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Tagawa Shun'ei. *Hajimete no yuishiki.* Tokyo: Shunjusha, 2003. xiv + 272 pp. ¥1800 (cloth), ISBN 978-4-393-13504-4.



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With the vast scope of the *YogĀcĀra* tradition and its range of variants and derivatives in India, Tibet, and East Asia, the prospect of writing an introductory book that gives sufficient treatment to the most essential points without getting lost in details, or overwhelmed in an attempt to cover every aspect of the tradition, is formidable. This is no doubt part of the reason that there does not yet exist a basic introductory book on *YogĀcĀra* in the English language.

Rather than trying to cover the entire tradition, one strategy might be to focus on a manageable, reasonably representative, and interesting facet of *YogĀcĀra* as a way of drawing students into this rich tradition that serves as the primary source for the technical language of Mahāyāna Buddhist epistemology, psychology, and soteriology.

Here in Japan introductions to *YogĀcĀra* (or *yuishiki*—“consciousness-only”) abound, to the extent that someone who desires to teach an introductory course on *YogĀcĀra* has to pick his or her way through more than a dozen books that might fill the bill. Having been able to teach an introduction to *YogĀcĀra* (“Buddhist Psychology”) in the form of a third-year seminar for a couple of years in a row (thanks to the recent surge in the popularity of psychology courses in Japanese colleges and universities), I have had the opportunity to work with some

interesting introductory texts, including the book under discussion here.

Tagawa Shun'ei is the abbot of the Hossō temple Kōfukuji in Nara. Thus his presentation of *YogĀcĀra* is coming from inside the tradition, and he makes no attempt to hide the fact that he is seeking to argue for the soundness of the *YogĀcĀra* system as a viable method for contemplating and treating the causes of human suffering. Nonetheless, his presentation demonstrates a solid scholarly mastery of the source material, delivered in a lucid and sober-minded manner, and thus remains appropriate for an academic setting.

Being a work of two hundred and seventy-two pages in ten chapters, the author is not attempting to introduce every facet of the tradition. He leaves out most of the history, coverage of canonical texts and major *YogĀcĀra* thinkers, and only lightly touches on epistemological problems, such as the status of external objects and the three modes of perception, focusing instead directly on the articulation of the *YogĀcĀra* map of the regions of consciousness. He delivers a thorough introduction to the *Ālaya-vijñāna* (eighth consciousness), *manas* (seventh consciousness), *mano-vijñāna* (sixth consciousness), and five sense consciousness, paying particular attention to the operation of cause and effect through karmic impressions and seeds. In con-

nection with the discussion of the *mano-vijāñāna* and *manas*, the book includes one of the most detailed and masterful explanations of the interconnections in the operations of afflictive factors and their antidotes that I have yet come across.

This articulation of the aspects and functions of the regions of consciousness, along with the interplay of wholesome and unwholesome mental factors, fills the first eight chapters of the book. The final two chapters deal with issues related to the attainment of liberation, including a discussion of distinctive aspects of the *Yogācāra* view of soteriology, centered around a treatment of how the *Yogācāra* teaching of the *icchantika* (incorrigible person, incapable of reaching enlightenment) can be reconciled with the pervasive Japanese Buddhist *hongaku* (original enlightenment) mindset, picking up on a debate that proponents of *hongaku* had used successfully in China and Japan a thousand years ago to diminish the *Yogācāra* school's influence.

Tagawa opens the book with the chapter “What is Consciousness-only,” introducing some of *Yogācāra*'s fundamental cognitive issues, taking as his point of entry the four aspects of cognition in their juxtaposition with the three kinds of objects [1]. The purpose of this manner of presentation is to introduce *Yogācāra* by showing some of the variety of fundamental problems to be encountered in the act of definitively “knowing” anything. Moving into the second chapter (“The Structure of the Mind”), he enters the main discourse of the book, first introducing the six-consciousness model understood by the pre-*Yogācāra* Abhidharma scholars, and then showing how problems with using that model to explain the existence and function of mind in subconscious and unconsciousness states necessitated the positing of a deeper, underlying region of consciousness, which ends up being divided into store (*Ālaya*) and ego (*manas*) “regions.”

Chapter 3 (“Mental Functioning”) schematizes this map of consciousness. Here, a general outline of the fifty-one mental factors is provided, including a detailed and lucid explanation of: the five factors always present in cognitive activity; the five factors having specific objects; and the four indeterminate factors. The detailed explanation of the wholesome and unwholesome (afflictive) factors is left for special treatment later in the book. Chapter 4, entitled “Accumulation of Experiences: The Subconscious Region of the Mind, #1,” treats the store consciousness, providing a detailed explanation of the seeds, perfumation, and karmic impressions that continually recreate the minds of living beings. The various permutations

of each of these are explained, not only theoretically, but with examples from our everyday lived experience in the development of both good and bad habits, as well as with poetic citations from the medieval Hossō monk Gedatsu Shōnin (1155-1213). Chapter 5 (“The Production of Things”) takes up the topic of seeds and perfumation in much greater detail, elaborating the cycle of seeds perfuming conscious experiences, which in turn perfume the seeds, as well as the seeds directly perfuming each other. This discussion is enriched by the author's weaving into the explanation of karmic causation of seeds and impressions the four kinds of causation (*catvāraāṅga-pratyayaāṅga*—explained in great detail), the four noble truths, the eight-fold path, and so on.

With Chapter 6 (“The Deep Ego Squirming in Selfishness: The Subconscious Region of the Mind, #2”), Tagawa moves from the discussion of causation in the *Ālaya* to the source of affliction, the *manas* (seventh) consciousness. He shows how the *manas* continuously generates self-benefit-oriented patterning at the subconscious level in its interaction with the store consciousness and the conscious *mano-vijāñāna*. He lays out the mental activity generated by the *manas* by elaborating the four afflictions associated with the self (self-delusion, self-views, self-pride, and the self's attachment to things) with a clarity and mastery that will be useful to advanced students of *Yogācāra* as well as beginners. He then elaborates the rest of the basic set of afflictions, detailing their causal interrelationships, as well as their relationships with the *manas*, *mano-vijāñāna*, and other categories of the fifty-one mental factors.

Chapter 7 (“The Mind that Makes Various Judgments”) introduces the *mano-vijāñāna* (“thinking”, or sixth) consciousness and its various functions, using the explanations of seeds, karmic impressions, objects, mental functions, and so on, developed in the earlier chapters. Here Tagawa also elaborates the twenty secondary afflictions, which tend, more than the four and six primary afflictions, to operate at the level of conscious awareness. He also begins to introduce the positive mental factors—the “antidotes”—that counteract the afflictions. Chapter 8 explains the function of the five sense consciousnesses, especially from the perspective of their relationship with the *mano-vijāñāna* and store consciousnesses.

The final two chapters address the problematic situation of human beings and their relationship with the conditions that are the ostensive end-goals of practice—*nirvāṇa* and buddhahood. In Chapter 9 (“Who are We?”) and Chapter 10 (“The Distance from Buddhahood”), the

author introduces the five-stage *YogĀcĀra* path, the five natures of practitioners, the three modes of perception of reality, and the two hindrances. It is in this section that he makes his most interesting interpretive move, one which, though it may well be criticized, deserves credit for the simple act of taking on a challenging issue. As a *YogĀcĀra* scholar seeking to simply provide an introduction to his system, he could have easily just presented the five natures and five paths as they are explained in the *YogĀcĀra* texts, and left it at that. But as a Buddhist teacher living in a Japanese environment predominated by active Buddhist traditions that are based in “original enlightenment” thought, he decided to take this on, and provide a defense for two HossĀ doctrines that had come under attack more than a millennium ago and are often cited today as primary reasons for the decline of HossĀ (once the most prominent Buddhist sect) in Japan: the unpopular *icchĀntika* character, and the idea that the course toward *nirvĀna* requires three incalculable eons of practice.

He takes the position that the *hongaku* approach should be seen as an idealistic view of the human mind and its capacity for perfection, while *YogĀcĀra* takes a realistic view. That is, even if you want to say that every sentient being has buddha-nature, the fact is that in terms of real circumstances, we are infinitely far from actualizing our buddhahood, and thus, each and every one of us is actually a virtual *icchĀntika*. He also argues for the closeness of the *hongaku* and HossĀ positions by showing the similarity between buddha-nature thought and the *YogĀcĀra* doctrine of “originally pure seeds.”

The epilogue, entitled “Consciousness-only and the

Modern World” briefly discusses some of the points of commonality to be seen between *YogĀcĀra* theories and modern scientific approaches, such as genetic theory, cognitive psychology, and so forth. His general attitude is to stress that such comparisons should not be made lightly by those lacking serious background on one side or the other.

As an introduction to *YogĀcĀra*, this book leaves out a lot. There is almost no discussion of the Indian origins of the tradition and its major texts (something one usually finds in other introductory works). The interpretations given in the book are based almost exclusively on the standardized rendition of *YogĀcĀra* provided in the *Cheng weishi lun*, and the existence of disagreements historically on key points within the tradition is ignored. On the other hand, his explanation of causation through the *Ālay*, and the general mapping of the regions of consciousness and their functions is one of the most accessible that I have seen anywhere. Since it is written in Japanese, the book cannot be used as an introductory text in a Western university. But I would imagine that someone who can read Japanese and wanted to teach an introductory course in the West on *YogĀcĀra* could greatly benefit by having access to this work. I can say from experience that it offers a presentation of the subject matter that is both accessible and interesting for undergraduates.

Note

[1] The three kinds of objects are: objects which are manifested from the *Ālay*; objects provisionally manifested from a subjective view, and, objects that exist in relation to the above two.

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