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with a remarkably faithful translation of a work which is one of the critical milestones in the development of Chinese narrative art. Her translation is a pleasure to read and should be of great value to all students of Chinese and comparative literature.

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KINDLY BENT TO EASE US by Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa. Part One: Mind; Part Two: Meditation; from "The Trilogy of Finding Comfort and Ease," translated and annotated by Herbert V. Guenther. Emeryville, California: Dharma Publishing, 1975, 1976. Pp. xxv + 321; XIII + 126. \$10.95 (cloth); \$5.95, \$4.95 (paper).

As the first presentation in English of a major work of the great Tibetan sage, Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa Dri-med 'Od-zer (1308–64), this work should have been an invaluable aid in understanding the monumental achievement of the Tibetan scholars in assimilating, organizing, and elucidating the entire sweep of fifteen hundred years of Indian Buddhist thought and practice, as well as a fine example of a classic Mahāyāna text. Unfortunately, Guenther ruins the whole thing, shrouding the jewel of the original with his own intellectual obscurities so that we catch only an occasional glint of its brilliance.

His major problem, in this reviewer's opinion, is his intellectual arrogance, which causes him to put himself above his text, its author, plain English, and his readers. A telling example is his choice of title, *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, which he prefers to Longchenpa's (to use Guenther's phoneticization) original title, literally, "Relief of Weariness by Ultimate Mind" (Tib. *sems ñid ngal gso*). Now, if an author wants to name his work with an allusion to Swift, that is his privilege. However, one may not attribute this new title to a long-departed original author, masking one's own role by posing as "translator." And yet this is just what Guenther does. He gives the work a title according to his own literary taste. He then puts the original author under it, not feeling the need to distinguish himself and his author. So poor Longchenpa is inexorably charged with a bizarre

taste for Swift! This may seem to some a small thing, and it is not nearly as serious as many other distortions, but it perfectly illustrates Guenther's main problem. He has become so identified with his material in his own mind that he feels somehow he owns it and can do whatever he wants with it. But is this proper? Is he Longchenpa's reincarnation, returned to improve upon himself? Did Longchenpa ask Guenther to represent him, adapting his presentation to the modern public where necessary? Strange as it may seem, either Guenther justifies his high-handedness in some such way, or else he shows that he has little respect for the integrity of the work of the Tibetan author.

I shall pursue the critique of Guenther's high-handedness on three levels: philosophical, scholastic, and philological.

First, philosophically Guenther reveals his own approach to Buddhist philosophy, somewhat self-consciously, in the following passage, ". . . in the end it is Being itself that becomes the real teacher, so that, even at the danger of being accused of introducing a subjectivistic note, we can say that we *learn by ourselves in encountering ourselves* in and through another. In this sense, then, the 'friend' is *Buddhahood (Being)* manifest in the other, while on the other hand Buddhahood is nowhere else than in us and is the 'teacher' who guides us to our Being" (p. 73, my italics). The first point of interest in this passage is Guenther's idea of learning, which seems to be a harnessing of the *Tathāgata-garbha* theory to the chariot of his own intellectual individualism. That is, Buddhist thought is not for Guenther the impersonal, self-transcending tradition of nonegocentrist philosophy, but is rather a personal philosophy, to expound which he may use language as metaphysically as he pleases. Now, he is well aware that Buddhist thought generally has the solid reputation of being thoroughly critical and analytic, and not fundamentally metaphysical. As a scholar in the field, he is familiar with the innumerable passages in all Buddhist philosophical texts that state simply that Buddhahood is utterly beyond categories of Being and Nothingness; yet in this translation he constantly talks about "Being" as Buddhahood, as the highest goal, etc. The question is, how does he get around the fact that his version of "Buddhist philosophy" is diametrically opposed, simply and right on the surface, to the whole thrust of Buddhist philosophy?

Guenther signals his tack in the opening words of his preface: "There is depth, breadth, and magic in *Nyingma thought* and its charm grows the more one studies it" (p. ix, my italics). Thus, he hides his own absolutism under the cloak of a particular Tibetan school—one mainly known to the West through his translations and those of his associates, Tibetan as well as Western. The fact that all Tibetan schools and scholars were first and foremost Buddhists and only secondarily affiliated with regional and political (and if doctrinal, only in the context of a few relatively subtle distinctive points) groupings—this fact is kept to the background, and we constantly hear of "Nyingma thought," "Nyingma philosophy," even "Nyingma culture." Nyingma (Tib. *nying-ma*) actually only means "old," "traditional," and is a term used to designate that school in Tibet's later period which depended more on the translations of the Buddhist scriptures done in the earlier period (seventh to tenth centuries) than on those of the later period (eleventh to thirteenth centuries). Guenther is quite sophisticated about this subterfuge, so within "Nyingma thought" he finds a special subcategory of his own where he can rationalize his own attitudes. This he brings out in such as the following: ". . . the essentials of rDzogs-chen thought—the seeming loss of Being in the state of a human being, a loss which presents itself as a challenge to find Being, and the inner experiences with their symbols through which man's development towards Being manifests itself" (p. xviii); and, "Terms like 'appearance' and 'presence' suggest something static, but in rDzogs-chen philosophy they are always understood as dynamic processes . . ." (p. 24). In this way, he invents and uses this context of "rDzogs-chen philosophy" to justify his own absolutistic attitudes. In fact, Tib. *rdzogs pa chen po* means simply "great perfection," and derives from the technical term "perfection stage" (Tib. *rdzogs rim*), which describes that phase of Tantric practice wherein the yogi attains the perfection of Buddhahood, transcending life and death and so on. This stage is not a 'philosophy,' in fact is inaccessible to a practitioner until he has mastered all philosophies, by attaining the wisdom that comes from critically transcending all absolutisms and nihilisms. Indeed, it is precisely because the rDzogs-chen teachings in Tibet were practical methods, with close ties to Chinese Ch'an traditions of rigorous nondual practices, and not

philosophical teachings, that they were considered esoteric. They were not to be published far and wide, lest the unaccomplished in philosophy should try to use them to rationalize their inborn naive absolutisms. But I will not dwell on this level any longer, as Guenther's philosophizing is obscure, as laborious to interpret as it is distorted in import. My main point is that it should be recognized that this is Guenther's own obscurity and distortion—Longchenpa and other Tibetan philosophers express themselves simply and clearly, with an unfailing concern for intelligibility, as teachers.

Second, on the scholastic level, Guenther's high-handedness is more clearly manifested by what he does not do than by what he does. He does not give us any insight into the relationship between Longchenpa's writings and those of his predecessors and successors in the Buddhist tradition. The "Pure Mind" volume is basically of the genre "path and stages" (Skt. *mārgakrama*, Tib. *lam-rim*), which was widely used in Mahāyāna practice from Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* (second century) through Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (eighth century), via Atiṣa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*, to sGampopa, Longchenpa, and finally Tsong Khapa. Guenther himself already translated the sGampopa version, and we would expect him to make some interesting observations about similarities and differences. Not that the text should be buried under a ton of dry scholastic remarks, but it is interesting to everyone to note how certain presentations differ from others. For example, on page 268, note 15, Guenther states that the first five *pāramitās* make up the merit-store (*puṇyasambhāra*) and the sixth makes up the knowledge-store (*jñānasambhāra*). The usual division in India and Tibet is for the first *three* to contribute to "merit," the last two to "knowledge," and the fourth to both. Thus, it would be interesting to have some background here, at least to know if this is a special tradition or a mistake. Further, except for three interesting pages of biography of the great Longchenpa, and four on his works in general, the whole commentarial aspect of both books is devoted to Guenther's own rarified world of intellectual fictions.

Third, illustrations of Guenther's philological high-handedness are too plentiful to enumerate in this space, but certain major examples will more than suffice to make the point. Consider the famous word *dharma* (Tib. *chos*). This word is well known in its meaning

of “duty” from the Indian social context, in its meaning as “doctrine” in the Buddhist context, and somewhat less well known in its meaning as “thing, phenomenon” from more technical Buddhist works. Guenther, as incredible as it may seem, is not satisfied with any of these simple words, but translates at whim “life’s meaning” (p. 223), “concepts and meanings” (p. 241), “meanings and values” (p. 243), “meaning of Being” (p. 251 n. 7) and so forth. The English reader may wonder at the poverty of Sanskrit and Tibetan, that they had no word for meaning and had to overwork one poor word so mercilessly. However, the Sanskrit *artha* and Tibetan *don* actually mean “meaning,” and are very common words in their respective languages. Guenther’s own world is perhaps so rife with “meanings,” visible to him alone, that he reflects this in the jungle of “meaningfulness” he creates by insisting on this word for all occurrences for the multi-valued *dharma*. Thus *chos sku* (*dharmakāya*, “ultimate body”) becomes “founding stratum of meaning” (p. III), and *chos dbyiñs* (*dharmadhātu*, “ultimate realm”) becomes “pure experience of meaningfulness.” Poetically, we get such anomalies as “This refreshing rain of life’s meaning” (p. 71), or “the cool rain of the meaningfulness of life” (p. 76) both of which passages refer to the proverbial “rain of Dharma,” with Dharma here clearly in the sense of Holy Doctrine (*Saddharma*). Now, Guenther apparently rationalizes his free translation license by claiming to translate in such a way as to reveal the deeper meaning, rather than merely to be lexically correct. But if this is so in this absolutely central case, then the meaning he supplies here is completely wrong; in fact it is diametrically opposite to the original. The ultimate or absolute (*paramārtha*) for all Mahayana philosophers such as Longchenpa is the realm of the Dharma, whence the verbal Doctrine, the materialized Buddha-forms, etc. proceed for the sake of sentient beings. This absolute is termed “voidness” (*śūnyatā*), “meaninglessness” (*animitta*), and “wishlessness,” (*apramihita*), and so forth. It is said to be beyond life and death, beyond intellect and imagination, inconceivable and profound. Thus, it has nothing to do with “life,” “meaning,” “meaningfulness,” or worst of all “life’s meaning,” which in Buddhism of any form can only be rendered back into Sanskrit as *samsāraduḥkha* (Tib. *‘khor bai sdug bsñal*). Thus, Guenther here goes

beyond bad taste and actually misleads by imposing his own “meanings and values” on the Buddhist teachings.

Although the above is really sufficient to put the reader on his guard, one more example should be mentioned both as an astounding phenomenon as well as a key to the exposing of another distortion. An amazing passage occurs in the introduction (p. xxiv): “*byang-chub* is a common word in Tibetan Buddhist writings and corresponds to the Sanskrit word *bodhi*, which is usually translated by ‘enlightenment.’ But Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa breaks this word down into its components *byang*, ‘limpid clearness,’ and *chub*, ‘consummate perspicacity,’ and gives it a very specific dynamic meaning.”

Here Guenther presents the traditional analysis of the “enlightenment” words in Buddhism as if it were Longchenpa’s invention, whereas the Tibetan translations of Sanskrit *buddhaḥ* and *bodhiḥ* as *sangs rgyas* and *byang chub* respectively are based on an old Indian tradition that glosses *buddhaḥ* as *prabuddhaḥ* (awakened) and *vibuddhaḥ* (expanded), which can be found as far back as Yaśomitra’s *Abhidharmakōśavyākhyā* (p. 5). This conveys the point that a Buddha is not only perfect in wisdom but also perfect in compassion, which latter amounts to technical knowledge and ability in liberating living beings. Thus, Longchenpa quite rightly analyzes *byang chub* as *byang* (perfect purity, not “clearness”) and *chub* (perfect understanding). However, Longchenpa does not proceed to insert this analytic passage in his own text every time he comes to *byang chub*, which still remains a single concept to him, just like our “enlightenment.” Once aware of what lies behind it, even the Buddha returned to use simple words, like *bodhi*. But not Guenther, who thus inflicts on the reader every time the common *bodhicitta* comes up (most evident in Chap. 8), “the inner potential for limpid clearness and consummate perspicacity,” instead of simply “the mind of enlightenment,” “the spirit of enlightenment,” or “the will to enlightenment,” etc. Thus, Guenther has Longchenpa no longer advocating and teaching the “attainment of enlightenment,” but rather urging us on to attain “limpid clearness and consummate perspicacity.” Guenther here demonstrates just how far he has become removed from the realities of communication, as well as how poorly he hears his own original

author. To return his own strong words to him, while Longchenpa “is concerned with the exploration of lived-through experience . . . ,” Guenther is obsessed with “. . . an intellectual parlor game of quantifications of fetish-words that have no longer any meaning because they have become divorced from experience” (p. xxiv). The tragedy is that many readers will inevitably think that Longchenpa, and not just Guenther, is confused.

In conclusion, this disastrous misrepresentation of one of the greatest scholars of Tibetan history can only be corrected by a fundamental revision of both commentaries and translation. It is unpleasant to have to pronounce so harsh a judgement on the work of a well-known scholar who has contributed much in the past, and who is even now in a position to give us still more, if he only would.

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