texts present a palpable tension that arises from the inherently paradoxical need to argue against words by using words, to devalue language through language” (*ibid.*). Tzohar rightly construes the need to resolve or contain this tension as a central task of Indian Buddhist thought. How this task is approached by early Indian Yogācāra philosophers—and in particular, by the sixth-century Yogācāra philosopher Sthiramati—is the principal subject of this meticulously researched study.

As interpreted by Tzohar, Sthiramati’s remedy is grounded in a “pan-figurative” theory of meaning unique in the scope of its claim that all language use—both in Buddhist treatises and in quotidian affairs—is metaphorical. The essential features of this claim are set forth in Sthiramati’s commentary to the first verse of Vasubandhu’s *Triṃśikā*: “The metaphor (*upacāra*) of ‘things’ (*dharmāḥ*) and of ‘self’ in its various forms, which is set in motion, that is to say in the world and in treatises, that is [with reference to] the transformation of consciousness” (p. 157). By “self” and “things” we are meant to understand all subjective and objective phenomena; none of which exist in the way they appear, namely, as substantive entities. Sthiramati’s claim that entities only exist metaphorically relies on “a formulaic śāstric definition of metaphor, according to which a word is used figuratively when it indicates ‘something that is not there,’ or in more formal terms, when a word’s primary reference is absent from the locus of reference” (p. 160)—as, for example, if a muscular, slow-witted person (the locus of

reference) were to be referred to as an ox (the primary, or literal, reference of the word “ox”). The self and things are metaphorical in this sense because as primary referents of the words “self” and “things” such apparent entities are absent from their locus of reference, which is—according to Sthiramati—“the transformation of consciousness” (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*). That is to say, the words “self” and “things” do not refer to real, substantive subjective or objective phenomena, but instead to the “transformation of consciousness,” which is neither a self nor a thing, neither subjective nor objective, but rather a perpetually shifting collection of “mental appearances” (p. 167). The transformation of consciousness is, in Tzohar’s words, “the epitome of change” (p. 168). Thus for Sthiramati all language is merely figurative in the particular, technical sense that words only capture experienced qualities or characteristics (*gauna*) and not existing entities. “Here ‘figurative’ means ‘that which occurs in the form of something which is only imagined to be there’” (p. 165). Language is thus “incapable of truly representing reality . . . as it lacks any direct referential grounding” (p. 167). However—and this is critical to bear in mind—this is not to imply that language has no ground whatsoever. Metaphor is, according to Tzohar, “a linguistic sign that indicates . . . the ontological nonexistence and referential absence of an allegedly real (primary) object, and the presence of a causal deep structure, which can be referred to only indirectly” (p. 143). Tzohar acknowledges that this amounts both to an ontological claim and to a theory of meaning, in that the meaning or sense of a word “is roughly the description of this causal process in terms of the Yogācāra model of consciousness” (p. 169). One great advantage to this onto-semantic theory is that “it allows the reference of a term to remain fixed even as its meaning changes from one speaker to another” (pp. 170–71). Specifically, “a term’s meaning is understood as a function of the speaker’s knowledge of the mental causal process underlying its use” (p. 172).

Sthiramati’s pan-figurative theory of meaning and its implications are the focus of part three (chapters five and six) of the book. The first two parts (chapters one through four) are devoted to a scrupulous investigation of the historical roots of this theory, which Tzohar traces back to earlier concepts of referential meaning and metaphor developed in the work of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā philosophers and in Bhartṛhari’s *Vākyapadīya*. These initial ideas were in turn picked up and developed by Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and, to a lesser extent, by the Buddhist epistemologist Dignāga. The point here is not only to track the intellectual pedigree of Sthiramati’s mature philosophy, but also to showcase the originality of his theoretical position in the *Triṃśīkābhāṣya*, where for the first time earlier notions of metaphor were aligned with Yogācāra doctrines of the nonexistence of objective phenomena and their underlying causal reality. Tzohar succeeds admirably in showing how Indian Buddhist thought developed in the context of a broader conversation that included non-Buddhist authors. This is certainly one of the strengths of the book. It is also to his distinct credit that he has relied, to some considerable extent, not on generalizations about “schools” but rather on a close reading of individual texts.

I do not pretend to do justice here to the sophistication of Tzohar’s arguments, nor to the range and subtlety of his historical and philological analysis. The book is, by all counts, an impressive accomplishment, and is no doubt deserving of the accolades it has received. Nevertheless, it is not without its difficulties. Problems crop up in those places where the author transitions from careful scholarship into what appears—to this reviewer, at least—an overly confident estimation of what is achieved by this pan-figurative view of language. In the introduction, for example, Tzohar writes: “[Sthiramati’s] theory of meaning . . . allowed the Yogācāra to carve out a position that is quite exceptional in the Buddhist landscape: a position that views ordinary language as incapable of representing or reaching reality, but at the same time justifies the meaningfulness of the school’s own metaphysical and salvific discourse” (p. 2). This is accomplished, we are told, “by radically reframing the school’s controversy with the Madhyamaka” (*ibid.*). He makes similar claims at intervals throughout the book, all of which culminate in the closing section of chapter five, which reads like a vindication of the Yogācāra’s position vis-à-vis the Madhyamaka critique.

The essence of this critique—as presented by Candrakīrti in chapter six of the *Madhyamakāvatāra*—is that the language used in the Yogācāra’s doctrinal claims is (like all language) self-referential and, in this sense, ungrounded and incapable of justifying its own doctrinal assertions. Sthiramati counters by insisting that it is the Madhyamaka philosopher—not him—who is vulnerable to this critique; the Madhyamaka’s radical conventionalism is “patently self-undermining because it cannot provide any criterion in light of which the meaningfulness and truth value of the school’s own claims might be dis-

tinguished from those of any other conventional language . . .” (p. 176). For the Yogācāra philosopher, on the other hand, “[W]hile language does not truly represent reality in any respect, its denotative function and the very conditions of its meaningfulness require us to presuppose extralinguistic underlying conditions as its ‘support’” (p. 176). Tzohar adds, in a footnote, that the use of the word “support” here means “that linguistic phenomena are causally grounded—which in the Yogācāra context also means that they are ontologically grounded” (ibid.).

It is worth noting, first of all, that Nāgārjuna explicitly states in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* that he has no theoretical position to assert or defend. The salvific power of the Madhyamaka’s discourse rests not on doctrinal claims, but rather on language that self-consciously eschews reliance on any ontological or epistemological foundation; hence the (in)famous “emptiness of emptiness.” In simply referring to “the school’s own claims”—as if the content of such “claims” were obvious—neither Sthiramati nor Tzohar acknowledges, much less directly engages with, the central element of the Madhyamaka’s soteriological project. It is also worthy of note that in making clear that Sthiramati’s theory of meaning relies on the positing of an extralinguistic, ontological ground (i.e., the “transformation of consciousness” that provides the locus of reference for all metaphorical language, which is to say, all language whatsoever), Tzohar appears to run up against his own repeated assertion that the dispute between the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka, as defined by Sthiramati, “turns on linguistic rather than ontological issues” (p. 154 and *passim*). But the most trenchant point to be raised in this context is the following: if one accepts the pan-metaphorical theory of meaning, namely, that all language is metaphorical, then this theory must apply equally to Sthiramati’s own technical vocabulary. In which case the primary reference of the metaphorical expression “transformation of consciousness” must be absent from *its* locus of reference, which is to say, it must be absent from *itself*. Perhaps something like this is implied when the transformation of consciousness is ambiguously described both “as an underlying causal reality on the one hand and a conceptual construct [*vikalpa*] on the other” (p. 169). The effort to decipher all this elicits a kind of intellectual vertigo, as if one were witnessing some kind of linguistic sleight of hand, or a virtuoso performance of the old ball and cups trick—which is, in so many words, exactly how Candrakīrti characterized the Yogācāra’s convoluted metaphysics in his famous critique. It’s not obvious to me how Sthiramati succeeds in evading that critique, nor do I understand how he hopes to secure the meaningfulness of his discourse by anchoring it in what ultimately amounts to a rhetorical abstraction. If anything—again, as Candrakīrti pointed out—such language lends itself all too easily to reification and, therefore, to continued suffering.

Which leads me to one final, perplexing consideration.

Oddly enough, once all the smoke and mirrors are cleared away, I find myself hard pressed to see any fundamental difference between Sthiramati’s pan-figurative theory and the Madhyamaka’s radical conventionalism. At first I found this troubling. But then it occurred to me: maybe that’s actually the genius of the whole thing, for “smoke and mirrors” *could* just be another name for “skillful means” (*upāyakaūśalya*). If, however, that’s what this is really about, then neither Sthiramati nor Tzohar is letting on.

Regardless, I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It is an impressive piece of scholarship, a complex, multifaceted work that will certainly become compulsory reading for anyone with a serious interest in Yogācāra studies.

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*The Medinet Habu Records of the Foreign Wars of Ramesses III.* By DONALD REDFORD. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, vol. 91. Leiden: BRILL, 2018. Pp. xi + 197. \$122.

This scintillating volume by Donald Redford covers two major themes. The first deals with the texts and scenes at Medinet Habu, whereas the second covers the identification of the Sea Peoples. This reviewer feels that although they are harmoniously integrated, the latter issue, especially, deserves