

ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་

འགྲེལ་བཤེས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་

TRANSLATION & TRANSMISSION

ཐུགས་རྒྱུ་

OCTOBER 2-5, 2014

KEYSTONE, COLORADO, USA

Plenary Session | ROOM: CASTLE PEAK | 2:00pm, October 3, 2014

Traduttore, Traditore: What is the Role of the Translator?

with Catherine Dalton, Tyler Dewar, Tom Tillemans, Gavin Kilty, Nicole Willock

Tom Tillemans's Presentation



Tom Tillemans
(University of Lausanne; 84000)

Tom J.F. Tillemans is Professor Emeritus of Buddhist Studies in the Department of South Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. The focus of his research has been on Buddhist logic and epistemology, Madhyamaka philosophy, and comparative philosophy. He was from 1998 until 2006 co-editor of the Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies. Born in 1950 in the Netherlands and raised in Canada, he now serves as the editor in chief for the 84000 project tasked with translating the scriptures of the Buddhist canon. Publications include *Scripture, Logic, Language: Essays on Dharmakīrti and his Tibetan Successors* (1999); *Materials for the Study of Āryadeva, Dharmapāla and Candrakīrti* (1990, reprint 2008); *Persons of Authority* (1993); *Agents and Actions in Classical Tibetan* (with Derek Herforth, 1989); *Dharmakīrti's Pramānavārttika: An Annotated Translation of the Fourth Chapter (parārthānumāna)* (2000); *Apoha. Buddhist Nominalism and Human Cognition* (with Mark Siderits and Arindam Chakrabarti, 2011); *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy* (with Jay Garfield, Georges Dreyfus, et al., 2011).

HANDOUT

Tom Tillemans

"Count Nouns, Mass Nouns and Translatability. The Case of Tibetan Buddhist Logical Literature"

The problem is the following. Subject terms (*chos can*) in Tibetan Collected Topics arguments, like *vase (bum pa)*, *tree (shing)*, *knowable thing (shes bya)*, *non-red (dmar po ma yin pa)*, *good reason (rtags yang dag)* and many, many, others are often not translatable by the count nouns they would seem to require in a Western target language – "a vase", "some/all vases", "this vase," "some/all/a/the good reason," "some/all/a/one/the knowable thing," "some/all/a/one non-red thing," and so on. Such count noun translations would not preserve truth. Two examples will have to suffice. Here and in what follows I've put the grammatically problematic English terms in italics:

(1) "*Non-red (dmar po ma yin pa)* is permanent, because there are common bases between *permanent* and it (*khyod dang rtag pa'i gzhi mthun yod pa'i phyir*)"

Comment: The same example can be constructed with *knowable thing*, *good reason*, and many other entities; the reason is a usual one in *bsdus grwa* to prove that something is permanent. The point of "Y having a common basis with X" is that there are cases of Y which are also cases of X. There are non-red things that are permanent, e.g., space (*nam mkha'* = Skt. *ākāśa*).¹

(2) "*Defining characteristic (mtshan nyid = Skt. lakṣaṇa)* [of anything] is not a defining characteristic (*mtshan nyid mtshan nyid ma yin*), because it has a defining characteristic and is thus a definiendum (*mtshon bya = Skt. lakṣya*)."²

Comment: *Defining characteristic* itself is defined as *what satisfies the three criteria for a substantial property (rdzas yod chos gsum tshang ba)* and is thus itself something that can be defined, i.e., a *mtshon bya*.

¹ See e.g. *bsDus grwa brjed tho*, p. 5: *dmar po ma yin pa chos can / rtag pa yin par thal / khyod dang rtag pa'i gzhi mthun yod pa'i phyir* "Take *non-red* as the subject; it follows that it is permanent, because there is a common basis between *permanent* and it". Cf. *Rwa stod bsdus grwa* p. 116: *ma byas pa chos can / der thal / rtag pa yin na / khyod dang rtag pa'i gzhi mthun yod pa'i phyir* "Take *non-produced* as the subject; it follows that there is a common basis between *permanent* and it, because if anything is permanent, then it there is a common basis between it and *permanent*."

² See e.g. *Yongs 'dzin bsdus grwa (chung)* f. 9b: *dngos po'i mtshan nyid chos can / mtshan nyid ma yin par thal / mtshon bya yin pa'i phyir* / "Take *defining characteristic of entity* as the subject; it follows that it is not a defining characteristic, because it is a definiendum [i.e. something to be defined]."