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*Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way. The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti.* Translated from the Sanskrit by MERVYN SPRUNG in collaboration with T. R. V. MURTI and U. S. VYAS. Pp. XVI + 283. Boulder: PRAJNA PRESS. 1979.

Sprung offers his partial translation of Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā—a commentary on the "root-text" of the Madhyamaka-school, Nāgārjuna's Madhyamakakārikā—with the expressed intention of making "an important work of Indian philosophy available to philosophers who read English" (VIII) and of placing "the Prasannapadā squarely within the live philosophical thought of our own time" (VIII). These intentions influence the style of his translation—he attempts to choose "the plainest, most intelligible way" (IX) of saying what is said in the original, without using brackets—, and his choice of chapters: I-VI, VIII-X, XIII, XV, XVIII-XIX, XXII-XXV. Moreover, in order to present "the flow of Candrakīrti's thought for the English language reader" (XI) in an uncomplicated way, most of the text's references to the Buddhist scriptures and most long quotations have been omitted, unless Sprung believed them necessary in order to understand a certain argument. This stripping the text of references to its religious context has been done to ensure that "the philosophy of the middle way will establish itself on its own merits, or fail to do so, quite without regard to its Buddhist orthodoxy" (XI). Finally Sprung has not "heavily footnoted" the translation, assuming that "to add commentary in the guise of footnotes would presume on the freedom of the reader" (X).

Candrakīrti's commentary definitely merits making it, or at least a larger part of it, accessible to the English reading public. It is not, however, intellectually healthy to strip such a literary document of its ties to its cultural context, which is in this case the religious tradition it is not only rooted in but with which it also wishes to conform. Even if isolating a text from its

cultural context could be justified in order to render its argument clearly and coherently, I think a translator cannot reserve any area of freedom for the interpretation of the reader. A translator has to present the original in his chosen language in a manner which is at once truthful to its original meaning, and dear to its new readers. That is all. The reader's freedom has to be limited—as far as possible—by presenting the meaning of the original. Whether the translator has to resort to writing footnotes or rather prefers other means to achieve such limitation, is another question.

Sprung's concise introduction to the thought of the Middle Way as presented by Candrakīrti is informative about the main concepts, and it offers intersecting statements with regard to the Mādhyamika's concept of reality (23). Regarding the translation itself there is only one question to be asked: "is it truthful to the original?" The reviewer shares Sprung's ideal of translating in the "plainest, most intelligible way," but the criteria determining what would in fact be "plainest" always depend on the particular original translated.

The Prasannapadā is one of the best-known Madhyamaka texts. Since Louis de La Vallée Poussin's edition of the text (1903–1913) various scholars have published partial translation of either the original Sanskrit or the Tibetan translation in one or another European language. And our understanding of the basic ideas of the school has improved over the last decades, because there have been a number of systematic studies which were based largely on Candrakīrti's commentary. Recently the material basis, the Sanskrit-text, too, has been improved (J. W. de Jong "Textcritical Notes on the Prasannapadā." *IJ* 20, 1978, 25–59, 217–252).

Sprung's translation was ready before de Jong's notes appeared, but one may agree with Sprung that the earlier philological work, even prior to de Jong's contribution, has been sufficient for the Prasannapadā to be presented at last to the general reading public. One would hope, however, that the level of interpretation gained by the labours of previous interpreters was to be put to good use, or, at least, not lost again. Unfortunately, this is often not the case in Sprung's translation.

Another cause of distress is the fact that Sprung, while trying to convey the meaning of Candrakīrti's often lengthy sentences in readable English, often dissolves the syntactical units of the original for the sake of the English medium. In itself this is a legitimate, even a desirable procedure in translating. In splitting up the clauses, however, Sprung does not always preserve the logical sequence implicit in the syntactical form of the original. This logical structure of the original's sentences necessarily has to be preserved in a translation, irrespective of the syntactical convention adopted by the translator. Sprung also tries to find new and often interesting translations for a number of terms with more or less success. The problem is that he does not follow his own proposals consistently. To exemplify these points I take at

random the translation of the beginning of chapter XVIII (*ātmaparīkṣā*), p. 165–168 (below I refer to La Vallée Poussin's edition).

340,6f.: Sprung frequently translates the term *ahamkāra* as "I-ing," *mamakāra* as "mine-ing." An English speaking philosopher might accept this, but later on the same page he will find "the notion 'I,'" and three pages further (167) he'll find "the sense of 'I.'" Will he not imagine that conceptual differences are being indicated?

340,6: *-aśeṣavastvanupalambhena*: Sprung translates "through ceasing to take anything whatsoever, . . . as real in its particularity." He thus interprets the term *anupalambha* as an intentional act of abstaining from conceiving something as something. In the parallel passage of 347,13ff. he translates *anupalambhāt* "because he no longer has any sense of them" (cf. also the glossary). That means that he tends to emphasize the intentional, subjective aspect of the meaning of *anupalambha*, while Candrakīrti rather emphasizes its nonintentional side. This is particularly clear when Candrakīrti paraphrases 348,1f. *śamāt* from v.2d by *anupādāt anupalambhāt*. The Mādhyamika has a non-perception in mind that is the result of non-existence, and not—as Sprung evidently thinks—a non-existence that results from non-perception. After all, *anupalambha* is the cognition of the "real way of things" (*tattva*) and only as such of soteriological importance. When Sprung translates "these are not allowed to arise because he [the Yogin] no longer has any sense of them," Sprung fails to understand that both terms are given as synonymous explanations of *śamāt*, and he thus literally devaluates the Yogin's soteriologically crucial cognition as merely an idle thought. Sprung's reversal of the logical sequence has led him further not to translate the ablative of *anupādāt* at all, to introduce instead the notion of an "allowance." This is necessary to his interpretation, but certainly not implied in the word *anupāda*. Sprung, moreover, does not follow his own interpretation consistently as one can see from his translation of *ātmānupalambhāt* (346,1) by "because they do not directly experience the self." In short, I still prefer de Jong's simple and clear translation "par la non-perception de toute chose . . ." (p.1). Such a translation leaves room for a possible conceptual nexus of non-perception with non-existence. One must admit that such a nexus cannot be taken for granted, because there has not yet been a careful study of the Madhyamaka concept of *anupalambha*. Such a nexus is, however, suggested in the Prajñāpāramitā—tradition (cf. Lamotte's *Traité* p.2146: "C'est parce que les dharma n'existent vraiment pas qu'ils ne sont perçus, et non point à cause de la faiblesse du savoir." In reference to Sprung's translation: that one does not wish to see the dharma any longer, is not the reason they fail to be perceived.)

340,10: In the quotation from the Madhyamakāvatāra *buddhvā* is translated by "having inseen." This, however, is the wrong place to suggest some "higher" sort of cognition,

since the line says nothing more than that the Yogin has seen, that is understood, the self to be the object of the *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*.

340.13–15: Elaborating upon the verse just quoted Candrakīrti establishes a logical sequence—expressed by means of repeating the present participle (*sam-*)*anupaśyan*—to clarify the motivation for the Yogin's investigation of the self: 1. discernment of *samsāra* as being based in the *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*, 2. discernment of the self as the objective basis of this *dr̥ṣṭi*, 3. discernment of a) abandonment of this *dr̥ṣṭi* through nonperception of the self, and b) disappearance of afflictions through abandonment of this *dr̥ṣṭi*. Sprung translates: "... the yogī, through not taking the self as real, abandons the view that the person is real, and having abandoned this view, discerning that all the basic afflictions come to an end, he inquires into the self." In other words Sprung divides the sentence and thus the Yogin's activity into two parts: first the Yogin is "discerning" (steps 1 and 2 above), but then he is discerning step 3.b) through acting out step 3.a). This leaves us to ask why the Yogin continues to investigate the self when he already has begun with "not taking the self as real" and thereby has abandoned the *dr̥ṣṭi*. Here, as above, Sprung falls into the trap of his own understanding of *anupalambha* ("not taking as real") as an intentional approach towards its object, the self, and distorts a logically and grammatically clear statement.

341.1f: Introducing *kārikā* I Candrakīrti wishes to explain why Nāgārjuna here deals only with the alternatives of identity and difference and gives two reasons: the three other relevant theses are implied in the two, and he wants to be brief. The whole meaning of Candrakīrti's remark is lost, however, when Sprung translates "Because the other theses ... are implicit ... and ... Nāgārjuna, ... refutes both views: that of identity and that of difference." Thus a new verb is substituted, the instrumental of *pratiśedhena* neglected, the verb *āha* and the crucial word *eva* that carries the purpose of the whole statement are left untranslated. ... *pakṣadvayapratīśedhenaiva* ... *āha* should in fact be rendered as "N. ... only by refuting these two views ... says:", since only then we can understand the purpose of the two reasons given (cf. Sprung's rendering of 341.5–7).

341.8: *tatra* does not refer to "this (*kārikā*)" but to "these (two views)."

342.2f: Sprung's translation of *upādāna* "what it (= the self) possesses," "the possessed" and *upādātā* "the possessor" is determined by the thesis "the self possesses the skandhas" (*tadvat* 341.1). It is not only inaccurate, but also inconsistent, since on p. 141 Sprung translates "what is appropriated," etc., as is usual (cf. the glossary).

342.7: The second part of Madhyamakāvatāra VI 127 quoted here is misunderstood, although de La Vallée Poussin's translation of the verse and the commentary is quite clear (cf. p. 292ff.). Instead of "If the self were like a real object, it could not, as such, have contradictory states" it says in fact

"Moreover the self would be something real; and if (the view that the person is real) would refer to such a reality, it would not be erroneous." For the difficult reading *tādṛśāś* cf. de La Vallée Poussin's note 3 on p. 292.

343.8: *atha vāyam anyo 'rīhah* introduces the second explanation of *kārikā* 1cd, i.e., "another meaning," not with Sprung "another argument."

343.9: Since he neglects the word, *lakṣaṇa-*, at the end of the compound Sprung presents what he notes to be "an interesting statement of the five skandhas": "The five factors of personal existence are (1) bodily form, (2) experiencing, (3) seizing on the specific character of things, (4) shaping one's dispositions, (5) becoming aware of objects." In fact the five terms are not an interesting statement of the skandhas, but rather a quite ordinary statement of the well-known characters or definitory marks (*lakṣaṇa*) of the skandhas. The beginning, therefore, should be "The five factors of personal existence have the following characters." Having mistaken the definitory features for the defined, Sprung continues to bend the words. *rūpaṇa* is taken as *rūpa* ("bodily form"), while in fact it is "the faculty of being broken," since the word for the skandha *rūpa* is etymologically derived from *rup-*, not from *rūp-*; likewise mistaken are the fourth and the fifth of Sprung's "skandhas" (cf. note 7 on p. 343 of the text and de Jong's note 14 for more details).

345.16: *tadaiśām* does not mean "For such, ...", but "Thus, for those ...", i.e., for those aspiring for freedom.

These examples will suffice to show that Sprung's translation in general is not very successful in meeting his own standards. The reader will be puzzled by the inconsistencies in translating a number of common, technical terms, by breaks and irregularities in the logical sequence of arguments, and by meaningless words and formulations. None of these flaws can be found in the original. They are due to the translator's carelessness in redacting his translation and in observing the grammatical and logical structures of the original. Especially distressing is the fact, that most of these flaws could have been avoided if only Sprung would have taken pains to utilize the works of his predecessors. He states that they have been of help (VII), but I fail to see how.

Careless editing of the Sanskrit terms added throughout the book (even of those in the Glossary) is another indication of a loose relationship to the original. The uncomely forms which result include for example: *pratīyayātā matreṇa* for *idampratīyayātāmātreṇa* (p. 49), *draṣṭā* for *draṣṭā* or *draṣṭṛ* (p. 93 and passim)—Sprung follows no rule in using either the nominative singular or the noun-stem in his terms—, *svaśīpataḥ* for *svarūpataḥ* (p. 168). Or from the Glossary: *utcheda* for *uccheda*, *grahana* for *grahaṇa*, *tr̥ṣṇa* for *tr̥ṣṇā*, *niśidha* for *niśedha*, *pramāna* for *pramāṇa*, *bhād* for *bādha* (?), *sākṣād* for *sākṣāt*, *sahabhava* for *sahabhāva*, *saṃvṛtya* (explained as "adjective to *saṃvṛti*") for *saṃvṛtyā* (instrumental of *saṃvṛti*). Finally—as if to demonstrate the dangers of translating words

in terms of the one meaning which one thinks they have—*nirhetuka* is explained as “being without cause; being without effect (sic!), i.e., non-causal.”

Considering that the translator's own legitimate aim is to present Candrakīrti's text in an intelligible form to the English reading public interested in the Madhyamaka, the translation is rather a setback than a step forward towards promoting the general knowledge of the Middle Way.

On the other hand Sprung has indeed made a great effort into the direction of a clear presentation of ideas which—because of its literary and conceptual context—the original sometimes expresses in a complicated manner. He has found many interesting ways of lifting the burden of stern scholastic Sanskrit from his translation, and this elimination of the specific means of language the Indian philosopher needs to express his ideas and arguments in fact helps the modern reader to grasp the essential thought. In this respect Sprung's translation has its merits and can serve as a—carefully taken—model. This same methodological attitude will be disapproved, however, by everyone who considers a good translation to be valuable not only to the extent that it is clear and intelligible, but also to the extent that it is a guide to the way another human being—even someone as “exotic” as Candrakīrti—has been able to give a linguistic testimony of his understanding of reality and the questions and answers he has in coping with it.

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