Buddhist Hybrid English: Some Notes on Philology and Hermeneutics for Buddhologists

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Buddhist thought has a strange, and in many respects deplorable, effect upon language; in India it produced that barbaric language we usually call by the equally barbaric name of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, a language in which large numbers of long, repetitive, obscure, and subtle works were composed over a period of more than a thousand years. It forced the Tibetans to invent not only an alphabet but also what was in effect a new language, the most mechanical form of translationese which the world has yet seen. It managed to disturb even the severe balance and precise rhythms of classical Chinese. And it is now in process of wreaking its havoc upon the English language, creating a dialect comprehensible only to the initiate, written by and for Buddhologists, a dialect which has provided the title for this paper: Buddhist Hybrid English.

It is the intention of this paper to make some suggestions about the causes of this unfortunate development, and to point the way to its remedy. More specifically, one main problem area will be dealt with: that of how to interpret Buddhist Sanskrit texts in such a way as to avoid unnecessary bastardization of the English language, while still performing the scholarly task of making available the meaning of such texts to the scholarly community. We shall be concerned here only with Buddhist texts that survive in Sanskrit, and how they have been and should be handled by the English-speaking Buddhological community. Much of what is said here will have wider applications, but such applications will not be made explicit.[1] We are here dealing with what is essentially an hermeneutical issue, and we shall try to answer three questions: first, what should be the *aims* of the Buddhological community in handling the corpus of Sanskrit texts avail-

able to it? A subsidiary issue here will be whether or not the training methods used for young Buddhologists are in fact appropriate to the achievement of these aims. Second, it will be asked how these aims may best be achieved. In order to answer this it will be necessary to look briefly at the *literary* nature of the available Sanskrit texts, and to establish some hermeneutical principles. We shall need to ask whether philological expertise as classically understood has any relevance to the hermeneutical enterprise, and to examine the possible aims and purposes of translation. Third, we shall ask—and make some attempt at answering—the question about the proper relationship of philology to hermeneutics in the Buddhological sphere. It is here, above all, that Buddhologists have a great deal to learn from other disciplines in which these problems have been faced and discussed for generations. There is absolutely no reason why Buddhology should become an hermetic tradition, sealed off from the uninitiate and passed down from master to pupil by mystical *abhiṣeka;* that way lies extinction, or at least a self-banishment from the wider academic community.

First, therefore, we need to discuss the legitimate aims of the Buddhological community in handling the corpus of Buddhist Sanskrit texts at its disposal. This area of Buddhological endeavour is clearly a part of the history of religious ideas in its widest sense. That is to say, the Buddhologist handling Buddhist Sanskrit texts is—or should be—concerned initially to understand what his texts are about. This sounds obvious, and should hardly need saying, but as we shall see the Buddhological community produces a large number of translations (particularly of Tibetan texts, but also to a somewhat lesser degree of Sanskrit texts) which betray no such understanding. What then constitutes understanding? This is a multi-faceted phenomenon, involving the interaction of the Buddhologist with his text on a number of different levels; it goes far beyond philology, though a certain degree of philological expertise is a necessary precondition for understanding to occur. Philological expertise should provide the ability to know what the technical terms of Buddhist Sanskrit philosophy mean (an enterprise which is still in its infancy) and to handle the complex syntax of Sanskrit philosophical sentence. This is no easy matter, and I doubt whether anything less than five years intensive study of the Sanskrit language could provide the necessary expertise. We should note here that philology, as classically understood in Europe and America, is of very marginal relevance for the study of Buddhist Sanskrit. Sanskrit has been—and often still is—

taught in Western universities primarily in connection with Indo-European studies, studies which have significance primarily for the understanding of the Veda.[2] The Sanskritic Buddhologist does not need to know the etymology and derivation of his technical terms and their relationship to conjectural Indo-European roots; more relevant would be a thorough grounding in the Prakrits, the linguistic developments of Middle Indic. The Sanskritic Buddhologist's primary concern is to understand the technical terminology of his texts as it was understood by their authors, throughout a thousand years of Indian history, and the only effective way of gaining such understanding is by wide reading of texts and commentaries. Only thus can the full semantic range of a given technical term be appreciated. Clearly, the pre-requisite here is the ability to read Buddhist Sanskrit with ease and fluency, to be able to pick up a text and read it with the same speed and level of comprehension that we would bring to a modern study in English, French or German. The undoubted fact that such skill is rare among Western Buddhologists means that very few have the time to become acquainted with a full range of Buddhist Sanskrit literature, and so our understanding of the material remains very limited. We shall return to this point.

The second step on the path to understanding a given text is the ability to contextualize, to place the text under discussion in its historical context, both in the broad sense of tracing continuities and discontinuities with the earlier tradition, and in the narrower sense of seeing how a given text fits into the larger corpus of its author. Contextualization should also, wherever possible, include a placing of the text in its socio-cultural context in an attempt to show how particular forms of thought arose in interaction with particular forms of society. It is true that the paucity of our knowledge about both the relative and absolute chronology of the composition of Buddhist Sanskrit texts in relation to the chronology of Indian history at large makes this task difficult; but even its desirability is hardly recognized by most practicing Buddhologists, who tend to discuss their texts exclusively on the level of abstract philosophy, as though each and every one was really composed in the *tuṣita* heaven, in blissful isolation from the world of men.

The third—and most important—step on the path to understanding a given text is that of appropriating its meaning, of making explicit to oneself one's understanding of the intentions of the text's author. It is at this point that creative thinking begins to operate, and

it is only when this point has been reached that any attempt at interpretation is likely to have success. There is unfortunately no space here to draw out the full implications of this third stage on the path of understanding; to do so would involve an excursion into the kind of hermeneutical philosophy which is far from popular in the Anglo-Saxon world. All that can be said is that a necessary condition for the attainment of this third stage is the ability on the part of the Buddhologist to restate what he takes to be the meaning(s) of his text in terms other than those employed by its author. If the Buddhologist cannot do this, and restricts himself to discussions of his text in the idiom and thought-world of the context which produced it, then he has failed in what we shall see to be a prime duty of any scholar in any field—that of making his results available to the wider scholarly community. It should also be noted that this process of restating the meaning(s) of a given text in terms other than those employed by the text itself may, but need not, involve straightforward translation of the text from one language to another. It will be suggested in the course of this paper that translation is very frequently not the best way of performing the hermeneutical task, a fact rarely realized by practicing Buddhologists, most of whom stand transfixed in awe of their texts and are concerned largely to transmit them by means of translation regardless of whether or not they have been understood.

So far, then, it has been suggested that the initial aim of the Buddhologist handling Buddhist Sanskrit texts and working within the academic community should be to understand his sources. The second legitimate aim, as we have already begun to see, is that of making his understanding available, initially to his co-specialists, secondarily to the wider scholarly community, and finally to the interested public. It must be stressed again and again that the Buddhologist, as an academic, has a real duty to communicate, and the tendency in contemporary Western Buddhology to retreat behind an impenetrable shield of technical vocabulary comprehensible only to co-specialists, and to make no effort to reach out to colleagues in related fields, is to be very strongly deplored. Very few of the papers published in the dozen or so English-language journals which handle specialized work in this field can be comprehensible to anyone outside the closed circle of specialists, and this is largely because few Buddhologists have any expertise in anything but Buddhology. Dr. Richard Gombrich, in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, bemoaned the state of British Sanskrit studies in these words:

> We have three problems: we are not very good at English; we are not very good at Sanskrit; and we are not very good at anything else.[3]

We should take these words to heart; they are, if anything, still more true of the state of Buddhist Sanskrit studies in England and America. There are, as one would expect, some exceptions, some Buddhologists who have both the skills and the desire to communicate with scholars in other fields and to undertake the hermeneutical task, but they are few, and mostly in the realm of philosophy, where at last some attempt is being made to enter seriously into the realm of cross-cultural philosophy.[4] But the vast majority of published work speaks only to other Buddhologists, and not always very clearly to them. If the third step on the path to understanding were taken more seriously, if it was felt as a duty to develop the ability to restate the meaning(s) of one's text, and if this approach were inculcated in our university departments devoted to Buddhist Studies, then we might begin to see some very positive results in the area of inter-disciplinary and inter-cultural thinking.

This should not be misunderstood. I am not trying to say that there is no room for specialized research work, or that journals should not publish abstruse and complex pieces likely to be understood only by other Buddhologists. Rather, I am suggesting that every Buddhologist should see it as his duty not merely to communicate with fellow specialists, but also with the wider scholarly world and with the interested public. If a Buddhologist's specialized research work makes him unable to do this, then there is something wrong with the educational system which produced him and with the academic structures which support him.

So far, then, it has been suggested that a Buddhologist's academic work is in principle no different from that of any other specialist in the field of the history of religious ideas, and that the aims towards which he works are just a part of the wider field of the search for truth. Something needs to be said, however, about what the aims of the Buddhologist are not, if only because there seems to be a great deal of confusion, especially in American academic circles, about this. The most important point to bear in mind here is that the Buddhologist *qua* Buddhologist cannot be a religious enthusiast, proselytiser, or even, one might go so far as to say, Buddhist. The set of attitudes that a Buddhist usually has towards the texts of his tradition are quite different from, and to a large extent incompatible with, those that a Buddhologist should have towards the text he is studying. The un-

critically religious Buddhist—and most Buddhists are uncritically religious—regards his texts with awe as instruments of salvation and containers of truth. He is not concerned to learn things about Buddhism, is only marginally concerned with philological matters, and generally has no interest whatever in what we have called contextualization. For the Buddhologist, the opposite is—or should be—the case.

To take two examples: the average Sinhalese Buddhist (and this applies also to the intellectuals of that tradition) is quite happy to believe that the *suttas* of the Pali *suttapiṭaka* were spoken by Śākyamuni just as they now stand in the texts preserved for us. He is not interested in, say, the application of form-critical method to the Pali canon in an attempt to reclaim the *Buddhavacanam.* Similarly, the Tibetan scholastic, trained in the philosophical method of his school, has no trouble at all with the idea that the same Śākyamuni spoke the *sūtras* of the *prajñāpāramitā,* and would regard as at best unnecessary and at worst sacrilegious the attempt to contextualize the *prajñāpāramitā* literature in the way that has been suggested in this paper. The conflict between uncritical faith and rigorous historico-philological enquiry, a conflict which radically divided and almost destroyed the intellectuals of Protestant Christendom during the last century, is in fact just as strong and just as pernicious in the Buddhist sphere, even though it has yet to come out into the open. We shall have occasion to return to this issue, especially when we consider the motivation for translating Buddhist texts. At this point it needs to be stressed once again: the Buddhologist as Buddhologist cannot be a proselytizer, neither can he regard his texts with awe as receptacles of revealed truth. The only kind of truth they can have for him as scholar is that which is subject to discussion and verification in the open arena of the academy.

This is not, of course, to say that no Buddhologist can also be a Buddhist, but only that any who claim to wear both hats—and many do—must be very careful to separate in their minds and their teachings the different functions of Buddhist and Buddhologist. To confuse the two is simply bad scholarly method. This problem is especially severe when Buddhism is taught in Western universities by Buddhist scholastics, either of the Tibetan or Theravādin persuasion. The difference in presuppositions and approaches between their way of studying Buddhism and the way in which aspiring Buddhologists should be studying it is often not made sufficiently clear to students, with the result of confused method and questionable results.

Having briefly sketched the aims of the Buddhologist handling Buddhist Sanskrit texts, we must now consider whether or not training methods in British and American universities are in fact appropriate to these aims. What can we expect of the new generation of Buddhologists in the field of Sanskrit studies? The first point to note is that there are not very many of them. There are a number of reasons for this: one is that Sanskrit tuition is not widely available in the universities of either England or America, and even where it is to be found the stress is either on Indo-European philology, or upon the study of the classical language and the mainstream literature of India.[5] Even in those few universities where Buddhism is treated as a field of study in its own right, Buddhist Sanskrit tends to get taught primarily as an adjunct to specialization in either Tibetan or Sino-Japanese fields. The attraction of having access to a complete corpus of Buddhist literature rather than a fragmentary one, combined with having living representatives of a given tradition available, together with their oral traditions, has meant that more and more aspiring Buddhologists are centering their attention either upon Tibetan studies or upon Sino-Japanese studies to the detriment of Sanskrit.[6] One result is that it is now typically possible to get a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies from an American university with only one, or at most two, years of Sanskrit, the kind of training which can give no more than a faint hint of the complexities, attractions, and sheer difficulties of reading Sanskrit philosophical texts with any kind of fluency. The study of Sanskrit among the rising generation of Buddhologists in the West is thus assuming a subsidiary position, and Eugene Burnouf's prophecy of 1844, that the study of Buddhist Sanskrit would always have priority for those interested in understanding Buddhism,[7] is now in process of being disproved.

This is a sad state of affairs. If real expertise in the handling of Buddhist Sanskrit texts should vanish from the universities of England and America—and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find outside India and Japan—the loss would be irreparable. It would be as though we had access to the sacred books of Christianity only through the Vulgate.

So far, then, we have seen that one of the aims of the Buddhologist which was outlined in the first part of this paper—that of understanding his texts—is in some danger because the time and teaching necessary to gain a fluent reading knowledge of Buddhist Sanskrit is not readily available in the universities of England and America, and even when it is, the young Buddhologist is not very likely to want it.

But it is in the third stage of the process of understanding, that of appropriating and restating the meaning(s) of one's text, that the real problems arise. The education of the aspiring Buddhologist as an hermeneutical philosopher is likely to have been sketchy, and so his skills as a communicator are likely to be equally minimal. We must ask: what are the methods best adapted to achieving the aim of restating the meaning(s) of one's text?

There can be no doubt that since the beginning of Buddhology as an academic discipline, one method above all others in communicating the meaning of Buddhist texts to the world has been adopted: this is the method of translation. Since Burnouf translated the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra,*[8] the *sine qua non* of success as a Buddhologist has been the production of substantial translations of previously untranslated texts. This is still very much the case today; the standard American Buddhist Studies Ph.D. consists of a translation (and sometimes also a critical edition) of a given text, combined with a fifty page introduction and perhaps the same amount of explanatory notes.[9] Part of the thesis of this paper is that the obsession with translation in the Buddhological community, the pick-your-text-and-translate-it approach, is no longer, if indeed it ever was, the best way of undertaking the hermeneutical task which we have seen to be of such fundamental importance. Among other problems, the stress on translation has led to the development of that regrettable phenomenon which provided the title for this paper: Buddhist Hybrid English, a bastardized form of the English language, so hag-ridden by Sanskrit syntax that almost every sentence is constructed in the passive, every technical term is translated by a series of hyphenated polysyllables, and the ideal of writing clear, precise, and elegant English hardly even comes to the conscious awareness of the translator.

I do not wish to underestimate the difficulties of translating Buddhist Sanskrit texts into clear, precise, and elegant English; I am only too aware of them. But I do wish to argue that if the task of translating in this way proves too difficult, then another way of communicating the meaning of the text should be adopted. To flesh out this statement in more detail we need to look at the nature of the source material with which the Sanskritic Buddhologist works, not, as is usually done, from the viewpoint of content, but from the viewpoint of form, of literary and aesthetic merit.

Clearly it is impossible to make any attempt at a survey of the literary forms and aesthetic merits of the entire field of Buddhist

Sanskrit literature. I wish simply to take a few examples of texts which are, for varying reasons, unsuited to communication and interpretation by translation. Examples will be taken from both *sūtra* and *śāstra,* though not from *tantra.*[10] To begin with the *sūtra:* there survives in Sanskrit a substantial body of work, ranging from the concise and elegant *vajracchedika,* through the diffuse, repetitive and ornate *Gaṇḍavyūha,* to the cryptic and disorganized *Laṅkāvatāra.* From the religious viewpoint these are the basic and essential texts of Buddhism; for the believing Buddhist it is here that the word of Buddha is to be found, and so the religious motivation for preserving and translating these texts is obvious. To do so is an action amassing great merit for the doer, and makes the saving word of the Buddha available for whole new cultures. It should always be remembered that the cult of the book is hardly less developed in the Mahāyāna than in Islam,[11] though the terms in which it is expressed are rather different. But for the scholar, as we have already pointed out, different considerations should provide motivation. The Buddhologist should ask himself, when dealing with a particular Sanskrit *sūtra,* whether or not it has any literary merit; whether or not it is of a kind to permit a clear English rendering, or whether its meaning would be better communicated by study and analysis. To take just one of many possible examples, let us look at the *Gaṇḍavyūha.*[12] In this text we see the apotheosis of Gautama taken to an extreme degree and a concomitant fascination with the details of the various *buddhakṣetras* which mutually interpenetrate to make up the *dharmadhātu.* The ostensible "plot" of the *sūtra*—Sudhana's pilgrimage from teacher to teacher in an attempt to discover how to live the life of a *bodhisattva*—is almost completely overlaid by the endlessly repetitive descriptions of the appearance, ornaments, and powers of the various *bodhisattvas,* and the piling up of a multi-membered compound upon multi-membered compond, each more grandiose than the last. For example, in a section of the *sūtra* devoted to describing *bodhicitta* there are no less than 224 separate similes used to elaborate upon it,[13] none adding anything substantial to our understanding of the phenomenon. Leaving aside for the moment the question of why so many Mahāyāna *sūtras* employ this kind of literary overkill, it is surely clear that a translation of such a work could have no scholarly purpose. Who would read it? Buddhologists have access to the original, which is at least syntactically easy to follow, even if paralysingly boring, and the wider scholarly community is not going to spend its time wading

through 500 pages of verbose repetition. Any Buddhologist who wishes to study the *Gaṇḍavyūha,* and to understand it in the sense of understanding which has been discussed in the course of this paper, would be better off producing a study of the text and an analysis of its religious meaning than a translation. Translation can all too often be a replacement for thought, a temptation to establish one's credentials and exhibit one's virtuosity; it frequently has little to do with the scholarly enterprise.

I would suggest, therefore, that a large proportion of the surviving *sūtra* material in Sanskrit is better left untranslated. Buddhologists can give far more to the scholarly community by creatively studying and interpreting these texts than by translating them. Translation can be left to those who wish to perform it as an act of religious supererogation. But here again a disclaimer becomes necessary. Some *sūtras,* even if a small minority, are models of literary elegance and religious power, and it is these that cry out for translation. I can do no better than to quote Jacques May on this matter, a man whose literary sensibilities and good sense could well be imitated by many English-speaking Buddhologists. He said (in reference to the *Saṃdhinirmocana*):

> . . . il est un des quelques Mahāyāna sūtras qui, tels le *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa,* l'*Upāli-paripṛcchām* réunissent des qualités qui font en général cruellement défaut à ce genre des textes: proportions raisonnables, ni trop vaste, ni trop restreintes; composition clair et rigoureuse; idées distinctes, articulées, exprimées avec pertinence et sans trop de répétitions.[14]

It is just because most *sūtras* are either excessively long or obscurely short, cryptically incomprehensible or repetitively obvious, and just because they lack the marks of clear and precise thinking, that most of them do not benefit from translation and are better interpreted in other ways.

We may now turn briefly to the second category of Buddhist literature traditionally distinguished, that of *śāstra.* The range of literary types subsumed into this category is very wide, and the decision as to the best method of undertaking the hermeneutical task must be made on the merits of each case. Here I wish only to take two examples of the Buddhist Sanskrit *śāstras* in order to give some idea of the special translation problems associated with this kind of literature, and in order to show that not all of these texts are amenable to translation. Our first example is the *Abhidharmakośa* together with Vasu-

bandhu's own *bhāṣya,* which we may take as a paradigm of *kārikā* texts with attached prose commentaries. Such texts provide special problems: the most obvious is that of what to do with the *kārikā* portions of the text. Is it legitimate to attempt a translation of the verses alone, without their prose commentary(s)? Were the *kārikās* ever meant to be read without a commentary, and do they in fact make much sense without one? These issues are at least partially literary ones, having to do with facts about the nature of Buddhist Sanskrit *śāstras* and the literary conventions of the time in which they were written; the issues remain difficult to decide because we do not know enough about such things. The common-sense view, and that which appears to have been taken by the majority of Buddhist intellectuals, past and present, is that a *kārikā* text such as the *Kośa* is of little use without a commentary. A *kārikā* text by itself is so concise and ambiguous that it communicates little; its main function is to provide a matrix for the extensive commentarial discussions of disputed philosophical issues which are to be found in the works of such as Vasubandhu and Sthiramati.[15] Therefore, taking into account the guidelines that we have already set out, we must conclude that the enterprise of translating *kārikā* texts by themselves is a fruitless one. The result can only be to produce an English version which is as ambiguous and frustrating as the Sanskrit original. Matters are different, though, when we move to a consideration of *kārikā* texts in conjunction with their commentaries. We move at once from the realms of aphoristic ambiguity to those of prolix precision. The problems here are not that we do not know what the author intended—that is usually very clear—but that Indian commentarial style is quite exceptionally hard to render into lucid and comprehensible English. Any attempt to make a complete English rendering of a *bhāṣya* which adopts the usual method of glossing each word, then unpacking each compound, and eventually getting around to discussing the philosophical meaning of the verse under consideration, is likely to lose the uninitiated reader in confusion very quickly.

The best method of making such texts available for the scholarly community is therefore not straightforward translation, but rather studies which incorporate translation only as and when necessary. Parts of the prose commentaries upon *kārikā* texts, notably those which go beyond word and grammatical glosses, are in fact masterpieces of philosophical prose, lucid and even at times entertaining, and it is these above all which need to be translated. It is also in these

extended commentarial sections—a commentary upon one *kārikā* may typically extend to half a dozen pages where matters of philosophical controversy are raised—that the real philosophical meat of a given work is to be found. The rest is of interest only to those who have sufficient philological expertise and interest in Sanskrit syntax to read it for themselves. The model for dealing with such *kārikā*-plus-commentary texts, therefore, should be Van Buitenen's study of Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya.*[16] Here interpretive cruxes are translated; the rest is summarized, analyzed, and interpreted. It might be objected that this kind of selective interpretation/study does violence to the integrity of the text and is therefore to be shunned; but as long as the scholarship employed in the study is careful and the content of the text under consideration adequately conveyed, this is no real objection. We have seen that one of the main objectives of the Buddhologist is to communicate the meaning of his text. The kind of selective translation/study I am suggesting for *kārikā*-plus-commentary texts would do this much more effectively than would a full translation, and is therefore to be preferred. It takes the text seriously but not slavishly.

Our second example of a Buddhist Sanskrit *śāstra* which is not amenable to communication by translation will be the monumental *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra.* About half this text has survived in Sanskrit, and much of it is now available in editions of varying excellence.[17] The *Yogācārabhūmi* is in effect a pedagogical handbook of the Yogācāra school, a work of what Jacques May has called "inexorable technicality"[18] consisting of little more than lists of technical terms together with brief definitions. To attempt a translation of such a work would be tantamount to rendering the Oxford English Dictionary into Sanskrit. Clearly, works of this kind need intensive study, and the results of such study need to be made available, but translation is simply not the best way to go about it.

It should, of course, be pointed out that some Buddhist Sanskrit *śāstras* do in fact possess the literary characteristics which make translation a suitable method of undertaking the hermeneutical task —namely, the characteristics of precision, lucidity and elegance. We might suggest Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* or Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* as fairly random examples. But the majority of the surviving Buddhist Sanskrit *śāstra* material is, I suggest, better left untranslated for much the same reasons that were distinguished earlier for the *sūtra* material.

This superficial and hurried review of the literary and aesthetic characteristics of Buddhist Sanskrit texts may allow the tentative conclusion that the Buddhologist's interpretive methods should always conform to the material with which he is dealing; that one method will not do for all texts; and that translation is only occasionally the most appropriate method.

Before we close this paper we should look at an example of Buddhist Hybrid English. It is not a phenomenon confined to graduate students or recent Ph.D. candidates, but something which afflicts the most mature scholars. Take this for instance:

> . . . all dharmas are situated in permanence, ease, the self, the lovely; and likewise in impermanence, ill, not-self and the unlovely; in greed, hate, delusion, wrong views; for an entity made by false views does not exist, how can the false views themselves take place? For situated in Suchness are all dharmas, and from that situation they do not depart. And why? Because the coming and going of Suchness cannot be apprehended. And so for the Dharma-element, the Reality-limit, Sameness, the unthinkable element, and immobility.[19]

This example of Buddhist Hybrid English was chosen pretty much at random from the late Edward Conze's translation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra.* This translation was originally published without notes or explanatory apparatus of any kind, and one cannot help but wonder if Dr. Conze ever thought about his audience. Non-Buddhologists, those who have no Sanskrit and no training in the intricacies of the *prajñāpāramitā,* cannot possibly make any sense of it whatever. Dr. Conze's translation bears only the most tenuous relationship to the English language in terms of syntax, and is full of unexplained technical terminology; this much should be obvious even from the short extract quoted here. Its only advantage is that the Sanskrit original shines through with a fair amount of clarity; it isn't difficult for the Sanskritist to reconstruct the original. But it is precisely the expert who doesn't need a translation. He can read the original, and should prefer to do so.

The barbaric nature of Dr. Conze's translation is not, of course, altogether his fault. The nature of the material is such that anything else would be almost impossible to achieve; the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* is just as barbaric in Sanskrit. His fault, then, lies not in a bad rendering of the text, but in that he decided to translate it at all. The long

prajñāpāramitā sūtras are just the kind of texts which do not benefit from translation and which are better studied and interpreted in other ways. I have no doubt that Dr. Conze came closer to an understanding of this material than has any Western Buddhologist before or since, but he failed signally in his hermeneutical task, that of making his understanding available to others, because—in this case at least—he chose the wrong method. The Buddhological community would have been better served if Dr. Conze had produced a good critical edition of this text (still a desideratum) rather than an unreadable translation, together with a detailed critical study of its structure, relationship to other *prajñāpāramitā* texts, ideas, and technical terminology, and (only as and when necessary) a translation of and commentary upon key passages.

I chose this example not because Dr. Conze's translations are worse than anyone else's; in fact they are better than most. Rather, it illustrates with a concrete example the kind of gibberish that is all too often produced by the Buddhological community in the sacred name of translation. I might add that still more striking examples of Buddhist Hybrid English could be adduced if we were to look at the results obtained by those who translate Tibetan texts.

We must now make some attempt to draw together the threads of this discussion. We have tried to sketch the legitimate aims of the Buddhologist in studying the corpus of Buddhist Sanskrit literature, and to show the fundamental importance of a good reading knowledge of Buddhist Sanskrit for the achieving of these aims. We have noted in passing that an adequate training in the field of Buddhist Sanskrit is becoming increasingly hard to find in English or American universities, largely because there is a growing tendency to treat Sanskrit merely as an adjunct to Tibetan or Sino-Japanese studies. But we have also tried to show that philology is not enough; in order for the Buddhologist to achieve his aims, philological expertise must be properly employed in the task of interpreting the sources and making them available for others; that is to say, philology must be properly related to hermeneutics. The second part of our paper was designed to show that such a relationship is only rarely brought into effect by translation, largely because of the literary nature of the source material. To attempt translation where this is not an appropriate means of undertaking the hermeneutical task leads to that regrettable phenomenon which I have called Buddhist Hybrid English.

NOTES

A version of this paper was first read at the 4th Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, U.S.A., August 7–9, 1981.

1. Most of what is said in this paper will be applicable only to England and America, in both of which the author has experience. While some of the problems are similar, there are sufficient differences to make the application of what is said here to the Buddhological communities of India, Europe, and Japan somewhat problematic.

2. cf. Richard Gombrich, *On Being Sanskritic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 20–22.

3. Gombrich, op. cit., p. 27.

4. Especially noteworthy here is Chris Gudmunsen's *Wittgenstein and Buddhism* (London: Macmillan, 1977) and many of the papers published in *Philosophy East & West* during the last decade. A good recent example is Robert Thurman's "Philosophical Nonegocentrism in Wittgenstein and Candrakīrti in their treatment of the Private Language Problem" (*Ph.E.W.*, Vol. 30.3, July 1980), pp. 321–337.

5. Sanskrit of any kind is formally studied in no more than half-a-dozen universities in England, and Buddhist Sanskrit in its own right is taught nowhere on a regular basis. While Sanskrit is more widely available in American universities, there is still comparatively little specialized teaching of Buddhist Sanskrit.

6. This tendency has now reached the point at which English translations of Buddhist texts are being produced solely from the Tibetan or Chinese even when the Sanskrit original—or part of it—survives. This kind of thing is done even by those who have at least some pretensions to scholarship in the field, for example, Jeffrey Hopkins, who has perpetrated a translation of Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* (as part of *The Precious Garland & The Song of the Four Mindfulnesses*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1975) entirely on the basis of the Tibetan version in apparent blissful ignorance that a substantial part of this text survives in Sanskrit, and has even been edited by G. Tucci as "The Ratnāvalī of Nāgāruna" (*JRAS*, 1934, pp. 307–25; 1936, pp. 237–252, 423–435). Such a procedure is simply bad scholarly method, and is becoming ever more common among Tibetophiles who seem to forget that Buddhist canonical texts were originally largely composed in Sanskrit.

7. Eugene Burnouf, *Introduction à l'Histoire du Buddhisme Indien* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1844, 2nd ed. 1876), pp. 10–11.

8. Burnouf, *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1825).

9. In surveying forty Buddhist Studies Ph.D.'s awarded by American universities from 1974–1979, I found that 25 followed this standard pattern.

10. This restriction is partly because I do not consider myself competent to discuss tantric texts from the literary angle or any other, and partly because the problems invoved in the hermeneutics of tantrism are so idiosyncratic and complex that even a superficial discussion would need a paper to itself. Nevertheless, many of the broader points made about *sūtra* and *śāstra* may also be applied to *tantra.*

11. cf. G. Schopen, "The Phrase *'sa pṛthivīpradeśaścaityabhūto bhavet* in the Vajracchedika: Notes on the Cult of the Book in the Mahāyāna." (*Indo-Iranian Journal*, Vol. 17, 1975), pp. 147–181.

12. This text is to hand in two reasonably good editions: D. T. Suzuki & H. Izumi, *The Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1949), and P. L. Vaidya, *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 5, Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960). There is no complete published English translation.

13. Vaidya, ed. cit., 397.17ff.

14. Jacques May, "La Philosophie Bouddhique Idéaliste" (*Études Asiatiques,* Vol. 25, 1971), p. 276.

15. The fact that *kārikā* texts are sufficiently ambiguous to be capable of a wide range of interpretations becomes clear if we compare, say, the *Kośa* with the *Abhidharmadīpa.* The latter is a work written in an attempt to re-establish the Vaibhāṣika viewpoint in reaction against the Sautrāntika leanings of the *Kośabhāṣya.* It does this in many instances by reproducing the *kārikās* of the *Kośa* and interpreting them in a different—sometimes diametrically opposed—manner. Some 300 of the 597 surviving Sanskrit *kārikās* of the *Dīpa* have more or less exact parallels in the *Kośa.* The "meaning" of any given *kārikā* is thus not inherent in the *kārikā* but determined by the commentator.

The best editions of the respective works are: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandu,* ed. P. Pradhan with introduction and indices by A. Haldar, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Vol. 8 (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975); *Abhidharmadīpa with Vibhāṣaprabhāvṛtti,* ed. P. S. Jaini, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Vol. 4 (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 2nd ed. 1977).

16. J. Van Buitenen, *Rāmānuja on the Bhagavadgītā: A Condensed Rendering of the Gītābhāṣya with copious notes and an introduction* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968).

17. *Bhūmis* 1–5, ed. V. Bhattacharya, *The Yogācārabhūmi of Ārya Asaṅga* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1957); *Bhūmis* 8, 9, 14, ed. A. Wayman in *Journal of Indian & Buddhist Studies,* Vol. 8, 1960, pp. 375–379; *Bhūmi* 13 ed. K. Shukla, *Śrāvakabhūmi of Arya Asaṅga,* Tibetan Sanskrit Works, Vol. 14 (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973); *Bhūmi* 15, ed. Unrai Wogihara, *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Tokyo: Sankibo Buddhist Bookstore, 2nd ed., 1976); also, ed. N. Dutt, *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Vol. 7 (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1966. 2nd ed., 1978).

18. In a review of Lambert Schmithausen's *Der Nirvāna-Abschnitt in der Viniścaya-Saṃgrahaṇī der Yogācārabhūmiḥ* in *Indo-Iranian Journal,* Vol. 14, 1972, pp. 125–129. The reference to "technicité inexorable" occurs on p. 125.

19. Edward Conze, *The Large Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom,* Parts 2 & 3 (Madison, Wisconsin: 1964), p. 374.