The Buddhist Roots of Secular Compassion Training

A Comparative Study of

Compassion Cultivation in Indian and Tibetan Mahāyāna Sources

with the Contemporary Secular Program of Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)

Julia Caroline Stenzel

School of Religious Studies,
McGill University, Montreal

October 2018

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative analysis of compassion cultivation in Indo-Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist contexts and the recent phenomenon of secular, Buddhism-derived compassion training in North America, exemplified by one of the most prominent programs to date, the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) developed at Stanford University.

This dissertation makes a contribution to the little-studied field of Buddhist compassion cultivation by tracing the transformations of important key concepts throughout Indian and Tibetan Buddhist intellectual history, highlighting the ways in which these transformational processes have enabled the contemporary secularization of compassion training. The study also clarifies conceptual discrepancies between traditional Buddhist and secular approaches to compassion training, particularly focusing on the compassion culture in which the respective training methods are embedded. The study thereby raises awareness of the scope and limitations of the secularization of Buddhist contemplative practices.

The critical comparative analysis is based on textual interpretation of relevant texts from various genres, such as Indian Mahāyāna *sūtra,* Abhidharma, Tathāgatagarbha, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka *śāstra*, Tibetan commentarial texts and practice manuals of the Lojong (*blo sbyong*) and Lamrim (*lam rim*) traditions, as well as recent scientific studies of mindfulness and compassion. The choice of textual material is determined by its relevance for the evolution of compassion cultivation, culminating in its secularization in contemporary North America.

The study begins with a broad overview of etymologies, definitions and ideas pertaining to compassion in canonical Mahāyāna literature, which are contrasted with definitions drawn from contemporary secular compassion science literature, thereby setting the stage for a comparative analysis. Then I discuss compassion didactics in *sūtra* and *śāstra* literature and propose a systematization of three didactic approaches, namely, constructive, deconstructive and cognitive-analytic. I argue that these three didactic styles must be understood as embedded in a contextual framework, a "compassion culture." The study then focuses on the specific method of *tonglen*, which is the formal contemplative method in both, Tibetan Lojong and secular CCT. I trace its philosophical roots to the principle of "equalizing and exchange of self and other" (Skt. *svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana,* Tib. *bdag gzhan mnyams brje*), which has been extensively developed by the seventh-century Indian master Śāntideva in his *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra*. The analysis of various Tibetan interpretations thereof shows how this meditation was progressively transformed and popularized, thereby paving the way for its secularization in CCT. After a detailed presentation of the secular program of CCT, I discuss the complex relationship to its Buddhist roots and conclude with a critique of the recent phenomenon of secularized Buddhist contemplative practice.

Résumé

Cette thèse est une analyse comparative de la méditation de la compassion dans le bouddhisme Mahāyāna indo-tibétain avec l'entraînement à la compassion laïque dérivé du bouddhisme, un phénomène récent en Amérique du Nord, illustré par l'un des programmes les plus importants à ce jour, le Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) à l'Université de Stanford.

Cette thèse contribue au domaine peu étudié de la méditation de la compassion bouddhique en retraçant les transformations d'importants concepts clés tout au long de l'histoire de la pensée bouddhique indienne et tibétaine. Cette analyse montre en quoi ce processus de transformation a permis la laïcisation contemporaine de la méditation de la compassion. L'étude clarifie également les divergences conceptuelles entre les approches traditionnelles bouddhiques et laïque à l'entrainement de la compassion, en mettant en avant l'importance de la « culture de compassion » qui soutient les méthodes de l'entraînement. L'étude sensibilise ainsi à la portée et aux limites de la laïcisation des pratiques contemplatives bouddhistes.

L'analyse comparative est basée sur l'interprétation textuelle des ouvrages pertinents de divers genres, tels que les *sūtra* Mahāyāna indiens, les *śāstra* de l'Abhidharma, Tathāgatagarbha, Yogācāra et Madhyamaka, les commentaires et les manuels de pratique des traditions tibétains de Lojong (*blo sbyong*) et Lamrim (*lam rim*), ainsi que des études scientifiques récentes sur la pleine conscience et la compassion. Le choix du matériau textuel est déterminé en fonction de sa pertinence pour démontrer l'évolution de l'entraînement à la compassion, aboutissant à sa laïcisation dans l'Amérique du Nord contemporaine.

L'étude commence par un large aperçu des étymologies, des définitions et des idées relatives à la compassion dans la littérature canonique du Mahāyāna. Je contraste ceci avec les définitions tirées de la littérature scientifique de la compassion laïque contemporaine, préparant ainsi l'analyse comparative en tant que telle. Ensuite, j'analyse les méthodes de méditation dans la littérature des *sūtra* et *śāstra* et je propose une systématisation en tant qu'approche constructive, déconstructive et cognitive-analytique à l'entraînement à la compassion. Ces trois approches didactiques doivent être comprises comme faisant partie intégrante d'un cadre contextuel, que j'appelle « la culture de la compassion ». Ensuite, je focalise sur la méthode spécifique de *tonglen*, qui est la méthode contemplative formelle à la fois dans le Lojong tibétain et dans le CCT laïc. Je retrace les racines philosophiques de la pratique du *tonglen*, à savoir le principe d'égalisation et d'échange de soi avec l'autre (*svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana, bdag gzhan mnyams brje*), qui a été développé par le maître indien Śāntideva dans le *Bodhi(sattva) caryāvatāra*. L'analyse de diverses interprétations tibétaines montre comment cette méditation a été progressivement popularisée, ouvrant ainsi la voie à sa sécularisation en CCT. La thèse se termine par un examen de l'entraînement à la compassion de CCT dans son contexte laïque qui est dominé par la science. Ayant montré la présence tacite de la pensée bouddhique dans le CCT, je conclus avec des réflexions sur les limites de la laïcisation des pratiques contemplatives bouddhistes.

Acknowledgements

With deep gratitude I dedicate this dissertation to the late Lama Gendun Rinpoche of Dhagpo Kundrol Ling. Through the transmission of his profound understanding of the Buddhist tradition in general and his radiant embodiment of compassion in particular, he planted the seed for the present study of compassion in Buddhist literature. I am forever grateful to him and to all my teachers who, over the years, encouraged me and supported me with great kindness in my attempts to understand the view and practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

I wholeheartedly thank my academic advisors: I am grateful to Professor Thupten Jinpa for introducing me to the field of secular compassion training and for his patient and superb guidance in writing this dissertation. I am grateful to Professor Lara Braitstein for her generous help at all stages of the doctoral program, for many hours of translating together, for her caring encouragement and her assistance with all aspects of academic life.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to learn from excellent professors at McGill University. I wish to mention in particular Professor Victor Hori whose example in academic excellence, rigor and kindness fills me with inspiration and admiration. I wish to express my gratitude to Numata Professor Roger Jackson for his help with early translations for this project, for his patient introduction into the art of academic publishing and for his ongoing kind support. I also wish to thank Numata Professor Dr. Trungram Gyaltrul Rinpoche for bringing his vast knowledge of Buddhist traditions into academia.

I am indebted to many teachers who instructed me in Tibetan and Sanskrit grammar and the art of translation. At the International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu: Professor Khenpo Jorden, Mingyur Dorje, Gavin Kilty, and Professor Dan Martin. Patrick Carré and Christian Bruyat of the Padmakara Translation Group were my very first translation teachers, and Dr. Erin McCann made Sanskrit study an enjoyable endeavor. I also thank Pamela Gayle White for editing parts of this dissertation.

I wish to thank my colleagues and fellow students at the School of Religious Studies of McGill University, in particular, Tillie Perks, Melanie Coughlin, Ryan Jones, and Professor Antoine Panaïoti for many enjoyable and fruitful discussions. Thanks also to all the kind staff in the Birks Building for their support and warm presence throughout the years.

Finally, I thank my friends and family who contributed in indirect ways to the completion of this dissertation, with their kind encouragement, their expertise and help inside and outside of academia, and their loving friendship: Delha Bettina Secker, Khaydrup Podvoll, Pamela Gayle White, Tsony, Prof. Chiara Letizia, Prof. Piroska Nagy, Sylvie Leblanc, Dr. Paul Hackett, Christian Bernert, Melanie Coughlin, Maria Grote, Prof. Isabelle Dourcy-Henrion, Dr. Rory Lindsay, Prof. Philippe Turenne, Melanie Létourneau and many others, to whom I apologize for not mentioning them by name. I thank my best friend Jampa Tenzin for his unceasing enthusiasm in sharing his knowledge of Buddhist philosophy and for his wonderful companionship. I thank my parents Ingrid and Jürgen Stenzel, my siblings Florian and Britta, and my entire family for their continuous love and support.

The completion of this Ph.D. project was made possible by the generous support of the Barbara and Patrick Keenan Foundation, the McCall Foundation, the Khyentse Foundation, the McBurney Family Foundation and the Ellen Aitken Fellowship.

Table of Contents

Technical Note and Abbreviations i
Introduction 1
1. Objectives 1
    1.1. Background, Scope, Purpose and Benefits 1
    1.2. Questions to Be Addressed 4
2. Methodological Considerations 7
    2.1. Terminology and Translation 7
    2.2. Critical Comparison as Method 10
    2.3. The Choice of Textual Material 14
3. Outline of Chapters 17
4. Overview of Key Literature 18
Chapter I. Definitions of Compassion in Buddhist and Secular Contexts 21
1. Etymologies and the Complex Question of Defining Compassion 21
    1.1. Etymologies in Western Languages 20
    1.2. Mahāyāna Buddhist Etymologies and Definitions 25
2. The Multifaceted Definitions of Secular Compassion 30
3. Mahāyāna Systematizations of Compassion 38
    3.1. The Ground: Is Compassion "Nature" or "Nurture"? 38
        3.1.1. Tathāgatagarbha Thought 39
        3.1.2. Yogācara 41
        3.1.3. Madhyamaka 45
    3.2. What is Being Trained – an Emotion, an Intention, an Action? 48
        3.2.1. Is Compassion an Emotion? 48
    3.3. The Perfectibility of Compassion 53
        3.3.1 Great Compassion 53
        3.3.2. The Three *Ālambana*s 59
        3.3.3. The Threefold Typology of Suffering 62
Conclusion 67

Chapter II. Compassion Cultivation Methods in Mahāyāna Literature 71
1. Compassion Culture 72
2. Three Didactic Approaches 76
    2.1. The Constructive Approach 76
        2.1.1. The Role of Loving-Kindness in Compassion Cultivation ... 77
        2.1.2. Aspirations and Intention-Setting 81
        2.1.3. The Four Immeasurables 84
        2.1.4. Personal Commitments 86
    2.2. The Deconstructive Approach 88
        2.2.1. Deconstructing Fear 89
    2.3. Cognitive-Analytic Approach 94
        2.3.1. Objects of Analytic Meditation 95
        2.3.2. Advantages and Disadvantages 95
        2.3.3. Suffering 96
        2.3.4. Sameness 96

2.4. An Early Example from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* …...100
3. Compassion Culture Revisted …….. 102
3.1. The Prosocial and Asocial Variants ……103
3.2. Benefitting Self and Others ……106
Conclusion …… 108

Chapter III. Compassion and the Roots of *Tonglen* Meditation in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA) ……. 110
1. Introduction to "Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others" …… 111
1.1. Compassion as Part of *Bodhicitta* ……..116
2. Early Traces of "Equalizing and Exchange" ……117
3. A Close Reading of the Equalizing and Exchange Passage ……..121
3.1. Equalizing (BCA VIII, 90-112) ……..
122
3.2. Exchanging Self and Other (BCA VIII, 112c-184) …… 125
3.2.1. Conceptual: The Exchange of Self-Identification …… 126
3.2.2. Evaluative: The Exchange of Emotional Appraisal …… 127
3.2.3. Objective: The Exchange of Spiritual Goods …… 131
3.3. Śāntideva's Deconstructive Compassion Didactics …… 133
4. Interpretations and Transformations: Śāntideva and *Tonglen* …… 138
4.1. Conventional and Ultimate *Bodhicitta* …… 138
4.2. The Nature of Exchange …….. 140
Conclusion …… 142

Chapter IV. Compassion Cultivation in Tibetan Traditions …… 144
1. The Contemplative Practice of *Tonglen*…….. 145
1.1. Brief Introduction to Lojong and *Tonglen* Practice …… 145
1.2. The Evolution of *Tonglen* …… 149
1.3. Early Commentarial Literature …… 150
1.3.1. *The Root Lines of Mahāyāna Mind Training* ……... 151
1.3.2. *The Annotated Root Lines* ……. 151
1.3.3. Chekawa's *Seven-Point Mind Training* ……. 153
1.3.4. Root Lines Embedded in *Mahāyāna Mind Training* …… 155
1.3.5. Root Lines in Sangye Gompa's *Public Explication* ……. 156
2. The Complex Relationship of *Tonglen* to Śāntideva's Teachings …… 161
2.1. Literature and Transmission Lineage …… 161
2.2. Transformation of Śāntideva's Teachings …… 164
2.2.1. Omission: Emptiness of Self …… 164
2.2.2. Addition: Emotional Stimuli ……. 166
3. Śāntideva's Legacy Beyond Lojong …… 168
3.1. Popularizing Compassion Training: Thokmé Sangpo (1295-1369) … 169
3.1.1. *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* ……. 171
3.2. Combining Two Approaches to Compassion Cultivation:
Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) …….. 174
3.3. Polemics around Equalizing and Exchange Practice ……. 175
Conclusion …… 181

Chapter V. Secular Compassion Training and *Tonglen* …… 183
1. Context: Science, Secularism, and Buddhism …… 183
1.1. The Scientific Exploration of Compassion ……. 188
1.2. The Role of the Dalai Lama …… 191
1.3. The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) …… 193
1.4. Compassion Based Interventions ……. 194
1.5. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)…….. 196
1.6. Lojong in America …… 198
2. Content: The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) …….. 199
2.1. The Pedagogical Approach of CCT …….. 201
2.2. The Six Step Pedagogy of CCT …… 203
2.3. Structure …… 208
2.4. Self-Compassion and Self-Kindness ……. 209
2.5. Interactive Exercises ……..210
2.6. The Guided Meditation …….. 211
2.7. The Instructors ……212
3. Comparative Analysis of Secular and Traditional Compassion Training ……. 213
3.1. Descriptive Comparison: Implicit Buddhist References in CCT …… 214
3.2. Evaluative Comparison: Differences and Tensions …… 219
3.2.1. Different Scope …… 219
3.2.2. Difference in Method …….. 221
3.2.3. Dialogic versus Introspective …….. 222
3.2.4. *Tonglen* in Contemporary Buddhism ……. 223
3.2.5. Empathic versus Dispassionate ……. 226
3.2.6. Self-Compassion as Primary Focus versus Side-Product ….. 228
Conclusion ……231

VI. Concluding Reflections …… 233
1. The Meaning of Secularization ……235
2. Evaluating the Secularization of Buddhist Contemplative Practices ……236
2.1. Various Critiques of Secularized Buddhist Practices …….…..…. 238
2.2. Response to the Critiques…..…… 241
3. Future Research …… 244

Glossary …… 247
References …… 249

Technical Note

All Tibetan names are rendered phonetically in accordance with the style sheet developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics and Wisdom Publications especially for the Library of Tibetan Classics. Their Wylie transliteration is given at the end of the thesis in a correspondence table. The titles of Tibetan works are given in Wylie transliteration in the text. The translations of the titles and their extant published translations can be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. A few texts are frequently cited and therefore referred to by the following abbreviations:

List of Abbreviations

AKBh *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Tib. *chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi bshad pa* (*Compendium of the Higher Teaching with Commentary*)
APS *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, Tib: *shes rab pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*)
BhK *Bhāvanākrama*, Tib: *sgom pa'i rim pa* (*Stages of Meditation*)
BBh *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Tib: *byang chub sems dpa'i sa* (*Stages of the Bodhisattva*)
BCA *Bodhi[sattva]caryāvatāra*. Tib: *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa* (*Practicing the Conduct of Bodhisattvas, The Way of the Bodhisattva*)
BP *Bodhipāthapradīpa*. Tib. *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma* (*Lamp for the Path to Awakening*)
IM *Instructor's Manual* of CCT
KG Kangyur (*bka' 'gyur*)
LG *Lojong Gyatsa (blo sbyong brgya rtsa*), Tibetan source text for MTGC
MA *Madhyamakāvatāra*, Tib: *dbu ma la 'jug pa* (*Entrance to the Middle Way*)
MSA *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, Tib: *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi bzhad pa* (*Ornament of the Great Vehicle Sūtra*)
MTGC *Mind Training: The Great Collection*, English translation of LG
RGV *Ratnagotravibhāga* /*Ratnagotravibhāgo Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra* Tib. *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos* (*Treatise on the Sublime Continuum*)
RĀ *Ratnāvalī* (*Garland of Jewels*/ *Precious Garland*)
ŚS *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Tib: *bslab pa kun las btus pa* (*Training Anthology*)
TG Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*)

Introduction

1. Objectives

1.1. Background, Scope, Purpose and Benefits

Secular compassion training is a recent cultural phenomenon in North America that has emerged in the wake of the scientific exploration of compassion in the fields of neuroscience, psychological science, psychotherapy research and evolutionary biology. Interest in the topic of compassion is steadily growing as clinicians discover its value in clinical applications, corporate businesses appreciate its impact on successful leadership, and the public at large learns how it promotes physical and mental well-being.

In terms of clinical application, compassion-based interventions have been used in the treatment of pathological high shame, anger and anxiety disorders (Gilbert and Procter 2006), schizophrenia, addiction to smoking (Kirby 2017), and PTSD at veterans' residential treatment centers (Standen 2012), among others. In leadership training, "compassionate leadership" is being presented as a novel and successful business philosophy by *Forbes* and *Harvard Business Review*.[1] For the general public, training programs that focus on fostering compassion and self-compassion are being offered in North America, Europe and Australia. Thus, secular compassion training is a cultural phenomenon that is irrefutably expanding, following the lead of the slightly older secular mindfulness training, whose most prominent program is mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990). Mindfulness has fully entered

[1] https://hbr.org/2018/02/how-to-cultivate-gratitude-compassion-and-pride-on-your-team, accessed June 1, 2018; https://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2017/05/20/compassionate-leadership/#542087ea5df9, accessed June 1, 2018.

American main stream culture, prompting popular media to speak of a “mindfulness revolution” (Boyce 2011).

Compassion and mindfulness training programs are both hybrids of Buddhist and contemporary psychological, therapeutic, and pedagogical concepts. Yet, whereas the mindfulness movement has been analyzed in some depth by Buddhist scholars, the analysis of secular compassion training from a Buddhist studies perspective remains a desideratum. While the number of academic publications on compassion has steadily been growing, reaching between thirty and fifty thousand per annum for the past decade according to a survey of Google scholar, the majority of these papers emerge from the fields of neuroscience and psychology, with a focus on the latest insights into the measurability and applicability of secular compassion. Fewer than a handful of studies have been published from the perspective of Buddhist studies, despite the fact that compassion programs explicitly credit Buddhist traditions as a major source (Weiss 2012, McKnight 2014, Dodson-Lavelle 2015, Ozawa-de Silva 2015), and even these few existing doctoral theses explore the topic from a contemporary angle. Their authors have all led compassion training programs, and their work is characterized by constructive critique with a view to promoting and improving the pedagogical value and applicability of compassion training for contemporary audiences.

If we take a look at the debates surrounding mindfulness meditation, it becomes clear that Buddhist scholarship plays a crucial role in clarifying, criticizing and enriching our understanding of meditation. The contemporary, secularized use of mindfulness has variously been criticized as being selective, reductionist, a distortion of Buddhist thought, lacking in ethical foundations, etc. These claims sparked a wave of invigorated research that has led to a refined understanding of the varieties of mindfulness meditation, and their evolution in Buddhist

history (McMahan 2008, McMahan and Braun 2017, Sharf 2015, Wilson 2014, Dunne 2015, Braun 2013). As Erik Braun and David McMahan state in their recent study of meditation in North America, "The discipline of Buddhist Studies has played a constitutive part in the past in shaping the forms of meditation, framed in scientific discourses, that we now reflect upon" (2017, 20). Even references in mainstream media have become more refined, as they commonly distinguish between different types of mindfulness meditation, such as focused attention, open monitoring, or effortless presence meditations.

While it is clear that religious studies scholarship can make important contributions to shaping these ongoing cultural transformative processes, it has yet to present an in-depth research focusing on the phenomenon of compassion training. The present dissertation addresses this lacuna. I offer a study of compassion cultivation in Indian and Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist literature from a historical and a philosophical perspective. Based on this, I engage in a critical comparison with compassion training in the contemporary secular and scientific context of North America. Taking one of the most prominent programs to date, the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) developed at Stanford University in 2009, as an example and prototype, I trace the didactic elements of secularized compassion training from their antecedents in traditional Buddhist sources to their secularized forms in CCT.

The study fulfills two purposes. From a historical perspective, I demonstrate why secular compassion training is not merely a cultural phenomenon belonging to North American wellness and consumer culture alone but should be understood as a recent outgrowth of the perpetual transformative processes that define the history of Buddhist thought. The spirit of innovation being inbuilt in the system, so to speak, these novel, secularized forms of compassion cultivation should not be seen as completely disconnected and alien to Buddhist tradition, but instead as part

of an ongoing process of adaptation. From a philosophical perspective, the study shines a light on the presence of a *compassion culture*, as opposed to specific techniques of Buddhist compassion training. The comparative aspect of the dissertation allows us to better discern the secularization of Buddhist contemplative practices and raise larger questions of cultural appropriation and loopback effects in secularization processes.

Thus, this study has been undertaken with a sense of the importance and promise of the explorations of compassion training within the fields of contemplative studies in general, and Buddhist studies in particular. As compassion cultivation grows in influence, the knowledge of its philosophical and historical roots, the breadth of its didactic methods and goals, and its similarities and divergences in secular adaptations will support and sustain a fruitful dialogue among Buddhist scholars, scientists, health care professionals, and "compassion enthusiasts" who participate in secular programs at large. The study provides greater insights into the significance and scope of compassion cultivation from a Buddhist studies perspective, thereby expanding our understanding of the broader category of meditation as a cultural phenomenon. Given the powerful impact of scientific research in this field, it is my hope that this study will demonstrate the value of further research into the depths of Buddhist sources so as to benefit from centuries of extensive exploration of the human mind and the resulting insights into the meaning of our existence.

1.2. Questions to be addressed

The emergence of Buddhism-derived, secular practices such as CCT is a novel phenomenon in Buddhist history which produces new questions that demand clarification. The appropriation of Buddhist mindfulness practices for secular purposes has been criticized as a

distortion of a highly evolved spiritual philosophy into a commodity: a story of degeneration and loss. Could this criticism also be applied to secularized compassion training? Is secular compassion training a distortion of Buddhist thought? Secular compassion training emerged in part as a response to the value-free, non-judgmental aspect of secular mindfulness practices by introducing ethical content, but it too represents a form of commodification of Buddhist thought that caters to neo-liberal capitalist consumerism instead of proposing renunciation and awakening. The query of whether secular compassion training represents a degeneration or distortion of Buddhist ideas is therefore a valid and important one, especially in combination with questions of how current influential scientific discourses on compassion might impact traditional Buddhist discussions of the topic. To begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to first clarify the meaning of compassion in traditional Buddhist source material, as only a clear understanding of the antecedents or origins allows for comparative conclusions.

How are compassion and compassion cultivation understood in Buddhist literature? One reason for the scarcity of academic study of these subjects is the longstanding preference of Western academia for engaging with the philosophical aspects of Buddhism, whereas interest in Buddhist ethics is a relatively recent development (Keown 1992, Harvey 2000, Goodman 2009, Clayton 2005, Cowherds 2015). Another reason is the fact that the idea of cultivating compassion as a distinct mental state in its own right has only emerged in the context of secular compassion training. Traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist literature tends to treat compassion as part of a cluster, seeing *karuṇā* (Tib. *snying rje*) as causing or participating in the resolve to attain awakening for the sake of all sentient beings, *bodhicitta* (Tib. *byang chub kyi sems bskyed*). Alternatively, compassion appears in the triad of loving-kindness (Skt. *maitrī*, Tib. *byams pa*), compassion, and *bodhicitta,* or as one of the four immeasurable qualities (*apramāṇa*). Compassion as a quality

that is interwoven with other aspects of spiritual cultivation in Indian Buddhist literature has been explored by Stephen Jenkins in his doctoral thesis, which is the only thesis to date that focuses directly on the topic of compassion (Jenkins 1999).

My interest in exploring compassion cultivation in Buddhist literature was stirred by the emergence and growing popularity of secular compassion training. This fact naturally coloured the perspective of this study, as it means that I read traditional Buddhist sources through the lens of contemporary secular compassion training. The challenges of this comparative endeavor will be addressed in the following section, which looks at the methods employed in this study. Besides the challenges, though, this modern lens also produces interesting questions that shine new light on old material, such as the questions of whether, according to Buddhist understanding, compassion is at the core of human nature, whether one can train in it, and what, precisely, is being trained. Queries such as these, which are currently being explored by neuroscientists, neurobiologists and psychologists, interested the Buddhist scholars of pre-modern India and Tibet just as much.

Another reason why the exploration of compassion and compassion cultivation in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature is challenging is the fact that both are constructs that have been evolving throughout the history of Buddhist thought. There is a general agreement that they are not monolithic entities, but the ways in which compassion and its cultivation have been transformed over time have not yet been explored in any depth. In this study I focus on a limited set of transformative processes that have come about in Indian and Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhism. The study's scope is determined by the source materials' direct relevance to secular compassion training, and particularly to CCT. Therefore, I have not included compassion cultivation methods as practiced in other Buddhist traditions as they are not germane to this specific subject.

The study ends with an exploration of the question of secularization: What does it mean to secularize Buddhist contemplative practices? In contrast to Charles Taylor's classification of three different types of secularism, the secular character of compassion training stands not in *opposition* to religion, but rather in an inclusive, encompassing position. I will explore the particularities of the secularization process in the context of compassion training, respond to critical views thereof and suggest an interpretation based on the analysis of the historical development of compassion cultivation in Indian and Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions.

2. Methodological Considerations

2.1. Terminology

Compassion (Skt. *karuṇā*, Tib. *snying rje*) lies at the very core of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which has been described as being propelled by the two wings of compassion and wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*, Tib. *shes rab,* Nagao 2000, 2). Without compassion, the Mahāyāna path is unthinkable. Not surprisingly, compassion and related concepts pervade nearly every aspect of Mahāyāna doctrine, yet a consistent definition of compassion is a rarity in Buddhist literature. As mentioned above, compassion often constitutes one aspect of a more complex mental cultivation. Most importantly, *karuṇā* is presented as a cause of *bodhicitta,* and textual references to these two qualities often overlap, since both are associated with liberating beings from suffering. For instance, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (MSA), one of the seminal textual resources for understanding compassion, explains *bodhicitta* by stating that "its root is compassion, its

aspiration the constant benefit of beings."[2] A commentary on this text gives the following elaborate explanation:

> *Bodhicitta* is of two kinds: one characterised by *karuṇā* and one characterised by *prajñā*. Of these [two], the one characterised by *karuṇā* is a state of mind resting in the thought: "May all sentient beings [attain] *nirvāṇa.*" It has [the tendency to accumulate] beneficial resources (*puṇya*) as its nature. The one characterised by *prajñā* is a state of mind resting in the thought: "Because all phenomena are empty (*śūnya*), there is no sentient being who [attains] nirvāṇa." It has [the tendency to accumulate] gnosis (*jñāna*) as its nature. What is worth noting here is that the bipolar components of *bodhicitta,* namely, compassion (*karuṇā*) and discerning insight (*prajñā*), are employed to classify it into two types and are clearly associated with the two kinds of accumulations (*saṃbhāra*). These two kinds of *bodhicitta* to a certain extent also resemble the subclassification into conventional and absolute *bodhicitta*.[3]

This passage clearly shows that while *karuṇā* constitutes one aspect of *bodhicitta* – namely conventional *bodhicitta* – it must be complemented by the gnosis of *śūnyatā.* The relationship of these three concepts is sometimes expressed in the complex term *sūnyatākaruṇāgarbha*, which could be translated as "the matrix or essence of emptiness and compassion." It is cited in Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī*, Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*, and others.[4] The present study has had to integrate the challenging fact that in traditional Buddhist literature,

---

[2] MSA 4,3 (Lévi 1907, 4.3): *karuṇāmūla iṣṭo 'sau sadāsatvahitāśayaḥ* || Compare also BBh I,2, where Asaṅga explains that generating the [awakened] mind depends on [1] the excellence of the spiritual lineage, [2] receiving assistance from a buddha, bodhisattva, or spiritual teacher; [3] having compassion for sentient beings; [4] a lack of fear regarding the suffering of saṃsāra. These explanations of the causes of bodhicitta bear great resemblance to the explanations of the causes of compassion cited above (BBh, 26).

[3] *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāravyākhyā by* Sthiramati, (P, Vol. *mi*, fol. 59a7-b1; D, vol. *mi*, fol. 53b4-6; S, vol. 71, pp. 1029.21-1030.5): *byang chub kyi sems ni rnam pa gnyis te / snying rje'i mtshan nyid dang / shes rab kyi mtshan nyid do // de la snying rje'i mtshan nyid ni sems can thams cad mya ngan las 'da'o snyam du sems pa ste / de ni bsod nams kyi rang bzhin no // shes rab kyi mtshan nyid ni chos thams cad stong pa yin pas sems can gang yang mya ngan las 'das pa med do snyam du sems pa ste / de ni ye shes kyi rang bzhin no //* (Cited in Wangchuk 2007, 266-7).

[4] RĀ 496 (Nāgārjuna and Hahn 1982, 130,1-4): *dvayāniśritam ekeṣām gambhīraṃ bhīrubhīṣanam | śūnyatākaruṇāgarbham ekeṣām bodhisādhanam* || "[To some he teaches Dharma] not based on duality; To some [he teaches] a profound [Dharma] terrifying to the fearful; To others the means of awakening that has emptiness and compassion as its essence." (Cited by Wangchuk [2007, 236] who also gives further quotations from *Śikṣāsamuccayakārikā* 21, and *Bhāvanākrama* I and III).

compassion is not considered a separate entity, or even a goal, in its own right.[5] As will be shown in this dissertation, we find here an important difference from secular compassion programs that provide training in compassion for its own sake.

In the *Bodhisattvaprātimokṣa Sūtra*, a work of early Mahāyāna literature, the aspirant engages in the bodhisattva path by voicing the following vows:

> "I, with the name so-and-so, […] for the benefit and the liberation of the infinite world of beings, *to deliver them from the suffering of saṃsāra*, I generate the mind of supreme and perfect awakening. […] From now on, the gifts I give, the discipline I observe, the patience I practice, the efforts I carry out, the concentration I develop, the wisdom I practice, the skilful means I employ, all of these will be dedicated to the welfare, the benefit and the happiness of all beings."[6]

This passage also shows that the two mental states of *bodhicitta* and compassion are used interchangeably; both are concerned with eliminating suffering. The *sūtra* states that it is understood that all beings in saṃsāra experience suffering. The salient trait of bodhisattvas (heroic beings striving for awakening) is their commitment to alleviate that suffering, and this compassionate impulse compels them to generate *bodhicitta*. Bodhisattvas are therefore regarded as the embodiment and epitome of compassion. The MSA XIX, 73-74 gives (*mahā*)*kṛpālu* (Skt., the (great) compassionate one) as a synonym for a bodhisattva: bodhisattvas are greatly (*mahā*) compassionate persons. Moreover, it is the bodhisattvas' great compassion that motivates them to forego nirvāṇic peace in order to continue working in saṃsāra for the welfare of beings.[7] The

---

[5] This is not to say that smaller texts on compassion alone are non-existent. They are, however, part of the compassion culture of the bodhisattva path. In the *Mind Training Anthology*, for example, several smaller texts treat compassion alone: "The Advice to Namdak Tsuknor" by Atīśa is a text on compassion and emptiness training alone (263-268); similarly, the "The Yoga of Unparalleled Compassion" in Glorious Virvapa's Teaching (269-274).

[6] BPS 274-275: *so 'ham evaṃnāmā* [...] *anantasattvadhātūttāraṇāyābhyuddharaṇāya saṃsāraduḥkhāt paritrāṇāya* [...] *anuttarāyāṁ samyakṣambodhau cittam utpādayāmi.* [...] *itaḥ prabhṛti yatkiṁcid dānaṁ dāsyāmi śīlaṁ rakṣiṣyāmi kṣāntiṁ saṁpādayiṣyāmi vīryam ārabhya dhyānaṁ samāpatsye prajñayā vyavacārya upāyakauśalyaṃ vā śikṣiṣye tat sarvasattvānām arthāya hitāya sukhāya* || (Cited in Vievard 2001, 423; emphasis mine).

[7] This theme received widespread attention, for example the AS XX; the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (however, the origins of this *sūtra* are doubtful), the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra-prajñā-pāramitopadeśa-śāstra*, Ch I, 10ab; or the MSA, XVII, 42. This latter verse reads*: aviṣṭānāṃ kṛpayā na tiṣṭhati manaḥ śame kṛpālūnāṃ | kuta eva lokasaukhye svajīvite vā bhavet snehaḥ* || (Lévi 1907, 126). "The mind of those compassionate (bodhisattvas) permeated with

textual excerpts cited here illustrate that Mahāyāna literature does not strictly distinguish between compassion or *bodhicitta* arising at the sight of suffering. Since compassion and *bodhicitta* constitute an interwoven complex, I will regularly refer to textual material on *bodhicitta* for my analysis of compassion.

2.2. Critical Comparison as Method

This study relies heavily on critical comparison as a research method since it compares secular and traditional Buddhist contexts as well as varying concepts within the framework of Buddhist traditions. It is therefore appropriate to reflect on the purpose and limitations of comparison as a method, especially given its problematic past. The comparative method in the study of religion has a controversial history. Although it began much earlier, it ramped up in the context of European colonialism in the 19th century when European forces controlled most of the world politically and economically. In the wake of imperialist conquest, the religions of others were studied not for the sake of conversion or to obtain inspiration, but for the purpose of managing and controlling other cultures (Kripal 2017, xxvi). The study of religion has undergone periodic changes, and the pendulum has swung from being overly critical or condescending of differences to romantically assuming a unity underlying all religions. The latter approach is based on "an exercise in identifying what is asserted by some to be a deeply human, and thus humane, element – sometimes called the Human Spirit or Human Nature," as Russell

---

compassion does not rest even in nirvāṇa…" MSA, XVII, 42 (Tib): *snying rjes zin pa'i brtser ldan rnams // zhi la'ang yid ni mi gnas na // 'jig rten bde dang rang srog la // chags par 'gyur ba smos ci dgos //* (Asaṅga (thogs med), 217a2) "Those loving beings imbued by compassion do not remain in the peace (of *nirvāṇa*), no need to mention an attachment for the pleasures of the world and this life." The question and controversies around sacrificing the attainment of *nirvāṇa* has been discussed by Jenkins 1999, 113-160.

McCutcheon states. Referring to the cross-cultural comparative work of Wendy Doniger, Diana Eck and others, he is wary of the simplifications implied by this approach:

> Based on this presumably shared item, feeling or value, mutual understanding across cultural and historical divides is believed to be possible; after all, studying 'their' sacred symbols, narrative or practices inevitably strikes a chord with 'us' (McCutcheon 2014, 21).

Indeed, the comparative study of secular and traditional constructs of compassion relies on the assumption that a shared human nature justifies such comparisons. The idea of identity or commonality has been posited by the agents of the secularization process, rather than the author of this study. By choosing Buddhist contemplative techniques for North American audiences, the developers of secular programs make the statement that compassion belongs to a common, basic part of the mind which functions in the same or very similar ways in very different cultural contexts. This understanding of religion is reflected in what Jeffrey Kripal calls "the cognitive study of religion, which focuses on cognition, that is, how the brain processes information" (Kripal 2017, xxx). By using experience as building blocks, he explains, humans construct meaning in life, including belief systems, rituals, ethical values and institutional structures.

> The cognitive study of religion is very young, and it remains to be seen if the fruits of this approach are really as significant as its practitioners commonly claim. But the field has already had one very positive effect on the study of religion. It has reintroduced comparison in a particularly robust way. The brain has become the new basis of comparison across cultures and time periods. The cognitive study of religion has, in effect, issued a challenge to the humanities and their almost exclusive turn to local detail, on social construction, and on religious difference: "The brain is the brain, regardless of where or when we encounter its expressions in our historical materials. And it works more or less the same wherever we find it. Such a neurological universalism is not a bad thing. It is an obvious empirical fact. Deal with it" (2017, xxx).

While the present study of compassion is aligned with these fundamental propositions of the cognitive study of religion, it also contends that human experience is defined in important ways

by cultural context. An intention of this study is to illuminate the cultures that are built around, and inform, different compassion pedagogies.

The question that remains to be answered is: What do we expect to learn through comparison? Simply stating similarities and differences in terms of "this is this and that is that" is obviously not satisfactory. According to Barbra Clayton, the comparative method must be a tool of knowledge acquisition, a form of discernment that reconciles the unknown with the known through comparative interpretation.

> Interpretation is required when we encounter a phenomenon that seems odd: something that is not completely transparent to us. If the object seems entirely alien, we will have a difficult time understanding it at all. If it is completely familiar, it will require no interpretation. If it is neither completely foreign nor completely familiar, then it can and will need to be interpreted, and part of how we do that is through comparing and integrating it to what we already know (Clayton 2001b, 22).

Like her I see the purpose of the comparative method as hermeneutic – a deepened understanding of the topic that cannot be acquired by a singular, unidimensional perspective. In this sense, the comparative method fosters an understanding of the Buddhist construct of compassion by reading it through the lens of secular compassion training. Reading Indian and Tibetan textual material through this new lens stimulates queries that Buddhist thinkers had not formulated in quite the same way – questions such as "Does compassion lie at the core of human nature? If so, why aren't we always compassionate? What does it mean to train in developing compassion in a deconstructive way?" to name but a few. In the reverse direction, reading a secular compassion training manual through the lens of traditional Buddhist practice cultures allows us to appreciate the multiplicity of pedagogical ideas that have been integrated into the secular program with the purpose of establishing a compassion culture rather than providing self-help training. In this sense, the comparative method is used in either direction in order to enhance and sharpen the understanding of compassion in both contexts.

Having clarified the purpose of the comparative method, a few difficulties in its actual application should be examined. As stated previously, compassion and related concepts pervade nearly every aspect of Buddhist doctrine. A survey of Mahāyāna literature reveals a range of definitions of compassion that extend from being an innate quality of mind to a cultivated behaviour; from a type of knowledge (Skt. *jñāna,* Tib. *shes pa*) to an affective, motivational impetus; from an initial cause for spiritual awakening to the final activity of enlightened buddhas; from a mere aspiration to self-sacrificial action, to name but a few. This nexus of ideas makes it difficult to establish clear referents of comparison, and the selection of textual material necessarily contains a subjective evaluation. In addition, the comparative aspect of this study involves more than two referents, as it compares not only methods of compassion training but also their respective underlying definitions of compassion and their historical, philosophical and textual contexts. There is therefore also a historical element in the analysis, in which the referents of comparison are not unrelated but have a historical link. Luis Gomez describes the complexity of dealing with a subject matter as follows:

> [N]o text can stand alone, without its subtexts, without its assumed worlds... Buddhist texts abound in stock phrases and shorthand terminology that hide innumerable conceptions, beliefs, and doctrinal lists whose meaning often depends on other literary and doctrinal constructs (1996, xiii-xiv).

The same can be said about secular compassion training. It is also a complex construct: the product of the confluence of certain aspects of science, Buddhism, psychological needs, and the socio-political situation of the world. As this study will show, it is the contexts and underlying assumptions rather than the training techniques themselves that distinguish traditional Buddhist from secular compassion training.

The difficulty of establishing clearly defined, objective referents in comparative studies has been described by Stephen Jenkins as a “paralyzing situation.” It is an uncomfortable space

that, I believe, comparative religious studies will have to accept in the absence of valid alternative approaches that would provide more objective research results. Citing Lawrence Sullivan, Jenkins concludes, “It is precisely our critical sense of the limitations of our assertions that allows us to go forward in a meaningful way. Rather than making some refinement or safe qualification of our assertions, [but] instead recognizing their ultimate lack of objectivity, we should proceed with humility, irony and even a sense of humor” (Jenkins 1999, 24). It is my hope that my analysis bears these characteristics. I have avoided value judgements, particularly when it comes to drawing final conclusions about the secularization of traditional Buddhist forms of spiritual discipline. Rather, my interest lies in exploring the transformative processes within the history of thought, as they testify to the richness and creativity of the human mind.

3. The Choice of Textual Material

My comparative study of Buddhist and secular compassion training is based on textual interpretation. Given the large amount of textual material on compassion and related concepts, it was necessary to determine selection parameters for the purpose of this analysis, even though a selective view incurs the risk of distorting the object of observation. The source material focuses on texts that are deemed directly or indirectly relevant to an analysis of secular compassion training, and particularly to that of CCT. While my approach to the study of compassion takes a very particular angle, i.e., that of the secular training protocol of CCT, my intention is to present an analysis of the different facets of this multivalent and important concept in its traditional Indian and Tibetan Buddhist contexts. This will include a definition of the terminology, philosophical rationales, cultivation practices, ethics and results of compassion training. The study uses only Mahāyāna sources, primarily because the authors of secular compassion training

constructed their programs based on Indo-Tibetan Mahāyāna literature. The inclusion of non-Mahāyāna sources would have made the comparison unnecessarily complex and confusing. Stephen Jenkins' *The Circle of Compassion* (1999) is a fine study of the characteristics and continuities of early mainstream Buddhism[8] and Mahāyāna Buddhism; it can therefore serve as a preliminary study to the present research project.

The choice of Indian texts is limited to Mahāyāna discourses (*sūtra*) and treatises (*śāstra*) of the Tathāgatagarbha, Yogācāra and Madhyamaka traditions that the Tibetan traditions consider authoritative. The choice of Tibetan texts is limited to works of the Lojong (*blo sbyong,* lit. mind training) and Lamrim (*lam rim*, lit. stages of the path) traditions, because these are the sources that the contemporary designers of the CCT manual considered authoritative. Overall, four areas contribute to the conversation: early Indian Mahāyāna sources (1st- 4th centuries CE), mature Mahāyāna (6th - 8th centuries CE), Tibetan adaptations (12th -15th centuries CE), and secular compassion training in 21st century North America.

Early Indian Mahāyāna sources include the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*)*;* Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* (*Garland of Jewels*)*;* Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*Compendium of Higher Teachings*)*, Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (*Ornament of the Great Vehicle Sūtra*)*,* and *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (*Stages of the Bodhisattva*)*;* Maitreyanātha's *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra* (*Analysis of the Germ of the Jewels: A Treatise on the Ultimate Doctrine of the Great Vehicle*)*;* Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (*Compendium of the Higher Teaching with Commentary*) and *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkarabhāṣya*; and Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (*Entrance to the Middle Way*). Mature Mahāyāna sources, particularly Śāntideva's *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra* (*Practicing*

[8] The term "mainstream Buddhism" is used by Jenkins to refer to early, pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist schools.

the Conduct of Bodhisattvas) and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (*Training Anthology*), are consulted for the contemplations on the equality of self and all other beings (*svaparasamatā*), and on the exchange of self and other (*parātmaparivartana*). Śāntideva's work is complemented by important early commentators on the BCA, mainly Sönam Tsemo (1142-1182) and Thokmé Sangpo (1295-1369), whose *legs bshad rgya mtsho* (*Ocean of Excellent Advice*) is studied at Tibetan monastic colleges to this day. This rather limited selection among the vast corpus of scriptural material means that discussions about the historicity of texts and sectarian differences of interpretation will be limited as well.

Regarding traditional Tibetan material, Tibetan scholars adapted Indian thought in various ways, and created innovative new contemplative traditions such as Lojong and Lamrim. Lojong is attributed to the Indian scholar Atīśa (Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, 980-1054), a major protagonist of the second propagation period of Buddhism in Tibet (Tib. *phyi dar*), and his disciples. Atīśa's *Bodhipāthapradīpa* (*Lamp for the Path to Awakening*) and numerous oral teachings contain many of the mind training ideas, which subsequently were presented in the now well-known seven-point structure by Chekawa (1101-1175).[9] Chekawa's work and other early important mind training texts can be found in the anthology composed by Shönu Gyalchok entitled *Blo sbyong brgya rtsa* (*Mind Training: The Great Collection*). Although Lamrim is mainly associated with Tsongkhapa's (1357-1419) *lam rim chen mo* (*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*), an early precursor is Gampopa's (1079-1153) *dwags po thar rgyan* (*Jewel Ornament of Liberation*). For my research, I consulted relevant passages of these source texts in their original languages, Sanskrit and Tibetan, and their available translations. Because of my

[9] On the complex origins of the Tibetan Lojong genre of texts and practice, see Thupten Jinpa's "Introduction" in *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (2006, 1-16).

own academic background with an emphasis on Tibetan, some texts have been consulted in Tibetan translation rather than their Sanskrit original. This is the case, for example, with the BCA. The translations provided in this study are drawn from available translations as indicated or are otherwise mine. Finally, the textual material for the analysis of the CCT consists principally of the program's *Instructor Manual* (IM) and *A Fearless Heart* by Thupten Jinpa, complemented by scientific publications on the subject.

3. Outline of Chapters

Chapter I of this study sets the stage for a comparative analysis by introducing a broad overview of etymologies, definitions and ideas pertaining to compassion, largely referenced from canonical Mahāyāna literature, but also from contemporary secular compassion science literature. Drawing from *sūtra* and *śāstra* material, Chapter II presents didactic approaches to compassion cultivation, systematizing them as constructive, deconstructive or cognitive-analytical. Attention is drawn to the fact that formal practice is embedded in a compassion culture that is just as important as specific methods. Chapter III examines the philosophical roots of *tonglen* practice, namely the principle of equalizing and exchange of self and other (*svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana, bdag gzhan mnyams brje*) as developed by the seventh-century Indian master Śāntideva in his famous BCA. Chapter IV traces and analyses various Tibetan interpretations thereof, showing how these sanctioned the popularization of *tonglen* meditation. Chapter V analyses Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT), comparing CCT's pedagogical elements with their Buddhist antecedents. In particular, CCT's core *tonglen* technique is contrasted with a traditional version of this practice. The Conclusion completes the comparative analysis with a discussion of the phenomenon of secularization. Even though secularized compassion training, which introduces novel elements such as self-compassion and

dyadic practice, is a break from traditional Buddhism, many parallels suggest that this is a deliberate adaptation by Buddhist scholars, and that it contributes to the image of Buddhism's capacity to unlock universal truths.

4. Overview of Key Literature

Scholarship on compassion is scarce. The dissertation of Stephen Jenkins, entitled *The Circle of Compassion: An Interpretive Study of Karuna in Indian Buddhist Literature* (1999) is the only comprehensive study of compassion in Indian Buddhist literature. Jenkins examines the question of how the doctrines of emptiness and no-self can provide an ontological basis for compassion, since the objects of compassion are deemed ultimately non-existent. Drawing on a wide range of Mahāyāna and pre-Mahāyāna sources, he clarifies the distinction between ontological selflessness and ethical selflessness (231). As the title reveals, he highlights the circular interrelationship between benefiting oneself and benefiting others thereby refuting any idea of interpreting Buddhist concepts of compassion as self-abnegating. His study provides a solid basis for understanding the concept of compassion, while my study focuses on techniques of cultivation. While Jenkins includes sources of mainstream Buddhism, showing their close relationship to Mahāyāna interpretations, my study begins with Indian Mahāyāna and includes Tibetan interpretations and secular transformations. Jenkins' study is therefore in many ways complementary to the present dissertation.

As previously mentioned, a few doctoral studies have examined secular compassion training in North America. Leah Weiss (2012), a contributor to CCT, argues for the need to theorize the pedagogy and philosophy of secularized compassion training, and offers what she calls an 'inculturated pedagogy' proposing an effective pedagogy and adequate training process

for compassion teachers. Brendan Ozawa-de Silva (2015), drawing from his personal experience with CBCT (Cognitively-Based Compassion Training) at Emory University, analyses modern secular compassion training and its potential contributions for positive psychology and contemplative science. Based on his interpretations of traditional sources and scientific study, he argues that there is empirical evidence for understanding human beings as possessing compassion at their core. Daphna McKnight's dissertation (2014) offers the first stand-alone, empirical study of *tonglen* meditation practice, developed by the author in a small pilot study. Brooke Dodson-Lavelle's dissertation (2015) compares several contemporary secular compassion training programs questioning their universal applicability to a large audience and suggests greater sensitivity to contexts, such as cultural background of participants. These dissertations include to various degrees references to the Buddhist roots of secular compassion training; Dodson-Lavelle also published a chapter with this very title (2017). In this dissertation I take the opposite approach in that I am more interested in understanding the Buddhist sources that precede and inform the secular CCT. Scientific explorations of compassion have resulted in encyclopaedic works, most importantly the *Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science* (2017) and *Compassion. Bridging Practice and Science* (2011). Although not an academic publication, an important resource for understanding CCT is Thupten Jinpa's *Fearless Heart*, which combines descriptions of the program with actual training instructions and narratives of the author's life.

The subject of compassion in Buddhist literature is included in a wide variety of academic publications. The most comprehensive research of the related concept of *bodhicitta* has been presented by Dorji Wangchuk's *The Resolve to Become a Buddha* (2007), a historico-philological study which includes an analysis of the complex causal relationship between compassion and *bodhicitta*. Focusing exclusively on the compassion passage of the

Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, Gadjin Nagao (2000) provides a fine introduction and translation of this important early Indian Mahāyāna literary source on compassion. A complementary view is provided by Artemus Engle of the relevant chapter in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (2016) and his concise explanations of "great compassion" (2009). Another small but rare gem is Georges Dreyfus' analysis of compassion in Abhidharma context (2002). The Tibetan literature of Lojong has been little explored, at present the introduction to and translation of *Mind Training: The Great Collection* being the most comprehensive resource.

Chapter I

Definitions of Compassion in Buddhist and Secular Contexts

"*May all beings be free of suffering and the causes of suffering*."[10]

What is compassion? This opening chapter presents various approaches to determining the meaning of compassion in traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist and secular contexts. It is divided into three sections. [1] The first section presents etymologies and definitions of compassion in English, Sanskrit and Tibetan and sheds light on the difficulties of defining compassion. [2] The second section discusses how these difficulties have been approached in secular context by means of multifaceted definitions. [3] The third and main part focuses on interpretations of compassion in traditional Buddhist texts. It traces explanations for [3.1] the origins, [3.2] the nature, and [3.3] the perfectibility of compassion. Methods for cultivating compassion, being the topic of Chapter II, are only marginally discussed in the present chapter.

1. Etymologies and the Complex Question of Defining Compassion

1.1. Etymologies and Definitions in Western Languages

The English word compassion is derived from the Latin root *compassiō* (noun) or *compatī* (verb), which indicates *"suffering with" the other*. The majority of Indo-European languages carry this connotation, for example the German *Mitleid* or *Mitgefühl* (suffering-with, feeling-with), or Greek *sympatheia* (shared suffering). Empathy, sympathy and pity are closely related terms that express cognitive and emotional aspects of recognizing another person's

[10] Excerpt from a Tibetan prayer expressing the four sublime states (*catvāri brahmāvihārāḥ*) or the four immeasurables (Skt. *catvāri apramāṇāḥ,* Tib. *tshad med bzhi*).

suffering. The terms empathy, sympathy, compassion and pity are often used synonymously (Batson 2009), which contributes to the difficult task of providing clear definitions. Aristotle defines compassion as a painful emotion that is determined by [1] the perceived severity of the suffering, [2] the assumption of non-desert, and [3] the fear of suffering a similar fate (Aristotle 1926, 1385b, Roberts 2016).[11] The first characteristic implies that we do not feel compassion for situations that we judge as trivial losses or pains. The second point implies that we judge that the person suffers undeservedly and cannot be blamed for having caused the misfortune through laziness or misbehavior. The third characteristic implies that as observers we can relate because we know similar suffering; and we fear that a comparable misfortune could fall on us. Aristotle's explanation focuses on the unpleasant emotional dimension of compassion. This understanding informs the philosophies of compassion skeptics like the German philosophers Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), for whom *Mitleid* was contagious ("eine Ansteckung"), a waste of feelings, without benefit to others, and simply a means to multiply the evil in the world ("das Übel in der Welt").[12] Compassion proponents Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Martha Nussbaum (b. 1947), on the other hand, demand that we take compassion seriously as a building block of our ethical and legal systems. Schopenhauer, who is known for his interest in Buddhist philosophy, postulates the imperative of a universal compassion (Schopenhauer 1841). Martha Nussbaum, a contemporary American philosopher, replaces

[11] *The Art of Rhetoric* 1385b reads: "Let compassion then be a kind of pain excited by the sight of evil, deadly or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, an evil which one might expect to come upon oneself or one of one's friends, and when it seems near. For it is evident that one who is likely to feel pity must be such as to think that he, or one of his friends, is liable to suffer some evil […]" (Cited by Roberts 2016).

[12] The following sentence was written by Kant in *Metaphysiche Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre* 34, 103-104, and cited by Nietzsche in *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Bd 12, 268. "In der Tat, wenn ein Anderer leidet und ich mich durch seinen Schmerz, dem ich doch nicht abhelfen kann, auch (vermittelst der Einbildungskraft) anstecken lasse, so leiden ihrer Zwei; obwohl das Übel eigentlich (in der Natur) nur Einen trifft. Es kann aber unmöglich Pflicht sein, die Übel der Welt zu vermehren, mithin auch nicht aus Mitleid wohlzutun." Nietzsche: "Mitleid beruht nicht auf Maximen sondern auf Affekten; es ist pathologisch. Das fremde Leiden steckt uns an. Mitleid ist eine Ansteckung."

Aristotle's third point by a *eudaimonistic* judgment, by which she means a recognition that others, persons and animals, are significant elements of our own well-being; their good has to be promoted in order to fulfill our own life's purpose. In her view, compassion does not require us to feel threatened by the idea that we could encounter a similar misfortune; it is thus not linked to fear. With Aristotle, she defines compassion however as a particular type of pain, "a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person's undeserved misfortune," which should inform a society's ethical and legal norms (Nussbaum 2001, 301). The controversy of these opposing standpoints has been elucidated by the work of the contemporary German cultural neuroscientist Tania Singer through differentiating between empathy and compassion. According to her, the former refers to the affective aspect of resonating with the other person's suffering, which leads to the experience of empathic distress, burnout, and compassion fatigue, whereas the latter refers to constructivist responses to suffering that focus on alleviating suffering. It is a character trait more than an emotion, and a quality which makes us human (2011). Singer therefore distinguishes between the other-oriented emotion of compassion and the self-oriented emotion of empathic distress:

> In contrast to empathy, compassion does not mean sharing the suffering of the other: rather, it is characterized by feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other's well-being. Compassion is feeling for and not feeling with the other. (Singer and Klimecki 2014, 875-876)

Singer's new definition of compassion, and her distinction between empathy and compassion is borne out of the young field of neuroscientific study of compassion. There is some support among compassion scientist to reinterpret the word compassion in a constructivist sense and reserve the word "sympathy" for the former meaning of "to suffer with"(Gilbert 2017, 4). However, the common usage of the English word "compassion" still manifests an ambivalence, if not confusion, about the meaning of this term. Is it an empathetic feeling or does it include an

impetus to actively alleviate the perceived pain? A survey of dictionaries shows that the understanding of the term has evolved over time, reflecting the influence of science and culture onto common parlance. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, one can trace a movement towards a more proactive interpretation of compassion. Whereas the Webster dictionary of 1918 offers a rather passive definition of "sorrow or pity for another's distress or misfortunes" (Webster 1919), the 2018 edition of the dictionary, now called Merriam-Webster, includes an intentional aspect, an impetus for action, as it defines compassion as "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress *together with a desire to alleviate it*."[13] In comparison, the Oxford Dictionary gives a passive definition still today – "sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others,"[14] whereas the Cambridge dictionary includes not only an intentional aspect, but also the emotion of sadness: "a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for other people's suffering or bad luck and a desire to help."[15] By expanding the definition of compassion to encompass the wish to act, or even the action itself, the facets of meaning multiply exponentially, as compassion may interact with various other mental states, attitudes, intentions, and emotions, such as for example a sense of moral responsibility for helping others, sadness or anger about social injustice, political ideas about a better society, or devotion to a religious ideal, to name just a few.[16] In Christian interpretations, compassion is often seen as a moral obligation, manifesting in caring for the poor, sick and dying, and other charitable work. Mother Theresa, to give but one well-known example, views compassion as religious practice. She is serving Christ when she is

[13] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/compassion, accessed Feb 1, 2018 (emphasis mine).

[14] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/compassion, accessed Feb 1, 2018.

[15] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/compassion, accessed Feb 1, 2018.

[16] For more discussion on psychological aspects surrounding compassion, see Gilbert 2017.

tending to the poor and sick, and therefore promotes impartial compassion.[17] Emulating the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11–32), she endorses another understanding of compassion than Aristotle's in that she is not evaluating whether or not the sufferer deserved the suffering. Although this study does not include a comparison to Christian religious notions of compassion, it is important to consider their influence on secular compassion training and research. For example, compassion interventions are often measured and evaluated by the participants' willingness to engage in charitable action, but never by their willingness to engage in more meditation, which would be a Buddhism-informed criterion.[18]

1.2. Mahāyāna Buddhist Etymologies and Definitions

I now turn to equivalents of the term compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhist canonical languages. The Sanskrit words that have most commonly been translated as compassion show a similar multivalence as the English concept. In the Monier-Williams dictionary (MW) of 1872, *anukampā*, *kṛpā*, and *karuṇā* are all translated as pity, tenderness, compassion. All three carry a sense of painful empathy: *anukampā* is derived from the verbal root √*kamp* and means "to move, vibrate, tremble." Preceded by the verbal affix *anu-* (alongside, after, or with), MW gives the meaning of *anukamp* as "to sympathize with." *Kṛpā* is derived from the verbal root √*kṛp*, and means "to lament, implore, mourn, be weak, or to pity." The most common word in Mahāyāna literature is *karuṇā*, and it has come to carry a proactive connotation. Evolved from the verbal root √*kṛ* ("to act, to do," etc.), it means a desire to act, namely, "the desire to remove woe and

[17] From a prayer composed by Mother Teresa of Calcutta for daily use in her Home for the Dying: "Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of your sick, and while nursing them, minister to you.[…] O beloved sick, how doubly dear you are to me, when you personify Christ; and what a privilege is mine to be allowed to tend you" (Roberts 2016).

[18] For a preliminary discussion on cultural influences on the expression of compassion see Tsai (2017).

suffering" (*ahitaduḥkhāpanayakāmatā*).[19] An alternative etymological interpretation, given by Vasubandhu's student Sthiramati, reads *karuṇā* as an attitude that "prevents [one from remaining] at ease," meaning that one is ill at ease in the face of others' suffering (Engle, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati 2009, 290, 451 n.756). In this reading, the term *karuṇā* is divided into the components of *kaṃ ruṇaddhi* (Tib. *bsod nyams bsrel ba*). The first syllable *ka* is identified with a noun that means "ease" or "happiness." The latter two syllables (*ruṇā*) are identified with the third person present singular form of a verbal root that means "to obstruct" or "to prevent" (*rudh*)." This interpretation aligns with empathic distress, that is, the experience of discomfort when identifying with others' pain.

The Tibetan terminology adds an interesting dimension to the etymology of compassion. To translate the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit to Tibetan in the seventh century CE, a standardized dictionary was created, the *Mahāvyutpatti.* It determined under royal decree the translation of Buddhist terminology. In this text, *karuṇā* is rendered as *snying rje*, or *thugs rje* in the honorific*;* also, *kṛpā* is given as *snying rje,* or *snying brtse ba*.[20] The Tibetan term is a composite of "mind, heart" (*snying, thugs*) and "lord, majesty, foremost" (*rje bo*). In combination, it gives the meaning "lord of the heart," or "the foremost [quality] of the mind." The addition of *brtse ba* carries the meaning of love and affection. It is interesting to note, then, that the Tibetan translators chose to remove the idea of suffering in their translation, and instead put an emphasis on character traits of strength and nobility. This suggests the understanding that even though compassion begins at the level of conventional reality as an empathic state of mind

[19] For a detailed discussion of the etymology of Sanskrit terminology of compassion, see Panaïoti 2014. For a discussion of related terms in pre-Mahāyāna literature, see Jenkins 1999, 28-39.

[20] For an online consultation of the *Mahāvyutpatti*, see: https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php? page= volume&vid=263, accessed 2018, Jan 10.

affected by the suffering of others, it can be transformed into a perfected form of compassion. The word choice of the *Mahāvyutpatti* translators seems to indicate their preference for viewing compassion as the foremost quality of the mind, and the noble, advanced, cultivated attitude of bodhisattvas, instead of limiting compassion to an ordinary and painful emotion.[21]

For a refined definition of compassion, Mahāyāna literature distinguishes between different types of compassion, most commonly employing the terms compassion (*karuṇā*), great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), immeasurable compassion (*apramāṇakaruṇā*), and the threefold typology of *karuṇā* according to its objects (*ālambana*), all of which will be discussed in the course of this study. The range of meanings associated with these terms stems from their respective contexts, but also express the idea of a progressive transformation of compassion on the spiritual path. There exists no master exposé that integrates all of these into one system, and moreover, some terms have been used interchangeably, for example *karuṇā* and *mahākaruṇā.* By relying on Tibetan sources, particularly the systematizing work of Tsongkhapa and subsequent Gelugpa scholars, one can identify distinctions between compassion, great compassion and infinite compassion. Firstly, the initial ordinary compassion can be defined as a sense of caring concern for a loved one, such as one's mother, who is most often cited in Tibetan texts as the object that most naturally evokes loving and caring feelings. Secondly, more evolved forms of compassion are called great compassion and comes in two categories. As mentioned previously, Tibetan language possesses honorific forms of nouns, thus making it possible to distinguish between the simple *snying rje chen po* and the honorific *thugs rje chen po*, both of which translate the Sanskrit *mahākaruṇā* and are rendered as "great compassion" in English. The term

[21] One has to keep in mind, though, that in the absence of an explanatory commentary, we can only speculate about the translators' intentions.

snying rje chen po refers to the bodhisattvas' great compassion, which is characterized as universal, impartial compassion for all beings, sustained by the bodhisattva's commitment to save them without exception from suffering. The honorific *thugs rje chen po* is an attribute reserved for buddhas and refers to the resultant state of genuine, fully matured, unconditional, and non-referential great compassion, which has been cultivated alongside an intuitive understanding of ultimate reality, emptiness (*śūnyatā*). This term is also used as part of the name for the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in his different forms (*spyan ras gzigs thugs rje chen po*). Moreover, it should be remarked that in Tibet, in addition to the exoteric Mahāyāna traditions emerged the esoteric Vajrayāna tradition of skillful means which associates great bliss (Skt. *mahāsukha*, Tib. *bde ba chen po*) to the cultivation of great compassion, aiming at a profound transformation of the contaminated state of mind and body to the perfect embodiment of buddha qualities. This esoteric approach goes beyond the scope of this study, however, and will not be covered in this thesis.

Lastly, the term immeasurable or infinite compassion (*apramāṇakaruṇā*) emerges from the context of the contemplation known as the four sublime states (Skt. *catvāri brahmavihārāḥ*, Tib. *tshangs pa'i gnas bzhi*), which in pre-Mahāyāna Pāli texts often employs the term *anukampā* for compassion. Mahāyāna authors mostly call this fourfold set the "four immeasurables" (Skt. *catvāri apramāṇāḥ,* Tib. *tshad med bzhi*), and thus speak of immeasurable compassion (Skt. *apramāṇakaruṇā,* Tib. *snying rje tshad med*). This term refers to universal, impartial compassion for all beings and is practiced also by practitioners of the *śrāvaka* path. Although initially designating a meditative absorption on compassion, *apramāṇakaruṇā* turned into a practice of generating aspirations for the benefit of beings. In the Tibetan liturgical tradition, the four immeasurables (*tshad med bzhi*) are a commonly recited four-line prayer. The

second line provides a definition of compassion, describing it as "the wish to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and the causes of suffering."[22] Two aspects are of importance. First, compassion is presented here as a wish or desire, making no reference to empathic suffering. Secondly, the reference to "the causes of suffering" implies that the compassionate person is required to make a mature diagnosis of suffering, understanding it beyond the outer symptoms of pain.

Another common way of conceptualizing compassion in Mahāyāna sources is the threefold typology of compassion according to its reference point or object. One distinguishes [1] compassion with beings as object (*sattvālambana karuṇā*), [2] compassion with phenomena as object (*dharmālambana karuṇā*), and [3] objectless compassion (*anālambana karuṇā*). This progression describes three stages of compassion that bodhisattvas should cultivate depending on their spiritual maturity. Their maturity manifests in their cognitive abilities, according to which they perceive the object (*ālambana*) of compassion as [1] ordinary beings marked by suffering, [2] as collections of impermanent particles, or [3] as void of a self-existent essence.[23]

This introductory survey of the etymologies and definitions of compassion, *karuṇā* and *snying rje*, sheds some light on the complexity of determining a coherent definition of the concept. The fact that compassion comprises cognitive, affective and aspirational facets has produced a variety of sometimes contradictory definitions. An important divergence in understanding the construct compassion lies in the question of whether it refers primarily to the initial emphatic response to the perception of suffering, or else, to the aspiration to see the

[22] Tib.: *sems can thams cad sdug bsngal dang sdug bsngal gyi rgyu dang bral bar gyur cig*/ The prayer of the four immeasurables will be discussed in detail in this study's section on the methods of compassion cultivation (Chapter II.2.1).

[23] The three *ālambana*s of compassion will be discussed in further detail in section 3.3. of this chapter.

suffering removed, or even includes the action of removing suffering. Alternatively, it may be a combination of any or all of these elements. If compassion includes a behavioral component, it raises the question of which type of actions can be considered genuine compassion (mental, verbal, physical, spiritual, social, etc.). Another challenge in understanding compassion lies in the question of what constitutes the suffering that should be removed (temporal, present, future, mental, physical). The English, Sanskrit and Tibetan etymologies also reflect the broad spectrum of ideas about the concept, or construct compassion. Recent developments in the English language suggest a transformation of the English term towards an increasing inclusion of constructive, aspirational elements. This development is reflected and promoted by the multifaceted definitions that are emerging from the field of secular compassion training discussed in the next section.

2. The Multifaceted Definitions of Secular Compassion

With the growing popularity of compassion research since the beginning of the twenty-first century, many researchers have worked on definitions of compassion for the purpose of its psychometric testing and disciplined training. The definitions that emerged from these scientific contexts reflect the influence of Buddhist thought, such as, for example, Paul Gilbert's definition of compassion as "a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it" (Gilbert 2017, 11). The resemblance to the previously cited line of the four immeasurables is evident, given the inclusion of a constructive aspirational element (viz. "commitment") and the focus on eliminating the causes of suffering (viz. "prevention"). To account for the multivalence of the term, contemporary researchers tend to present definitions that divide the construct compassion into its components. Here, three of these multifaceted

definitions will be discussed. The CCT considers four components; the psychologists Strauss et al. determine five, by means of consolidating data of a broad survey of existing research on compassion and self-compassion (Strauss 2016); and Jennifer Goetz in the *Cambridge Handbook of Compassion Science* proposes a different set of five compositional features (Seppälä et al. 2017, 3-16).

Thupten Jinpa, in the CCT's *Instructor's Manual* (2009, henceforth IM) identifies four dimensions of compassion, namely a cognitive, affective, intentional and motivational:

> [W]e understand compassion to be a multidimensional process, the key components of which are (1) an *awareness* of suffering in others (cognitive/empathetic), (2) *sympathetic concern* related to being emotionally moved by suffering (affective), (3) a *wish* to see the relief of that suffering (intentional), and (4) a *responsiveness* or readiness to help relieve that suffering (motivational). Thus, we view compassion as a combination of a cognitive perspective and an affective state that gives rise to cooperative and altruistic behavior (Jazaieri et al. 2013, 6).

This definition as a multidimensional process allows an understanding of compassion in which the different facets discussed previously coexist in harmony rather than in conflict. The division into four different aspects avoids reducing compassion to a (painful) emotion, and it opens different gateways for the education of compassion, which, after all, is the objective of CCT. It is possible to enhance the cognitive, aspirational and motivational aspect of compassion, without reinforcing the painful affective element. The IM provides in addition to the succinct definition a more extensive discussion of compassion that serves as a clarification of the concept but also as a rationale for its cultivation. Since the CCT's presentation of compassion is a major source for understanding secular compassion training, the IM's passage is quoted here in full. The italics are given in the original, while the underlined phrases mark reformulations of Buddhist thought, which will be discussed below:

> At its most fundamental level, compassion can be seen as an expression of our basic mental faculty of *caring*. It is our natural capacity to care for our own welfare that serves as the basis for our ability to feel empathy for others.

To feel such empathy, we must not only wish to be rid of our own pain and suffering but also be able to feel a sense of *connection* or *identification* with others. These two—a person's sensitivity to his or her own pain and suffering, and that same person's sense of connection with others—constitute what can be called the root of *loving, empathic concern*. It is this empathetic concern that engenders the compassionate attitude that finds others' suffering to be as unbearable as one's own.[24]

All major contemplative traditions envision the possibility that, through deliberate cultivation, one can learn to extend one's empathetic concern even to one's adversaries.[25] Genuine compassion is based on the simple recognition *that someone else's suffering is akin to one's own suffering, and that just as one wishes to be free of one's own pain and sorrow, so one can feel the same about another's unhappiness*. Compassion is devoid of any hint of being patronizing or condescending, and thus needs to be distinguished from pity, which merely feels sorry for the other person. Compassion entails allowing one's heart to be open, being sensitive to the other's pain and sorrow, letting oneself be emotionally moved by his or her suffering, having the cognitive ability to empathize with someone else's situation, remaining nonjudgmental in one's response, and being tender toward the other person.

Most of the Tibetan Buddhist practices designed to cultivate compassion, which are the source of the reflective meditative exercises offered here, follow a clearly delineated developmental process, moving through distinctly identifiable mental states. For example, to help overcome our natural tendency to discriminate against those toward whom we feel indifferent or even hostile, a key stage in compassion meditation involves the cultivation of a deep recognition of the *basic sameness of self and others* with respect to the fundamental, natural aspiration to attain happiness and overcome suffering. This is the deep recognition that, just like me, others yearn to be happy and to avoid even the slightest pain. It is through such recognition that a common bond with others is established. Another crucial stage involves the cultivation of *empathic concern*—an attitude that, holding others dear, enables our hearts to be sensitive to others' pain and suffering. Such empathic concern arises on the basis of having cultivated a genuine sense of *appreciation of others* through recognizing the profound ways in which one's own welfare is intimately interconnected with the welfare of many others. Together, empathetic concern and appreciation of others form the basis for the arising of genuine compassion for others—and, ideally, for all beings.

[…]

---

[24] For a detailed study of compassion and its associated mental qualities, such as empathy and altruism, from contemporary research in psychology, see C. D. Batson, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991).

[25] For a useful collection of succinct presentations of the topic of compassion and altruism in the world's contemplative traditions, see Neuser Chilton, ed., *Altruism in World Religions* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

> Compassion is not pity; it's not the personal distress one feels at the sight of someone else's pain, nor is it simply feeling for someone's pain and feeling sorry about it. Nor is compassion equivalent to heroism, although there could be a heroic form of compassion. Similarly, although there can be a form of compassion that involves self-sacrifice, in itself compassion does not entail personal sacrifice. What it does entail is openness to being moved by the sight of others' suffering and responding to this sight primarily out of a deep sense of concern for the other, with no negative or self-referential judgment (Jinpa et al. 2013, 94, 8-9).

These explanations of compassion, while describing it as a natural response with a strong emotional component, take great pains to disentangle it from negative or painful connotations. Instead, they put the emphasis on desirable positive qualities such as openness, an open heart, concern for others, sensitivity, non-judgement, and tenderness. Later on, the IM describes compassion even as a "gift [that] emanates from the intrinsic warmth and good nature of your heart" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 109).

The above passage also provides a rationale for compassion cultivation based on two arguments, namely the recognition of a shared humanity and of the interdependence of all beings. These two insights are also known as "the two pillars of secular ethics," a term coined by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, and discussed in Chapter V of this thesis (Dalai Lama 2011). The rationale starts with the assertion that compassion is fundamentally part of human nature, "an expression of our basic mental faculty of *caring*" (Dalai Lama 2011, 8-9). The understanding of compassion as an inborn quality encompasses recent re-discovered arguments from evolutionary biology and Buddhist ideas of intrinsic seeds of buddha qualities.[26] This conception of human nature, Jinpa explains in his own book on compassion, stands in opposite to theories that depict humans as being fundamentally selfish and competitive (Jinpa 2015, 5-10). Certain interpretations of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution resulted in a widespread

[26] The idea of buddha-nature is discussed in part 3.1 of this chapter. Scientific assessments of natural compassion are discussed in Chapter V, sections1.1 and 1.4 of this thesis.

skepticism towards compassion, as selfless behaviour was seen as "naïve," "irrational and […] possibly detrimental to the person who engages in it," he explains.[27] In publications, presentations, and interviews, the Dalai Lama, Jinpa, and others work on improving the reputation of compassion.[28] The argument also has a phenomenological aspect, arguing that all humans share the subjective experience of wanting to be free of suffering. The shared experiential reality provides the basis for strengthening the natural caring concern for others. The second argument develops the idea of interconnectedness of all beings, which includes the knowledge that "one's own welfare is intimately interconnected with the welfare of many others." The aim of this argument is to foster a "genuine sense of appreciation for others," which will lead to altruistic and compassionate behavior.

In the passage quoted above, a reader familiar with Buddhist literature will immediately discover numerous ideas derived from Buddhist thought. The full picture of parallels between the CCT and Buddhist sources will only emerge at the end of this study. Here, however, it seems useful to indicate certain themes that will recurrently be discussed throughout this thesis, namely the themes of shared humanity, interconnectedness and the universal scope of compassion. Firstly, the idea of shared humanity, expressed in the IM as the "identification with others," and the "basic sameness of self and others," is an idea developed throughout Mahāyāna literature, beginning with the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*s. Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (hereafter BCA) elaborates on the experiential aspect of this idea with words that resemble closely the IM's "just

[27] For further discussions on evolutionary theories of compassion, see Davidson and Harrington (2002). Darwin's theory of the survival has by now been rectified, with the help of quotes of his *Species* that equate the fittest with the most compassionate: "Sympathy is much strengthened by habit. In however complex a manner this feeling may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend one another, it will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring" (Darwin 1874, 72).

[28] See for example Tenzin Gyatsho and Vreeland, 2001.

as oneself wishes to be free of one's own pain, so one can feel the same about another's unhappiness." Secondly, interconnectedness is expressed as a "sense of connection" in the IM. This is a fundamental theme in Lojong literature, where it is expressed as the idea that all beings have been our mothers and therefore deserve our respect and gratitude. In the passage above, this is expressed as "appreciation of others." And thirdly, the universal scope of compassion which is characteristic of Buddhist treatments of compassion, for example in the well-known "four immeasurable states," is here expressed through the hint that "genuine compassion for others [is] ideally, for all beings."

The close resemblance of the IM's definition of compassion with Buddhist ideas will also be reflected in the compassion pedagogy and the structure of the program. A divergence exists in the assessment of self sacrifice. The IM's commentary emphasises that compassion "does not entail personal sacrifice." Self-sacrifice is not unknown in Buddhist literature; it is openly endorsed in the *Jataka Tales* but qualified in Śāntideva's BCA as a behavior reserved for advanced bodhisattvas with sufficient understanding of the empty nature of reality.[29]

CCT's multifaceted definition has set a standard in defining compassion by distinguishing its constituent components. The following two definitions show only minor differences. The *Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science* (2017) opens with this definition by

[29] In BCA V, 86, Śāntideva admonishes bodhisattvas not to sacrifice the physical body as long as the absence of a substantially existing self is realized: Skt. (Śāntideva and Minayeff 1889, 176, 2-3): *saddharmasevakaṃ kāyam itarārtaṃ na pīḍayet | evam eva hi sattvānām āśām āśu prapūrayet* || Tib (TG dbu ma *la*, 13b3-4)*: dam pa'i chos ni spyod pa'i lus // phran tshegs ched du gnod mi bya //de ltar byas na sems can gyi // bsam pa myur du rdzogs par 'gyur//* The body, used to practice sacred teachings,/ Should not be harmed in meaningless pursuits./ By acting thus the wishes of all beings/ Will swiftly and completely be attained. (Translation Padmakara 73).

the social and cultural psychologist Jennifer Goetz, who insists that compassion should be understood as a discrete emotion (Seppälä et al. 2017, 3):[30]

> An experience of compassion […] involves several distinct components:
> 1. Awareness of an antecedent (i.e., suffering or need in another individual);
> 2. Feeling "moved"; that is, having a subjective physical experience that often involves involuntary arousal of branches of the autonomic nervous system;
> 3. Appraisals of one's own bodily feeling, social role, and abilities within the context of the suffering;
> 4. Judgments about the person who is suffering and the situational context; and
> 5. Engagement of the neural systems that drive social affiliation and caregiving and motivate helping.

In comparison, a group of psychologists and psychiatrists in Great Britain under the leadership of Clara Strauss lists five components (Strauss 2016, 11-12):

> Following consolidation of existing definitions, we propose that compassion consists of five elements: 1) Recognizing suffering; 2) Understanding the universality of suffering in human experience; 3) Feeling empathy for the person suffering and connecting with the distress (emotional resonance); 4) Tolerating uncomfortable feelings aroused in response to the suffering person (e.g. distress, anger, fear) so remaining open to and accepting of the person suffering; and 5) Motivation to act/acting to alleviate suffering.

Both these definitions vary in their descriptions of components from that of CCT, but the variances lie in their emphases and not in a fundamentally different understanding of the construct compassion. Just like Jinpa's definition they include cognitive, affective, intentional and motivational components. Most important to note is that compassion researchers now commonly agree on including proactive elements, which, as we have seen, English dictionaries, and therefore common parlance, do not (yet) unanimously endorse. The latter two definitions by Strauss and Goetz differ from Jinpa's in that they include a sharper focus on the compassionate individual's subjective experience ("tolerating uncomfortable feelings," "appraisals of one's own

[30] In this chapter Goetz refers to her previous work (Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas 2010).

bodily feeling") whereas Jinpa's includes an indication to infinite, universal compassion "for all beings," which again, must be read as a close alignment with Buddhist thought. In all three definitions, there remains an ambiguity in regard to the question of whether compassion includes action, or only the motivation to act. The IM speaks of a responsiveness and readiness to help, Goetz of neural systems that drive action, and Strauss states both, the motivation to act and the action itself. This ambiguity is an important point that remains to be clarified among compassion researchers. It requires a discussion about the nature of action – mental, verbal and physical – and about the nature of suffering that the compassionate person attempts to alleviate. Does, for example, the mental action of praying for a suffering person constitute a compassionate response? How do we account for a long-term perspective in alleviating pain which may result in a short-term non-responsiveness to suffering? Paul and Eve Ekman have started such a discussion by distinguishing proximal and distal types of compassion with reference to the immediate experience of suffering in the here and now, or the perceived potential of suffering in the future, respectively (Ekman 2017). The latter type, I believe, is what Buddhist thinkers have been more concerned with than the former type. This type of compassion does not rely on the direct perception of suffering but demands greater foresight and knowledge about the long-term consequences of actions, not only on a relational level, but also on a social, economic, environmental and global level. As Ekman remarks, it also includes a "willingness to engage in actions to prevent that suffering, even if it requires some immediate sacrifices in the here and now" (2017, 43). The following discussion of Buddhist conceptions of compassion will demonstrate from several perspectives that Buddhist thinkers emphasize the role of knowledge in our understanding and training of compassion.

With these preliminary and general presentations of the etymologies and definitions of compassion, *karuṇā* and *snying rje*, this study will now turn to a discussion of specific aspects of compassion as expressed in relevant Indian Mahāyāna literature.

3. Mahāyāna Systematizations of Compassion

Mahāyāna literature contains countless references to compassion but few in-depth, structured discussions on the issue of definition itself. Definitional explanations are often presented in the Abhidharmic taxonomy style that needs further commentaries to help one understand the listed components of the construct of compassion. Moreover, as compassion plays an important role at every step of the bodhisattva path, it is described in different ways when pertaining to the ground, the path or the fruition of the spiritual progression of a person. This triad is a common systematization, especially in Tibetan Buddhist literature (Tib. *gzhi, lam, 'bras bu*). In the following three sections, I will elaborate three questions pertaining to each of these three aspects respectively. [3.1] The first section will explore ideas about the origins of compassion: Is it "nature" or "nurture"? [3.2] Secondly, it examines its trainability and the question of what is being trained –an emotion, a knowledge, a behavior, an intention? [3.3] Thirdly, it explores the perfectibility of compassion: What does it mean to be perfectly compassionate in Mahāyāna view? For each question a variety of textual material is consulted so as to appreciate the broad range of subtle differences in the understanding of compassion.

3.1. The Ground: Is Compassion "Nature" or "Nurture"?

This question aims at exploring the origin of compassion. Where does the impetus for compassionate thoughts, words and actions come from? Is compassion an integral part of human

nature, or is it a moral attitude generated through cultivation? In short, is compassion "nature" or "nurture"? One possible answer can be found in the Tathāgatagarbha literature, which states that all beings possess buddha-nature. Madhyamaka and Yogācāra treatments of this subject, however, show different emphases.

3.1.1. Tathāgatagarbha Thought

The doctrine of *tathāgatagarbha* (Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*) centers around the idea of "*sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*:" the idea that all beings possess the "embryo," "germ," or "essence" of a *tathāgata*" (Asaṅga 1950, 25,17-26,11). First expounded in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra,* the idea evolved from the simple assumption that all beings possess the potential for awakening into the belief in a quasi-genetic determination for becoming a buddha. Interpretations of what the *tathāgatagarbha* signifies draw on nine similes given in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (Zimmermann 2002, 34-39). According to one, it is like an embryo which refers to the idea that all beings carry within them already complete buddhas unbeknownst to themselves because of their mental defilements, which are however merely adventitious stains. In another, *tathāgatagarbha* is likened to a seed or sprout, which symbolizes the potential that needs to be cultivated into buddhahood.[31] Maitreyanātha's famous treatise on the topic, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,[32] interprets the notion of buddha-nature as luminosity of the mind that is naturally endowed with compassion and innumerable other buddha qualities. In RGV I,5 he

[31] According to Zimmerman (2002, 38), even this simile expresses the fact that "the tree is contained in its complete but not yet fully unfolded form already in the seed," which means that "no act of purification is needed."

[32] According to Karl Potter (1974, 262) the author of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and *Vyākhyā* is Sāramati. If we follow the Tibetan tradition, however, the *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantra* belongs to the five treatises (*śāstra*) of Maitreya, though it might contain older elements. Despite being a treatise rather than a *sūtra*, the RGV is invested with special authority because of its attribution to Maitreya, the next buddha in this universe. The first safe date about its existence is 508 CE, the year it was translated into Chinese by Ratnamati (Mathes 2008).

explains the awakened state of a buddha as endowed with the qualities of knowledge, compassion and power:

> Unproduced, effortless, not arisen by understanding from others, buddhahood is endowed with the power of awareness and compassion and has the two purposes.[33]

In RGV I, 28 he combines this idea with that of a "nominal buddha" that pervades all beings and will cause them to attain the state of suchness that is endowed with the previously enumerated qualities.[34] The commentary of the RGV, the *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*, traditionally attributed to Asaṅga, cites several *sūtra*s to support this interpretation.[35] The exact meaning of *tathāgatagarbha* has been discussed controversially in Buddhist history,[36] it has at times earned the critique of being a substantialist view incompatible with the doctrine of *śūnyatā*. However, the details are not important to the present research; it suffices to say that the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine formulates a very optimistic view of human nature, which ascertains the conviction that all beings are fundamentally compassionate, and, moreover, have the potential to manifest the universal compassion of a buddha, which is characterized by its universal scope, being beyond the limitation of space and time.[37] The task of the bodhisattva is neither to cultivate compassion

---

[33] RGV I, 5 (Ed. Johnston 7, 13-15): *asamṣkṛtam anābhogam aparapratyayoditam | buddhatvaṃ jñānakārunyaśaktyupetaṃ dvayārthavat* || Tib: (TG *phi* 77b4-5) *'dus ma byas shing lhun gyis grub // gzhan gyi rkyen gyis rtogs min pa // mkhyen dang brtse dang nus par ldan // don gnyis ldan pa'i sangs rgyas nyid //*

[34] RGV I, 28 (Ed. Johnston 25,17-26,11*): saṃbuddhakāyaspharaṇāt tathatāvyatibhedāt | gotratośca sadā sarve buddhagarbhāḥ śarīriṇaḥ* || Tib. (TG *phi* 88a6-88b2): *rdzogs sangs sku ni 'phro phyir dang // de bzhin nyid dbyer med phyir dang // rigs yod phyir na lus can kun // rtag tu sangs rgyas snying po can //* It is said that beings possess buddha-nature because they are embraced and pervaded by the embodiment of the perfect buddha, because suchness cannot be differentiated, because of the potential (*gotra*). Translation: Mathes (2008, 28).

[35] *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra, Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* (Mathes 2008, 8). Mathes also quotes Nāgārjuna's *Dharmadhātustotra* stanzas 20-22, which give the luminosity endowed with qualities (Mathes 2008, ix).

[36] For an overview of the philosophical debates, see: Seyfort Ruegg (1969), Jikido (2000). Whereas Ruegg presents interpretations of the Tibetan dGe lugs school, Mathes (2008) follows interpretations of the Bka' rgyud school.

[37] RGV VIII, 36 (Johnston 32,12-13): *mahākaruṇābhāvanayā sarvasattveṣv aparyantakālakāruṇikatām upādāyāparānta koṭiniṣṭha iti* || Tib (TG *phi* 92a3): *snying rje chen po bsgoms pas sems can thams cad la dus mu mtha' med par snying rje dang ldan pa'i phyir na phyi ma'i mtha'i mur thug pa yin no//* [T]hrough the practice of the Great Compassion, [he has] mercy towards all living beings beyond the limitation of time. Therefore, with reference to this point, it is said he lasts as long as the utmost limit [of the world] (Takasaki 214).

nor to reveal it, but to recognize its perfect presence. The skills and qualities needed for this spiritual discipline emerge from buddha-nature itself (RGV I, 35),[38] which is to say that inborn compassion catalyses the dissolution of ignorance and the recognition of inborn compassion. The RGV compares compassion to a mighty wind that dispels the obscuring cloud-formation of mental defilements (RGV IV, 11).[39]

3.1.2. Yogācāra

This view of an inborn potential is echoed in the Yogācāra school of thought. Important sources for understanding the Yogācāra understanding of compassion are the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (MSA)[40] by Asaṅga (4th/5th c. CE), and his *Yogacaryabhūmau-bodhisattvabhūmi* (BBh),[41] which is a companion work in more straightforward language than the versified and complex MSA. In MSA IX, 37, Asaṅga endorses the view that all beings possess *tathāgatagarbha*.[42] As has been explained in the previous section, this entails that by

[38] RGV I, 30 (Johnston 26, 19): *tatra svabhāvārthaṃ hetvarthaṃ cārabhya ślokaḥ || sadā prakṛtyasaṃkliṣṭaḥ śuddharatnāmbarāmbuvat | dharmādhimuktyadhi-prajñāsamādhikaruṇānvayaḥ ||* Tib (TG *phi* 88b4-5): *de la ngo bo'i don dang rgyu'i don las brtsams nas tshigs su bcad pa / rin chen nam mkha' chu dag bzhin // rtag tu rang bzhin nyon mongs med // chos mos lhag pa'i shes rab dang // ting 'dzin snying rje las byung ba //* Regarding its essence and cause, there is one śloka. Tathāgatagarbha is always undefiled by nature, like the pure jewel, the sky and water. It stems from enthusiasm for the Dharma, wisdom, meditative absorption and compassion. (Translation adapted from Takasaki (Takasaki 2000, 200).

[39] RGV IV, 11/ 290 (Johnston 99, 11-12): *āgantuvyāptyaniṣpattes tatsaṃkleśo 'bhrarāśivat | tatkṣiptipratyu-pasthānāt karuṇodvṛttavāyuva*t || Tib. (TG *phi* 122b1-2): *glo bur khyab dang ma grub phyir // de yi nyon mongs sprin tshogs bzhin // de gtor ba yi nyer gnas phyir // thugs rje mi bzad rlung dang 'dra* // Being accidental, pervasive, and unreal, their defilements are like a multitude of clouds; And, bringing about the dispelling of these, compassion is like a strong wind (Takasaki 2000, 354).

[40] The author of the MSA is sometimes stated to be Maitreyanātha. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, ed. S. Lévi, Paris, 1907. It has been translated from the Tibetan (*theg pa chen po'i mdo sde'i rgyan*) by Robert Thurman (Maitreyanātha/Āryāsanga and Vasubandhu 2004).

[41] Ed. Wogihara 1971: 16-17, D4037: Wi 10a7-b2. Translated from Tibetan (*rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las byang chub sems dpa'i sa*) by Artemus Engle (Engle 2016).

[42] MSA IX, 37 (Lévi 1907, 9.37): *sarveṣām aviśiṣṭāpi tathatā śuddhim āgatā | tathāgatatvaṃ tasmāc ca tadgarbhāḥ sarvadehinaḥ* || Tib (TG sems tsam *phi* 156b7) *de bzhin nyid ni thams cad la //khyad par med kyang dag gyur pa // de bzhin gshegs nyid de yi phyir //'gro kun de yi snying po can //* Although suchness is in all beings without distinction, when it has become pure it is transcendent buddhahood: therefore all beings have its embryonic essence.

nature all have the potential for the awakened Buddha qualities, including the universal compassion of a Buddha. Yogācāra introduces the closely related concept of "family" (*gotra*), which gives further nuances to the idea of a naturally compassionate human nature.[43] According to this theory, all beings are born into a certain *gotra* which determines their spiritual potential. Literally translated as "family," the term refers to a person's propensity or "spiritual gene," as David Seyfort Ruegg calls it (Ruegg 1969). Beings are divided into five propensities (*gotra*), the *icchantika*, *tīrthya*, *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha* and *bodhisattva*.[44] Even though all possess the element of awakening (*tathāgatadhātu*), the first four are characterised by various degrees of mental veils (*āvarāṇa*) such as aversion (*vimukhatā*) or indifference (*nirapekṣatā*) towards the welfare of others, and are therefore limited in their aptitude for universal compassion (Viévard 2001, 429). The concept of *gotra* is thus a way of explaining a person's inclination towards one of the spiritual paths rather than another,[45] including universal compassion which is a trait unique to the *bodhisattva* or Mahāyāna *gotra.* The BBh I, V.4 explains that "it should be understood that the excellence of spiritual lineage is acquired through the natural order of things" (Engle 2016,

(Transl. Thurman 87) The commentary (*Bhāṣya*) by Vasubandhu for this section reads (Lévi 1907, 40): *sarveṣāṃ nirviśiṣṭā tathatātadviśuddhisvabhāvaśca tathāgataḥ | ataḥ sarve satvās tathāgatagarbhā ity ucyate* || Tib (TG sems tsam *phi* 156b7-157a1): *de bzhin nyid ni thams cad la khyad par med la / de bzhin (*157a1*) gshegs pa yang de rnams par dag pa'i nyid yin te / de'i phyir sems can thams cad ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po can zhes bya ba 'byor pa rnam par dbye ba//* There is suchness in all beings without distinction, while a transcendent lord has it as his nature in pure form. Hence it is said that all living beings have the embryonic essence of a transcendent buddha. (Thurman 87). This view has been carried on also in Tibet, for example in the *Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan*, an early *Lam rim* or *Bstan rim* (Stages of the Teaching) work by Gampopa (*sgam po pa*, 1079-1153), whose first and fundamental rationale for the perfectibility of the mind is the fact that all beings possess buddha-nature. Gampopa argues that buddha-nature is the cause for beings to be able to attain buddhahood.

[43] For the origins of the term *gotra,* see Ruegg 1976, 345: The author states that the conception of the *gotra* was introduced first in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (RGV) 1.27-8 and then taken up in 1.144. It is founded on the canonical statement "*sarvasattvās tathāgatagarbhāḥ*" – "All sentient beings are *tathāgatagarbha*(s)."

[44] RGV I, 32-33 (Viévard 2001). The names of these potentials translate as incorrectible, indeterminate, disciple, solitary sage and bodhisattva, respectively. A slightly different taxonomy gives: *agotraka* (no lineage/ propensity), *aniyatagotra* (uncertain lineage), *śrāvaka gotra, pratyekabuddha gotra* and *tathāgata gotra* MSA, Chapter III (Lévi 1907, 3.0-14, Maitreyanātha/Āryāsanga and Vasubandhu 2004, 23-30), BBh Chapter I (Engle 2016, Book I,1).

[45] MSA III, 2-4 (Lévi 1907, 2.2-4; Tib. TG sems tsam *phi* 134b2-7).

27). Universal compassion, according to Asaṅga, is naturally present predominantly in all those belonging to the *bodhisattva gotra*."[46] The notion of different *gotra* then is a way to explain that despite the all-pervading buddha-nature, there are manifest differences in individuals' capacity to naturally and spontaneously express compassion. It answers the question of why different people will react and respond very differently to the same sight of suffering, some being indifferent even to the suffering of close ones, other showing compassion even to strangers.

Although Yogācāra sources emphasise the natural origins of compassion, they also see several other cognitive causes as significant for bringing forth the universal compassion of a bodhisattva. First, the imminent cause for a bodhisattva to generate compassion is the perception of suffering: "It ripens through the sight of suffering of another."[47] However, one needs to be prepared for a compassionate response through education. Chapter XVII of Asaṅga's MSA, an important and rare source for detailing compassion,[48] explains: One should first rationally analyse the advantages of being compassionate; then cultivate compassion through specific methods, while also eliminating antagonistic mental states:

---

[46] MSA III, 5 (Lévi 1907, 3.5) *kāruṇyam adhimuktiśca kṣāntiś cādiprayogataḥ |samācāraḥ subhasyāpi gotre liṅgaṃ nirupyate* || Tib (TG sems tsam *phi* 137b4-5): *sbyor ba'i sngon du snying rje dang // mos pa dang ni bzod pa dang // dge ba yang dag spyod pa ni // rigs kyi rtags su shes par bya//* From the very outset of practice, compassion, faith, patience, and dedication to beauty are declared the marks of the gotra.

MSA VIII, 5 (Lévi 1907, 8.5 comm): *svaprakṛtyā ca gotreṇa paraduḥkhadarśanena nihīnayānaparivarjanatayā ca paripacyata iti kāraṇaṃ* || Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 149a7-149b2): *de dang bźin te rigs dang / gźan sdug bsngal bar mthong ba dang / theg pa dman pa yongs su spong pas yongs su smin par 'gyur ba ni rgyu'o //* [Compassion is born] from its own nature due to the gotra, it ripens through the sight of suffering of another, and from detachment/ abandoning inferior thoughts. This is its cause.

[47] MSA VIII, 5: see previous note.

[48] MSA Ch XVII consists of 3 main parts: verses 1-28 explain *pūjā* (worship of buddhas and masters), *sevā* (service to teachers), and the four *apramāṇa* or immeasurables: *maitrī* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (sympathetic joy), and *upekṣa* (equanimity). Verses XVII 29-64 explain *karuṇā* alone, as the second of the four immeasurables. Vasubandhu's commentary remarks that the emphasis on *karuṇā* is justified because it is the most important and central among the four immeasurables. Verses XVII 65-66 praise the greatness and merit of the three virtues of worship, service, and the four immeasurables. An annotated translation and short discussion of the section on *karuṇā* can be found in Nagao 2000.

> The compassionate ones (*karuṇātmaka/* bodhisattvas) have four types of compassion (*kṛpā*): 1) that from its nature (*prakṛti*), 2) from its careful analysis (*pratisaṃkhyā*), 3) from methods of cultivation (*abhyāsavidhāna*) acquired in a former life, and 4) from gain of purity (*viśuddhi*) by destroying its adversary (*vipakṣa*).[49]

The commentary on this text, Vasubandhu's *Bhāṣya*, explains these factors in the following way:

> (Compassion) should be understood as proceeding respectively from: 1) the excellence of (the bodhisattva's) heritage (*gotra*), 2) an examination (*parīkṣana*) of virtues and faults, 3) its cultivation (*paribhāvana*) in another (former) life, and 4) the gain of being free from greed (*vairāgya*). When its adversary, namely violence (*vihiṃsā*), is destroyed, purity is gained, hence, (it proceeds) from detachment.[50]

In this commentary, Vasubandhu specifies that the compassion trainees prepare themselves by rationally evaluating the advantages of being compassionate and the shortcomings of being uncompassionate. Moreover, he explains that aggressive mental states make it impossible to fully manifest one's natural compassion.

Similarly, Asaṅga's parallel work, the BBh, lists "natural goodness" and the "spiritual gene or lineage" (*gotra*) as the first causes for compassion but adds that it is stimulated by perceiving one's own and others' suffering and sustained by understanding the severity and continuous nature of it. Whereas the MSA puts greater emphasis on educating compassion, the BBh emphasizes the natural compassionate disposition of bodhisattvas, who may develop

---

[49] MSA XVII, 34 (Lévi 1907, 17.34): *kṛpā prakṛtyā pratisaṁkhyayā ca pūrvaṁ tadabhyāsavidhānayogāt | Vipakṣahīnā ca viśuddhilābhāt caturvidheyaṁ karuṇātmakānāṁ || seyaṁ yathākramaṁ gotraviśeṣataḥ | guṇadoṣaparīkṣaṇataḥ | janmāntaraparibhāvanataḥ | vairāgyalābhataśca veditavyā ||* Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 216a1-2) *snying rje'i bdag nyid can gyi brtse ba 'di // rang bzhin dang ni so sor brtags pa dang // de sngon goms par byas dang ldan pa dang // mi mthun phyogs nyams rnam dag thob pa bzhi//* Translation: Nagao (2000, 11), slightly modified: "pity" replaced by "compassion" for reasons of coherence.

[50] MSA XVII, 34 *Bhāṣyam* of Vasubandhu (Lévi 1907, 17.34 comm): *seyaṃ yathākramaṃ gotraviśeṣataḥ | guṇadoṣaparīkṣaṇataḥ | janmāntaraparibhāvanataḥ | vairāgyalābhataśca veditavyā | tadvipakṣavihiṃsāprahāṇe sati viśuddhilābhata iti vairāgyalābhataḥ ||* Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 216a2-3): *'di ni go rims bzhin du rigs kyi khyad par dang / yon tan dang / skyon yongs su brtags pa dang / tshe rabs gzhan na yongs su goms pa dang / 'dod chags dang bral ba thob pa'i sgo nas rig par bya ste / de'i mi mthun pa'i phyogs rnam par 'tshe ba spangs na rnam par dag pa 'thob pas de ltar na 'dod chags dang bral ba thob pa'i sgo nas yin no//* Transl. Nagao, ibid., slightly modified, see above.

"compassion that can be small, middling, or great, without having engaged in continuous practice."[51]

In sum, the Yogācāra scholars Asaṅga and Vasubandhu affirm that all beings possess compassion as their nature, but they qualify this statement with the theory of *gotra,* which assumes a disposition for universal compassion only in a select group, namely the bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna *gotra*. This potential for universal compassion is further dependent on previous education and cultivation and present stimulation, which means, an altruistic person might not have trained in compassion in this life, but because of karma, cause and effect, reaps the results of compassion training of previous lives.

3.1.3. Madhyamaka

The Madhyamaka school of thought takes a slightly different approach to the question of the origin of compassion, as they do not explicitly endorse the doctrine of *gotra.* However, Madhyamikas appear to accept the idea that an ordinary and limited type of compassion is present in all beings, while the great, universal, impartial compassion of bodhisattvas is a learned quality. Thus, universal compassion is not reserved to a select group, such as a Mahāyāna family (*gotra*). Instead the emphasis is on the importance of commitment, training, and a teacher. Madhyamaka scholars eschew a statement on the origin of universal compassion. Nāgārjuna (ca.

[51] BBh I,2: "Generating Enlightened Mind," Asaṅga explains compassion as one of the causes for developing bodhicitta in BBh 1,5.4. The passage in full reads: "A bodhisattva becomes one who possesses an abundance of compassion toward sentient beings due to four causes. Among the limitless world spheres of the ten directions, there are world spheres in which suffering is not found. However, a bodhisattva takes birth in a world sphere where suffering is found, not where suffering is absent. He or she observes that others have been affected, stricken, and overcome by some particular form of suffering. Moreover, he or she observes that either others, or [oneself], or both [others and oneself] have been affected, stricken, and overcome by many different kinds of long-lasting, intense and continuous forms of suffering. Therefore, on the basis of his or her spiritual lineage, due to his or her natural goodness, and because these [four] factors, a bodhisattva develops a [form of] compassion that can be small, middling, or great, [and he or she does so] without having engaged in continuous practice [of spiritual exercise]." (Transl. Engle 2016, I,2; p. 28).

150-250 CE), for instance, renowned as one of the earliest authoritative representatives of Madhyamaka thought, is silent on the question of origin, and seems generally less interested in a systematic elaboration on compassion. He focuses on analytical philosophical treatments of *śūnyatā,* rather than the progression of bodhisattvas or an ethical theory of compassion.[52] Nāgārjuna's well-known piece of advice literature, the *Ratnāvalī,*[53] for instance, contains practical instructions for the moral conduct of bodhisattvas including the cultivation of compassion, without ever addressing the question of the initial impulse for, or a general theory about compassion.

In contrast to the Yogācāra view of a specific *gotra* (family) that predetermines a person's quality of compassion, Madhyamaka literature explains a different type of family adherence, expressed in Sanskrit as *kula* (family), or as *vaṃśa* (lineage) of the *tathāgata*. The BCA, being one of the most prominent resources for the cultivation of *karuṇā*, suggests in chapter III that a person is born into the family (*kula*) through the act of generating the resolve to reach awakening in order to alleviate the suffering of all beings (*bodhicitta*). Verses III, 23-24 are now known as the bodhisattva vow, an intentional act by which a person becomes a member of the buddha family. BCA III, 25b reads "Today I take my birth in Buddha's line. And have become the Buddha's child and heir."[54] Thus, it is through compassion and *bodhicitta* that a person awakens their link to the buddha family. The order is here the opposite of that described earlier in

---

[52] According to Mathes, the attribution of bodhisattva texts to Nāgārjuna was a retrospective act in order to fill a perceived gap. Mathes writes: "Tradition has attributed a number of texts to Nāgārjuna (the *Dharmadhātustotra* or the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa*, for example) in order to have authoritative "Madhyamaka works" to refer to which explain the ten bodhisattva-levels or bodhicitta" (Mathes 2005, 149).

[53] Hahn (1982); for a translation, see Nāgārjuna, Dunne, and McClintock (1997); or Hopkins (1998).

[54] BCA III, 25b (Śāntideva and Minayeff 1889, 165,2-3): *adya buddhakule jāto buddhaputro 'smi sāmpratam* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 7b3-4) : *de ring sangs rgyas rigs su skyes // sangs rgyas sras su bdag deng gyur* //Translation Padmakara 2006, 50.

Yogācāra literature. The former describes that the family (*gotra*) leads to the generation of compassion, whereas the latter, on the contrary, sees the moral decision to develop compassion as a determining cause for becoming a member of the buddha family (*kula*).[55]

As for the question of what sparks compassion, the BCA contains an indication for a factor capable of inciting the generation of compassion. In verse I,5 Śāntideva states that it is "by the power of a Buddha" (*buddhānubhāvena,* Tib. *sangs rgyas mthu yis*) that a person develops virtue.[56] In the context of the BCA, the virtue (Skt. *guṇa*, Tib. *yon tan*) referred to in this verse is *bodhicitta*, which relies on the bodhisattva's great compassion. In the companion work to the BCA, the ŚS*,* one finds another indication in an extract of the *Sūtra on the Ten Qualities,* which states that one needs "the inspiration or teaching received from a master or a buddha," as well as "hearing words of praise of the awakening mind" in order to generate the awakening mind (Śāntideva and Goodman 2016, 10). The idea that inciting virtue is a function of the buddha's enlightened activity (Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi phrin las*) is common to both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. Nevertheless, one can infer from these verses that Madhyamikas assumed a sleeping potential of compassion that can be awakened to great compassion and *bodhicitta* by means of external stimuli.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the question of "nature or nurture." This short survey has shown that all Mahāyāna traditions assume the presence of a natural, ordinary compassion. In addition, Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra texts are explicit about great compassion being an innate part of buddha-nature, and thus of all sentient beings. The Yogācāra qualifies this

---

[55] For an extensive discussion of the two understandings of family in this context, see Viévard, 2000.

[56] BCA I,5b reads: *buddhānubhāvena tathā kadācil lokasya puṇyeṣu matiḥ kṣaṇaṃ syāt* || Tib. (TG *la* 2a1-2): *de bzhin sangs rgyas mthu yis brgya lam na // 'jig rten bsod nams blo gros thang 'ga' 'byung* // Translation Padmakara (2006, 32): Likewise rarely, through the Buddha's power, virtuous thoughts rise, brief and transient, in the world.

generally positive outlook on human nature with the idea of *gotra* which defines differing degrees of a predisposition for compassion, acquired through training in previous lives. One group out of five, the *Mahāyāna gotra*, possesses direct access to the great, universal compassion of a buddha, unconcealed by mental limitations.

3.2 What is Being Trained – an Emotion, an Intention, an Action, a Mental State?

Although compassion is understood as a naturally present potential, Buddhist literature emphasizes the need for its disciplined and prolonged training – which we can read as an acknowledgement of the element of "nurture" in the "nature-nurture" question. Before examining the techniques and methods of Buddhist compassion practices, it is necessary to clarify what exactly is being trained, since the underlying conceptualization of compassion will determine the pedagogical approach taken. For example, if one understands compassion principally as an emotion, its training will most likely aim at reinforcing the empathic affect. If understood as an intention, one will focus on setting the right intention; if conceived as a mind-state informed by knowledge, compassion education will aim at correcting and enhancing the practitioners' understanding of the reality they are inhabiting and at eradicating erroneous ideas. If the emphasis is on compassionate action, the training will aim at strengthening and repeating altruistic behavior patterns. The following analysis explores Mahāyāna literature in search of indications for understanding compassion as an emotion.

3.2.1. Is Compassion an Emotion?

To determine whether the Mahāyāna Buddhist construct of compassion can be understood as an emotion in a Western sense of emotion, it is first necessary to discuss the

meaning of the term emotion and determine how it is reflected in Mahāyāna Buddhist understanding. Western psychologists have theorized emotions for a long time as feelings or physical sensations, and the understanding of what constitutes emotions has undergone important conceptual transformations over time. Darwin saw them as instinctual reactions, William James as responses to physiological changes. Only since the 1960s have cognitivist and propositional attitude theories started to dominate the field. These more recent theories see emotion as a complex conscious experience that involves cognitive and conceptual activity combined with feelings of pleasure or displeasure. Philosopher Paul E. Griffith, in explaining different psychological, neuroscientific and philosophical approaches to the understanding of emotions, maintains that whereas psychologists and folk usage of the term emotion show considerable variation, "philosophers have generally held it to be a conceptual truth that emotions derive their identities from the thoughts associated with them" (Griffiths 2002). This philosophical view of emotions does not draw a rigid line between rationality and feeling, and thus resembles a Buddhist understanding of the mind.[57]

The Abhidharma, often referred to as Buddhist psychology[58] offers several systematizations or taxonomies of the mind. None of these contains a concept that maps directly onto the Western notion of emotion. Georges Dreyfus, who has examined the question of whether Buddhist notions of compassion correspond to Western ideas of emotions (Dreyfus 2002, Dreyfus and Thompson 2007) comes to the following assessment:

---

[57] The contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa offers a creative and unconventional illustration of a possible Buddhist understanding of emotions as conceptual thoughts that coincide with a "feeling tone" or experiential quality. He likens the discursive thought process to pigment and the accompanying energy to water. "When energy and thought are mixed together, they become vivid and colorful emotions." Chögyam Trungpa, "The Dualistic Barrier" (1988, 64).

[58] For example, Goleman and Tenzin Gyatsho (2003) or Trungpa (1975).

> Although there are many elements in the typology of mental factors that we can identify as emotions (anger, pride, jealously, loving-kindness, and compassion), there is no category that maps onto our notion of emotion. Most of the positive factors are not what we would call emotions, and although most of the negative factors are affective, not all are. Hence it is clear that the Abhidharma does not recognize the notion of emotion as a distinct category of a mental typology. There is no Abhidharma category that can be used to translate our concept of emotion, and similarly our concept of emotion is difficult to use to translate the Abhidharma terminology. Rather than opposing rational and irrational elements of the psyche, or cognitive and emotive systems of the mind (or brain), the Abhidharma emphasizes the distinction between virtuous and afflictive mental factors. Thus, our familiar Western distinction between cognition and emotion simply does not map onto the Abhidharma typology. (Dreyfus and Thompson 2007)

In this paragraph, Dreyfus refers to the Abhidharma taxonomies of consciousness (Skt. *citta,* Tib. *sems*) and mental factors (Skt. *caitta,* Tib. *sems 'byung*),[59] which analyse each mental state in terms of a clear and cognizing aspect (*citta*) and a feeling tone that is explained by a multiplicity of mental factors (*caitta*) that are either omnipresent, positive, negative, negative of restricted scope, or indeterminate.[60] The categorization of factors as positive (*kuśala, dge ba*), negative, (*akuśala, mi dge ba*) or other is determined on account of their pleasant or unpleasant short- and long-term retributions.[61] However not all of them correspond to Western psychology's ideas of

[59] Abhidharma thinkers developed multiple competing theories about the mind's nature and functioning. Some took a more epistemological stance, while others approached it more therapeutically. What they have in common is that Buddhist masters did not draw a dividing line between cognitive, rational and emotional processes, as Cartesian thinking tends to do. For more explanations on Buddhist systems that analyse mental and bodily constituents (*nāmarūpa*), the nature of awareness (*vijñapti*) and consciousness (*vijñāna*), see Gomez (2003, 680). Other relevant discussions are Dreyfus (2002) and Griffiths (2002).

[60] Besides the theory of mind and mental factors, equally important is the taxonomy of *skandha* that explains human experience as being constituted of five "sets" or "aggregates" (*skandha*) of psycho-physical elements. The *skandha* of form (*rūpa*) refers to the experience of our physical aspect, the remaining sets are mental, progressing from a basic level to an increasingly subtle level of mental activity. The grossest level is translated as sensation (*vedanā*), followed by perception (*saṁjñā*), and then by impulse or formation (*saṁskāra*). The final *skandha* is consciousness (*vijñāna*), understood as the capacity to coordinate the information and cognize the mental objects of experience. The two systems overlap; for instance, *vedanā* and *saṁjñā* are counted among the *caitta.* In this system, *vedanā,* i.e. emotion or feeling is described as a primal emotional response of like, dislike or indifference.

[61] Vasubandhu explains in *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* Chapter IV, 45a-b (1967, 227,7-8): *idaṃ kuśalādīnāṃ lakṣaṇam | kṣemaṃ karma kuśalaṃ yadiṣṭavipākaṃ nirvāṇaprāpakaṃ ca duḥkhaparitrāṇāt* || Translation in French (Vasubandhu and La Vallée Poussin 1923, 106): L'acte bon (*kuśala, śubha*) est salutaire (*kṣema*), parce qu'il est de rétribution agréable (*iṣṭavipāka*) et par conséquent protege de la souffrance pour un temps (c'est l'acte bon impur, *kuśalāsrava*); ou bien parce qu'il fait atteindre le *nirvāṇa* et, par conséquent, protege définitivement de la souffrance (c'est l'acte bon pur). Translation in English: Good action is salutary, because it is of agreeable retribution and as a

emotions.[62] Lists of mental factors vary in length; the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (AS) I, Chapter 1 gives fifty-one, the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh) forty-six, for example. The differences are of little importance to the present discussion, as both lists of positive mental factors include two that are relevant to an understanding of compassion, namely, the absence of hatred (*adveṣa/ zhe sdang med pa*) and non-harmfulness (*ahiṃsā, mi tshe ba*). Both the AS and the AKBh explain at several occasions that the absence of ill-will (*vyāpāda*) or hatred (*dveṣa*) should be understood as loving-kindness (*maitrī*), and the absence of cruelty or harmfulness (*vihiṃsa*) should be understood as compassion:

> What is non-harmfulness? It is compassion (*karuṇā*) which forms part of the absence of hatred. [63]

Two things are astonishing in this Abhidharma treatment of compassion. The first is its brevity given the overall importance of compassion for the bodhisattva path. The second is the fact that compassion is here defined in negative terms, as an *absence*.[64] This explanation does not capture the feeling-tone of "com-passion" as an empathetic suffering with another, nor does it include the constructive or proactive element of actively alleviating others' pain. It is not possible to equate

---

consequence it protects one from suffering for a time (this is good, but impure action); or rather, because it brings about the attainment of *nirvāṇa* and, as a consequence, definitively protects one from suffering. This is good, pure action (Pruden, Vol 2, page 621).

[62] For example, *amoha* (absence of bewilderment), which seems to describe a type of clear cognition.

[63] There are two references for this explanation: [1] *Abhidharmasamuccaya* I, 1.12 (Asaṅga 2007, Sec I, Ch I,12): *adveṣaḥ katama | sattveṣu duḥkhe duḥkha sthānīyeṣu ca dharmeṣv anāghātaḥ | duścaritāpravṛttisanniśraya-dānakarmakaḥ* || What is the absence of hatred? It is the absence of malevolence regarding living beings, suffering and the conditions of suffering. Its function consists of giving a basis to the halting of misconduct. And AS, Sec I, Ch I, 18: *avihinsā katamā adveṣāṃ śikā karūṇatā | aviheṭhanakarmikā* || What is non-harmfulness? It is compassion which forms part of the absence of hatred. Its function consists of not tormenting.

[2] AKBh VIII, 29: (Pradhan 452,5-16) *apramāṇāni catvāri | maitrī karuṇā muditopekṣā ca | apramāṇa sattvālambanatvāt | kim arthaṃ catvāryeva | maitryadveṣaḥ adveṣasvabhāvā maitrī api karuṇā karuṇāpy evam | muditā sumanaskatā* || Transl. Engl. (Vasubandhu, La Vallée Poussin, and Pruden 1988, 1264-5): The immeasurables are four in number: loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity…. Because they oppose ill-will, etc., goodwill is the absence of hatred. So too compassion. Joy is satisfaction.

[64] Buddhist scholar Alexander Berzin argues that the list of *caitta* is not exhaustive, as important qualities are not listed separately, such as precisely love and compassion. "The 51 mental factors," https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/science-of-mind/mind-mental-factors/primary-minds-and-the-51-mental-factors.

these Abhidharma explanations with a definition of compassion as an emotion in the Western psychological sense of the term. Given the wide range of writings on compassion, it would be wrong to regard the Abhidharma treatment of compassion as exhaustive. Numerous instructions on cultivating compassion imply the emotional facets of compassion, for instance, Vasubandhu's instruction in the BBh regarding meditating on one hundred and ten forms of suffering in order to cultivate great compassion, which suggests that the bodhisattva is emotionally touched by the contemplated suffering (Engle 2016, I.16.3.1.).

Tibetan texts are more explicit about emotional aspects, suggesting that tears should roll and one's body hair should stand on end when meditating on loving-kindness and compassion (Gampopa 1998, 129). However, the Abhidharma explanations with their insistence on an absence make an interesting pedagogical statement, namely that compassion exists only in the complete absence of aggression. They ascertain that as long as aggressive tendencies exist in the mind, it is only a matter of causes and conditions that the impulse to do harm unto others will emerge. Therefore, the uprooting of aggressive tendencies, including prejudice, bias and ingroup/outgroup thinking,[65] must be an integral part of compassion cultivation. In Vasubandhu's AKBh, cultivating compassion begins with the preparatory stage of "putting ill will at a distance," that is, with curbing harmful thinking. The full elimination of harmfulness, however, can only be attained in meditative absorption.[66]

---

[65] The term ingroup/ outgroup thinking refers to thinking in terms of implicit and explicit stereotypes: The "ingroup" refers to the self-identity of a group of people as belonging together based on a variety of factors including gender, race, religion, or geography; while the "outgroup" refers to people identified as other, who then become the targets of implicit and explicit stereotypical bias and prejudice. The "Impicit Association Test" (IAT), conducted at Harvard University explores to which extent ingroup/outgroup thinking subconsciously controls our perception and behavior. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/faqs.html.

[66] AKBh VIII 31d K (Vasubandhu and Pradhan 454,1-454,2): *tatprayogeṇa tu vyāpādādiviṣkambhaṇāttat-pratipakṣatvamuktam | prahāṇa dūrīkaraṇāc ca |* Transl.Pruden (1268-69): "In their preparatory stage (*prayoga*), [the immeasurables] disturb ill-will (*vyāpāda*), etc., and dispel (lit.: "render distant") ill-will already abandoned." This passage of the AKBh deals with the question of whether the practice of the four immeasurables could eliminate

3.3 The Perfectibility of Compassion

If the concept of emotion does not capture sufficiently Buddhist notions of compassion, how do we understand this state of mind more appropriately? The following section examines the idea of a progressive enhancement of compassion culminating in a state of perfection, which is based on specific types of knowledge and cultivated intentions. Two common ways of systematizing compassion in Mahāyāna literature will demonstrate the important role of knowledge and intention-setting that characterize the compassion of bodhisattvas and buddhas. These two systematizations have already been briefly introduced in the section "Mahāyāna Buddhist Etymologies and Definitions" (1.2.) of this chapter. [1] The first pertains to the progression from compassion to great compassion (Skt. *mahākaruṇā*, Tib. *snying rje chenpo, thugs rje chen po*) based on the spiritual maturity of a person; [2] the second is the threefold systematization according to the object or reference point (Skt. *ālambana*, Tib. *dmigs pa*) of compassion, which is also linked to progressive degrees of analysing and understanding reality.

3.3.1. Great Compassion

The explanation of great compassion in the *Abhidharmakośa*, Chapter VII, 33, together with its *Bhāṣya* by Vasubandhu, elucidates how early Mahāyāna scholars understand a perfected stage of compassion in juxtaposition to less developed stages, such as the compassion of ordinary people and followers of non-Mahāyāna paths. Stephen Jenkins provides a translation and very helpful discussion of this verse in his dissertation, clarifying the cryptic language and technical terminology of the AKBh, based on a commentary by Yaśomitra (1999, 169-179, 242-

---

mental defilements. It comes to the conclusion that it is not possible as long as meditative absorption (*dhyāna*) has not been attained.

248). Since Vasubandhu's explanations are a rare and important source for a systematic comparison of compassion and great compassion, I will briefly summarize the main points here, complement them with discussions from the Yogācāra school of thought, and add a uniquely Tibetan explanation from the Gelug tradition.

Vasubandhu begins by stating that great compassion is conventional knowledge, literally "a conventional mentality" (*mahākṛpā saṃvṛtidhīḥ,* Pradhan 414, 18). Interestingly, the presentation of great compassion is placed in the chapter on *jñāna* (experiential knowledge, wisdom). One might expect that great compassion is explained as a form of ultimate wisdom as it is reserved for the advanced level of a buddha. However, great compassion is the buddha's engagement in the world of suffering, and therefore needs to be of the realm of conventional truth. Jenkins goes to some length to explain that Abhidharma scholars understand pure forms of conventional wisdom as the result of the realization of higher truth.

> [P]lacing compassion in the realm of conventional wisdom does not relegate it to the realm of ignorance and delusion. The highest forms of compassion are based on conventional wisdom, a wisdom that flows out of the realization of ultimate truth and has its aspect. Therefore, although the ultimate perspective of selflessness does not provide an ontological perspective for compassion, still, because ultimate realizations bear fruit in the conventional wisdom that flows out of them, ultimate truth is directly related to conventional ethics (Jenkins 1999, 178).

Thus, at advanced levels, compassion becomes increasingly informed by wisdom, which Vasubandhu goes on to explain as the absence of delusion (*moha*), and as the knowledge of the subtlest forms of suffering within the saṃsāric realms of existence. Vasubandhu then lists five characteristics of great compassion: it emerges in relation to the vast accumulation of merit (*puṇya*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), it necessitates knowledge of the three types of suffering, an

infinite, universal scope, the quality of equanimity, and its unsurpassable excellence.[67] In the third part of the verse, Vasubandhu states that great compassion differs from ordinary types in eight aspects (VII, 33c.: *nānākaraṇamaṣṭadhā,* Pradhan, 415,6). Without elaborating on the details of its technical explanations, the differences are as follows: Ordinary compassion means the absence of harmfulness (*adveṣa*), while great compassion is in addition the absence of delusion (*moha*). Ordinary compassion is a response to gross forms of suffering, while great compassion is based on the understanding of all forms of suffering (lit. the three types of suffering), even concealed and potential suffering.[68] Ordinary compassion focuses on a limited number of beings, while great compassion has the vastest possible scope, embracing impartially and equally all beings of the three realms (Skt. *dhatu,* Tib. *khams*).[69] Great compassion is accompanied by sincere renunciation (*vairāgya*), saves and protects (*paritrāṇa*) sentient beings rather than merely wishing for their liberation, and arises in the mind stream of buddhas. In all these aspects it differs from the compassion of the followers of non-Mahāyāna paths such as the *śrāvaka,* and that of ordinary people. The explanations provided by the AKBh suggest that compassion in its perfected form is a mental state based on specific forms of knowledge and intention. It transcends the emotionally motivated ordinary compassion. The AKBh VII,28 enumerates great compassion as one of the eighteen *dharma*s unique to buddhas, along with ten

[67] This is a description of the cryptic and technical verse VII, 33b (*saṃbhārākāragocaraiḥ | samatvād ādhimātryāc ca* || (Pradhan 414,21-415,1) based on Jenkins' translation of the Bhaṣyam and commentary by Yaśomitra (ed. Wogihara, p. 648: 11-31) in Jenkins (1999, 243).

[68] The three types of suffering are explained in the next secion.

[69] The three realms are the desire realm (*'dod pa'i khams* or *kama dhatu*), the form realm (*gzugs khams* or *rupa dhatu*), and the formless realm (*gzugs med kyi khams* or *ārūpyadhātu dhatu*).

powers, four fearlessnesses and three mindfulnesses.[70] Alternatively, in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi,* it figures among the one hundred and forty unique qualities of a *tathāgata*.[71]

In the BBh I.16.3.2., expressing a Yogācāra perspective, great compassion is presented as the result of intensive intention-setting and a process of purification. Asaṅga enumerates which factors contribute to the perfection of compassion. The great compassion described in this passage is the resultant compassion of buddhas and by extension the compassion that advanced bodhisattvas cultivate.

> (1) [It is a form of compassion] that is developed after one has [mentally] taken hold of the suffering of sentient beings that is profound, subtle, and difficult to realize. (2) [It is a form of compassion] that one has become acquainted with over a long period of time and that one has cultivated for many hundreds of thousands of *kalpa*s. (3) [It is a form of compassion] that has engaged its object with an effort of such intensity that the bodhisattva who is filled with compassion would give up a hundred lives in order to remove the suffering of beings, let alone a single life or the material possessions [that sustain his or her] physical body. (4) [It is a form of compassion] that is exceedingly pure due to the purity of the [ārya] bodhisattva stage that [has been attained by] those bodhisattvas who have reached the [path's] culmination and [a form of compassion that is exceedingly pure] due to the purity of the state of a *tathāgata* that [has been attained by] the *tathāgatas*.[72]

---

[70] Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Chapter VII, 28ab (Pradhan 411, 10): The eighteen *avenikabuddhadharma* are: 10 *bāla* (powers), 4 *vaiśaradya* (perfect self-confidences), 3 *smṛtyupasthāna* (applications of mindfulness) and *mahākaruṇā* (great compassion).

[71] BBh III.5 (Dutt 1966, 259): *tatra tathāgatavihāramārabhya tāthāgatīñ ca niṣṭhāgamanabhūmiṃ bhagavatāṃ catvāriṃśaduttaramāveṇikaṃ buddhadharmaśataṃ bhavati | dvātriṃśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇāni aśītyunuvyañjanāni catasraḥ sarvākārāḥ pariśuddhayaḥ daśa tathāgatabalāni catvāri vaiśāradyāni trīṇi smṛtyupasthānāni trīṇyarakṣāṇi mahāṃkaruṇā 'sammoṣadharmatā vāsanā-samuddhātaḥ sarvākāra-varajñānañca* ||. Translation Engle (2016, 16035): ["The Object of Mental Application that Relates to the Perfection of the Support"] discusses 140 unique qualities of a buddha, among them great compassion. The others are [1] the 4 forms of purity, [2] the 10 powers, [3] the 4 forms of intrepid confidence, [4] the 3 forms of closely placed recollection, [5] 3 forms of having nothing that needs to be concealed, [5] great compassion, [6] the state of being completely free of confusion, [7] complete destruction of the traces, and [8] knowledge of all aspects of what is most excellent.

[72] BBh I 16.3.2.(Asaṅga and Dutt 1966, 169): *tatra caturbhiḥ kāraṇaiḥ karuṇā mahākaruṇety ucyate gambhīraṃ sūkṣmaṃ durvijñeyaṃ sattvānāṃ duḥkhamālamvyotpannā bhavati | dīrghakālaparicitā ca bhavaty aneka kalpaśatasahasrābhyastā | tīvreṇa cābhogenālambane pravṛttā bhavati yadrūpeṇābhogenāyaṃ karuṇāviṣṭo bodhisattvaḥ sattvānāṃ duḥkhāpanayanahetoḥ svajīvitaśatāny api parityajet prāgevaikaṃ jīvitaṃ prāgeva ca kāyapariṣkāram | sarvaduḥkhayātanāprakārāṃścodvahet | suviśuddhā ca bhavati tadyathā niṣṭhāgatānāśca bodhisattvānāṃ bodhisattvabhūmiviśuddhyā tathāgatānāñ ca tathāgatabhūmiviśuddhyā* || Translation Engle (2016, 11398).

The BBh's description of great compassion resembles that of the AKBh and commentaries but emphasizes the role of courageous intention and engagement into action: The text illustrates the intensity of the bodhisattvas' intention to save others with their willingness to sacrifice.[73] Interesting to note here is also that this text does not speak of an accumulation of wisdom but of the attainment of purity in order to enhance compassion to the state of great compassion. Implicit in this approach is the Yogācāra idea of the fundamental transformation (Skt. *āśraya paravṛtti,* Tib. *gnas yongs su gyur pa*) of the mind from its contaminated state to its original purity of lucid awareness free of the taints of mental afflictions. This approach reflects the belief that great compassion, as an aspect of buddha-nature, lies at the core of the bodhisattva's mind and needs merely to be revealed through spiritual practice.

The importance of an extraordinary intention that distinguishes great compassion from lesser forms of compassion can also be found in Tibetan systematizations of the Gelug school. As mentioned previously, Tibetan literature has introduced the distinction of *snying rje chen po*, the great compassion of bodhisattvas, and *thugs rje chen po*, the great compassion of buddhas. The former is qualified mainly by its extraordinary intention, the latter by the wisdom and extraordinary qualities of buddhas. Regarding the former, Tsongkhapa ascertains that it is not enough merely to think "May all beings be happy and be free from suffering," but "you must wholeheartedly assume the responsibility of producing [the benefit of others] by yourself."[74] Great compassion (*snying rje chen po)* of bodhisattvas actively "seeks to save all beings" (Tib. *skyobs 'dod kyi snying rje chen po*), requiring an extraordinary intention (Skt: *adyāśayaḥ*, Tib:

[73] Engle explains the terminology of Skt. *pravartate*, (Tib. *'jug pa*) as "engage," which describes a sense of urgency with which the bodhisattvas undertake their spiritual cultivation.

[74] Tsong kha pa 2010, 312: *des na sems can thams cad bde ba dang phrad na snyam pa dang sdug bsngal dang bral na snam pas mi chog gi rang gis de dang bsgrub pa'i khur snying thag pa nas 'khyer dgos pas khad par rnams phyed par bya//* See also Engle 2009, 195.

lhag bsam) that implies a firm personal commitment to engage in the path to awakening.[75] The Tibetan Gelug scholar Pabonka (1878-91), describes this state of mind as a sense of intolerance to see others suffer (Tib. *sems can sdug bsngal gyis mngar ba la mi bzod pa*) (Pabonka 2009, 51)[76] which leads to the commitment to take upon oneself the responsibility of saving others from their suffering (Tib. *gzhan don khur du 'khyer ba'i lhag bsam*) (Pabonka 2009, 63). It is thus this extraordinary intention that distinguishes the bodhisattvas' great compassion from other less radical forms of altruism. When compassion has become uncontrived (Tib. *bcos min*) and spontaneous (Tib. *rtsol med*), the bodhisattva has obtained the prerequisite for generating *bodhicitta*. According to Tsongkhapa's *lam rim chen mo* this type of compassion is the foundation of the Mahāyāna path (Tib. *theg chen gyi lam gyi rtsa ba snying rje*) (Tsongkhapa 2010, 307). It gives rise to *bodhicitta* and therefore marks the moment a bodhisattva trainee enters the path of accumulation (*tshogs lam*) of the bodhisattva path (*theg chen gyi 'jug sgo*).[77] It is this type of great compassion that associated with the occasion of Buddha Śākyamuni, in a previous lifetime as a bodhisattva trainee, expressing the commitment to attain full awakening, according to the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (Tib. *Snying rje pad ma dkar po'i mdo*).[78] Thus, as a prerequisite to *bodhicitta*, the bodhisattva's great compassion is understood as the sole and

---

[75] Pagel describes the important role that the terms *aśaya* (pure intent) and *adyāśayaḥ* (determination) carry in one of the earliest texts describing bodhisattva practice, namely the *Bodhisattva Piṭaka* (Pagel 1992, 117).

[76] Also see the commentary on Atīśa's *Bodhipāthapradīpa* by Drakpa Dhondup (grags pa don grub) (2009, 149).

[77] Tsongkhapa states that compassion is the defining mark that makes one a Mahāyāna practitioner. In the *Byang chub lam rim che ba* (2010, 307), he writes: *snying rje chen pos yid skyod na/ sems chen thams cad 'khor ba las gdon pa'i phyir nges par dam 'char bar 'gyur la/ snying rje dman na de ltar byed pa mi 'ong bas 'gro ba ma lus pa sgrol ba'i khur 'khyer ba ni de la rag las pa'i phyir dang/ khur de mi 'dzin na theg chen par mi chud pa'i phyir snying rje thog mar gal chen po yin no*// Transl.: Once your mind is moved by great compassion you will definitely make the commitment to free all beings from cyclic existence. Compassion is important in the beginning because feeling responsibility to free all beings requires compassion and because, if you do not take on this responsibility, you are not ranked as a Mahāyāna practitioner (Tsonkhapa 2000, Vol 2, 28). Also see Engle 2009, 193-198.

[78] *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* (*dam pa'i chos pad ma dkar po'i mdo*) [The *Sūtra* of the White Lotus of the Good Dharma]. Toh 113, Sde dge Bka' 'gyur vol. 67 (mdo sde, ja), folios 1.a–180.b; Dpe sbdur ma, vol.50, pp.234-36.

unique quality that allows a person to embark on the path to buddhahood. *Snying rje chen po* does not necessitate an experiential understanding of emptiness at its entry point, but the depth of compassion is believed to grow with the bodhisattva's increasing experiential knowledge of ultimate reality. In this sense compassion is contingent on the bodhisattva's ontological position. Even though great compassion may not be accessible for the majority of Buddhist followers, it is important to remember that it fulfills the function of inspiring the ideal of impartial universal compassion.

3.3.2. The Three *Ālambana*s

The great compassion of a bodhisattva (*snying rje chen po*) refers to a broad spectrum of mental states, from the initial commitment up to the near-perfection of a buddha's great compassion. Within that spectrum, the compassion taxonomy of the three *ālambana*s distinguishes between three levels of compassion according to the bodhisattva's spiritual maturation. The system of the three *ālambana*s of compassion explains which type of knowledge is required of bodhisattvas so as to successfully progress in their compassion cultivation. It is found in many *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s and is accepted across the boundaries of different philosophical schools of Indian Buddhism.[79] It distinguishes compassion according to three possible objects (*ālambana*),[80] namely as compassion with [1] beings as object (Skt. *sattvālambana karuṇā,* Tib. *sems can la dmigs pa'i snying rje*), [2] phenomena as object (Skt. *dharmālambana karuṇā*, Tib.

[79] Important textual resources are the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka Sūtra*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa Śāstra*, *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra, Śikṣāsamuccaya* and the *Madhyamakāvatāra* by Candrakīrti. The *Bodhisattvapiṭaka Sūtra* is probably the earliest source, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa Śāstra* are of contested authorship.

[80] Alternatively, there are classifications according to the spiritual level of the object, namely buddhas, bodhisattvas, disciples, and solitary sages (Śāntideva and Goodman 2016, 212).

chos la dmigs pa'i snying rje), or [3] objectless compassion (Skt. *anālambana karuṇā,* Tib. *dmigs pa med pa'i snying rje*).[81] Interpretations of the three types differ in detail but exegetes agree on the understanding that compassion is tied to the trainee's ontological standpoint. The first type refers to compassion from a conventional perspective. It is directed towards sentient beings (*sattvālambana*) understood as substantially existing objects. This type of compassion is shared with non-Buddhists because it is based on conventional perception. The second type of compassion arises in dependence on a refined understanding of reality. Two interpretations can be found. First, it means that the bodhisattva cultivates compassion for beings while understanding that beings are mere collections of constituent entities, or compounds of *dharma*s; hence the name, compassion with reference to phenomena (*dharmālambana*). While generating an altruistic state of mind, the bodhisattvas are therefore acutely aware of the impermanent nature of beings, or of life. According to the BBh I.16.3., this deeper level of compassion arises in the minds of bodhisattvas from the first to the seventh *bhūmi* and is shared with *śrāvaka*s (Engle 2016, 11279). In an alternative interpretation, the *śrāvaka*s and all bodhisattvas up until the seventh *bhūmi* are not the subjects who generate this type of compassion, but the objects of that compassion because they themselves are still affected by impermanence, and experience

[81] The probably best-known source is the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra*, T 403, k. 4, p. 500a13–17; T 397, k. 29, p. 200a, 15–18. The relevant passage is cited in *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Śāntideva and Vaidya 1999, 212).
Sā [maitrī] trividhākṣayamatisūtre 'bhihitā | sattvālambaṇā maitrī prathamacittotpādikānāṃ bodhisattvānāṃ | dharmālambaṇā caryāpratipannānāṃ bodhisattvānāṃ; anālambaṇā maitrī anutpattikadharmakṣānti-pratilabdhānāṃ bodhisattvānām iti || Transl.: The noble *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra* describes three kinds of loving-kindness (*maitrī*) which also apply to compassion: "the loving-kindness of beginner bodhisattvas, which takes sentient beings as its object; the loving-kindness of bodhisattvas with practice experience, which takes simple entities as its object; and the objectless loving-kindness of the bodhisattvas who have attained the acceptance of the nonarising of everything." Note: *anutpattikadharmakṣānti* is often mentioned in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*s and involves the absence of emotional resistance against the teaching of emptiness (Translation Goodman, Śāntideva 2016, 209; also Bendall, 212). The threefold typology is also common in Tibetan treatises of the path, albeit with adapted interpretations (sGam po pa: *Dvags po thar rgyan;*, Sa skya Pandita: *Thub pa'i gong gsal;* Tshong kha pa: *Lam rim chen mo*).

subtle forms of suffering.[82] On a more practical level, this second type of compassion implies a focus on the causes of suffering, such as the mental afflictions (Engle 2016, 7530). The third and most advanced type is compassion without any reference point (*anālambana karuṇā*). This means not only seeing the compounded nature of beings but also the emptiness of their constituent components. Bodhisattvas at the level of the eighth *bhūmi* who "accept the non-arising of *dharma*s," "avoiding even generating a conception of entities"[83] have this type of non-objectified great compassion. *Anālambana karuṇā* arises in bodhisattvas from the eighth *bhūmi* onward, it has the quality of being irreversible (*avaivartika*) and is called great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) (Viévard 2001, 443).

This threefold schema has been interpreted in various ways, with different emphases on the ordinary or the supra-mundane forms of compassion. As mentioned previously, the significance of this systematization lies in its conceptualization of compassion, as this will determine the pedagogies employed to cultivate it. In the present taxonomy, the emphasis lies on knowledge, in the sense of understanding reality. Higher forms of compassion are here presented not as emotions, but as mental states determined by certain forms of knowledge or wisdom. The three types are understood hierarchically, which means, there is the idea that through progressively enhancing knowledge, compassion can be also be progressively enhanced.

---

[82] This view has been expounded by commentators of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (verse 3), such as Ju Mipham and Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, and by Prajñākaramāti on the BCA (Candrakīrti and Mipham 2005).

[83] See also the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra,* quoted in the SS XII. Here, the *sūtra* describes the three levels for *maitrī* in a similar way (Śāntideva and Vaidya 1999, 212): *sā trividhā āryākṣayamatisūtre'vihitā- satvārambaṇā maitrī prathamacittotpādikānāṃ bodhisattvānām | dharmārambaṇā caryāpratipannānāṃ bodhisattvānām | anārambaṇā maitrī anutpattikadharmakṣāntipratilabdhānāṃ bodhisattvānāmiti* || The *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra* describes three kinds: "the loving-kindness of beginner bodhisattvas, which takes sentient beings as its object; the loving-kindness of bodhisattvas with practice experience, which takes simple entities as its object; and the objectless loving-kindness of the bodhisattvas who have attained the acceptance of the nonarising of everything" (Translation Goodman, *Anthology*, 209).

The Threefold Typology of Suffering

The threefold compassion typology correlates with the threefold typology of suffering. Abhidharma literature distinguishes three types of suffering: explicit suffering (*duḥkhaduḥkhatā*, lit. suffering of suffering), suffering of change (*vipariṇāmaduḥkhatā*), and suffering of being conditioned (*saṃskāraduḥkhatā*).[84] These three are characterised by their specific experiential quality: The first, explicit suffering, is experienced as painful by ordinary people. It is the wide variety of painful experiences in this life, from a simple tooth ache to severe trauma and includes all small and big forms of physical and mental suffering between birth and death. The second type, the suffering of change, refers to the potential suffering contained in pleasant experiences; they feel pleasant now but carry the seeds for suffering in the future. Just like previously for the second type of compassion, it requires a refined understanding of the impermanent nature of reality. The third type of suffering is described as a neutral experience (neither pleasant nor unpleasant) because it is too subtle for ordinary people to be noticed. However, it is directly perceived by *ārya* bodhisattvas of the first *bhūmi* and beyond. The AKBh states that this fundamental state of suffering is the result of the fact that phenomena are conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) and contaminated (*sāsravā*),[85] which means they arise in the shape of an individual's defilements

---

[84] AKBh VI, 3: *duḥkhā stridūḥkhatā yogādyathāyogamaśeṣataḥ | manāpā amanāpāśca tadanye caiva sāsravāḥ* || Translation Pruden: Impure *dharma*s, whether they are agreeable, disagreeable, or otherwise, are, without exception, suffering, by reason of the three types of suffering, each according to its type (Vasubandhu 1988, 899).

[85] Conditioned (*saṁskṛta*) phenomena refers to everything that is temporal, impermanent, produced from causes, such as the body, i.e. the five skandhas, matter, the spiritual path, etc. See for example: AKBh I, 7 (Pradhan 4,22; 5,2): *te punaḥ saṃskṛtā dhārmā rūpādiskandhapañcakam | saṃskṛtā dharmāḥ ta evādhvā kathāvastu saniḥsārāḥ savastukāḥ* || Translation: Conditioned things are the fivefold *skandhas*, matter, etc. Conditioned things are the paths; they are the foundations of discourse; they are "possessed of leaving"; they are possessed of causes." French translation (Vallée-Poussin 1923, 11): Les conditionnes (*saṃskṛta*), c'est la pentade des skandhas, matiere, etc. Les conditionnes sont les Chemins: ils sont le fondement du discours: ils sont 'avec sortie': ils sont "ayant des causes." Regarding contaminated phenomena, AKBh I,8 explains: (Pradhan 5,8) *ye sāsravā upādānaskFandhāste saraṇā api | duḥkhaṁ samudayo loko dṛṣṭisthānaṁ bhavaśca te* || English translation: When they are contaminated, they are the appropriative aggregates. They are also harmful. They are suffering, arising, the world, the locus of false opinions, existence (Vasubandhu, La Vallée Poussin, and Pruden 1988, 61-63).

such as desire and ignorance. Although the "suffering of being conditioned" is described as neutral experience by the author of the AKBh, the contemporary Buddhist teacher Chögyam Trungpa claims that ordinary people are affected by it. Describing it in psychological terms as "general misery and dissatisfaction that goes on all the time," he asserts that it is "a feeling of hollowness, heaviness and wretchedness"(Trungpa and Lief 2009). Whatever the case, the final purpose of the bodhisattva path is the elimination of this most subtle form of suffering, as its absence is equated with the extinction of all mental defilements and with *nirvāṇa* (AKBh IV, 2, Vasubandhu and Pradhan 327, 3ff.; transl. Pruden 1988c, 899 ff).

The three types of compassion are also discussed by Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra,* an important work that maps a systematic approach to the integration of emptiness and compassion. The treatise is known for the special attention that its author pays to compassion at the beginning of the text. In the introductory praise, normally reserved for an homage to the Buddha, Candrakīrti praises compassion as the first cause of buddhahood (MA I,1-2).

> Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are born from the Muni king;
> Buddhas are born from bodhisattvas;
> And, from the mind of compassion, non-duality and
> *Bodhicitta* is born the bodhisattva.
>
> Because compassion is viewed as the seed of the Conquerors' excellent harvest,
> The water that makes it grow, and the fruition [that ensures]
> It will continue to be enjoyed for a long time,
> I praise compassion at the beginning.[86]

[86] MA I,1-2. Skt. (Candrakīrti 2005): [1] *munīndrajāḥ śrāvakamadhyabuddhāḥ buddhodbhavāḥkhalvapi bodhisattvāt | kāruṇyacittādvayabuddhibodhicittāni heturjinaputrakāṇām* || [2] *bījaṃ kṛpā yajjinaśasyarāśestadvṛddhaye vārisamā cirāya | bhogāya pākaśca yathaiva mānya, mādau mamātaḥ karuṇāpraśaṃsā* || Tibetan (Candrakīrti (zla ba grags pa) 1994-2008, 555): [1] *nyan thos sangs rgyas 'bring rnams thub dbang skyes/ /sangs rgyas byang chub sems dpa' las 'khrungs shing/ /snying rje'i sems dang gnyis su med blo dang/ /byang chub sems ni rgyal sras rnams kyi rgyu//* [2] *gang phyir brtse nyid rgyal ba'i lo tog phun tshogs 'di'i / sa bon dang ni spel la chu 'dra yun rin du / longs spyod gnas la smin pa lta bur 'dod gyur pa / de phyir bdag gis dang por snying rje bstod par bgyi* // Translation: Engle (2009, 194), alternatively Candrakīrti and Mipham (2005, 11).

Verse I,1 states that compassion is to be cultivated in combination with a non-dual mind – explained as an understanding of the true nature of reality – and *bodhicitta*. The author praises compassion's ubiquitous role at every state of the bodhisattva path, beginning, middle and end. In a metaphor he paints the image of compassion as the first seed, the water, and the harvest of buddhahood. He then alludes to the three types of compassion by means of a poetic allegory of nature and water:

> Helpless beings, driven as an irrigation wheel,
> To compassion for these, I bow down.
>
> Sentient beings are as the moon's reflection in moving water.
> Seeing them as empty in their change and in their nature
>
> The victorious one's son, possessing such understanding,
> And overcome by compassion, wishes to completely liberate all beings
> (I.3cd-4ab).

In these verses, the irrigation wheel stands for the *sattvālambana*, while seeing the reflection in moving water symbolizes both the *dharmālambana* and the *anālambana.* The former refers to understanding beings' impermanent nature, while the latter to realizing their empty nature. The relationship between compassion and the idea of no-self or emptiness has been the topic of much controversy in academic debate.[87] Some scholars have argued that realizing emptiness contradicts compassion, because if the objects of compassion and their suffering are ultimately empty, there is no basis for compassionate conduct, and no possibility for normative ethics from an ultimate

[87] The dilemma of lacking an ontological basis for normative ethics in *śūnyatā* has been discussed at great length elsewhere and does not need to be repeated here. An extensive report of the controversy can be found in Jenkins (1999, 113-227). A recent anthology of essays on the topic can be found in Cowherds (2015). Dorje Wangchuk discusses the tension between the two poles of emptiness and compassion, addressing the question of whether the realization of *śūnyatā* hinders *karuṇā,* or automatically entails the generation of *karuṇā*, or, in other words, the question of whether *karuṇā* is a natural outflow of *śūnyatā*. Based on textual evidence, he concludes that the correct understanding of *śūnyatā* does not hinder but deepens the quality of *karuṇā* (Wangchuk 2007, 243-245). Remember that Mahāyāna thought ascertains that bodhicitta depends on a profound understanding of both, emptiness and compassion, as the term *sūnyatākaruṇāgarbha* expresses (see Introdution, "Terminology").

perspective.[88] However, this debate has a long history in traditional Buddhist context, as can be seen in Śāntideva citing the skeptics' argument: "If sentient beings do not exist then for whom is there compassion?"[89] The problem dissolves with Nāgārjuna's and Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka explanation of *śūnyatā* according to which emptiness it is not nonbeing, but dependent origination. In the *Lokātītastavaḥ* 22, Nāgārjuna, praising the Buddha, ascertains:

> What arises dependently is exactly what You regard as *śūnyatā*. O, your incomparable lion's roar is that no independent thing exists![90]

Furthermore, as the threefold typology of compassion indicates, for a beginner bodhisattva on the level of *sattvālambāna*-compassion, the cultivation of compassion precedes the realization of emptiness on the bodhisattva path. Therefore, "non-existing beings" are not a point of concern at that stage. Only at more advanced levels is the discernment of emptiness required in parallel to the perfection of emptiness, culminating in the most advanced level of deobjectifying *anālambana*-great compassion (*mahākaruṇā, thugs rje chen po*).

In sum, these two typologies (of compassion and suffering) both imply that bodhisattvas progressively evolve in their understanding of reality, and in accordance, their compassion gets refined. Although knowledge is not the only factor for cultivating compassion, as will become evident in the following chapters of this study, it plays a crucial role in grounding compassion in reason, providing a level of depth and stability that the empathic, affective and aspirational aspects alone are not capable of accomplishing. We have seen that the BBh I.16.3.1. instructs

---

[88] Notably, Paul Williams (1998) argues, based on Śāntideva's BCA, that the philosophy of no-self cannot entail altruism, and in fact, destroys the very notion of a bodhisattva path. Barbra Clayton (2001a) rebuttles by arguing for a practical experience- and value-based interpretation of the no-self argument.

[89] A hypothetical question in the BCA IX,76 (Śāntideva and Minayeff 1889, 213,25-214,1): *yadi sattvo na vidyeta kasyopari kṛpeti cet* | (TG dbu ma *la* 33b5): *gal te sems can yod min na // su la snying rje bya zhe na* // Also see Jenkins (2015).

[90] *Catuḥstavah, Lokātītastavaḥ* (Tib. *'jig rten las 'das par bstod pa;* Hymn to [the Buddha] Transcending the World), verse 22: *yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva te matā | bhāvaḥ svatantro nāstīti siṃhanādastavātulaḥ ||* Engl. Translation: Lindtner (1982).

bodhisattvas to contemplate one hundred and ten forms of suffering. These comprise taxonomies of suffering, such as the three types of suffering mentioned here, or the sufferings of the six realms of existence (hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods and gods), the suffering caused by primary and secondary mental afflictions, to name but a few. It is clear then that the training of compassion presupposes a certain intellectual understanding of Buddhist cosmology and philosophy. The first level, compassion with sentient beings as object (*sattvālambana*), requires knowledge of the saṃsāric realms, which implies a belief in rebirth; the second type of compassion with *dharma*s as reference point (*dharmālambana*), is enhanced through knowledge of the karmic functioning of cause and result, while the third is dependent on the gnosis of the empty nature of phenomena, which can only be acquired in meditative equipoise. The pedagogical approach to gain the required knowledge is, according to Tsongkhapa, a thorough contemplation of one's personal situation and suffering. In a commentary on the above cited MA, he explains how experiential knowledge of one's own suffering is linked to the sense of intolerance of seeing others suffer, and thereby to compassion:

> [Y]ou must first reflect on the manner in which you yourself wander in saṃsāra, in order to evoke a [genuine] awareness [of your own samsaric suffering]. Otherwise, without having [previously] developed [such an awareness] to any degree at all [in relation to himself or herself], a beginning practitioner who tries to contemplate this [topic] in relation to other sentient beings will not be able to develop the sense that their suffering is unbearable. Therefore, as described in the commentary on [Āryadeva's] *Four Hundred Verses*, you must first contemplate [samsaric suffering] in relation to yourself. Following that, you can meditate upon it in relation to others (Engle, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati 2009, 198).[91]

It should be noted that the threefold typology of suffering and their related practice instructions demonstrate that the elimination of suffering is only partly concerned with what *feels* painful,

[91] Engle cites from the *Elucidation of the True Intent: An Extensive Commentary on the Introduction to the Middle Way* (Tib: *dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal*), in vol. 16 (ma) of Tsongkhapa's *Collected Works*, pp. 3–535; Toh. No. 5408, f. 12b. (Engle 2016, 10395-10397).

stressful, dissatisfying but demands, more importantly, a profound understanding of the underlying structures that create and perpetuate suffering in a long-term perspective. For a bodhisattva, compassion means the elimination of mental defilements inherent in conditioned phenomena. This idea has already been seen in the previously mentioned definition of compassion in the four immeasurables (*apramāṇa*) which expresses the wish to the see the elimination of not only apparent suffering but the *causes* of suffering.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a selection of etymologies, definitions and philosophical analyses of compassion, thereby setting the stage for the following discussions of compassion pedagogies and for a critical comparison of traditional and secular approaches to compassion training. The survey began by ascertaining the difficulties we can see in contemporary secular scientific research context in determining a coherent meaning of the construct "compassion," as it touches upon elements as opposite as empathic pain, rational assessment, aloof aspirations, and a commitment to action. Definitions of compassion therefore tend to be taxonomic lists to describe the cognitive, emotive, intentional and motivational facets of compassion. An analysis of different Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist sources paints a similarly multifaceted picture. A summary description of this picture should include at least six facets: [1] the Abhidharmic definition of compassion as an absence of harmfulness, [2] the *apramāṇa* scope of compassion as impartial universal altruism that aspires to eliminating the suffering of all sentient beings without exception, [3] the attention to the causes of suffering, [4] the subsumption of compassion under *bodhicitta*, which defines compassion as the firm intention to attain awakening to free beings from their various sufferings and [5] the understanding that the quality of compassion

evolves with the spiritual maturity or knowledge of a person which [6] is a result of his or her discipline in exploring the empty nature of reality.

An important difference between the two contexts (traditional Buddhist and contemporary secular) is that the empathic, painful aspects of compassion play a comparatively smaller role in the majority of traditional Buddhist explanations, although their occurrence is not denied. Instead, the emphasis is on constructive aspirational responses to the sight of suffering, accompanied and sustained by a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that cause suffering, for example, the denial of the impermanent nature of life. Another important difference is the Buddhist description of compassion in terms of the *absence* of its opposites, namely aggression and ignorance, an approach that is little discussed or absent in secular treatments.

This chapter also explored a traditional Buddhist views on a number of currently relevant queries. The first question pertained to the "origins" of compassion, exploring whether compassion is thought of as "nature" or "nurture." The idea of buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*) provides a solid basis for understanding compassion as a natural, inborn and shared aspect of humanity, and even suggests that the ability for universal compassion is given to all, or at least to those with the Mahāyāna *gotra*. Nevertheless, all Buddhist scholars, especially from the Madhyamaka school of thought, also emphasize the need to nurture the compassionate potential through external inspiration, education and training so as to produce genuine compassion, or great compassion. Mahāyāna literature thus expresses the conviction that compassion can be generated and enhanced through disciplined methods – a conviction that modern science has accepted only since the discovery of neuroplasticity in the twenty-first century. The conviction of the perfectibility of compassion underpins much of the following discussion on compassion cultivation. The second question explored notions of the nature of compassion. Abhidharma

sources offer possibilities of understanding compassion as a psychological category, as they classify it as a mental factor. However, the literature revealed a limited discussion of only a partial aspect of compassion with its emphasis on the absence of harmfulness rather than on empathic affect. Abhidharma definitions, I have concluded, have little in common with contemporary concepts of compassion as an emotion. The Abhidharma approach entails however interesting conclusions about compassion didactics, suggesting the importance of deconstructive methods to eliminate disturbing tendencies such as bias, prejudice, or outgroup thinking. As an answer to the question of how perfected forms of compassion should manifest, the study analyzed compassion typologies, namely the twofold distinction of ordinary and great compassion (in its distinction of *snying rje chen po* and *thugs rje chen po*); and the threefold classification according to the objects (*ālambana*) of compassion. Both typologies express the perfectibility of compassion through intention and knowledge. It has become evident that *snying rje chen po,* even though considered the beginning stage of the Mahāyāna path, is in fact a highly developed stage, requiring a radical commitment to altruism and a high degree of spiritual cultivation. Mahāyāna sources unanimously assert great compassion as the highest form of compassion, which is accompanied by the two-fold benefit for the subject and object of the compassion training.

Finally, the selection of Buddhist sources consulted in this chapter highlight the fact that compassion is not only a multifaceted concept but is itself imbedded in a multilayered context that interweaves psychological concepts about the functioning of the mind, philosophical views about the nature of reality, and ethical considerations about perfecting altruistic qualities that are inherent in buddha-nature. This compassion culture gives rise to a network of assumptions and values that inform and structure the individual's compassion training in important ways.

Compassion culture is also the locus of tension between secular and traditional forms of compassion training, as the former operates within the immanent frame, to use Charles Taylor's term (2007), whereas the latter assumes the belief in the possibility of transcendence. These differences will become more evident in the course of this study's explorations. In the following chapter, I will continue to elaborate on the idea of compassion culture, within which I discuss various didactic approaches to compassion available in Indian and Tibetan literature. Curiously, these didactics will reveal that, although empathy and emotional stimulation are downplayed in Mahāyāna definitions of compassion, they are nevertheless employed as skilful means for beginner compassion trainees.

Chapter II

Compassion Cultivation Methods in Mahāyāna Literature

A bodhisattva, a great being,
should perceive all sentient beings as mother, father, sons, and daughters.

(*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*)

While modern science discovered the trainability of compassion only recently (Lutz et al. 2008), Buddhist visions of the path are unthinkable without the conviction that one can radically transform the mind, including especially one's compassion, through repetition, discipline and insight. Mahāyāna literature presents a range of contemplative methods for the cultivation of compassion and related states of mind. This chapter analyses various styles of compassion cultivation in Mahāyāna context. First, I will present the idea of a compassion culture which constitutes the frame within which individual methods are applied. Second, a model of three didactic approaches in Mahāyāna compassion cultivation will be presented. This model will provide the theoretical framework for the analysis of compassion cultivation throughout the chapters of this thesis. The passage of one of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, will serve as an example to demonstrate the interweaving of these didactic approaches within one contemplative practice. Finally, the chapter returns to the question of compassion culture from a more pragmatic perspective, exploring the question of whether compassion cultivation endorses a socially engaged lifestyle rather than an "asocial" life in isolation. This question is answered by analysing the circularity of the benefits for self and other.

1. Compassion Culture

Mahāyāna Buddhism sets forth the ethical ideal of the bodhisattva, embodied in persons who aim at the highest good for themselves and others. Out of loving-kindness (*maitrī*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), they wish to help all beings to obtain liberation and *nirvāṇa* (*sarva-sattva-parinirvāṇa-hetoḥ*), but also to obtain material prosperity and well-being (*sukha*) in this world. Compassion is therefore at the root of both long-term and short-term aspirations and is, in the words of Har Dayal, "the guiding star in a bodhisattva's entire career" (Dayal 1970, 178). To implement their compassion-inspired aspirations, bodhisattvas take commitments to morality in the form of precepts.[92] The BBh I.10. distinguishes between three types: (1) the morality of restraint, (2) the morality of acquiring virtuous entities, and (3) the morality that acts on behalf of beings (Engle 2016, 7437).[93] Restraint is explained as stopping the immorality that has been occurring continuously with the aim of their complete cessation.[94] Followers of the Buddhist path receive vows according to their propensities for the life of a monastic renunciate, a lay householder, a tantric yogin, or a combination of these. The specificities of the various vows have been explained elsewhere (Sobisch 2002, Jamgön Kongtrül 1998); here it is only important to note that, rooted in compassion, an entire ethical structure developed, along with its practical application in the form of vows that detail which behaviors have to be adopted and which

[92] The term precept is here used in the broad sense of a "rule and guideline intended to properly shape the mind and its manifestations in physical and verbal behavior so as to facilitate progress on the path to liberation." It refers to both, monastic and lay vows of abstention. More specifically, in Mahāyāna, the observance of precepts "was incorporated into the bodhisattva path as an essential element of the perfections (*pāramitā*) that the bodhisattva was expected to cultivate. The second of these perfections (*śīla paramita*) calls for dedication to morality and strict adherence to the precepts" (Getz 2003).

[93] Tib. [1] *nye spyod sdom pa'i tshul khrims*; [2] *dge ba'i chos sdud pa'i tshul khrims*; [3] *sems can don byed kyi tshul khrims*.

[94] The vows have been classified in various ways, a widespread model in the Indo-Tibetan tradition being the three sets of vows, namely the vows of personal liberation (Skt. *prātimokṣa*, Tib. *so thar gyi sdom pa*), of awakening mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*, Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'i sdom pa*), and of the awareness holder (Skt. *vidhyādhara*, Tib. *rig 'dzin*) of the secret mantra (Jamgön Kongtrül 1998).

avoided. Transmitted for centuries and still fundamental building blocks of Buddhist practice today, vows accompany every step of a follower of the Buddhist doctrine. They can number into the hundreds,[95] some being as general as the promise to adhere to the Buddha Dharma, or as specific as receiving donations in a correct way, or teaching the doctrine to the appropriate audiences (*Ākāśagarbha Sūtra*).[96] This superstructure, consisting of ethical, philosophical and soteriological considerations, is what I call the compassion culture within the traditional Buddhist context. The presence of a thriving compassion culture provides individuals with multiple reference points that educate and enhance their practice of self-cultivation. When instructed to express compassion through shunning non-virtue, followers can rely on explanations of the ten non-virtuous deeds;[97] when told to train wholesome qualities and work for the benefit of others, they know to turn to instructions on the six perfections (*pāramitā*): generosity, discipline, patience, effort, meditative concentration and wisdom,[98] all of these being constituents of compassion culture. Although I do not suggest that the normative ethics

[95] Monastic vows of the Vinaya amount to sets of 227 to 354 vows depending on the school and tradition.

[96] The *sūtra* lists eighteen transgressions of a bodhisattva that are to be avoided. These include teaching emptiness to spiritually immature people or diverting donations for meditators to monastics who practice inferior spiritual practices, such as recitation instead of meditation.

[97] These are explained in numerous texts. Nāgārjuna's RN 14-16 gives the following explanations regarding the ten non-virtuous acts (Skt. *daśākuśala*, Tib. *mi dge ba bcu*. Hahn 6, 13-20, 8, 1-4): *hiṃsayā jāyate 'lpāyur bahvābādho vihiṃsayā | cauryeṇa bhogavyasanī sa(śa[truḥ] paradārikaḥ) || pratyākhyānaṃ mṛṣāvādāt paiśunyān mitrabhedanam | apriyaśravaṇaṃ raukṣyād abaddhād durbhagaṃ vacaḥ || manorathān hanty abhidhyā vyāpādo bhayadaḥ smṛtaḥ | mithyādṛṣṭeḥ kudṛṣṭitvaṃ madyapānān matibhramaḥ ||* English translation: A short life comes through killing. Much suffering comes through harming. Poor resources, through stealing. Enemies, through adultery. From lying arises slander. From divisiveness, a parting of friends. From harshness, hearing the unpleasant. From senselessness, one's speech is not respected. Covetousness destroys one's wishes, harmful intent yields fright, wrong views lead to bad views, And drink to confusion of the mind (Hopkins 1998 and 2007). In comparison, Tibetan entries give the ten non-virtuous acts as [1] *srog gcod*/ cutting off life; [2] *ma byin len*/ taking what is not given; [3] *mi gtsang spyod*/ impure sexual behavior; [4] *rdzun smra ba*/ lying, false speaking; [5] *phra ma*/ divisive talk; [6] *tshig rtsub*/ harsh words; [7] *ngag 'chal*/ idle talk; [8] *brnab sems*/ covetousness; [9] *gnod sems*/ maliciousness; [10] *log lta*/ wrong views.

[98] The six perfections (*ṣaṭpāramitā*) are given in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*s as: generosity (Skt. *dāna*; Tib. *sbyin pa*), discipline (Skt. *śīla*; Tib. *tshul khrims*), patience (Skt. *kṣānti*; Tib. *bzod pa*), diligence (Skt. *vīrya*; Tib. *brston 'grus*), meditative concentration (Skt. *dhyāna*; Tib. *bsam gtan*), and wisdom (Skt. *prajñā*; Tib. *shes rab*).

expounded in scripture accurately reflects the historical realities of religious life in India or Tibet, they nevertheless present the theoretical ground on which religious and social education is built. In the case of Tibet, we can see different signs of how the notion of compassion has been woven into the tapestry of its national identity. It is expressed, for example, in the national mythology around the bodhisattva of compassion (Chenresig, *spyan ras gzigs*), who is considered Tibet's patron bodhisattva (Kapstein 2000, 147-162). Throughout history, many spiritual and political leaders have been considered emanations of him. Worship of Chenresig and the promulgation of bodhisattva ethics is shared across sectarian divides. The recitation of Chenresig's six-syllable mantra *Om mani peme hung* (being the Tibetan pronunciation of Skt. *auṃ maṇi padme hūṃ)* is ubiquitous, its letters are carved on rocks, stones and various objects. In contemporary, everyday life with Tibetans, one may hear them frequently call out "*nying-jé*" as a spontaneous expression of empathy towards whatever they encounter, "*nying-jé*" (*snying rje*) literally meaning compassion. The Tibetan people's devotion to the Dalai Lama is also an expression of their explicit cultural espousal of compassion as a key spiritual value (Lopes 2015, 58-79, 200-266, Van Schaik 2006, 55-72, Ishihama 1993, Kapstein 1992, Jinpa 2008, 31). Contemporary ethnographic studies suggest that principles such as compassion, forbearance and non-harmfulness are being passed on from parents to children, not necessarily as religious virtues but as social skills.[99] It is therefore safe to say that the compassion culture of Mahāyāna Buddhist scripture is not only a theoretical ideal but also a lived culture.

Keeping the encompassing frame of compassion culture in mind when discussing the individual compassion practices is important for three reasons. Firstly, extracting compassion

[99] See for example Sara Lewis' work with Tibetans in the diaspora, which suggests that principles of mind training were transmitted by the parents as a way of thinking, rather than acquired through meditative practice (Lewis 2018). Another example is Holly Gayley's study of East Tibetan nomads who put non-harmfulness before economic progress (Gayley 2016).

meditation from its context runs the risk of reducing the practices to simplistic exercises. As mentioned previously, compassion is integrated in numerous meditative practices, often overlapping with other aspects, such as *bodhicitta*, loving-kindness (Skt. *maitrī,* Tib. *byams pa*), or generosity (Skt. *dāna,* Tib. *sbyin pa*). By singling out the topic of compassion, the contemplative exercises may seem unidimensional or simple. For example, the aspiration prayer of the four immeasurables, "May all beings be free of suffering" etc., may appear as naïve wishful thinking. The concept of compassion culture serves as a reminder that individual contemplative exercises have to be understood as part of a broad curriculum for mental cultivation. Secondly, because of the ubiquitous nature of compassion on the bodhisattva path, there are numerous practices that contribute in an indirect manner to compassion. The scope of this study does not allow me to include a discussion of these practices. However, it is important to remember that all practices that purify the mind of harmful tendencies like ignorance, fear or aggression greatly enhance the quality and amplitude of a person's compassion. From this perspective, even practicing discipline in the form of vows and precepts is a way of expressing compassion, as the commitments contribute to a person's capacity to persevere and successfully bring compassion cultivation to fruition. Thirdly, and most importantly, Buddhist compassion culture contains the belief that the natural, inborn potential of compassion finds its fullest expression only in an awakened person, a buddha. Since this perfected compassion or *mahākaruṇā* has to be realized in tandem with an understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), it implies that also the study, reflection, and meditation of ultimate reality is both conducive and indispensable to cultivating compassion. And even though *mahākaruṇā* might be inaccessible to beginner bodhisattvas, believing in its attainment nevertheless provides a long-term perspective to the cultivation of compassion, adding an ulterior purpose to the simple act of helping others.

For these three reasons, i.e. the risk of oversimplification, of reductionist selection, and of neglecting the long-term vision, it is crucial to bear in mind the wider context of compassion culture within which the phenomenon of compassion appears.

2. Three Didactic Approaches

With this caveat in mind, an analysis of specific instances of compassion cultivation in Buddhist literature is nevertheless a good starting point, as it has the merit of shedding light onto the didactic methods employed, which will allow a comparative study with secular compassion training. There is no single source in Mahāyāna literature that systematically discusses didactic theories of compassion cultivation. Just like in the discussion of definitions in Chapter I, a comprehensive picture can be gained by surveying the existing contemplations. This reveals three didactic styles, namely a constructive, a deconstructive, and a cognitive-analytic approach. The following discussion will present each of these approaches with various examples from relevant bodhisattva literature. Most compassion practices are a combination of these elements, but one can often identify a clear preference of the author for one of the approaches. An example from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (hereafter APS) will illustrate how these different approaches are interwoven in one single contemplation.

2.1. The Constructive Approach

Among the three didactic approaches, the most commonly found in various contemplative practices is the constructive approach, by which I refer to the cultivation of compassion by means of transforming and enhancing already existing potentialities rather than weakening antithetical propensities, which is the deconstructive approach. The cultivation of

compassion in this approach includes related mental states such as loving-kindness, caring, gratitude, a sense of responsibility, generosity, perseverance, moral courage and so forth. The constructive approach comprises a variety of methods. One set of methods builds on the meditators' conventional, lived experiences of affectionate kinship relations which serve as the first reference points for transmuting them into universal forms of love and compassion. Not only the affection for family, also self-cherishing sometimes serves as an accessible reference to a personal experience of care that can then be transferred to others. In both cases, the subjective psychological experience of affection serves as the phenomenological basis for cultivating compassion since it is a personal experience that almost anyone can relate to. Another set of methods is the recitation of aspiration prayers, which is grounded in the meditators' confidence in the teachings and texts of their transmission lineage. Aspiration prayers, believed to be the words of great bodhisattvas of the past, guide the thought process of the reciting meditator towards spiritually advanced ways of thinking. Both sets of methods make use of the formal techniques of conceptual contemplation, visualization, and recitation, all of which have to undergo extensive repetition, since it is believed that through repetition, new mental habits can be formed. In the following, these two sets of methods, kinship and aspiration, will be discussed in more detail.

2.1.1. The Role of Loving-Kindness in Compassion Cultivation

The cultivation of loving-kindness often precedes or accompanies that of compassion. "Loving-kindness is the sap of the compassion tree,"[100] says the MSA in a poetic way. In the

[100] MSA, XVII, 39 (Lévi 17, 39a): *karuṇāseko maitrī tadduḥkhe saukhyato vipulapuṣṭiḥ* || Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 216b2-3): *snying rje'i chu ba byams pa ste //* The metaphor of compassion as a tree is expounded the five verses 36-40.

passage quoted from the APS at the beginning of this chapter, bodhisattvas are implored to view others as their "mother, father, sons and daughters."[101] Especially motherly love for her child stands as a symbol for selfless care for another being, often implying a sacrifice of her own well-being. Candrakīrti uses the intensity of motherly love in *Madhyamakāvatāra* XI, 50 to illustrate the enlightened compassion of a Buddha (2000, 399):

> The distress of a mother for her child pained by eating poison
> Does not compare to your compassion for your family.

In the reverse direction, that is, the child's love for the mother, is used as a didactic means in several meditations for developing compassion, filial gratitude and a sense of responsibility towards the mother. This has been developed in the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* (Conze 1975, 344), the *Bhāvanākrama* (*The Stages of Meditation*) by Kamalaśīla (8th century), in Atīśa Dīpaṃkāra's *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭa* (10th/11th century),[102] and the Tibetan Lamrim and Lojong traditions that emerged from Atīśa's work. Gampopa in his Lamrim work, known as the *Dhagpo Thargyan,* greatly elaborates on narratives of the hardships a mother endures through pregnancy and child education, thereby raising the incentive for developing gratitude and compassion towards the mother.[103] Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) systematizes a meditation that pivots around the recognition of motherly kindness in his *Lam rim chen mo* (Tsongkhapa 2000b), known as the "seven instructions of causes and effect."[104] The six causes and one result are given as the following contemplations (*bsgom pa*):

---

[101] The passage is cited in full in the next section.

[102] Translation: Apple (2010). Atīśa's famous *Bodhipātapradīpa* does not explicitly refer to the mother-child relationship. However, it is part of Tibetan commentaries. See, for example, Geshe Sonam Rinchen (1997).

[103] Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen, *Dam chos yid bzhin gyi nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i lam gyi rim pa bshad pa* (Gampopa 1998, 126-128).

[104] Tib. *rgyu 'bras man ngag bdun* (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 29-49). Gareth Sparham attempts to construct a lineage for this teaching in his article (1992).

1. Recognition of all living beings as one's mother (*mar shes*)
2. Remembering their kindness (*drin dran*)
3. Wishing to repay their kindness (*drin bzo*)
4. Developing loving-kindness (*byams pa*)
5. Compassion (*snying rje*)
6. Wholehearted resolve (*lhag bsam*)
7. The mind of awakening (*byang chub kyi sems*) (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 35-49, 2010, 310-326)

As this list shows, the meditation does not end with compassion but culminates in the mind of awakening. Moreover, it begins with an element of equanimity, rather than the personal relationship with the mother of this life. There is thus an indication of counteracting the problematic aspects of the child-mother relationship for liberative practice.

The use of personal experience as a starting point is noteworthy as it is an ambiguous method in a Buddhist context. While love and compassion towards one's mother is a readily accessible reference point to start developing universal compassion, the attachment inherent in conventional love is contested. It carries a negative connotation in Buddhist doctrine, being described as a combination of the two basic causes for suffering in *saṃsāra,* namely ignorance (*avidyā*) in the form of false self conception, and attachment (*rāga*) to one's own person and self-interest. One of the ways attachment manifests is the primary preoccupation with one's personal happiness. It therefore stands in diametric opposition to the other-orientation of compassion. Ignorance and attachment both belong to the group of negative mental factors (Skt. *kleśa*, Tib. *nyon mongs*)[105] that should ultimately be eliminated, yet, they are incorporated in one

[105] They are called mental disturbances, because they disturb and obscure the mind, and leave imprints in the mind that will result in various forms of suffering. The idea of *kleśa* relates well to the German term for passion, "*Leidenschaft*," meaning "that which creates suffering." The meaning of the term *kleśa* does not fully map onto our idea of negative emotions, as it encompasses two types of affliction, one being emotional the other a type of cognitive affliction. Cognitive afflictions refer to misconceptions about the nature of reality. The mistaken belief in the existence of a substantial self in persons and in material phenomena is considered an affliction; this has little to

of the most common compassion pedagogies. Since motherly love is defiled by attachment, it is discredited as ordinary, limited, and inferior to the spiritually cultivated love of a bodhisattva. Asaṅga writes in MSA XVII, 43**:**

> There exists no love which is irreproachable, and which is not mundane, but the compassionate love of intelligent ones (bodhisattvas) is blameless and transcendent.
>
> The love of such as father and mother is made of craving (*tṛṣṇā*) and so is liable to reproach. For those who dwell in mundane compassion, though irreproachable, it is still mundane. But the love of bodhisattvas is made of compassion and is both irreproachable and transcendent.[106]

This verse summarizes poignantly the ambiguous relationship to mundane love among relatives and the compassion built upon it. While praiseworthy, this love and compassion are stained by attachment and ignorance and must be transcended.

Not all compassion cultivation practices rely on motherly love, or love for one's mother, as the starting point of the meditation. Śāntideva, for instance, makes no mention of it in the BCA. Instead, some meditations use as their starting point the love and care an individual habitually has for him- or herself. The APS states: "As one wishes happiness for oneself, [one] should apply happiness to other beings as well."[107] This idea is echoed in BCA VIII. Tibetan commentarial literature refers to this mental state as self-cherishing (*bdag gces 'dzin*).[108] Just as

---

do with our notion of negative emotions. Therefore, the ultimate aim of a Mahāyāna Buddhist is to purify the mind of all karmic imprints because they uphold the idea of a substantial self.

[106] MSA XVII, 43 (Levi, 17.43): *sneho na vidyate 'sau yo 'niravadyo na laukiko yaśca | dhīmatsu kṛpāsneho niravadyo lokasamatītaḥ* || Commentary ascribed to Vasubandhu (Levi, 17.43, p.127): *mātāpitṛprabhṛtīnāṃ hi tṛṣṇāmayaḥ snehaḥ sāvadyaḥ | laukikakaruṇāvihāriṇāṃ niravadyo 'pi laukikaḥ | bodhisatvānāṃ tu karuṇāmayaḥ sneho niravadyaśca laukikātikrāntaśca | kathaṃ ca punar niravadya ity āha*||

Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 217a4-6): *kha na ma tho med pa'i byams pa gang // de ni yod min 'jig rten pa yang min // blo ldan rnams kyi brtse bas byams pa ni // kha na ma tho med cing 'jig rten 'das //* Commentary: *pha ma la sogs pa'i byams pa ni sred (5) pa'i rang bzhin dang | kha na ma tho ba dang bcas pa'o // 'jig rten pa'i snying rjes gnas pa rnams kyi kha na ma tho ba med kyang// 'jig rten pa yin no // byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyi byams pa ni snying rje'i rang bzhin dang | kha na ma tho ba med pa dang // 'jig rten las 'das pa yin no // (6) ji ltar kha na ma tho ba med pa yin zhe na //* Translation Nagao 2000, 17.

[107] *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 116.3-118. See p.101 n. 146 of this thesis.

[108] This topic is further elaborated in the following chapter of this study.

in the case of the child-mother-relationship, however, self-care contains a form of attachment, which has to be transformed during the process of cultivation. The means to transforming the defilement of attachment inherent in familial relationships or in self-cherishing is explained multiple times in Mahāyāna literature: It is the method of infinite expansion according to which after recollecting feelings for oneself or the mother of this life, the bodhisattvas progressively transfer the generated love and compassion, first to close friends, then among medium friends, distant friends, and then from small enemies to great enemies, and finally to the infinity of all sentient beings in the universe.[109] Being attached to all beings in the universe factually means having no attachment, since it is impartially directed to all beings.

In the opinion of Buddhist scholar Stephen Jenkins, Buddhist compassion is closely tied to its aspect of passion. "The meditations for generating compassion, even in early Buddhism, are based on the expansion or extension of the very thing that drives the wheel of *saṃsāra*, self-cherishing" (Jenkins 1999, 45), he writes. I cannot agree with his overemphasis on self-cherishing and passion as the basis of compassion meditation. Instead, self-cherishing seems to be no more than a mere starting point of the meditation, whereas the more important aspect is the transformation to other-orientation that dominates most of the meditation. It is a skillful means for beginner trainees who cannot begin with anything other than their ordinary experience. Moreover, the metaphor of motherly love for her child symbolises an ideal form of selfless love and responsible care, even to the point of self-abnegation. Descriptions of motherly love illustrate an attitude of concern for another being that is more important than one's own person, thus resembling the altruistic ideal of the bodhisattva's compassion. The final goal is found in a

[109] For example, the AKBh's commentary to *kārikā* VIII, 31d by Vasubandhu offers instructions for the practice of the immeasurables for beginners (*ādikārmika*). The instructions state that trainees begin by recalling their own happiness.

state of universal impartial love and compassion, a complete transcendence of self-cherishing, as expressed in Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* 484a:

> May I be as dear to sentient beings as their own life,
> And may they be even dearer to me.[110]

In this verse, the idea of being caring for others even more than one habitually cares for one's own life expresses the sublimation of attachment, since having attachment for all beings in the universe is synonymous with having impartial love. Attachment to kin and self is therefore used as a constructive method for beginner bodhisattvas to cultivate the first type of compassion defined as "compassion which has sentient beings as its objects (*sattvālambana*)"; it is transcended in the two advanced forms, namely compassion with phenomena as object (*dharmālambana*), and objectless compassion (*anālambana*).

2.1.2. Aspirations and Intention Setting

The second set of methods mentioned above is the category of aspiration prayers (Skt: *praṇidhāna*, Tib: *smon lam*) – liturgies that consist of numerous altruistic wishes that are recited and contemplated by followers of the bodhisattva path, either individually or communally. The reciting person cultivates his or her mind by mentally following the text, thereby setting the intention to engage in altruistic behavior. Often recited out loud or chanted, the texts include pledges, vows, confessions, dedications, and descriptions of offerings. One of the oldest and most well-known aspiration prayers is the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* (Tib. *bzang spyod smon lam, The Aspiration for Excellent Conduct*), which is derived from the last chapter of the *Avataṃsaka*

[110] RN 484a (Nāgārjuna and Hahn 1982, 160, 13-16): *prāṇapriyaḥ syāṃ sattvānāṃ te matpriyatarāśca me* || Tib.: *sems can rnams la srog bzhin phangs // bdag las de dag ches phangs shog //* (English transl. Hopkins 90, 21-24).

Sūtra (*Flower Ornament Sūtra*).[111] The prayer formulates about fifty verses that express the extent of a bodhisattva's ideal altruistic attitude that the reciting person emulates by repeating the wishes, as the following verse exemplifies:

> Throughout each of the realms and in every direction,
> I shall pacify all suffering of the unfortunate realms.
> I shall establish all beings in happiness,
> and work for the benefit of everyone.[112]

Other well-known examples are the BCA's chapters III and X. They contain a number of aspiration verses that express impartial altruism, concern for the welfare of all beings, enthusiastic sacrifice and generosity, as the following verse III, 9 (Tib. III, 10) exemplifies

> For sentient beings, poor and destitute,
> May I become a treasure ever plentiful,
> And lie before them closely in their reach,
> A varied source of all that they might need.[113]

The ontological perspective the reciters of such verses adopts is that of a highly advanced bodhisattva practicing great compassion. Their attitude is marked by the vastness of the scope, the sincerity of the commitment and lacks references to ordinary feelings of affection for one's kin or friends. In addition to this type of extensive aspiration recitations, single verses of aspiration and prayers are integral part of all Buddhist liturgies. Their function is to actively

---

[111] The *sūtra* is translated into English from the Chinese sources by Thomas Cleary as *The Flower Ornament Scripture* (1984). The prayer which is also known as the *Samantabhadracaryāpraṇidhānarāja* (Samantabhadra's Aspirations to Good Actions, published as *The King of Prayers* (2015)) is found in the last chapter of the *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, which is also known independently as the *Gaṇḍhavyūha Sūtra*.

[112] *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna/ bzang spyod smon lam* (TG gzungs 'du, *waṃ* (262b5-266a3), verse 21): *zhing gi khyon dang phyogs rnams ci tsam par/ ngan song sdug bsngal rab tu zhi bar byed/ bde ba dag la 'gro ba kun 'god cing / 'gro ba thams cad la ni phan par spyad//*

[113] BCA III,9 (Minayeff 163, 20-21): *daridrāṇāṃ ca sattvānāṃ nidhiḥ syām aham akṣayaḥ |nānopakaraṇākārair upatiṣṭheyam agrataḥ* || Transl. Crosby/ Skilton 1999, 20: May I be an inexhaustible treasure for impoverished beings. May I wait upon them with various forms of offering. Tib. BCA III, 10 (TG dbu ma *la* 7a1-2): *sems can phongs shing dbul ba la // bdag ni mi zad gter gyur te // yo byad mkho dgu sna tshogs su // bdun du nge bar gnas gyur cig //* (Transl. in text: Padmakara 2006, 48).

construct altruistic ways of thinking through repeated recitation, thereby preparing the person to enact ethical conduct in daily life and enthusiasm for contemplative practice.

2.1.3. The Four Immeasurables

In the Tibetan traditions, a widely practiced form of cultivating an altruistic attitude is the four-line prayer of the four immeasurables (Skt. *catvāri apramāṇāḥ,* Tib. *tshad med bzhi*), which read in translation:

> May all beings have happiness and the cause of happiness.
> May all beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering.
> May all beings not be apart from the sublime happiness that is free of suffering.
> May all beings dwell in equanimity that is free from prejudice and partiality. [114]

The four immeasurables have been briefly mentioned previously (Chapter I.1.2 of this thesis) as a locus for a specific definition of compassion as being universal (*apramāṇakaruṇā*) and focused on the elimination of the causes of suffering. The four immeasurables are however mostly known as a practice of highly sophisticated mental attitudes, namely immeasurable loving-kindness (Skt. *apramāṇamaitrī,* Tib. *byams pa tshad med*), immeasurable compassion (Skt. *apramāṇakaruṇā,* Tib. *snying rje tshad med*), immeasurable joy (Skt. *apramāṇamūditā,* Tib. *dga' ba tshad med*) and immeasurable equanimity (Skt. *apramāṇopekṣā,* Tib. *stang snyoms tshad med*).

---

[114] *Skyabs 'gro sems bskyed*. In *Zhal 'don phyogs bsdebs*. Varanasi: Dge ldan spyi las khang, 2007,4.

sems can thams cad bde ba dang bde ba'i rgyu dang ldan par gyur chig/
sems can thams cad sdug bsngal dang sdug bsngal gyi rgyu dang bral bar gyur cig/
sems can thams cad sdug bsngal med pa'i bde ba dam pa dang mi 'bral bar gyur cig/
sems can thams cad nye ring chags dang bral ba'i btang snyoms la gnas par gyur cig//

A standard reference in the Karma Kagyü School for this liturgy can be found in Jamgön Kongtrül's compilation *gDams ngag mdzod*, in the *sgrub bryud karma kam tshang pa'i phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gyi sngon 'gro bzhi sogs kyi ngag 'don 'phags lam bgrod pa'i shing rta* by Karma pa IX Wangchug Dorje and others. This is a standard preliminary practices liturgy and manual (*karma kam tshang sngon 'gro*). See Wangchuk Dorjé (1971, 105-22).

While the origins of the practice are not clearly known, it has received much attention from exegetes throughout Buddhist history. In early Buddhist and possibly even already in pre-Buddhist Indian literature, the four contemplations are known as the four abodes of Brahmā (Skt. *catvāri brahmavihārāḥ*). They were understood as meditative absorptions that lead to a rebirth in the heaven of Brahmā.[115] Later interpretations shifted the focus to nirvāṇa as the ultimate goal[116] and emphasized the aspect of intention-setting, wishing, praying and formulating aspirations. In Indian Mahāyāna literature, the four *apramāṇa* are mentioned in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, Chapter XX; the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra* and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. Furthermore, they are explained in the *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* Ch.4 (Pagel 1992, 125-137); the AS II, Chapter III; AKBh VIII; MSA Ch. XVII; BBh XVI, and the Indian scholar Buddhagupta wrote a practice commentary with the same name, which is included in the Tibetan canon.[117]

Regarding the practice of the four immeasurables, many Mahāyāna texts explain them as mental states of bodhisattvas without detailing practical aspects of their cultivation. For instance, the BBh speaks of a "superior attitude" that "radiates" loving-kindness, compassion, and joy towards all sentient beings (Engle and Asaṅga, 11269). However, the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* II, Ch. III, 2 provides some clarification as Asaṅga explains the four states as absorptions based on specific aspirations. He states that they are exercises of the path of mental cultivation (Skt.

---

[115] Etienne Lamotte lists the following pre-Mahāyāna sources: *Dīghanikāya* II & III, *Theragātha* I, *Jātaka*, *Visuddhimagga*. He also states that the *Yoga Sūtra* I, 33 by Patanjali discusses them (Asaṅga and Lamotte 1973, 457, n10). For a study of these four in Theravāda context, where they are more commonly known as *brahmavihārāḥ*, see Harvey Aronson's dissertation on this subject (1975), his monograph (1980), and Maithrimurthi (1999). For a contemporary academic discussion of the immeasurables see Conze (1983).

[116] According to Har Dayal, the Mahāvastu exalts the *brahmavihārāḥ* to such an extent that it promises nirvāṇa and the *summum bonum* to the person who practices them (Dayal 1970, 227).

[117] *Caturapramāṇatīka*, by Buddhagupta (sangs rgyas gsang ba) (1994-2008). Translated by Lhasey Lotsawa Translations (2011) and Lotsawa House (2016); see Buddhagupta (2016).

bhāvanāmārga), each absorption composed of concentration (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), mind (*citta*) and mental factors (*caitta*). In Asaṅga's words:

> What are the immeasurables? There are four of them. What is loving-kindness? It is concentration and wisdom, and the mind and mental activities associated with them, based on the absorption with the thought: "May beings live in happiness." What is compassion? It is concentration and wisdom—the rest as above—based on the absorption with the thought: "May beings be free from suffering…."[118]

In the Tibetan context, the emphasis is on formulating the respective aspirations as a means of cultivating the corresponding superior attitude. The Tibetan prayer is recited by many Buddhist followers multiple times daily, generally in combination with the refuge prayer. Therefore, one can assume that it has important educational and spiritual functions: Firstly, it provides a definition of loving-kindness and compassion even for those not engaged in the study of the Buddhist doctrine. Secondly, it cultivates a habit for altruistic thinking. Thirdly, the infinite scope of the aspirations is believed to generate an immeasurable quantity of virtue, hence the name immeasurables – *apramāṇa*.

2.1.4. Personal Commitments

The fundamental characteristic that turns aspirations into genuine Mahāyāna practice is, as has been mentioned previously, the sense of courage, personal responsibility and active engagement in freeing others from their suffering. Mahāyānists insist that, as a means for cultivating great compassion, the four immeasurables have to be understood as the commitment to save sentient beings (Tib. *skyobs 'dod kyi snying rje chen po*) instead of merely wishing beings to be free from suffering (Tib. *sdug bsngal dang bral 'dod kyi snying rje*) (Engle,

[118] AS II (Viniścayasamuccaya), Ch.3, 2. *apramāṇāni katamāni| catvāri apramāṇāni| maitrī katamā| dhyānaṃ niśritya sattvāḥ sukhena saṃprayujyeranniti vihārasamṛddhau samādhiḥ prajñā tatsaṃprayuktāśca cittacaitasikā dharmāḥ|| karuṇā katamā| dhyānaṃ niśritya sattvā duḥkhena viyujyeranniti vihārasamṛddhau samādhiḥ prajñā śeṣaṃ pūrvavat||* (Sanskrit: http://www.dsbcproject.org/canon-text/content/98/787).

Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati 2009, 194, 451 n760). Therefore, compassionate aspirations often take the form of personal precepts and vows, the most important of which is the *bodhicitta* vow: the resolve to attain buddhahood. In the *Bodhisattvaprātimokṣa Sūtra*, the aspirants recite the following vows in the presence of real or imagined witnesses, inserting their personal names in the recitation:

> "I, with the name so-and-so, […] for the benefit and the liberation of the infinite world of beings, to deliver them from suffering of saṃsāra, I generate the mind of supreme and perfect awakening. […] From now on, the gifts I give, the discipline I observe, the patience I practice, the efforts I carry out, the concentration I develop, the wisdom I practice, the skilful means I employ, all of these will be dedicated to the welfare, the benefit and the happiness of all beings."[119]

In this verse, compassion is expressed as the aspiration to deliver beings from suffering. However, the vow itself is the pledge to generate aspiration-*bodhicitta* (Skt. *praṇidhicittotpāda*, Tib. *smon pa'i sems bskyed*) and application-*bodhicitta* (Skt. *prasthānacittotpāda*, Tib. *'jugs pa'i sems bskyed*). Because of the commitment to attaining awakening, the *sūtra* explains, bodhisattvas enact compassion with every action, be it an act of generosity, discipline, patience, or other.

To review, the methods that I subsume under the category of the constructive approach to cultivating compassion are those practices that construct new patterns of thinking which result in compassionate ways of relating to the suffering of others. The key elements of the constructive approach are the psychological transformation of attached kinship-affection into impartial universal loving concern and compassion, and the deliberate and repeated generation of aspirations, mentally and verbally, which should result in taking responsibility and direct action.

---

[119] *Bodhisattvaprātimokṣa Sūtra* (1931, 274-275)*: so 'ham evamnāmā* [...] *anantasattvadhātūttāraṇāyābhyuddharaṇāya samsāraduhkhāt paritrāṇāya* [...] *anuttarāyāṁ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādayāmi.* [...] *itaḥ prabhṛti yatkiṁcid dānaṁ dāsyāmi śilaṁ rakṣiṣyāmi kṣāntiṁ saṁpādayiṣyāmi vīryam ārabhya dhyānaṁ samāpatsye prajñayā vyavacārya upāyakauśalyam vā śiksisye tat sarvasattvānam arthāya hitāya sukhāya*, cited by Viévard (2001, 423).

2.2. The Deconstructive Approach

The deconstructive approach takes the opposite route, as it deconstructs mental barriers that impede compassion. These include mental poisons such as aversion, disgust, jealousy, anger and so forth, but also more subtle and unconscious biases and prejudices, while most fundamentally, the deconstructive approach aims at destroying the belief in a substantially existing self and the resulting self-cherishing and dualistic clinging. The Abhidharma definitions of compassion as the absence of harmfulness (*vihiṃsa*), discussed in the previous chapter, express the understanding that compassion can only truly unfold once its opposite forces such as anger, hatred, and aggression have been eliminated. Vasubandhu adds that great compassion is also the absence of ignorance.[120] This view is echoed by Asaṅga's explanations of compassion in negative terms, namely as the deconstruction of greed (*vairagya*) and harmfulness (*vihiṃsa*), or the deconstruction of the distinction between happy and unhappy, or self and other.[121] The first two points of this list are self-evident; the third instructs a state of equality (*sama*) based on the understanding that all experiences are transient and a form of suffering. Therefore, according to Asaṅga, one should have compassion also toward people that appear to be happy, not only toward those in pain. The fourth point refers to a deconstruction of the false distinction between self and other, which is fundamental to genuine compassion, as it implies that one is as concerned about alleviating others' suffering as one is with one's own. Once the misconception of a separate self is destroyed, the compassionate bodhisattvas will naturally care for others as much as they do for themselves. The deconstructive didactic approach is not so much concerned

[120] See AKBh VII, 33c *Bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu, discussed in Chapter I.3.3.1. of this thesis: *svabhāvato 'dveṣāmohasvabhāvatvāt* || "With respect to its nature: ordinary compassion is absence of hatred, whereas great compassion is absence of ignorance" (Vasubandhu, La Vallée Poussin, and Pruden 1988, Chapter VII, 33c, page 1144).

[121] MSA XVII, 35 (Lévi 1907, 17.35); translation and discussion: Nagao (2000, 12).

with the evident manifestations of suffering but more with their underlying causes. It is therefore an indirect and long-term approach to cultivating compassion. Once the obstructing forces to compassion are eliminated, one attains, according to Asaṅga, a state of purity (*viśuddhi*).[122] This results from the breakdown of conventional dualistic perception, which in his words is non-perception (*anupalambha*), because it is free from the perception of the three things (*trimaṇḍala*) – self, other and compassion itself, or more generally, subject, object and action.[123] The didactic method for deconstructing the barriers between self and other, or between subject, object and action is most famously explained in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (BCA). Chapter VIII on meditative concentration is a collection of various techniques for reversing self-grasping and deconstructing the barriers between self and others. These meditations are collectively known as "equalizing and exchanging self and other" (Skt. *svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana,* Tib. *bdag gzhan mnyams brje*),[124] and aim at deconstructing the sense of a substantial, separate self, and the attached moral evaluation that oneself is more important than others.[125] As the various aspects of Śāntideva's deconstructive method will be analysed in some detail in the following chapter of this study, their detailed presentation is omitted here.

2.2.1. Deconstructing Fear

A contentious topic is the bodhisattva's relationship to suffering. Are bodhisattvas harming themselves when cultivating compassion? Compassionate persons need the capacity to

---

[122] MSA XVII, 34 and 64 (Lévi 1907, 17.34; 17.64). See p.41 of this thesis, Chapter I.3.1.2. on Yogācāra.

[123] Purification or purity refers to the insight into the non-origination of all existences (*anutpattikadharmakṣanti*), which a bodhisattva understands on the eighth bhūmi (Nagao 2000, 12, 30).

[124] BCA VII, 16 and VIII, 120, 140-154 (Śāntideva (zhi ba lha)). Translated from Sanskrit: Śāntideva, Crosby, and Skilton (1995, 68, 99, 100-154); translated from Tibetan: Śāntideva and Padmakara (2006, 99, 126, 129-131).

[125] An extensive discussion of this meditation is the subject of Chapter III of this study.

cope with the painful aspects of empathy and be willing to bear hardships for the sake of others. The fear of experiencing suffering prevents many people from committing to compassion. An important aspect of training compassion is therefore to deconstruct fear. This type of resistance to compassion is not unknown to Buddhist scholars as several examples in Buddhist literature show. For instance, Asaṅga affirms that compassion involves pain: "Observing that the world is of the nature of suffering, the compassionate one (*kṛpālu*) suffers…."[126] In the BCA VIII, 104, Śāntideva engages in an imagined debate with an opponent who asks: "Compassion makes us feel such pain, why allow it to arise against one's will?"[127] Both authors ascertain later on in their explanations that eventual experiences of suffering will be eclipsed by even greater joy, being the result of their meditations, and the result of bringing happiness to others. This is especially true for advanced bodhisattvas whose emotional experiences are uplifted by their understanding of ultimate reality. Instead of sorrow or terror, they feel delight:[128] "There is nothing more

---

[126] MSA XVII, 33 (Lévi 1907, 17.33): *duḥkhātmakaṃ lokam avekṣamāṇo duḥkhāyate vetti ca tadyathāvat | tasyābhyupāyaṃ parivarjane ca na khedam āyaty api vā kṛpāluḥ* || Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 215b6): *'jig rten sdug bsngal bdag nyid lta ba yi // brtse dang ldan pa'i sdug bsngal de dang ni // de yongs spang ba'i thabs kyang ji bzhin rig // nyam nga bar byed skyo bar yang mi 'gyur//* Observing that the world is of the nature of suffering, the compassionate one (*kṛpālu*) suffers (by this fact), and he truly knows it, as well as the means to get rid of it. Or, further, he does not become exhausted [in his practice of those means] (Nagao 2000, 11).

[127] BCA VIII, 104 (Min 201, 23-24): *kṛpayā bahu duḥkhaṃ cet kasmād utpadyate balāt* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 27b3): *snying rje sdug bsngal mang gyur pa // ci phyir nan gyis skyed ce na //* Translation from Skt: Skilton (1995, 97); from Tib: Padmakara (2006, 124).

[128] MSA XVII, 46 (Lévi 1907, 17.46): *duḥkhābhāve duḥkhaṃ yatkṛpayā bhavati bodhisatvānāṃ | saṃtrāsayati tad ādau spṛṣṭaṃ tv abhinandayati gāḍhaṃ* || Tib.(TG sems tsam *phi* 217b1-2): *byang chub sems dpa' sdug bsngal med // brtse bas sdug bsngal 'gyur ba gang // de la dang por kun tu skrag // reg nas shin tu mngon par dga' //* Translation from Skt: In the nonexistence of suffering, whatever suffering comes to the bodhisattvas due to compassion terrifies them at first but when it is deeply penetrated it causes them delight (Nagao 2000, 19). Translation from Tib., first line: Bodhisattvas have no suffering.

MSA XVII, 47 (Lévi 1907, 17.47): *kim ataḥ paramāścaryaṃ yad duḥkhaṃ saukhyam abhibhavati sarva | kṛpayā janitaṃ laukyaṃ yena vimukto api kṛtārthaḥ* || Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 217b3-4): *brtse ba bskyed pa'i sdug bsngal 'jig rten gyi // bde ba thams cad zil gyis gnon 'gyur zhin // don byas rnams kyaṅ de dang mi ldan gang // de las ngo mtshar che ba ci zhig yod //* Trans from Skt: There is nothing more marvelous than this – that just that suffering of bodhisattas born out of compassion becomes such a happiness that surpasses all mundane happiness; and even the arhats who have accomplished their aims are deprived of that happiness, not to speak of others. (Nagao 2000, 19).

marvelous than this – that just that suffering of bodhisattvas born out of compassion becomes such a happiness that surpasses all mundane happiness," Asaṅga exclaims. The final act of fearlessness is the bodhisattvas' willingness to remain in saṃsāra and bear all its disadvantages of out of compassion. MSA XVII, 49 reads:

> Out of compassion for the sake of living beings, they do not forsake the suffering by which the transmigrational life is constituted. What suffering for the benefit of others will the compassionate ones not embrace?[129]

Śāntideva's BCA VIII, 107 expresses the same idea with the poetic metaphor of wild geese or swans' sweeping down upon a lotus pond, symbolizing bodhisattvas' relationship to even the worst forms of suffering:

> Those whose minds are practiced in this way,
> Whose joy it is to soothe another's ills,
> Will venture into hell of Unrelenting Pain
> As swans sweep down upon a lotus lake.[130]

These quotations illustrate an aspect of courage and fearlessness in compassionate behavior that is described with a connotation of enthusiastic joy, illustrated by water birds plunging down into clusters of lotus blossoms. However, they present a non-conventional state in which an individual does not operate on the ordinary level of self-preservation, and most likely refer to advanced bodhisattvas on the eighth bhūmi and higher.[131] Such reflections may not suffice for a

---

[129] MSA XVII, 49 (Lévi 1907, 17.49): *duḥkhamayaṃ saṃsāraṃ yatkṛpayā na tyajati satvārthaṃ | parahitahetor duḥkhaṃ kiṃ kārūṇikair na samupetam* || Tib.: *sems can don phyir brtse bas sdug bsngal gyi // rang bzhin 'khor ba gang yin mi gtong na // snying rje can rnams gzhan la phan pa'i phyir // sdug bsngal ci ste khas len byed mi 'gyur //* (Translation Nagao 2000, 20).

[130] BCA VIII, 107 (Min 202,3-4): *evaṃ bhāvitasaṃtānāḥ paraduḥkhasamapriyāḥ | avīcim avagāhante haṃsāḥ padmavanaṃ yathā* || Tib: *de ltar rgyud ni goms gyur pa // gzhan gyi sdug bsngal zhi dga' bas // pa dma'i mtsho ru ngang pa ltar // mnar med pa yang 'jug par 'gyur//* (Translation Padmakara 2006, 124).

[131] Chapter VIII of the BCA blurs the lines between the training of compassion and its resultant perfected state. Although a chapter on the training of meditative concentration, the verses describe advanced states or rather the final result of the meditation on *bodhicitta* and compassion. In BCA V, 86, Śāntideva puts a limit to beginners: He admonishes his audience not to sacrifice the physical body as long as the absence of a substantially existing self is not realized: Skt: *saddharmasevakaṃ kāyam itarārtaṃ na pīḍayet | evam eva hi sattvānām āśām āśu prapūrayet* || Tib*: dam pa'i chos ni spyod pa'i lus // phran tshegs ched du gnod mi bya // de ltar byas na sems can gyi // bsam pa myur du rdzogs par 'gyur//* The body, used to practice sacred teachings, should not be harmed in meaningless

beginner bodhisattva to completely deconstruct fear. Moreover, they require a strong belief in a far-removed reward for endurance. However, they might provide the basis for the following contemplations.

The method to deconstruct fear appears to be a mental training that engages in the most extreme imaginations of suffering as a way to weaken mental resistance. Mahāyāna literature is filled with examples and instructions that opposes one's habitual sense of self-preservation. For instance, the APS alludes to imagined pain inflicted by others to strengthen the bodhisattva's resolution: "Even if they cut [my] body into one hundred pieces, [I] produce love and compassion and do not have malice towards them." Śāntideva, in his BCA enthusiastically proclaims his willingness to change his relationship to pain, whether self-inflicted or caused by others:

> If for others' sake I harm myself,
> Then every excellence will be my heritage. (BCA VIII, 126)

In the following verse, Śāntideva invites pain as a means to curb attachment to the own body:

> This body I have now resigned
> To serve the pleasure of all living beings.
> Let them ever kill, despise, and beat it,
> Using it according to their wish. (BCA III, 13)[132]

Fearless disregard for the body is much praised from the beginning of Buddhist history, as early as the *Jataka Tales*. Similarly, the MSA's Chapter V on practice (Skt. *pratipatti,* Tib. *sgrub pa*)

---

pursuits. By acting thus the wishes of all beings will swiftly and completely be attained. (Śāntideva and Padmakara, 73).

For examples of giving the body in Buddhist literature, see (Dayal 1970, 181-188) For an extensive discussion on the issue, see Ohnuma (2000) Charles Goodman attempts to harmonize the view of bodily sacrifice with the theory of utilitarianism in Goodman (2016).

[132] BCA VIII 126 (Min 203, 14-15): *ātmānaṃ pīḍayitvā tu parārthaṃ sarvasaṃpadaḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 28b1): *gzhan phyir bdag la gnod byas na // phun sum tshogs pa thams cad 'thob //;* BCA III, 12 (Min 164,3-4): *yathāsukhīkṛtaś1 cātmā mayāyaṃ sarvadehinām | ghnantu nindantu vā nityam ākirantu ca pāṃsubhiḥ* || Tib: *bdag gis lus can thams cad la // lus 'di ci bder byin zin gyis // rtag tu gsod daṅ smod pa'am // brdeg sogs ci dgar byed la rag //* Translation Padmakara (2006, 127; 49)

begins with the emphatic statement that the compassionate bodhisattva voluntarily self-inflicts more pain than an ordinary person would impose on their enemies.[133] Although these texts do not theorize their didactic approach, one can assume that these contemplations provoke bodhisattvas in training to analyse their assumptions about the nature of suffering, and experiment with what it means to accept disadvantages and to put others first. Their reflections might include the recognition that "suffering" is not a solid entity, which means that an experience of hardship can be a challenge or a curse, depending on how it is conceptualized. Training a change in perspective is one of the aspects of the previously mentioned didactic method of "equalizing and exchanging self and other." In particular, the aspect of exchanging one's own happiness for others' pain in BCA VIII, 131 has been interpreted by the scholars of the Tibetan Lojong tradition as a contemplative practice by which meditators imaginatively approach the idea of enduring pain. This is the meditation of *tonglen* (Tib. for giving and receiving) which is the formal practice also of secular compassion training and thus stands at the center of this study. In *tonglen* practice, meditators imaginatively invite the suffering of others and absorb it in their own heart-mind. In this manner they mentally face their resistance to pain.[134] One of the purposes of Śāntideva's exchange meditation and of *tonglen* meditation is thus to deconstruct the mental habit of self-preservation and self-protection. Śāntideva's BCA in its entirety suggests a progression from experiencing suffering to accepting suffering, to inviting suffering, and finally to transforming it into joy. The training in *tonglen* combines both deconstructive and constructive

[133] MSA V, 3: *paratra loko na tathātinirdayaḥ pravartate tāpanakarmaṇā ripau | yathā parārthaṃ bhṛśaduḥkhatāpane kṛpātmakaḥ svātmani saṃpravartate* ||

[134] Chapter III of this study describes Śāntideva's practice of equalizing and exchange in more detail, and Chapter IV discusses aspects of *tonglen* practice.

aspects since it deconstructs attachment to the self, but it constructs the quality of courage and fearlessness.

2.3. Cognitive-Analytic Approach

With the cognitive-analytic approach I refer to the sum of analytic contemplations with which bodhisattvas learn the rationale for cultivating compassion, thereby clarifying their world view and strengthening their commitment to persevere in the practice. Analytic meditations often precede contemplations of compassion and *bodhicitta* or are combined with them. These demand bodhisattvas-in-training to closely analyse various aspects of reality; the insights thus gained will transform their outlook on life. The term analysis or analytic meditation (Skt. *vicārayet, vicārabhāvanā*, Tib. *rnam par dpyad pa, dpyad sgom,*) can be found in different contexts and is not restricted to the cultivation of compassion. It plays an important role in the context of tranquility and insight meditation (Skt. *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā;* Tib. *zhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*) where it refers to the investigative endeavors by which meditators seek to gain certainty about reality. Investigations are inferential, starting with objects of examination (*parīkṣaṇa*) that are material and apparent, but moving on to objects of non-material form, and culminating in insights into the nature of the mind. Analytical meditation is juxtaposed to equipoise or mental settling (Skt. *sthāpyabhāvanā,* Tib *'jog sgom*), also conceptualized as calm abiding or tranquility meditation (Skt. *śamatha,* Tib. *zhi gnas*). This second type of meditation refers to the mind's capacity to devote concentrated attentiveness to the object of meditation. When this alert attention is combined with investigation, it greatly enhances the quality of the investigation. In its final stage, it is through equipoise that the mind is capable of settling nondually in the realization of its own nature which it has gained through investigation. Classic presentations of

these two types of meditation can be found in Kamaliśīla's *Bhāvanākrama,* in Lamrim literature and in Mahāmudrā literature.[135]

2.3.1. Objects of Analytic Meditation

Compassion meditation is sustained and enhanced by a broad range of topics of analytic meditation. Bodhisattvas must contemplate, for instance, the advantages of compassion cultivation, the disadvantages of lacking compassion, the varieties of suffering, or the meaning of the equality of self and other. This last contemplation is particularly important as a preparation for actively engaging in the practice of compassion, as will be shown below. In the following, each of these themes will be elucidated.

2.3.2. Advantages and Disadvantages

MSA XVII, 34 instructs meditators to focus on "the virtues and faults" as the object of examination (*parīkṣaṇa*). Vasubandhu's commentary explains that these refer to the virtues of possessing or cultivating compassion and the fault of not doing so (Nagao 2000).[136] Similarly, in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 126-131, Śāntideva asserts that wishing happiness for others instead of oneself leads to experiencing the advantages of prosperity (*sarvasaṃpada*), happiness (*sukha*) and power (*svāmitva*), whereas the disadvantages of not practicing the exchange meditation include the impossibility of attaining meditational accomplishments (*sādhya*), buddhahood

[135] For a discussion on insight in the *Bhāvanākrama*, see Adam (2002). For extensive discussions from the point of view of Mahāmudrā meditation, see Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (dvags po bkra shis rnam rgyal) (1998, 2019) . The Lamrim presentation from Gelug perspective, cited by Brendan Ozawa de Silva, can be found in Pabonka (1993).

[136] The author of the commentary is believed to be either Vasubandhu or Asaṅga himself, the author of the MSA.

(*buddhatva*), or even mundane happiness (*sukha*).[137] The analysis of the advantages and disadvantages is a common part of meditation practices, as it enables practitioners to establish a robust rationale for their discipline, which helps them persevere with diligence.

2.3.3. Suffering

Another common object of analysis is suffering. The previous chapter's discussion of the three *ālambana*s of compassion showed that a refined understanding of the different forms of suffering stabilizes compassion and differentiates it according to the bodhisattvas' understanding of reality. In addition, the examination of one hundred and ten forms of suffering are recommended by Asaṅga, "by means of which the compassion of bodhisattvas is developed and increased and their meditation reaches perfection"(Engle 2016, I.16.3.2). Śāntideva also gives extensive descriptions of samsaric suffering as the result of desire and ignorance as a means to strengthen renunciation prior to the meditation of equalizing and exchanging self and others in BCA VIII.[138]

2.3.4. Sameness

The topic of sameness could be interpreted as belonging to all three approaches: As a constructive element, cultivating the idea that all beings are equal in that they have been our

[137] BCA VIII, 126-131 juxtapose advantages of practicing *bodhicitta*, or compassion, with the disadvantages of not doing so. Most famously, verse 131 (Min 203, 24-25) states: *na nāma sādhyaṃ buddhatvaṃ saṃsāre 'pi kutaḥ sukham | svasukhasyānyaduḥkhena parivartam akurvataḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 28b4): *bdag bde gzhan gyi sdug bsngal dag// yang dag brje ba ma byas na // sangs rgyas nyid du mi 'grub cing // 'khor ba na yang bde ba med //* Transl.: All the joy the world contains has come through wishing happiness for others. All the misery the world contains has come from wanting pleasure for oneself (Padmakara 2006, 128). Transl. from Sanskrit by Crosby and Skilton (1999), 99.

[138] BCA VIII, 4-88. These analytical meditations on the flaws of saṁsāra are presented in the BCA as part of the perfection of meditative concentration.

mothers leads to attitudes of gratitude and care. In the context of the deconstructive approach, it refers to deconstructing barriers between self and others so as to see them as equally important. I have, however, included the discussion of sameness in the cognitive-analytic approach because I see it primarily as a preparatory step that transforms a person's perception of the world. In Buddhist understanding, meditators do not construct sameness, but learn to recognize the already existing condition of being alive as a being in a reality marked by impermanence and suffering. In this context "sameness" stands for beings' equal desire for happiness, equal vulnerability to suffering, and equal hope to escape and avoid pain. The recognition of this condition serves as a phenomenological argument for the practice of compassion: it is an undeniable shared experience of all humans, and even more generally, of all sentient beings. Phenomenological, in this context, has to be understood in the sense of "contemplative phenomenology," coined by Brendan Ozawa de Silva, being a phenomenology that describes phenomena the way they *should* or *will* appear to trained meditators such as the advanced bodhisattvas addressed in the *sūtra*. Contemplative phenomenology thus has a normative and teleological character, in that it tells us how we should correctly perceive the world (Ozawa-de Silva 2015, 170). In the *sūtra* passage, bodhisattvas are told to perceive all beings as one family, thus acknowledging the interdependence of all, and their sameness as family members. According to Ozawa-de Silva, the idea of sameness is argued from a phenomenological perspective relying on the personal experience of the bodhisattva rather than the metaphysical speculation about the ontology of persons. The first-person perspective is projected onto the experience of all beings, implying that all beings equally wish happiness. Thus, the logical conclusion is that the altruistic wish to liberate beings has to apply impartially and universally to all beings.

Recognizing the sameness (Skt. *śamatha,* Tib. *mnyam pa, gcig pa*) of self and other is one of the core cognitive skills of the bodhisattva. Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (MSA) describes how the generation of the awakening mind is interconnected with an attitude of equality, which is equivalent to eradicating the distinction between self and other:

> When you have the attitude of the equality of self and others, or even keep others dearer than yourself, then you have determined the welfare of others as more important than your own. What does it mean then "my welfare or "your welfare"? (MSA V, 2)[139]

The idea of sameness or equality has already been introduced in the discussion of great compassion, where it designates the ontological standpoint of an advanced bodhisattva and buddha, who has compassion equally for all, independently of their present situation, which can be painful, joyful or neutral. MSA XVII 64 elaborates on the meaning of equality:

> Know that the compassion of the bodhisattvas is equal because of its intention, right practice, being free from greed, non-perception, and purification.[140]

According to the explanations given in Vasubandhu's commentary to this verse, fully understanding equality is reserved to advanced bodhisattvas on the eighth bodhisattva *bhūmi*. Equality manifests, firstly, in the bodhisattvas' intention, since their compassion is directed equally to unhappy and happy beings,[141] knowing that all experiences potentially carry the quality of suffering.[142] In addition, equality must be expressed in the "right practice," which

---

[139] MSA VI, 2-3 (Lévi 5.2): *paratralabdhvātmasamānacittatāṃ svato 'dhi vā śreṣṭhatareṣṭatāṃ pare | tathātmano 'nyārthaviśiṣṭasaṃjñinaḥ svakārthatā kā katamā parārthatā* || Tib.(TG sems tsam *phi* 143a5-6): *gzhan dang bdag tu mnyam pa'i sems nyid dam // bdag pas gzhan ches sdug pa rnyed nas ni // de ltar bdag pas gzhan don mchog tu shes // rang gi don gang gzhan gyi don gang yin* // See also the verses following the here cited verse, i.e. 143a6-143b2.

[140] MSA XVII, 64: *karuṇā bodhisatvānāṃ samā jñeyā tadāśayāt | pratipatter virāgāc ca nopalambhād viśuddhitaḥ*|| According to the interpretation of Nagao (2000, 29-30).

[141] MSA XVII, 35, Comm. (Levi 1907, 17.35): *tatra samā sukhitādiṣu yatkiṃcid veditam idam atra duḥkhasyeti viditvā*|| Translation Nagao (2000, 11-12): Here (a bodhisattva's compassion is): "equal" (*sama*) towards all sentient beings who are happy and so on (because a bodhisattva is compassionate) having understood that life is suffering.

[142] Nagao cites the *Vṛtti*, the subcommentary by Shtiramati, to explain that this type of compassion is reserved to the bodhisattvas: "In the mundane world, there is compassion such as love of parents for children, friends, and so on, but there is no love for an enemy. *Śrāvaka*s and *pratyekabuddha*s also have compassion for suffering beings, but not

according to Vasubandhu is "protecting all beings." It must be "free from greed," that is, impartial due to the absence of harmfulness. Interesting is the fourth point, "non-perception" (*anupalambha*) of the so-called three spheres, subject, object and action, which in the present context refer to self, other and compassion itself. These three are equal in that they cannot be perceived, since their ultimate nature is emptiness. The ontological aspect of equality is further expressed in the last characteristic listed in the verse, "purification," which refers to the fact that in a bodhisattva's perception, all phenomena are equal in their non-origination. Only on the eighth *bhūmi*, bodhisattvas attain the insight into the non-origination of all existences (*anutpattikadharma-kṣānti*) (Nagao 2000, 30), therefore, only at that level do they embody impartial compassion, according to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

These textual examples show that the notion of sameness or equality can be found as an important philosophical idea in early Mahāyāna sources. Śāntideva draws on these to build his contemplation of "equalizing and exchange of self and others." The practical application of the notion of sameness may lead to counter-intuitive consequences, since universal compassion includes unlikely objects, such as criminals or people that do not manifestly suffer, such as the rich, healthy, successful individuals.[143] In the long-term perspective of causes and karmic consequences, everyone, but especially the perpetrators of unwholesome actions face unavoidable future sufferings and are thus valid objects of compassion. Since the deep understanding of the sameness of self and other is the result of analysis and discerning awareness, it can be understood as a cognitive-analytical element, but it also entails the

for beings who are happy and comforted. A bodhisattva, on the other hand, realizes that any sensation whatsoever is non other than suffering, and, looking at these sufferings, he pities not only beings of the *Avīci*-hell, the world of uppermost pain, but also equally beings of the *Bhavāgra*-heaven, the world of uppermost pleasure." Ibid., p.30, n 69.

[143] MSA XVII (Lévi 1907) describes the objects of compassion, including the violent, those disturbed by anger, the reckless, and those attached to falsebood.

deconstruction of the conventional sense of self and the dualistic distinction between self and other. The examples given here show that the boundary between cognitive-analytic and the two other approaches are porous.

In conclusion, it is worth noticing that the three didactic approaches that I identified in compassion cultivation can be correlated with the typology of compassion given in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* (MSA) XVII, 34. As mentioned previously, Chapter VII of the MSA is one of the few theoretical, comprehensive discussions of compassion. In verse 34, Asaṅga distinguishes between compassion cultivated through careful analysis (*pratisaṃkhyā*), through repeated cultivation (*abhyāsavidhāna*), and through the elimination of adversary forces (*vipakṣa*) that impede compassion,[144] which correspond to the three approaches of cognitive-analytical, constructive and deconstructive. Asaṅga gives a fourth type, preceding the three listed here, namely compassion that arises "from its nature (*prakṛti*)." This is the naturally present potential for compassion that exists in each person and which serves as the basis and starting point for its cultivation described in the latter three points.[145]

2.4. An Early Example from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*

As one of the many examples for a contemplative practice of compassion, the following passage from one of the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*

[144] The full verse MSA XVII, 34 (Lévi 1907, 17.34) states: *kṛpā prakṛtyā pratisaṁkhyayā ca pūrvaṁ tadabhyāsavidhānayogāt | Vipakṣahīnā ca viśuddhilābhāt caturvidheyaṁ karuṇātmakānāṁ || seyaṁ yathākramaṁ gotraviśeṣataḥ | guṇadoṣaparīkṣaṇataḥ | janmāntaraparibhāvanataḥ | vairāgyalābhataśca veditavyā ||* Tib: snying rje'i bdag nyid can gyi brtse ba 'di // rang bzhin dang ni so sor brtags pa dang // de sngon goms par byas dang ldan pa dang // mi mthun phyogs nyams rnam dag thob pa bzhi // Engl.:The compassionate ones (*karuṇātmaka/* bodhisattvas) have four types of compassion (*kṛpā*): 1) that from its nature (*prakṛti*), 2) from its careful analysis (*pratisaṁkhyā*), 3) from methods of cultivation (*abhyāsavidhāna*) acquired in a former life, and 4) from gain of purity (*viśuddhi*) by destroying its adversary (*vipakṣa*) (Nagao 2000, 11).The translation is slightly modified, namely "pity" is replaced by "compassion for reasons of coherence.

[145] Compassion as an inherent part of human nature has been discussed in Chapter I.

(APS), illustrates how the three didactic approaches are interwoven into a single multifaceted contemplative practice. Although the APS passage is generally taken to describe the generation of *bodhicitta* (*bodhicittotpāda*), there is no contradiction in considering it as compassion cultivation since the *sūtra* passage explicitly states this purpose. The passage reads:

> A bodhisattva, a great being, should perceive all sentient beings as mother, father, sons, and daughters. As one wishes happiness for oneself, [one] should apply happiness to other beings as well. One should liberate from suffering all beings without exception, not giving up on any sentient being. Even if they cut one's body into one hundred pieces, one produces love and compassion and does not have malice towards them.[146]

In this passage of the APS we can identify nine distinct themes that are interwoven to form a complex mental training. The constituents can be distinguished according to the threefold analytic approach system that I presented above.

1. Constructive elements:
    a. cultivating a sense of kinship with all beings
    b. appreciating self-care, applying it to others
    c. cultivating aspirations (to liberate beings)
    d. cultivating forbearance (in the face of pain)
    e. producing love and compassion
2. Deconstructive elements:
    a. deconstructing partiality (all beings without exception are included)
    b. eliminating harmful intentions (one does not have malice)
3. Cognitive-analytic elements:
    a. perceiving the interdependence of all beings (all are family)
    b. recognizing the sameness of self and others (in desiring happiness)

[146] *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 116.3-118: *tasmān mātṛsaṃjna pitṛsaṃjna putrasaṃjna duhitṛsaṃjna bodhisattvena mahāsattvena sarvasattvānām antike yāvad atmasaṃjna utpādayitavyā | yathā ātmā sarveṇa sarvaṃ sarvathā sarvaṃ sarvaduḥkhebhyo mocayitavyaḥ evaṃ sarvasattvāḥ sarveṇa sarvaṃ sarvathā sarvaṃ sarvadu˙khebhyo mocayitavyā iti | evaṃ ca sarvasattveṣu saṃjna utpādayitavyā mayaite sarvasattvā na parityaktavyāḥ | mayaite sarvasattvāḥ parimocayitavyā aparimāṇato duḥkhaskandhāt | na ca mayaiteṣu cittapradoṣa utpādayitavya antaśaḥśataśo 'pi chidyamāneneti | evaṃ hi bodhisattvena mahāsattvena cittamutpādayitavyam*‖ (Haribhadra and Wogihara 1932-35, 14). Cited by Apple (2010, 137) and Gareth Sparham (1992) who discusses it as the origin passage of bodhicitta.

The majority of these themes belong to the constructive approach, while the cognitive-analytic and the deconstructive elements support and complement the compassion cultivation. All of these themes that appear here in succinct and conglomerated form are important topics in Mahāyāna literature and thus extensively expounded in other texts, some of which have been referenced here. In general, one will notice that these three didactic approaches are never single standing exercises but appear in combinations to build more complex contemplative practices. Although one could conclude that any approach alone is capable of producing compassion, Buddhist scholars have presented them in various combinations. From the point of view of the didactic outcome for the meditator, one may generalize that the constructive method is more concerned with producing short-term effects in enhancing compassion; the deconstructive method aims at long-term results and the elimination of the roots of suffering; while the cognitive-analytic approach provides the rationale for compassion cultivation and a theoretical framework that stabilizes its practice and helps make compassion an enduring trait of one's character.

3. Compassion Culture Revisited

This chapter began with a discussion of the philosophical framework in which the cultivation of compassion is embedded, which I called the compassion culture. Another aspect of compassion culture is to be considered when it comes to determining the life style that is most conducive to cultivating compassion. The following reflections weigh two proposals for an ideal compassionate life style from Mahāyāna literature against one another, namely a prosocial versus an asocial life. The former focuses on social engagement and emphasizes the three forms of generosity, the latter focuses on self-cultivation in solitude. Is the socially engaged lifestyle

favored over an asocial life in isolation? These two visions of a compassionate life symptomatically display the tension between benefitting others and benefitting oneself. On the surface, it seems that compassion demands social engagement and that a life in isolation only serves one's personal benefit. This assessment is contradicted by the concept of the two benefits (Skt. *dvayārthā,* Tib. *don gnyis*) and their inherent circularity.

3.1. The Prosocial and Asocial Variants

The most common prosocial expression of compassion is generous giving, which includes three forms of generosity, namely giving material objects, psychological support, or spiritual advice.[147] In MSA XVII, Asaṅga links the practice of compassion directly to that of generosity, suggesting that generosity is the foremost expression of compassion and is also enhanced by it.

> Compassion, generosity, and fortune always increase for the compassionate one. From this comes happiness, born of love and assistance and produced due to the capacity to act.[148]

The author goes on to explain that one of the functions of generosity is attracting beings to a virtuous life style, thereby bringing them to spiritual maturity.[149] This is an important indication of what it means to alleviate the suffering of others. Whereas generosity of material goods to alleviate poverty and suffering are important, they are only short-lived, and thus, cultivating the causes for lasting happiness and eliminating the causes of suffering has a prime role. Engaging in actions that educate others in how to lead a virtuous life and stop perpetuating further causes of

---

[147] Explanations about the perfection of generosity can be found in the *Pāramitāsamāsa* by Aryaśūra, Ch.1, (Meadows 1986, Saito, Vairocana, and Āryaśūra 2005) and in the BBh I,9 (Engle 2016).

[148] MSA XVII, 50 (Lévi 1907, 17,50): *karūṇā dānaṃ bhogāḥ sadā kṛpālor vivṛddhim upayānti | snehānugrahajanitaṃ tac chaktikṛtaṃ sukhaṃ cāsmāt ||*

[149] MSA VII, 59, commentary, (Lévi 1907. 7.59); Translation: Nagao 2000, 26.

suffering is the most important aspect of a long-term vision of compassionate activity. It is this far-reaching aspect of eradicating harmful behaviour that connects compassion with the larger ethical framework of Mahāyāna discipline, as compassionate activity means practising the six perfections (*pāramitā*) of the bodhisattva path. Thereby one becomes the embodiment of a Mahāyāna ethical ideal. The perfections are generally understood as means of self-perfection so as to reach "the other shore" of awakening or omniscience. Here however, according to Asaṅga, their practice has the additional function to educate and correct the "adversaries (*vipakṣa*) of the *pāramitās*," that is, to educate those who are acting in unwholesome ways (Nagao 2000, 28). In this way, practicing the perfections is understood as beneficial for both, self and others. The image of a compassionate life given here by Asaṅga, and also repeated in multiple ways by other scholars, is that of a prosocial life, engaged in charities, moral conduct and teaching ethical guidelines to others. As bodhisattvas aspire to free beings from suffering in a long-term perspective, their task is to teach them Mahāyāna ethical standards, such as the avoidance of the ten non-virtuous actions of killing, stealing, lying, etc., and, ultimately, inspiring them to act meritoriously and pursue the bodhisattva path to buddhahood.

In contrast to this prosocial life style, Buddhist scholars have also proposed an asocial variance, that is, a life in isolation from society. The rationale for considering a life in solitude an expression of compassion is that perfecting one's own spiritual capacities becomes a means to effectively guide others in developing their own wisdom, and to inspire them on the way. In the words of Śāntideva, who in the ŚS VI quotes the following passage from the *Sūtra on Chanting the Dharma Together* (Skt. *Dharmasaṃgīti Sūtra*, Tib. *chos yang dag par sdud pa'i mdo*), we find the relationship between a contemplative lifestyle and compassion expressed:

> A mind absorbed in meditation sees things just as they are. In a bodhisattva who sees things as they are, great compassion unfolds for sentient beings. Such a person

> thinks, "I should bring it about that all sentient beings see everything just as it is as a result of meditative absorption." Moved by that great compassion, this person quickly completes the training in higher moral discipline, higher thought, and higher wisdom, and awakens fully to highest genuine full awakening. (Śāntideva and Goodman 2016, 117-118)

According to this verse, practicing meditative absorption becomes a compassionate act aimed at helping others to develop their own wisdom. It is the agent's intentions that characterize his or her actions as compassionate. The benefit for others is not immediately perceivable, since the "quick completion of training" that the sūtra mentions may nevertheless take many life times. In the BCA, Śāntideva confirms this view. In Chapter VIII, the description of the equalizing and exchange meditation, considered the root of compassion and *bodhicitta* training, is preceded by contemplations about various reasons to renounce social life and pursue a contemplative life in isolation, which he sees as the perfect environment for cultivating compassion and *bodhicitta*. The first half of Chapter VIII is a praise of a solitary life in isolation devoted to meditation (BCA VIII,2-4; 39; 85-89) combined with a warning about various forms of desire (5-38; 40-84).

Since compassion can be expressed in such diametrically opposite ways, the absence of material generosity cannot be equated with an absence of compassion. Under certain conditions, receiving alms can just as much be an expression of compassion as giving them. Śāntideva, in the same work, describes the possibility of the compassion trainee being at the receiving end of generosity, instead of being a donor. The bodhisattva uses the gift as a means of creating a bond between the donor and one's own liberating practice: "I should act so that all those sentient beings who come into my field of vision or give me alms will go to good rebirths" (Śāntideva 2016, 126, cited from the *Ratnarāśi Sūtra*).

3.2. Benefitting Self and Others

Who benefits from compassion cultivation? Buddhist textual material and contemporary scientific research both ascertain that the compassion-trainees benefit from their mental training. The success of secular compassion training might, in part, be derived from this piece of information: that compassion-trainees are the first beneficiaries of the training, as neuroscientific, neurobiological experiments and psychological self-assessments have shown scientifically measurable health benefits for the participants. It seems like a paradox: benefitting oneself directly contradicts the very nature of compassion as other-oriented wish to alleviate suffering. One might think that even a slight benefit for the person will taint the purity of one's compassion. This is, however, not the view maintained by Buddhist thinkers. Mahāyāna philosophy presents the idea of the two benefits (Skt. *dvayārthā*, Tib. *don gnyis*), namely "one's own and others' aims" (*svaparārthapaṭala*), consisting of the pursuit of one's own benefit (Skt. *svārtha/ātmahita,* Tib. *bdag gi don*), and the benefit of others (Skt. *parārtha/ parahita,* Tib. *gzhan gyi don*).[150] Asaṅga's BBh explains that correct practice must include both aspects in balance, insisting that ignoring one's own benefit constitutes an error.[151] Stephen Jenkins coins the term "circle of compassion" to describe this interrelationship between benefiting oneself and benefiting others (Jenkins 1999, 25-62).

[150] The distinction applies not only to compassion cultivation but to meditation results in general. (BBh I,3, Engle 2016, 2254) See also MSA IV.1., or Asaṅga-Maitreya's *Uttaratantraśatra* I.5.

[151] Asaṅga states that actions that lack the twofold benefit should be rejected by bodhisattvas. He explains that generosity, even if carried out with the selfish attitude of accumulating merit for oneself, will also benefit others and is therefore acceptable. However, generosity carried out *without* the belief in spiritual merit should be rejected. That means, if a bodhisattva does not believe that his or her actions will result in personal benefit in future lives, they carry out the exclusive benefit for others, and this should be rejected as bodhisattva practice. Asaṅga's explanations underline the determining force of the mental state that accompanies compassionate activity. Accordingly, the ideal generosity is carried out by a bodhisattva "who holds excellent [philosophical] views," so that the "activities relate to the aims of others in a manner that also accomplishes one's own aim" (Engle 2016, BBhVy n. 185).

The twofold benefit is further divided into short-term and ultimate results. Bodhisattvas provide beings with short-term happiness by means of prosocial activities such as the various forms of generosity discussed previously. Accomplishing ultimate welfare for others comprises all activities that bring ultimate happiness to others, for example by introducing them to "the permanent abandonment of all the mental afflictions, the eightfold ārya path, and the worldly virtuous entities that are attained on the basis of the [ārya path]" (BBh I, 3,9-10; Engle 2016, 2630). As for the compassion-trainees' own benefit, short-term benefits designate the maturation of merit in this life and future lives. Because of the belief in the accumulation and maturation of karmic merit, every act for others can potentially be an occasion for benefitting oneself. As a result of virtuous acts, bodhisattvas will, according to Asaṅga, enjoy wealth, physical pleasure and mental ease, and be guaranteed pleasant future rebirths in the form and formless realms (BBh I.3,7-8; Engle 2016, 2601). Similarly, the BCA mentions that the bodhisattva will experience contentment as a result of making others happy, and bliss when meditating on *mahākaruṇā* and *śūnyatā*.[152] The ultimate benefits for those who perfect their compassion is the attainment of buddhahood, in which *mahākaruṇā* is said to be one of the hundred and forty unique qualities of the blissful state of a *tathāgata*.[153]

Despite the circularity of self and others' benefit, some Buddhist thinkers insist that in order to generate genuine compassion, the *intention* must be other-oriented, that is, the concern for other's well-being must be the primary aim in acting compassionately. In other words, one's compassion training should not be motivated by a deliberate self-interested motivation.

---

[152] See section 3.2.2. of this chapter, and MSA XVII, 46-47. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* explains the karmic results of meditating on love and compassion in the following way: "By building up great love, one is reborn free of harm; by building up great compassion, one is born with one's roots being stable." A fortunate rebirth as the result of compassion training is also taught in the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa Sūtra*.

[153] See Chapter I.3.3.1. of this thesis.

Tsongkhapa, for instance, speaks of self-benefit as a by-product "*rang don zhar la grub pa*" (Tsongkhapa 2010, 297) of one's spiritual practice.[154] However, the simple fact of experiencing self-benefit as a by-product is not seen as problematic at all in Buddhism. The crucial distinction lies in the motivation with which the cultivation is undertaken. However, even an impure motivation can be corrected. Therefore, in traditional Buddhist and secular context alike, if compassion trainees begin the training with the hope for personal advantages, in the process, as they connect with their innate compassion, they will develop their compassion for others, thus dissolving the paradox.

Conclusion

A person's capacity to enact compassion in thought, communication and behavior depends on a complex inner negotiation of considerations and decisions which reflect the individual's set of values, habits and sensibilities. While individual exercises to generate and enhance compassion will, through repetition, transform the mental landscape, the training is constantly interacting with the environment surrounding the trainee, either in a supporting or an interfering capacity. The cultivation of compassion is therefore determined just as much as by its context than by its specific training. I began and concluded the chapter with reflections on what I call "compassion culture" which provides the support for the aspiring bodhisattvas. Their cultivation is embedded in a number of concentric frames: Compassion cultivation is part of *bodhicitta* cultivation, which is the foundation of the bodhisattva path, which, in turn, is framed by different sets of spiritual vows and commitments.

[154] In the translation *The Great Treatise* (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 15), it is rendered as "thereby indirectly achieves your own welfare…".

Then, I identified three didactic approaches for cultivating compassion, which I presented as the constructive, deconstructive and cognitive-analytical methods. This threefold classification allows a clearer understanding of the intentions and outcomes of different practices: The constructive approach aims at enhancing positive emotions and prosocial activities, whereas the deconstructive approach seeks to disrupt those mental tendencies that impede compassion. Cognitive-analytic elements provide the theoretical framework, such as the view of the basic equality of all beings. The most challenging approach is the deconstructive, as it demands a radical transformation of the relationship to the self, and a deconstruction of the boundaries between self and others, resulting in a transcendence of the habit to protect oneself at the expense of others. The idea of compassion culture, as I showed at the end of the chapter, does not refer to the outer appearance of a particular life style, as Mahāyāna literature endorses both prosocial and asocial life styles. While being on the path to awakening, bodhisattvas may express compassion in ways that address either immediate forms of suffering by means of charitable, prosocial actions. Alternatively, they address the causes of suffering by teaching others how to eradicate unwholesome tendencies. They do so by exemplifying bodhisattva qualities, by pursuing a solitary life devoted to meditation, or by teaching ethical behavior. Compassion culture refers thus not to external characteristics but to an ethical framework that assumes Buddhist ideas of the accumulation of merit, the karmic force of intentions, the trust in merit transfer to future life times, and the belief in the possibility of dissolving self-grasping. It is cultivated within a long-term vision toward awakening and with the notion of the twofold benefit.

Chapter III

Compassion and the Roots of *Tonglen* Meditation in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

For one who fails to exchange his own happiness for the suffering of others,
buddhahood is certainly impossible –how could there even be
happiness in cyclic existence?
(BCA VIII, 131)

The *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra* (BCA) by the Indian scholar Śāntideva (7th century), celebrated as a classic of Indian Mahāyāna literature for its poetic beauty and passionately communicated message, constitutes a major source for bodhisattva ethics. Tibetan scholars considered it a foundational text for several traditions, most directly for the Lojong, Lamrim and Kadam (*bka'gdams*) traditions. In the process of creating these new traditions, while celebrating the BCA as a source of inspiration, Tibetans have at times altered its ideas, so that the transmission of concepts is far from being a straightforward continuation.[155] In the next three chapters of this thesis I trace the progressive transformations pertaining to compassion cultivation by examining the relationship between the BCA, Tibetan adaptations, and further adaptations in secular context. In particular, I identify and analyze the passages of the BCA that have served as a resource for *tonglen* meditation, because it is this contemplative practice that constitutes the principal formal practice of Tibetan Lojong, which, in turn, has provided the blueprint for the guided meditations of the secular compassion training of CCT.

This chapter has four sections. [1] The first section introduces the BCA's principle of "equalizing and exchange of self and other;" [2] the second traces its textual antecedents in

[155] See, for example, Thupten Jinpa's discussion (2019) of the complex relationship between the BCA and the Lojong tradition, which, as he puts it, would not have emerged without the BCA (manuscript p.10), while Roger Jackson (2019) examines the way Tsongkhapa "tamed" Śāntideva's unorganized thought in the systematized progressive stages of the path in his *Lam rim chen mo*.

Mahāyāna scripture. [3] The third part is a close reading of the relevant passage (BCA VIII, 90-186/7)[156] which gives insights into the different facets of the contemplations of equalizing and exchange, identifying phenomenological, therapeutic and soteriological elements and highlighting the role and function of its deconstructive didactic approach to compassion. [4] The fourth section focuses on the reception of this passage in Tibetan BCA commentaries. It demonstrates the way in which subtle interpretative devices used by the earliest Tibetan commentators prepared the direction of later interpretations, initiating the transformation from equalizing and exchange to *tonglen* meditation. Interestingly, as Chapter V will show, the CCT has selectively returned to Śāntideva's ideas which proved more compatible with the secular frame than Lojong ideas.

1. Introduction to "Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others"

Śāntideva's cluster of ideas known as "equalizing and exchange of self and other" (Skt. *svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana,* Tib. *bdag gzhan mnyams brje*) can be found in the second part of the BCA's chapter on meditative absorption (*dhyānapāramitā, bsam gtan bstan pa*).[157] In these verses, the BCA presents a unique cluster of ideas for the cultivation of *bodhicitta*. The BCA and its companion work, the ŚS (*Anthology of Training*), are believed to have been composed by Śāntideva at the monastic university of Nālandā in the seventh century CE.[158]

---

[156] In the Sanskrit versions, Chapter VIII contains 186 verses, in the Tibetan 187 (the additional verse being 186 of the Tibetan version).

[157] BCA VIII, 90-187 (Śāntideva (zhi ba lha), TG dbu ma la 27a2-30b7). Translated from Sanskrit: Śāntideva, Crosby, and Skilton (1995, 96-104). Translated from Tibetan: Śāntideva and Padmakara (2006, 122-136). The Tibetan translation of *dhyānapāramitā* is *bsam gtan pha rol tu phyin pa*, however, the Tibetan BCA gives *bsam gtan bstan pa* as the title, meaning "teaching on meditative absorption."

[158] Although the Tibetan tradition revers Śāntideva (Zhi ba lha) as the author of the BCA, many contemporary scholars assume that the BCA is the work of several authors (Cowherds 2015). Apart from legends transmitted in the Tibetan tradition, nothing certain can be stated about the author(s) and eventual reviser(s) of the text. The text's date of composition can be reconstructed in relationship to the pioneer-scholar Śāntarakṣita (725-788) because he quoted from the BCA. Śāntarakṣita went twice to Tibet and, on his second trip, dated to 763, founded the monastery of

Indian and Tibetan commentarial work preserved in the Tibetan Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) suggests that the BCA rapidly enjoyed great popularity in Tibet, whereas its impact in China remained limited. The first Tibetan translation was produced by an Indian-Tibetan collaboration in the ninth century (Sarvajñadeva and Kawa Paltsek) and was based on a manuscript from Kashmir.[159] Its discovery in the twentieth century in Dunhuang and the research of Akira Saito have revealed some important differences in length and content to the later translation which became the canonical edition of the Tibetan Tengyur.[160] This later retranslation was undertaken by three scholars, Dharmaśrībhadra, Rinchen Sangpo (958–1055), and Śākya Lodrö, based on manuscripts from Madhyadeśa (North-central India), and were edited a final time by Sumatikīrti and Loden Sherab (1059–1109)[161] before being included in the Tibetan canon. The commentarial work on Śāntideva extant today are mainly Tibetan compositions, with the exception of ten Sanskrit commentaries in the Tibetan canon, the most well-known being Prajñākaramati's (10th/11th century) *Bodhicaryāvatāra-Pañjikā*.[162] Over one hundred commentaries are said to

Samye (*bsam yas*).[158] Therefore, one can conclude that the BCA must have been composed before that year. The Tibetan narratives tell us that Śāntideva was born a prince, but evaded marriage and became a monk at the monastic university of Nālandā.

[159] This is the presumably earlier *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (BsCA). See p.115 of this thesis. The text states as its author not Śāntideva, but Akṣayamati (*blo gros mi zad pa*), which is believed to be an epithet of Śāntideva.

[160] Santideva might have written the shorter version first, then the ŚS and then the longer BCA. (Harrison 2007).

[161] This editorial information is given in the canonical edition of the bsTan 'gyur (Derge edition). The colophon describing the process of how the BCA was translated (TG dbu ma *la* 40a5-7) states: *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa slob dpon sha nta (sic) de bas mdzad pa rdzogs so // rgya gar gyi mkhan po sa rba dzny'a de ba dang / zhu chen gyi lo ts'a ba ban de dpal brtsegs kyis kha che'i dpe las zhus te gtan la phab pa las / slad kyis rgya gar gyi mkhan po dha rma shr'i bha dra dang / zhu chen gyi lo ts'a ba ban de rin chen bzang po dang / sh'a kya blo gros kyis yul dbus kyi dpe dang 'grel pa dang mthun par bcos shing bsgyur te gtan la phab pa'o // yang dus phyis rgya gar gyi mkhan po su ma ti k'i rti dang / zhu chen gyi lo ts'a ba dge slong blo ldan shes rab kyis dag par bcos shing bsgyur te legs par gtan la phab pa'o //*.

[162] Tib. *byang chub kyi spyod pa'i dka' 'grel* (Prajñākaramati (shes rab 'byung gnas blo gros) 1902-14). According to Dietz (1999, 36), it is the only commentary of which the Sanskrit version is extant. Liland (2009, 17-18) mentions two further Sanskrit partial commentaries.

exist, the earliest presumably composed by Kadampa (*bka'gdams pa*) scholars.[163] Building on these are the commentaries by later scholars such as the Sakya founding father Sönam Tsemo (1142-1182) and the renowned scholar Gyalsé Ngulchu Thokmé Sangpo's (1295-1369) who was learned in all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Thokmé Sangpo's text is still widely studied at Tibetan monastic colleges today.[164] Their interpretations give important clues to understand the adaptation of Śāntideva's teachings in the Lojong tradition.

In Tibetan Buddhism, and by extension in English translation, the BCA is considered a Mahāyāna classic. As the title indicates, it instructs bodhisattvas how to engage (*avatāra*)[165] in the practice (*caryā*) of all the spiritual qualities necessary to attain the highest goal, awakening (*bodhi*). Its fame and impact have been attributed to its style of composition just as much as to its content. Written as a passionate, engaging first-person phenomenological account of the stream of consciousness of a bodhisattva in action, presented in metered verse (*śloka*), the author invites the audience, with his inspirational, motivational tone, to adopt his reasoning, which is often only loosely structured, but full of vivid imagery and engaging, hypothetical dialogues.[166] The audience learns by embodying the author's voice rather than being lectured by an authoritative

---

[163] According to Thupten Jinpa, Gendun Chophel, mentions seeing the names of many older Tibetan commentaries of the BCA among the texts that belonged to the Chim (*mchims*) masters at Narthang (*snar thang*) monastery, a major center of learning for the Kadam school (Chopel, Jinpa, and Lopez 2014, 53). Gene Smith provides the following list of the ealiest commentaries on the BCA: *Bka' gdams pa* expositions by *rngog lo tsā ba blo ldan shes rab* (1059-1109), [his disciple and famous logician] *phywa pa chos kyi seng ge* (11th-12th c.), *nyang bran chos kyi ye shes* (12th c.), *lha 'bri sgang pa* (12th c.), *gtsang nag pa, bu ston rin chen grub, mtso sna ba, dga' ba gdong mkhan po chos dpal bzang po, grub pa shes rab* (14th c.), and *rgyal sras thogs med* (1295-1369). The *sa skya* and *bka' rgyud* commentators are: *sa skya pa slob dpon bsod nams rste mo* (1142-1182), *bla ma dam pa bsod nams rgyal mtshan, sa bzang ma ti pan chen* (14th c.), *stag tshang lo tsA ba shes rab rin chen, dpa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, phag mgo ba ye shes brtson 'grus* (Smith 2001, 228).

[164] It is studied at, among others, Sakya College and Dzongsar Institute, Dehra Dun, and served as source for Dza Patrul Rinpoche's teachings. http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Ocean_of_Good_Explanation, accessed July 6, 2017.

[165] The translation of *avatāra* as "entry, engaging in" is peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit literature.

[166] For an analysis of the linguistic style of the BCA, see Kashinath and Stenzel (2016).

figure. The text's impact may also be credited to the fact that it finds a balance between the path of an ascetic recluse and that of a lay practitioner engaged in social life, by presenting both the vision of advanced bodhisattvas and accessible instructions for beginners who embarks on the path to buddhahood. The text describes the generation, preservation, and enhancement of *bodhicitta* (*byang chub sems*) in ten chapters. These describe the progression of the increasingly advanced training of a bodhisattva on the path:

Chapter I-III: Generation of *bodhicitta* through "supreme worship";[167]
Ch. IV-VI: Preservation of *bodhicitta* through carefulness, introspection, and forbearance;[168]
Ch. VII-IX: Enhancement of *bodhicitta* through diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom;[169]
Chapter X: Dedication[170]

Important verses for the cultivation of compassion are found in Chapter I praising the excellence of *bodhicitta*, which encompasses compassion, in Chapter VI's discussion of compassion as an antidote to anger and as the rationale for forbearance and patience, and, most importantly, in Chapter VIII's passage on *bodhicitta*. This chapter is entitled "Perfection of Meditative Concentration" (Skt. *dhyānapāramitā*, Tib. *bsam gtan*) and explains in vivid language the benefits of renunciation and of a secluded life for the development of meditative stability, followed by instructions on enhancing *bodhicitta*. These instructions are what Tibetan commentators call the equalizing and exchange passage, consisting of 97 verses, which make up

[167] Ch I: The Praise of Bodhicitta, the Awakening Mind (*bodhicittānuśaṃsa, byang chub sems kyi phan yon bshad pa*); Ch II: Confession of Faults (*pāpadeśanā, sdig pa bshags pa*); Ch III: Taking Hold of Bodhicitta (*bodhicittaparigraha, byang chub kyi sems yongs su gzung ba*).

[168] Ch IV: Carefulness (*bodhicittāpramāda, bag yod bstan pa*), Ch V: Vigilant Introspection (*saṃprajanyarakṣaṇa, shes bshin bsrung ba*), Ch 6: (Perfection of) Forbearance (*kṣāntipāramitā, bzod pa bstan pa*).

[169] Ch VII: (Perfection of) Diligence (*vīryapāramitā, btson grus bstan pa*), Ch VIII: (Perfection of) Meditative concentration (*dhyānapāramitā, bsam gtan bstan pa*) and Ch IX: (Perfection of) Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā, shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*).

[170] Ch X: Dedication (*pariṇāmanā, bsngo ba*).

the second half of the chapter on meditative concentration. The passage thus belongs to the rather more advanced portion of the text, dealing with the enhancement of *bodhicitta*.

The shorter and probably earlier edition of the BCA (hereafter the BsCA), discovered in Dunhuang, shows surprising and important differences regarding this passage (Ishida 2010, Saito 1993, Van Schaik 2014). In the BsCA, the passage used to be half as long and belong to the previous chapter on diligence (*vīryapāramitā*/ *brtson 'grus bstan pa*).[171] The BCA's verse VII,16 remains as a trace of this earlier placement of the equalizing and exchange placement in chapter VII.[172] In my opinion, this change does not represent a mere reshuffling of topics but makes a statement about the hierarchy and importance of the topic in relation to other elements of the treatise. Buddhist literature on the bodhisattva path is commonly presented in a hierarchical order, going from the easiest to the most difficult stages in the training. The BCA is no exception, as it describes the bodhisattva path in typical ascending order, starting with generosity and supreme worship, and ending with the perfection of wisdom. Therefore, according to this logic, shifting the equalizing and exchange passage to a later chapter indicates an advancement in the hierarchy towards the more difficult stages on the path. That is to say, the author, or reviser(s), decided that the equalizing and exchange instructions were not merely a preparation for meditation, but the core of meditation practice itself. By placing the meditation on *bodhicitta* into

[171] The equalizing and exchange passage consists of 97 verses, 52 of which can be traced to the BsCA's "Diligence Chapter;" the remainder are additions by the author(s) or revisers that compiled the BCA. Some of these additional verses also occur in the ŚS. The 97 verses in question make up slightly more than fifty percent of the Meditation Chapter.

[172] BCA VII, 16 (Min 189,9-10) *aviṣādabalavyūhatātparyātmavidheyatā | parātmasamatā caiva parātma-parivartanam* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 20b5): *skyid lug med dang dpung tshogs dang // lhur blang bdag nyid dbang bya dang // bdag dang gzhan du mnyam pa dang // bdag dang gzhan du brje bar gyis //* Engl. (Padmakara 2006, 99): Do not be downcast, but marshal all your powers; Make and effort; be the master of yourself! Practice the equality of self and other; practice the exchange of self and other.

the section on calm abiding meditation (Skt. *śamatha*, Tib. *zhi gnas*), he makes the statement that deep mental calm is not achieved by merely isolating the body and developing disgust for worldly desires but by meditating on the equality of all beings, and by the reversal of selfishness. This is an important statement to consider in the current discussions about mindfulness as a means of relaxation and finding mental peace. The author or reviser(s) of the BCA suggests that peace of mind is cultivated by means of compassion and ethical conduct.[173]

1.1. Compassion as Part of *Bodhicitta*

It should be noted that the BCA does not explicitly teach compassion cultivation, but the generation of *bodhicitta*. In other words, compassion cultivation is not understood as a stand-alone practice, but as part of the process of generating *bodhicitta*. Just as in other Mahāyāna literature, one can observe a hierarchy of virtues in the BCA, in which compassion is not ranked as the most excellent virtue but is subordinate to *bodhicitta*.[174] That Śāntideva focuses on *bodhicitta* rather than compassion is evident from a linguistic survey: The Tibetan translation of the BCA that serves as the canonical edition available to us in the Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*)[175] contains only twenty-three occurrences of the terms equivalent to "compassion" (*snying rje, thugs rje*),[176] in contrast to fifty-one occurrences of "the mind of awakening" (*byang chub sems*).

---

[173] The association of the equalizing and exchange passage with diligence rather than with meditation can be found also in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, which associates the practice of the four *āpramaṇa* with the paramita of vīrya (vigour, diligence) with the explanation "that they help to bear the burden of all beings." This idea corresponds to the Śāntideva's explanations of taking on the suffering of all beings. (Lamotte 1976, 157), cited by Pagel (1992: 128-9).

[174] The hierarchy is based on the argument that only bodhicitta and no other mental state is capable of counteracting the power of unwholesome emotions such as hatred and fear (BCA I,5).

[175] (Śāntideva (zhi ba lha), TG dbu ma la, folio 1-40). There are at least three different versions of the BCA, according to Liland (2009, 27).

[176] *snying rje*: 11; *thugs rje*: 6; *byams pa*: 1; *brtse ba*: 5, and additional seven references to the compassionate ones (*thugs rje che rnams, thugs rje chen po mnga' rnams*).

Even the passage explaining equalizing and exchange (BCA VIII, 90-186/7) is not presented in terms of compassion cultivation, but *bodhicitta* (BCA VIII, 89). While the distinctions between compassion and *bodhicitta* are important in terms of their soteriological framework, I am considering *bodhicitta* meditations here as compassion training. *Bodhicitta* is defined as having two features: "Through compassion, it focuses on the welfare of others, through wisdom, it focuses on perfect enlightenment."[177] Thus, *bodhicitta* and compassion differ in their soteriological perspective, but because of the overlap in meaning, in this chapter I analyse verses on *bodhicitta* for their instructions on cultivating compassion.

2. Early Traces of "Equalizing and Exchange"

The BCA's "equalizing and exchange of self and other" passage is a combination of tradition and innovation. To appreciate their novelty, it is useful to explore Mahāyāna thought antecedent to Śāntideva's work. The first aspect, equality or sameness, is easily traceable, and has already been introduced as one of the methods of the cognitive-analytic didactic approach. The Mahāyāna tradition presents the ethical ideal of bodhisattvas who resolve to reach buddhahood to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. The rationale for generating *bodhicitta* (Tib. *byang chub kyi sems bskyed*) is a multifaceted argument that interweaves notions of sameness or equality, interdependence, impartiality, immeasurability, and altruism with a moral imperative to act for the benefit of all. As mentioned earlier, the notion of sameness or equality (Skt. *śamatha,* Tib. *mnyam pa, gcig pa*) appears in the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, such as the

[177] MSA IV,3 (Lévi 1907, 4.3): *karuṇāmūla iṣṭo 'sau sadāsatvahitāśayaḥ* || Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 139a7-139b1): *de yi rtsa ba snying rjer'dod // rtag tu sems can phan par sems //* Also cited in Künsang Palden's commentary on the BCA (2007, 53): "Its root is compassion, its aspiration the constant benefit of beings."

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā[178] and *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*s.[179] Scholars Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, and others have expanded the discussion by providing philosophical rationales from phenomenological and ontological perspectives.[180] The phenomenological argument treats equality experientially as all beings' equal desire for happiness; the ontological interpretation argues that beings are ontologically equal in their non-origination, or emptiness of a substantially existing self. The conclusion of both arguments is the ethical paradigm of extending compassion equally and impartially to all. As will be shown below, Śāntideva draws on these sources in his plea for altruistic care for others, reiterating these two types of arguments.

The second part of Śāntideva's principle, the meditation of exchange, can only partially be traced to earlier scriptural sources. The principle comprises three types of exchange, which will be discussed in detail below. In brief, one type is the exchange of one's own happiness with the suffering of others, that is, an exchange of goods. The two transactions or movements that constitute this type of exchange can be found independently in Mahāyāna literature. The first transaction occurs in the idea of dedication (Skt. *puṇya pariṇāmanā*, Tib. *dge ba bsngo ba*), understood as the wish to transfer the merit accumulated through one's own good deeds to

---

[178] *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra* 116.3-118, cited in full in the previous chapter, p.101 n.146.

[179] *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, Toh 44, KG phal chen *a*, chap.45. Translation: "When great enlightening beings cultivate the practice of enlightening beings in this way, they can fully develop infinite pure virtues, which could never be exhaustively recounted or extolled, and accomplish unexcelled enlightenment, realizing the equality and purity of all buddha-fields, equality and purity of all sentient beings, equality and purity of all bodies, equality and purity of all faculties, equality and purity of all fruits of action, equality and purity of all congregations and sites of enlightenment, equality and purity of all completely fulfilled practices, equality and purity of all knowledge of methods of the teaching, equality and purity of the vows and dedications of all buddhas, and equality and purity of the realms of spiritual powers of all buddhas" (Cleary 1984, 634-635).

[180] The phenomenological rationale uses the experience of shared humanity as the basis for postulating the equality of self and other. (Nāgārjuna RN 484 argues for concern that is equally directed toward self and others). The ontological rationale uses the equal nature of all beings as an argument. (Asaṅga in MSA VI, 5 refers to the equality of all phenomena; in MSA IX, 70 and 76 to the equality of self and other; Vasubandhu in AKBh VII, 31a describes great compassion as based in the knowledge that sees all beings as equal. Candrakīrti elaborates on the ten kinds of equality from the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra,* in context of the sixth bodhisattva ground.)

another person, who may experience its maturation in form of happiness.[181] A related idea is the wish to transform one's own body into "a wish-fulfilling jewel," as expressed in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* and the *Vajradhvajapariṇāma Sūtra*: "May my body become a wish-fulfilling jewel, a source of daily sustenance for all beings." These and other references are provided by the Tibetan Lojong scholar Sangye Gompa Senge (*sangs rgyas sgo pa seng ge,* 1179-1250) in his *Public Explication of Mind Training.*[182]

The second movement within the exchange involves drawing suffering towards oneself. In a general understanding, the thought of accepting suffering can be seen in the *pāramitā* of patient forbearance (Skt. *kṣānti*, Tib. *bzod pa*), which includes bearing pain inflicted by others. More specifically, it involves actively wishing for the maturation of others' demerit (Skt. *pāpa*, Tib. *mi dge ba*) in one's own stream of consciousness, which also demands the willingness to endure suffering. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* contains such aspirations.

> I yearn for the suffering of all sentient beings to befall me. I will transform myself into a form that is the source of everyday sustenance for all beings.[183]

In the previous chapter, the MSA has been quoted with statements about the compassionate bodhisattvas' capacity to inflict and bear pain if it helps promoting the welfare of others.[184] The

---

[181] For a discussion of the concept of merit transfer, see Clayton (2005).

[182] Sangye Gompa Senge, "*Public Explication of Mind Training* (*tshogs bshad chen mo*)," in Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen (2006, 313-417). *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, Toh 44 KG phal chen *ga*, chap.45, 90a:7. *Vajradhvajapariṇāma Sūtra* Toh 44 KG phal chen *kha*, chap.8, 108b:3.

[183] *Avataṁsaka Sūtra*, Toh 44, KG phal chen, *a* chap.45, 50b:4. Also: *Agracayapraṇidhāna*: Toh 4396, TG sna tshogs *nyo*, 327b:6.

[184] MSA V, 3 (Levi 5,3): *paratra loko na tathātinirdayaḥ pravartate tāpanakarmaṇā ripau | yathā parārthaṃ bhṛśaduḥkhatāpane kṛpātmakaḥ svātmani saṃpravartate* ||Tib. (TG sems tsam *phi* 143a7-143b1): *ji ltar snying rje'i bdag nyid gzhan gyi don gyi phyir // bdag la sdug bsngal mi bzad gdung par rab byed pa // de ltar 'jig rten gdung ba'i las kyis gzhan dgra la // shin tu brtse ba med par rab tu 'jug ma yin* // Engl.: Compassionate people inflict pain upon themselves in order to benefit others which far exceeds the torment and suffereing they would inflict on their worst and most despised enemies.

combination of the transfer of merit and demerit in both directions can be found most famously in the previously mentioned RN 484 by Nāgārjuna:

> May I be as dear to sentient beings as their own life,
> And may they be even dearer to me.
> May their unwholesome deeds ripen upon me,
> And all my virtues ripen upon them.[185]

The RN is a collection of five hundred verses of advice on how to conduct a wholesome life, underpinned by reasonings that establish the emptiness of inherent existence (Hopkins 1998 and 2007, 22). Verse 484 is part of the final section of altruistic wishes of a bodhisattva to be of benefit to the infinity of beings, to which belongs the eradication of the causes of suffering, that is, unwholesome karmic seeds or demerit (*pāpa*). Therefore, bodhisattvas try to stop beings from committing unwholesome deeds (verse 482), take on the karmic maturation of others' non-virtues, dedicate the ripening of their own good fortune (*śubha*) to them (v. 484) and this commitment is given until the last sentient being has been liberated (v. 485). The exchange in these verses is what I call the "objective aspect" of the exchange, as it is an exchange of goods, namely unwholesome karma, or demerit, against wholesome karma, or spiritual merit. It is this type of exchange that one will see formalized in the *tonglen* meditation. Śāntideva's exposition of exchange contains additional facets, namely a conceptual and an evaluative type of exchange, which seem to have no antecedents.[186] Nevertheless, it is clear that the rudimentary ideas of equality and exchange were already present in Mahāyāna thought long before Śāntideva

---

[185] RN 484 (Nāgārjuna and Hahn 1982, 160, 13-16): *prāṇapriyaḥ syāṃ sattvānāṃ [te matpriyatarāśca me | teṣāṃ pāpaṃ ma]yi pacye[n] macchubhaṃ teṣu cākhilam* || Tib.: *sems can rnams la srog bzhin phangs // bdag las de dag ches phangs shog // bdag la de dag sdig smin cing // bdag dge ma lus der smin shog* //

[186] The set of three unwholesome attitudes that Śāntideva alludes to (namely, pride, contempt, competitiveness) has a precedent in the Pāli Canon, *Mahāvagga* IV 162 (2). In the section "Discrimination," the Buddha admonishes the monks not to engage in three discriminations (Pāli: *tayo vidhā*), which are "I am superior," "I am inferior," "I am equal." (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000, 1560). Śāntideva, however, turns the instruction around and instructs practitioners to direct these three against one's own self.

composed the equalizing and exchange passage of the BCA.[187] His work has been considered innovative in the way it combines different lines of thought to form a complex cluster of contemplative, analytical and, practical exercises. Śāntideva understands the idea of exchange in the sense of a radical cognitive change of perspective. Novel is also his presentation of these exercises as an account in the first-person perspective, and the presentation of *bodhicitta* as the exclusive object of meditations of calm abiding (Skt. *śamatha,* Tib. *zhi gnas*) as a preparation for penetrative insight (Skt. *vipaśyanā,* Tib. *lhag mthong*),[188] as Śāntideva states in verse VIII, 4 of the BCA.

3. A Close Reading of the Equalizing and Exchange Passage

Having elucidated the context of the text passage in question, the study will now turn to unpacking the layers of content of the equalizing and exchange verses. It should be remembered that no matter how systematic and orderly the structure might appear in the analysis, Śāntideva's root text is a multilayered flux of ideas that moves freely among several parallel lines of thought. It is often cryptic, merely alluding to ideas through metaphors. In addition, the re-arrangement and possible addition of verses by the author or later revisers result in a free-flow of ideas, the structure of which has been proposed not by the root text itself but by his commentaries.

---

[187] The Lojong master Sangye Gompa Senge (*sangs rgyas sgo pa seng ge*, 1179-1250) collected quotes from half a dozen sources from *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s in his *Public Explication of Mind Training* (*tshogs bshad chen mo*). See Shönu Gyalchok (2006, 313-417).

[188] In comparison, the *Pāramitāsamāsa* by Āryaśūra, gives the more common presentation of mental calming without bodhicitta as the object of meditation (Saito, Vairocana, and Āryaśūra 2005).

3.1. Equalizing (BCA VIII, 90-112)

The first twenty-three verses, identified by Tibetan commentators as the equalizing passage,[189] present Śāntideva's interpretation of the fundamental Mahāyāna idea of sameness or equality. He combines the two previously discussed approaches, namely the phenomenological perspective found in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, and the ontological reflections of the MSA, adding his own reflections and conclusions. Firstly, the phenomenological approach refers to the first-person experiences of joy and sorrow, which are then generalized as a third-person observation: "In joy and sorrow all beings are equal" (VIII, 90c).[190] Thokmé Sangpo explains the meaning of this verse as referring not only to joy and sorrow, but to the *wish* for well-being and the *wish to avoid* sorrow. What an individual considers painful may vary, but the wish to avoid it is equally present in all. Because of the postulated sameness, Śāntideva claims that one can experience another person's pain if one chooses to identify with it. Thokmé Sangpo's commentary on VIII, 93 explains: "Similarly, even though the pain of others does not befall me, if I identify with it, their suffering becomes mine. Because [I] identify with it, it becomes difficult to bear."[191] These are reasons enough to protect beings,[192] which, according to Buddhist cosmology, include not only humans but all beings of the six realms of *saṃsāra*. The same idea of equality and the moral

[189] Thokmé Sangpo gives the following structure: Verses 90-112ab: Equalizing, 112cd-184: Exchange, and 185-187: Ordinary activity. Rinchen Pal gives the structure: Verses 90-112: Equalizing, verses 113-187: Exchange.

[190] The translation of this and all following verses of the BCA follow closely the translation by Wulstan Fletcher of the Padmakara Translation Committee (Śāntideva and Padmakara 2006), but are amended wherever necessary to reflect the explanations given by Thokmé Sangpo in his commentary.

[191] Thokmé Sangpo's commentary to BCA VIII, 93 (Thokmé Sangpo 2006, 127): *de bzhin du gzhan gyi sdug bsngal dag bdag la 'bab par mi 'gyur yang de lta na'ang gzhan de la bdag tu zhen na de'i sdug bsngal bdag gi yin te/ de la bdag tu zhen pas de bzod par dka' bas so//*

[192] Thokmé Sangpo's commentary to BCA, 90 (2006, 127): *sems can thams cad chos can/ bdag bzhin du bsrung bar rigs te/ bde ba 'dod pa dang sdug bsngal mi 'dod par bdag dang mnyam pa'i phyir ro//*

imperative that it carries is expressed in Śāntideva's ŚS, which can be understood as a companion work to the BCA.

> When fear and suffering are disliked
> By me and others equally,
> What is so special about me,
> So that I protect myself and not others? (ŚS I,1 and BCA VIII, 96, Goodman 2016, 6)

The second approach, the ontological perspective, is more complex because the various metaphors Śāntideva uses allude to different philosophical views, describing reality either as unity, nonduality, or emptiness. In BCA VIII, 91, Śāntideva evokes the idea of unity, that is, of a greater whole that encompasses all beings. As an analogical proof, he evokes the image of hands and limbs that are equally part of one body, and take care of one another (91, 114). The wholeness of "one body" stands for "one humanity" in which boundaries disappear, and individuals are inseparable and nondual in the sense of being parts of the same single entity. The view of inseparability evokes the Cittramātra view of the nonduality of self and other. As this view is considered inferior from a Madhyamaka standpoint, it could be explained, according to scholars Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, as a didactic device of provisional truth, temporarily adopted for the pedagogical purpose of cultivating of altruism and compassion (Śāntideva, Crosby, and Skilton 1995, 82-86).

A second line of argument corresponds to Abhidharma metaphysics in that it postulates the absence of a self within a conglomeration, arguing that it is a delusion to believe in the continuum of consciousness (VIII, 97), or the existence of a self within a conglomeration of particles (VIII, 101). The interpretative challenge of these verses lies not only in the fact that Śāntideva relies on Abhidharma reasoning to dismantle the concept of "self," but that he treats suffering as an existing entity while postulating the non-existence of the self. "Suffering has no possessor (who experiences it); no distinction (between self and others) can be made. Since pain

is pain, it is to be dispelled" (102).[193] This "ownerless suffering" argument, which can also be found in the ŚS,[194] poses a hermeneutic challenge because of its ontological lopsidedness, affirming the non-existence of persons but simultaneously arguing for the existence of suffering. If self is unreal, so should be others and their suffering. If that is so, then a philosophical argument based on ultimate grounds for moral action seems to be undermined.

Contemporary scholars have wondered why Śāntideva, a Mādhyamika, employed philosophical arguments of the Yogacāra and Abhidharma schools, considered lower in sophistication and realization,[195] and why he introduced the no-self argument, which seems to undercut his ethical argument. If the self doesn't exist, suffering doesn't exist, and then there would be no motivation for helpful action. One hypothesis, proposed by BsCA scholar Akira Saito, is that the verses on no-self are later insertions that corrupt the original meaning (Saito 1993, Ishida 2010). Another hypothesis, asserted by Jay Garfield, Stephen Jenkins and Graham Priest is that the no-self argument was "added as a corrective" to the idea of wholeness or unity of all beings (Garfield, Jenkins, Priest 58). The bewilderment about the discrepancies in Śāntideva's ontological argument can be dissolved by considering the explanations by Commentator Thokmé Sangpo, who writes:

> Although it is right [that sufferer and suffering do not exist], if my suffering is removed, it is right to remove *all* suffering. And for the same reason, if theirs is not

[193] Thokme Sangpo's commentary to BCA VIII, 102 (2006, 129): *sdug bsngal myong byed kyi bdag po med pa ni bdag gzhan thams cad bye brag med pa nyid yin pas bdag po gcig mi gcig gis bsrung mi bsrung gi dbye ba mi rigs so*/ [...] *ga bsngal yin pa'i phyir gzhan gyi sdug bsngal de yang bsal bar bya'o*// The additions in brackets are derived from Thokmé Sangpo's commentary.

[194] Charles Goodman states: "I think, though it is impossible to be entirely sure, that we can find the same argument at ŚS 360. Though there are significant translation issues about the key verse, I would render it as follows: "Therefore, living beings should be understood in the same way,/ As like a collection of sense-spheres./ Since that suffering is unowned, It should be prevented for oneself and others" (Śāntideva and Goodman 2016, xxxviii).

[195] For an extensive discussion, see Garfield, Jenkins, and Priest (2015).

> removed, then it is congruent (*mtshungs*) that also mine, like that of other beings, should not be removed.[196]

In these verses, Thokmé Sangpo does not seem concerned by philosophical discrepancies, but focuses on the experiential dimension. He does not discuss BCA VIII, 102-103 as metaphysical or ontological statement about what exists or does not exist, but rather as analytical methods for exploring and transforming human experience. He acknowledges the truth of ultimate nonexistence, but wants to focus on improving the lived experience, that is, the removal of suffering. In this sense, he takes Śāntideva's approach in these verses to be therapeutic. The relevant section of the commentary has the heading "Abandoning self-clinging" (*bdag 'dzin spang ba*), and Thokmé Sangpo seems to accept the multiplicity of argumentative lines as a didactic or therapeutic method of Śāntideva to dismantle self-identification or self-grasping (Skt. *ātmabhāva*, Tib. *bdag 'dzin,* verses 92, 98-100). Indeed, it is this self-grasping, this seemingly natural and intuitive idea of an independent self, that Śāntideva identifies as the principal impediment to a compassionate and caring mind. As he thinks of it as a false perception or mental dysfunction, he proposes the following practices to remedy it.

3.2. Exchanging Self and Other (BCA VIII, 112c-184)

The "Exchanging Self and Other" passage constitutes the last part of Chapter VIII and consists of 73 verses[197] followed only by three concluding verses. Śāntideva calls the exchange

---

[196] Thokmé Sangpo, comm. to VIII, 103 (2006, 129): *Ci'i phyir kun gyi sdug bsngal ni bzlog par bya zhes brtsad du med de/ de lta yin yang gal te bdag gi sdug bsngal bzlog na sdug bsngal thams cad bzlog par rigs pa la rgyu mtshan des gzhan gyi de mi bzlog na bdag gi yang sems can gzhan gyi bzhin bzlog bya min par mtshungs so//*

[197] The exchange passage comprises approximately 73 verses. Different Tibetan commentators determine its beginning variously with verse 111, 112, or 113, which gives an idea of the fluid progression from the notion of equalizing to that of exchange. Thogs med bzang po dpal identifies 73.5 verses belonging to this section.

of self and others a *paramaṃ guhyaṃ,* (*gsang ba'i dam pa*),[198] which is often translated as "sacred mystery," but might be better translated as "the supreme secret." This interpretation, suggested by Tibetan Lojong masters, alludes to a secret oral transmission of the practice of exchanging self and other and could explain the scarcity of scriptural precedents (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2006, 335-336).

The meditations that Śāntideva proposes in Chapter VIII do not aim *directly* at deconstructing the concept of self (*svabhāva*), as this is the topic of the following Wisdom Chapter IX, but they deconstruct the sense of self *indirectly* by disrupting the psychological, emotional and behavioral structure that is built around the concept of "I". In the exchange-passage, Śāntideva introduces mental exercises that pertain to various types of exchange. Although no structure is offered by the author or his commentators, for the sake of clarity, I suggest distinguishing three different types of exchange, namely the exchange of self-identification (conceptual), of emotional appraisal (evaluative) and of spiritual goods (objective).

3.2.1. Conceptual: The Exchange of Self-Identification

The first type of exchange is the conceptual transfer of self-identification (Skt. *ātmabhāva*, Tib. *bdag 'dzin*) to that of another person, the idea of putting oneself in the shoes of another person. As Śāntideva claims that grasping the idea of self is a false concept acquired through habit (VIII, 110-116), he proposes mental training to correct the mistake.

> Just as in connection with this form, devoid of self (*svabhāva*)
> My sense of "I" arose through strong habituation.

[198] BCA VIII, 120 (Min 203, 2-3): *ātmānaṃ cāparāṃścaiva yaḥ śīghraṃ trātum icchati / sa caret paramaṃ guhyaṃ parātmaparivartanam*// Whoever longs to quickly rescue both himself and others, should practise the supreme mystery: the exchange of self and other. (Translation Crosby/Skilton 1999, 99) Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 28a5) *gang zhig bdag dang gzhan rnams ni | | myur du bskyab par 'dod pa des // bdag dang gzhan du brje bya ba // gsang ba'i dam pa spyad par bya* // Those desiring speedily to be a refuge for themselves and others/ Should make the interchange of "I" and "other," and thus embrace a sacred mystery. (Translation Padmakara 2006, 126).

Why should the thought of "I"
Through habit, not arise related to another?" (BCA VIII, 115)[199]

Śāntideva describes a set of meditations on cognitive perspective taking, in which the meditator imaginatively takes the perspective of another and "looks back" onto his or her own previous person. (Verses 140-154). These exercises have deliberately strong emotional overtones, which constitute the evaluative part of the exchange discussed below. It is important to note that the author treats these reflections as practice, not as a single reflection. It is through repeated practice that a new habit will be created. However, the cognitive appraisal aspect of the exchange practice has not been taken up as a formal practice by Tibetan teachers, with the exception of the nineteenth-century scholar-practitioner Paltrul Rinpoche (*Rdza dpal sprul*, 1808–1887).[200]

3.2.2. Evaluative: The Exchange of Emotional Appraisal

The second type refers to a change of attitude towards oneself and others. Its basic idea bears resemblance with Richard Lazarus' cognitive appraisal theory, which states that our emotional reactions depend upon our cognitive evaluations of situations (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Śāntideva proposes that as we identify with another person as closely as we do now with ourselves, we will naturally have an equal amount of concern, love and care that we have for ourselves (VIII, 116). The practice of exchange is to "lay aside all love of self" and concentrate on the "ocean of good qualities that are in others." (VIII, 113).[201] This close link between

---

[199] BCA VIII, 15 (202,19-20*): yathātmabuddhir abhyāsāt svakāye 'smin nirātmake |pareṣv api tathātmatvaṃ kim abhyāsān na jāyate* || Tib.: (TG dbu ma *la* 28a2): *ji ltar bdag med lus 'di la// goms pas bdag gi blo byuṅ ba // de bźin sems can gźan la yaṅ // goms pas bdag blo cis mi skye* // Translation Padmakara (2006, 125).

[200] *The Brightly Shining Sun* (*byang chub sems dpa'i spyod p la 'jug pa'i sgom rim rab gsal nyi ma*). Translated by Adam Pearcey at http://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/bodhicharyavatara-brightly-shining-sun. Markus Viebeck analyses Dza Paltrul's re-introduction, reinterpretation and use of the BCA (Viehbeck 2016).

[201] BCA VIII, 113 (Min 202, 15-16): *jñātvā sadoṣam ātmānaṃ parān api guṇodadhīn | ātmabhāvaparityāgaṃ parādānaṃ ca bhāvayet* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 28a1): *bdag nyid skyon bcas gzhan la yang // yon tan rgya mtshor*

conceptual and evaluative exchange is corroborated by the interpretations of early Tibetan commentators who equated self-grasping (*bdag 'dzin*) with self-cherishing (*bdag gces 'dzin*). This hermeneutic contrivance was discussed in the last section of this chapter (III.4.). Even though this exchange operates on the level of emotion and attitude, it is astonishing and important to note that the meditations that Śāntideva proposes in VIII, 140-154 do not aim at enhancing positive caring emotions for others but take the negative route of reducing the preoccupation and emotional involvement with one's own person. Instead of focusing on the qualities of others, Śāntideva faces the weaknesses and moral deficiencies of his own character. He demonstrates three examples of such negative emotional appraisal directed towards his own person, exploring three different types of emotional stress.

> Taking others – lower, [higher, equal] – as myself [and]
> Identifying my self as "other,"
> without [distracting] thoughts
> I generate envy, pride and rivalry. (VIII, 140)[202]

In the fourteen verses following this introductory *śloka*, Śāntideva describes a variety of unkind thoughts and prejudices that are directed from his "new self" to his "former self." In great detail, he elaborates on thoughts that mock his concealed weaknesses, such as his lack of virtue and knowledge (145-6) or turn him into a victim of negative prejudice and aggression. For example, from the perspective of a superior, he exclaims: "I will take such satisfaction in his evil deeds and degradation. I will render him despicable, the butt and laughing stock of everyone" (150). In fact, he invokes all the very emotions that he had previously criticized as the lowly mental state

---

shes byas nas // bdag 'dzin yongs su dor ba dang // gzhan blang ba ni bsgom par bya // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 125).

[202] BCA VIII, 140 (Min 204, 16-17): *hīnādiṣv ātmatāṃ kṛtvā paratvam api cātmani | bhāvayerṣyāṃ ca mānaṃ ca nirvikalpyena cetasā* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 29a2): *dman sogs bdag tu byas pa dang // gzhan nyid du ni bdag byas nas // rnam rtog med pa'i sems kyis su // phrag dog 'gran dang nga rgyal bsgom* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 129).

of "childish folk:" jealousy, pride, anger.[203] These instructions are so unusual for a practice manual, that they beg the question of the rationale behind this negative emotional appraisal. The verses are not only highly unusual, but even problematic, because they suggest developing mental afflictions (Skt. *kleśā*, Tib. *nyon mongs*) as a means of spiritual maturation. Generally, Buddhist manuals admonish people to shun non-virtue at all cost. Śāntideva, however, cultivates purposefully disturbing mental afflictions. One can find an indication of a rationale in an earlier verse of the BCA (IV,43), in which Śāntideva asserts that the only permissible use of afflictions is to remedy other afflictions: Bodhisattvas should discard all negative emotions except those that serve the purpose of destroying *kleśa*s.[204] The commentator Rinchen Pal (*Lho pa kun mkhyen rin chen dpal*, 13th c.) corroborates this interpretation, as he designates the afflictions in this passage as antidotes (*gnyen po*), explaining that envy counteracts pride, rivalry counteracts ambition, and pride counteracts jealousy.[205]

Unusual, too, is the narrative mode of this passage, as it reads like a modern first-person stream of consciousness journal. It starts and ends without mediation, lacking an introduction or speech marks. Recognizing the bewildering aspect of these verses, Rinchen Pal takes pains to clarify how to understand them: all the demonstrative pronouns (*'di*) in this section refer to the old self, whereas all the "I" (*bdag*) in this section to the "imagined support," i.e. the new self, he explains. The fourteen verses are thus presented like thoughts that seem to appear out of

---

[203] See BCA VIII, 12.

[204] BCA IV, 43 (Min 169, 3-4): *atra grahī bhaviṣyāmi baddhavairaśca vigrahī | anyatra tadvidhāt kleśāt kleśaghātānubandhinaḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 9b6-7): *'di la bdag gis zhen bya zhing // khon du bzung nas g.yul sprad de // rnam pa de 'dra'i nyon mongs pa // nyon mongs 'joms byed ma gtogs so* // The connection to the justification in Chapter VI,43 was pointed out by John Dunne at the Bodhicaryāvatāra Conference at Princeton University, 2017.

[205] Rinchen Pal was a student of Sakya Pandita, composed a condensed commentary (Tib. *zin bris*) on the BCA (Rinchen Pal 1995).

nowhere, resembling chatter in someone's head; they have the tone of subliminal prejudices that one might carry around without fully being aware of them. The passage replicates the kind of superficial, unexamined mental chatter that we ourselves might have in dealing with other people in daily life. The author might want to shed some light on the ubiquity of bias and prejudice that habitually permeate everyone's mind, in order to highlight that bias is a powerful inhibitor of compassion. Although Śāntideva does not engage in extensive theoretical observations, he indicates his didactic intentions in chapter VI on patience, when he suggests that experiencing suffering leads to compassion (VI,21).[206] In other words, the purpose of the exercise is to raise awareness of the painful effects of prejudice in order to inspire a change of attitude. Meditators who practice along the lines of these verses actively engage in negative evaluations of their own person and will get a glimpse of the suffering of someone who is the victim of prejudice. As they develop greater lucidity and empathy, they discard their own present, ongoing prejudices. Thus, the rationale behind the evaluative exchange in verses 140-154 can be understood as twofold, firstly the production of negative emotions towards the self, and secondly, the sensitization to the harmful effects of prejudice; both aim at reducing the preoccupation with the self. This rationale culminates in the subsequent verses in a recognition of the drawbacks of self-grasping (155-157), the complete dissociation with the self (155-173), and in an attitude of abnegation and self-punishment (165-168). Addressing the self as if it were another, Śāntideva scolds:

> Since every evil has its root in you,

[206] BCA VI, 21 (Min 179, 15-16): *guṇo 'paraśca duḥkhasya yatsaṃvegān madacyutiḥ | saṃsāriṣu ca kāruṇyaṃ pāpād bhītir jine spṛhā* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 15a7-b1): *gzhan yang sdug bsngal yon tan ni // skyo bas dregs pa sel bar byed // 'khor ba pa la snying rje ste // sdig la 'dzem dang dge la dga'* // Furthermore, suffering has also qualities: sadness purifies pride, it produces compassion for the beings of saṃsāra, it makes you avoid wrongdoing and love virtue.

You are indeed now ripe for punishment. (BCA VIII, 168cd)[207]

The critical attitude toward self-grasping, which outwardly resembles self-abnegation, is the precondition for serving others (170) and the only way to create contentment (Skt. *prītiḥ*, Tib. *dga' ba*) for oneself (173), according to the author. Śāntideva expresses here the argument of the two benefits (Skt *dvayārthā*, Tib. *don gnyis*),[208] which asserts that ultimately serving others brings true happiness for oneself.

3.2.3. Objective: The Exchange of Spiritual Goods

The third type of exchange that Śāntideva evokes is what I call the "objective exchange," in the sense of an exchange of objects or goods. These goods are not material in nature but are abstract value clusters related to happiness (Skt. *sukha,* Tib. *bde ba*) and its contrary, suffering (Skt. *duḥkha*, Tib. *sdug sngal*).

If I do not interchange
My happiness for others' pain
Enlightenment will never be attained
And even in saṃsāra, joy will fly from me. (BCA VIII, 131)[209]

I will part with my own happiness and involve myself in the suffering of others. (BCA VIII, 161ab)[210]

---

[207] BCA VIII, 168 (Min 206, 20-21): *athaivam ucyamāne 'pi cittaṃ nedaṃ kariṣyasi | tvām eva nigrahīṣyāmi sarvadoṣās tad āśritāḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 30a3-4): *'on te de ltar gdams kyang ni // sems khyod de ltar mi byed na // khyod la nyes pa kun bsten pas // khyod nyid tshar gcad bya bar zad* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 133).

[208] See Chapter II.3.2. of this dissertation.

[209] BCA VIII, 131 (Min 203, 24-25): *na nāma sādhyaṃ buddhatvaṃ saṃsāre 'pi kutaḥ sukham | svasukhasyānyaduḥkhena parivartam akurvataḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 28b4): *bdag bde gzhan gyi sdug bsngal dag // yang dag brje ba ma byas na // sangs rgyas nyid du mi 'grub cing // 'khor ba na yang bde ba med* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 128).

[210] BCA VIII, 161 (Min 206, 6-7): *sukhāc ca cyāvayātmānaṃ paraduḥkhe niyojaya | kadāyaṃ kiṃ karotīti chalam asya nirūpaya* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 29b6-7): *bdag ni bde dang bral gyis te // gzhan gyi sdug bsngal bdag la sbyor // gang tshe 'di ni ci byed ces // bdag gi skyon la brtag par gyis* // Transl. in text: mine. Transl Skilton/ Crosby: Make yourself fall from happiness and involve yourself in the suffering of others (1998, 102). Transl. Padmakara: Happiness, fulfilment: these I give away. The pain of others: this I will embrace. (2006, 132).

In a broader sense, the happiness and suffering Śāntideva describes can be understood as illustrations of what Buddhist literature has termed "the eight worldly concerns" (Skt. *aṣṭau lokadharmāḥ,* Tib. *'jig rten gyi chos brgyad*).[211] These eight are defined as the preoccupation with, on the one hand, gain, happiness, praise and fame, and on the other their opposites, namely loss, pain, blame and bad reputation. Bodhisattva trainees exchange their preference for the four desirable worldly *dharma*s with the latter undesirable four. For instance, they accept the blame for another person's mistakes (162) while directing praise and fame to others (163).[212] As mentioned previously, the emphasis of Śāntideva's pedagogy here is on accepting unpleasant experiences for himself rather than giving positive ones to others. Furthermore, suffering is not only accepted, it is actively sought out. Śāntideva scolds, vilifies and humiliates the "self," reducing it to the rank of a slave and servant to others (167-172). An important locale for the objective exchange is the body. In numerous verses, Śāntideva identifies the body with self-grasping; and to eliminate self-grasping, he prescribes physical suffering which serves, based on a correct understanding, as an antidote to self-clinging.[213] Śāntideva explains his rationale by pointing to the drawbacks of the conventional attitude toward the body:

> The more this body is protected, the more fragile it becomes, the more it degenerates. (BCA VIII, 174)[214]

---

[211] Nāgārjuna, *Suhṛllekha* (*Letter to a Friend*), Verse 29. In Tibetan literature, they have become a popular topic.

[212] BCA VIII, 162 -163 (Min 206, 8-9): *anyenāpi kṛtaṃ doṣaṃ pātayāsyaiva mastake |alpam apy asya doṣaṃ ca prakāśaya mahāmuneḥ || anyādhikayaśovādair yaśo 'sya malinīkuru | nikṛṣṭadāsavac cainaṃ sattvakāryeṣu vāhaya ||* Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 29b7): *gzhan gyis nyes pa byas pa yang //rang gi skyon du bsgyur byos la // bdag gi nyes pa chung byas kyang // skye bo mang la rab tu śogs // gźan gyi grags pa lhag brjod pas // raṅ gi grags pa zil gyis non // bdag ni bran gyi tha ma ltar // don rnams kun la bkol bar gyis //* Engl. (Padmakara 2006, 123): When others are at fault, I'll take/ And turn the blame upon myself,/ And all my sins, however slight,/ Declare, and make them known to many.// The fame of others I will magnify/ That it might thus outshine my own. Among them I will be as one who serves,/ my lowly labor for their benefit.

[213] Thokmé Sangpo, in structuring the BCA, gives this section the heading: "Applying the antidote" (*gnyen po dbang du bya ba*) (2006, 139).

[214] BCA VIII, 174 (Min 207, 6-7): *yathā yathāsya kāyasya kriyate paripālanam | sukumārataro bhūtvā pataty eva tathā tathā ||* Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 30a6-7): *ji lta ji ltar lus 'di ni // yongs su skyong bar byed gyur pa // de lta de ltar*

This verse aims at the reversal of one's attitude toward the self, namely the deconstruction of self-cherishing and self-protection; it directs the mind toward disregarding one's personal interest, which in the most immediate sense refers to protecting the body from harm. Śāntideva's verse also entails that bodhisattvas need a certain amount of courage and the capacity to endure hardships.

This close reading of the BCA's verses on equalizing and exchange has shed some light on the didactic approach that Śāntideva pursues. Arguing that the habitual tendency to see oneself as different and separate from others severely limits the ability to exhibit altruistic concern for other beings, he postulates the equality of self and others. He offers arguments from phenomenological and ontological perspectives in support of his argument and proposes to reverse one's self-focused attitude through contemplative exercises, namely the contemplations on exchanging self and other. Three different layers can be identified in the proposed contemplations, namely a conceptual, evaluative and objective. The conceptual level refers to the reversal of self-identification, the evaluative to the reversal of one's self-cherishing attitude, and the objective to the exchange of abstract goods, such as happiness and suffering, or praise and blame. Through these contemplations, Śāntideva proposes a far-reaching reappraisal of one's conventional worldview.

3.3. Śāntideva's Deconstructive Compassion Didactics

The discussion of Mahāyāna compassion didactics in Chapter II of this study distinguished three different approaches, which I labelled constructive, deconstructive, and

---

shin tu ni // bze re can gyur nyid du lhung // (In text transl. Crosby and Skilton (1998, 103). Transl. Padmakara (2006, 134): To the extent this human form is cosseted and saved from hurt, Just so, just so, to that degree, It dwindles to a weak and fretful state.

cognitive-analytic. The constructive approach aims at stimulating empathic responses and enhancing positive character traits, the deconstructive approach focuses on eliminating antagonistic tendencies that inhibit the expression of compassion, while the cognitive-analytic approach is geared toward transforming one's cognition of reality by means of analysing the nature of saṃsāra, thus providing a cognitive framework for compassion. Just like the previously discussed example from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, also the BCA is a combination of various elements of all three approaches. However, every author and every text have preferences, emphasising one approach over the others. The APS, for instance, showed a strong preference for the constructive approach, and so does much of the Lojong literature. Śāntideva also applies constructive didactics with his enthusiastically formulated aspirations in the BCA's chapters III and X, and he employs cognitive-analytic didactics in various chapters in which he examines and describes the causes of beings' suffering. In the patience chapter (VI) for instance, he examines the causes of anger. However, in Chapter VIII, that is, in the verses that provide the basis for compassion cultivation, his didactic approach stands out in that it does not rely on the constructive approach pursued in most other instructions on compassion cultivation. Instead, the methods of equalizing and exchange are best understood as cognitive-analytic and deconstructive, respectively.

Regarding the former, in verses VIII 90-112, Śāntideva encourages bodhisattvas to reform their ordinary dualistic outlook and start viewing the union of all beings and the equal value of their experience. According to the scholars and translators Skilton and Crosby, these instructions reflect the Cittamātra idea that compassion is the natural outflow of the highest realization of non-duality (Śāntideva, Crosby, and Skilton 1995, 82-86). It is clear however that Śāntideva saw the necessity for additional training. In verses VIII, 155-156, Śāntideva ascertains

the disadvantages of selfishness and the advantages of transcending that state. The purpose of analysing the human condition in this way is to enhance perseverance, altruism and other qualities, such as compassion.

The didactic approach of "the exchange of self and other" section focuses on deconstructing mental structures that inhibit compassion, such as the sense of an independently existing self, or the preferential treatment of the self at the expense of others. The majority of verses deal with discarding attachments to "I" and "mine." The sense of self-importance is being insulted, the self vilified, and the desired outcome of Śāntideva's instructions is to abandon self-cherishing, possibly even to give up one's own body. The vocabulary of deconstructive actions—giving up, discarding, relinquishing, etc.—is far more prominent than the use of constructive terms. Śāntideva abstains from describing various sufferings that could serve as stimuli for engendering a compassionate response or from reinforcing prosocial emotions. His deconstructive pedagogy suggests that he assumes that beings naturally have the potential for compassion, and do not need further stimuli. When he states, "compassion makes us feel such pain" (104), he assumes that feeling compassion is a given; a shared experience. Śāntideva's didactics therefore reflects a positive view of humanity as being endowed with a natural potential for compassion, but he abstains from stimulating empathetic emotions.

Śāntideva's deconstructive didactics points us to understanding what hinders the naturally inborn potential for compassion from being expressed. His verses shed light on the difficult question of why people often do not act compassionately, even though they might wish to be compassionate. His radical normative claim to impartial and universal compassion entails the conclusion that as long as the self-other dichotomy has not been eradicated, genuine compassion is not born. This means that compassion that is reserved for an ingroup is not genuine, as it

conceals prejudice and bias against the outgroup, and therefore harbors the potential for aggression. Śāntideva has a contemporary proponent of a similar view in the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who argues powerfully against what she calls the politics of disgust, that is, the laws and public opinions that emphasize separation and recoiling from those who are different. In her book *From Disgust to Humanity*, she criticizes those who justify disgust as an excuse for prejudice and aversion; she advertises a politics of humanity by which she means trying to walk in the other persons' shoes for a while, and in the process, learning to see them as people who are like oneself (Nussbaum 2010). Nussbaum' view resembles Śāntideva in that both propose that bias, prejudice and ideas of separation have to be actively deconstructed through disciplined educational efforts. Śāntideva's contemplations may seem extreme in their morality, but his understanding of compassion as radical non-harmfulness is as relevant as ever. Following his argument, acts of charity or prosocial action cannot be fully compassionate as long as ingroup/outgroup thinking, prejudice and bias have not been eradicated. Compassion cultivation therefore has to comprise methods for deconstructing self-grasping.

The demanding nature of Śāntideva's ethics also shines through in the verses on generosity and dedication in chapters III and X, which I categorized as constructive approaches to compassion cultivation. In Śāntideva's logic, compassionate actions such as generosity are fully complete and spontaneous only once the distinction between self and other has been dissolved. His descriptions of charity are therefore characterized by a high degree of ethical demandingness that can only be understood on the basis of his equalizing and exchange instructions. Such extreme generosity is often expressed as offering one's own body, life or labor to others. BCA VIII culminates in a verse on giving one's own body:

Therefore, free from all attachments,

I will give this body for the benefit of beings. (BCA VIII, 184ab)[215]

Similarly, the *bodhicitta* aspirations in Chapter III, the merit transfer in Chapter X, and the discussion of generosity in Chapter I of the ŚS all express the bodhisattvas' absolute dedication, passionate, unreserved commitment that can only be understood as the expression of a profound mental transformation.

My body thus and all my goods besides
And all my merits gained and to be gained
I give them all and do not count the cost
To bring about the benefit of beings. (BCA III, 10)[216]

The enthusiastic call for selflessness of Śāntideva's verses, which has led contemporary scholars to extensive discussions about the intentions of the author and the nature of his ethics, especially in comparison to Western ethical models,[217] should be understood on the basis of BCA VIII. It seems helpful to read such verses as the result of having meditated on and internalized the equality and exchange of self and other rather than reading them as prescriptive behavior. If we focus on the behavioral aspect, we are faced with a demanding form of ethical heroism that might be nothing more than inaccessible.

---

[215] BCA VIII, 184 (Min 207, 26-27): *tasmān mayānapekṣeṇa kāyas tyakto jagaddhite | ato 'yaṃ bahudoṣo 'pi dhāryate karmabhāṇḍavat* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 30b5:) *de bas bdag gis chags med par // 'gro la phan phyir lus gtang bya // des na 'di la nyes mang yang // las kyi spyad bźin gzung bar bya* // Transl. (Padmakara 2006, 135): Therefore, free from all attachments, I will give this body for the benefit of beings. And though it is afflicted by so many faults, I shall adopt it as my necessary tool.

[216] BCA III, 10 (Min 163, 22-23): *ātmabhāvāṃs tathā bhogān sarvatryadhvagataṃ śubham | nirapekṣas tyajāmy eṣa sarvasattvārthasiddhaye* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 7a2-3): *lus dang de bzhin longs spyod dang // dus gsum dge ba thams cad kyang // sems can kun gyi don sgrub phyir // phongs pa med par gtang bar bya* //Translation Padmakara (2006, 48: BCA III, 11).

[217] Among those who have discussed the demanding nature of Śāntideva's ethics are Stephen Harris (2014), (2015) and Charles Goodman (2016).

4. Interpretations and Transformations: Śāntideva and *Tonglen*

The verses on equalizing and exchange of self and others are one of the major scriptural sources for the Mahāyāna mind training of the Lojong tradition that emerged in Tibet in the eleventh century, and, by extension, also for *tonglen* in the secular CCT at Stanford University's CCARE.[218] A comparison of the BCA passage with Lojong descriptions of *tonglen* shows important differences in their didactic approach. This final section will shed some light on the early commentarial reception of the BCA in India and Tibet so as to elucidate the beginning of the hermeneutic trajectory that links the BCA VIII to *tonglen*. The analysis of the transformative process that the passage has undergone will be continued in the next chapter from the perspective of the Tibetan Lojong literature. Thupten Jinpa (2019) identifies two areas in which the Lojong presentations stand in tension to their corresponding ideas in the BCA. The first pertains to the Lojong's framing of its main practice as the cultivation of the two awakening minds, conventional and ultimate *bodhicitta*. The second difference lies in the Lojong's envisioning of the nature of the exchange in *tonglen*.

4.1. Conventional and Ultimate *Bodhicitta*

The Lojong tradition commonly presents its practice as a combination of training in conventional *bodhicitta* (Skt. *saṃvṛtibodhicitta,* Tib. *kun rdzob byang sems*) and ultimate *bodhicitta* (Skt. *paramārthabodhicitta*, Tib. *don dam byang sems*). The former refers to the cultivation of the altruistic aspiration to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all beings and includes the practice of *tonglen*; the latter to the realization of the ultimate nature of reality. According to Jinpa, the language of such a distinction is absent in the BCA root text and in most

[218] http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/.

of its early Indian commentaries. Śāntideva refers simply to "*bodhicitta"* (VIII, 89) without further distinction. However, it appears in an Indian commentary by Kṛṣnapa (11th century), which ascertains that "the chapter that presents the perfection of wisdom is referred to as [presenting] the ultimate *bodhicitta*, while the other nine chapters are described as presenting the conventional *bodhicitta*. Thus, the two awakening minds are present here."[219] In Thokmé Sangpo's commentary on the BCA one finds the practice of equalizing and exchange under the heading of "Conventional *Bodhicitta*" (VIII, 90-184),[220] while his commentary on the concluding verse (187) of Chapter VIII can be understood as a meditation on ultimate *bodhicitta* (Jinpa 2019, 6).[221] Jinpa concludes that the interpretive frame of the two *bodhicitta*s that the later Indian commentarial tradition introduced was adopted as a received approach to the BCA, thereby determining the Lojong structure of discussing and practicing the conventional and ultimate *bodhicitta*.

What does this interpretation of the two-fold *bodhicitta* entail for the practice of *tonglen*? The distinction between conventional and ultimate is a common distinction in Indian and Tibetan literature, *pāramārthika* (true) pertaining to absolute truth, and *sāṃketika* (designatory, pertaining to convention or transactions) or *saṃvṛti* (concealing), referring to relative truth, or

---

[219] Kṛṣnapa, *Presenting the Difficult Points of Bodhicaryāvatāra* (TG vol.62), p.242-43, cited by Jinpa (2019, 7. The page number here and in the following refer to the unpublished draft of this chapter, since this dissertation was written before the publication of the Reader). Jinpa adds the bibliographical information that the translator's colophon of the text states that the work was translated into Tibetan by the author himself with the Tibetan translator Chökyi Sherab (11th century).

[220] Thokmé Sangpo, commentary on BCA VIII, 89 (2006, 127): *gnyis pa kun rdzob byang sems sgom pa la gsum ste/ bdag gzhan mnyam pa dang / brje ba dang / thun mong gi bya ba'o* // Transl.: Secondly, the cultivation of conventional bodhicitta has three sections: the equalizing of self and other, the exchange, and ordinary activity.

[221] Thokmé Sangpo's commentary *legs bzhad rgya mtsho* (2006, 142) reads: *de bas na 'dod chags la sogs pa'i nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa dang / nyon mongs pa can ma yin pa'i rnam rtog shes bya'i sgrib pa bsal ba'i phyir du 'dod pa'i rnam rtog la sogs pa log pa'i lam las sems blan te / yang dag pa dge ba'i dmigs pa la rtag par yang bdag gis mnyam par gzhag par bya'o//* Thus, in order to clear away the obscuration of the afflictions such as desire, and the others, [and] the cognitive obscurations that are not tainted by affliction, I'll bend my mind from the mistaken path, and constantly upon the perfect object of virtue, I shall rest my mind in even meditation.

the conventional perspective, the mistaken perception of a concrete world.[222] Although definitions vary in detail, the distinction is generally understood to refer to the bodhisattva's capacity to understand *śūnyatā* or the primordial reality of phenomena (*dharmatāpratilambhika*), or the absence thereof. Ultimate *bodhicitta* is attributed to bodhisattvas who have attained the first stage (*bhūmi*) or beyond, while conventional *bodhicitta* relies on conventional, dualistic modes of cognition (Wangchuk 2007, 256). By categorizing the equalizing and exchange passage as conventional *bodhicitta*, Kṛṣnapa, Thokmé Sangpo and other commentators de-emphasize Śāntideva's references to the primordial reality of phenomena, such as the non-existence of self, or the non-duality of self and other. Thereby, they prepare the road toward an understanding of the equalizing and exchange passage as a conceptual exercise that functions within the realm of duality, without challenging the self-other dichotomy.

4.2. The Nature of the Exchange

The second interpretative transformation pertains to the nature of the exchange. Previously, I have analyzed Śāntideva's instruction on exchange in terms of three categories, conceptual, evaluative and objective. The first is the most radical exchange because it involves renouncing grasping at a self, or personal identity. Indian commentaries, according to Jinpa, all interpret the exchange "literally in terms of switching of identity" (2018, 7), while Tibetan commentaries opt for the less radical interpretation of an attitudinal shift towards the self, a transfer of self-cherishing toward cherishing the other. The hermeneutic device employed by early Tibetan commentators, such as Sönam Tsemo and Thokmé Sangpo, is the interpretative

[222] The two concepts have been interpreted in a variety of ways, the complexity of which goes beyond the scope of this thesis. For details in the distinction and historical evolution of these terms, see Wangchuk (2007, 251).

shift from the BCA's term "self-grasping" (*bdag 'dzin* or *bdag tu 'dzin pa*) to "self-cherishing" (*bdag gces 'dzin*) in the commentaries referring to verses VIII, 113, 135-6, 174 and 181. This addition cannot be found in the Indian commentary by Prajñākaramati, and it is therefore presumably an interpretation originating with Tibetan commentators. The re-interpretation of these terms entails significant consequences, since the attitudinal change does not demand the practitioner to eliminate the dualistic perception of reality in terms of self and other, or to relinquish the delusion of an existing self. Rather than dealing with the cognitive obscuration of self-delusion, the Tibetan commentators focus on the obscuration of the afflictions (*nyon mongs*) such as the attachment to the self.[223] Thokmé Sangpo writes that Bodhisattvas should know the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the qualities of cherishing others.[224] The slight shift toward an affective interpretation of the verses, the hardly noticeable addition of the word cherishing (*gces*), might very well be an early indicator for the more emotional aspects of the Lojong didactics. Chilbu's commentary, quoted above, refers to the "dear" mother to whom one should send one's happiness out of love for her. The meditation does not demand renouncing one's view of an existing self or viewing oneself through the eyes of the other – the mother in this case – such as BCA VIII, 140-154 instructs. The interpretative shift in *tonglen* meditation will be further explored in the following chapter of this study. Here it suffices to recognize that with these two hermeneutic tools, the shift from ultimate *bodhicitta* to relative *bodhicitta*, and from self-grasping to self-cherishing, the commentators of the BCA provided a rationale for a far less demanding and radical understanding of the principle of equalizing and exchange.

---

[223] The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* defines "gces 'dzin" as "rtsa ba chen por rtse ba', gtsigs chen po byed pa," (attributing great value and importance to one's own person.)

[224] Tokme Commentary on VIII, 113: *bdag nyid dam de gces par 'dzin pa skyon dang bcas pa dang gzhan dag gam de gces par 'dzin pa la yon tan rgya mtshor shes byas nas/_bdag 'dzin yongs su dor ba dang gzhan blang bar ni bsgom par bya'o//* (LoTC 134).

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined the multifaceted contemplations related to the principle of equality and exchange in Śāntideva's BCA. Firstly, to provide a historico-textual frame for the principle, I traced preceding related ideas in Mahāyāna texts and indicated subsequent hermeneutical developments in Indian and Tibetan literature. Secondly, my close analysis of the BCA verses led me to distinguish two approaches to the meditation on equality, namely phenomenological and ontological, and three approaches to meditating on the exchange, which I called "conceptual," "evaluative" and "objective." In the next chapter, I will continue to trace the principle of equality and exchange in the context of *tonglen* practice, elucidating how scholars only partially adopted the BCA's ideas and instead formed their own new didactics. Finally, the close reading of Śāntideva's verses BCA VIII, 90-186/7 allowed me to draw conclusions about the specificity of Śāntideva's compassion didactics, which proved to be both, traditional and innovative. I deduced that Śāntideva presumes compassion to be an inherent potential in the human mind that therefore does not need to be acquired through enhancing positive emotions and empathy. Instead, natural compassion needs to be freed from obstructive forces. The BCA VIII verses on equalizing and exchange therefore represent a *deconstructive approach* to compassion, aimed at the annihilation of the deeply ingrained self-other dichotomy that inhibits the expression of compassion. Reflecting on this didactic approach allowed me to evaluate the role and nature of antagonistic forces that inhibit the expression of compassion. The most important insight is that the fabricated idea of separateness between oneself and others undermines genuine compassion. In other words, it means that prejudices, in the sense of carrying deep-seated, unquestioned judgements about the value of another individual or an outgroup, inhibit genuine compassion in fundamental ways. However, according to the BCA,

self-centeredness is but an erroneous mental pattern that can and must be eradicated through training. For Śāntideva, as I have shown in this chapter, compassion training has less to do with empathetic emotions but instead with the eradication of deluded psychological structures and replacing them with a world-view of other-orientation.

Chapter IV

Compassion Cultivation in Tibetan Traditions

Take into your own heart all the suffering,
the suffering's origin, and the afflictions of your dear mother.
(Chilbupa's Seven-Point Mind Training)

"*My mother, my mother*"
(Atīśa's Seven-Point Mind Training)

Tibetan Buddhist traditions have developed unique, pragmatic, down-to-earth approaches to cultivating loving kindness, compassion and *bodhicitta* (*byang chub kyi sems*) which have become known as the category of teachings called *lojong* (*blo sbyong*) or mind training. Practices such as the "seven-point mind training" (*blo sbyong don bdun ma*) with its meditation technique of *tonglen* (*gtong len*), the "seven-fold causes and result instructions" (*rgyu 'bras man ngag bdun*) or the "thirty-seven bodhisattva practices" (*rgyal sras lag len so bdun ma*) enjoy great popularity among all Tibetan Buddhist followers across sectarian divides. Śāntideva's influence in all of these practices is undeniable and significant, yet, as the last chapter's analysis of Tibetan commentarial literature on the BCA indicates, the relationship to the source is complex. The analysis of the continuities and discrepancies between the BCA and its Tibetan adaptations that began in Chapter III will be continued in the present chapter with a focus on Lojong literature. It is divided into three parts: [1] Introduction to the Lojong tradition and *tonglen* practice; [2] The complex relationship of *tonglen* to Śāntideva's teachings in the BCA, and [3] Śāntideva's legacy beyond Lojong.

1. The Contemplative Practice of *Tonglen*

1.1. Brief Introduction to Lojong and *Tonglen* Practice

Lojong is the name of a spiritual tradition as well as a literary genre of Tibetan Buddhism. The spiritual tradition of Lojong is unique to Tibetan Buddhism, emerging in the eleventh century as a creative product of Tibetan assimilation and adaptation of Indian Buddhist thought. Historically, Lojong was first associated with the Kadam (*bka'gdams*) School of Tibetan Buddhism but in time became integrated into all major Tibetan schools. The first text that uses the word in its title is the Kadampa scholar Langri Thangpa's *Blo sbyong tshig brgyad ma* (Eight Verses on Mind Training).[225] The origin of Lojong is credited to the teachings of Atīśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (*A ti sha mar me mdzad dpal ye shes*, 982-1054), whom Tibetans respectfully call "the venerable master" (*Jo bo rje*). He was an abbot of the monastic university of Vikramaśila, India, who, following an invitation by the king of Guge in Western Tibet, became a seminal figure in the later transmission of Buddhist Dharma (*phyi dar bstan pa*) to Tibet.[226] His *Bodhipāthapradīpa* (*Lamp to the Path of Awakening*) is considered the main source for the emergence of Lojong. Atīśa had one hundred and fifty teachers, the main ones being the Sumatran scholar Dharmakīrti (Tib. *gser gling pa*) with whom Atīśa stayed for twelve years; the

[225] *Blo sbyong tshig brgyd ma* by Dge bshes Glang ri thang pa (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2004, 177-186). Jinpa (2019) mentions that the first usage can be traced to the Kadam master Potowa (*Po to ba*, 1027-1105).

[226] The historical and philosophical development of *tonglen* has received little attention in Western academia, even though the practice has been introduced and popularized in North American since the late 1980s with translated works such as Jamgön Kongtrül's *Great Path of Awakening* (1987), best-selling popular works such as Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (1992), or Chögyam Trungpa's *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* (1993). An important source of information is the more recent publication of *Mind Training, The Great Collection* (2006) with its introduction by translator Thupten Jinpa (abbreviated as MTGC). This work, the *Theg pa chen po blo byjong brgya rtsa* (literally the Hundred Mahāyāna Mind Trainings, abbreviated as LG), is the earliest anthology of Mind Training texts, compiled by the Tibetan scholars Shönu Gyalchok (*gZon nu rgyal mchog*, 14th c.) and Könchok Gyaltsen (*dKon mchog rgyal mtshan*, 1388-1469). It is to date the largest collection of Mind Training texts in translation. Extant academic research publications on *tonglen* are dissertations by Daphna McKnight and Brendan Ozawa de Silva.

Indian Dharmarakṣita of Odantapuri monastic university, and the junior Kusalī, known also as Maitrīyogi.

Lojong instructions were initially considered a restricted teaching, only given orally to a few select disciples. The Kadampa teacher Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (*'chad kha ba ye shes rdo rje*, 1101–1175) is said to have been the first Tibetan master to expand the audiences. He is also known for organizing the mind training in seven points, *blo sbyong don bdun ma* (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2004, 41-80), thus creating a systematization that can be found in many commentaries and came to stand as synonymous with Lojong. The name Lojong also came to designate a literary genre referring to a range of texts that provide various instructions for the generation of *bodhicitta*. A comprehensive collection of such texts is the *blo sbyong brgya rtsa* (LG)*,* compiled in the fifteenth century by Shönu Gyalchok (*gzhon nu rgyal mchog*) and Könchok Gyaltsen (*dkon mchog rgyal mtshan*, 1388–1469) and translated by Thupten Jinpa (*Mind Training: The Great Collection* [MTGC], 2004). This anthology demonstrates that as a literary genre, Lojong comprises a broad range of practical instruction texts, extending far beyond the seven-point systematization. Different systematizations of practice developed, such as the *Zhen pa bzhi bral* ("parting from the four attachments") teachings of the Sakya school.

The term *blo sbyong*, including its cognates *blo sbyongs, blo sbyang,* and *sems sbyong,* is a multivalent term referring to a range of meanings: habituating, training, purifying and transforming (*sbyong*, *sbyang*) the mind (*blo*).[227] Although in a broad sense, all of Buddha's teachings aim at mental transformation, Lojong came to be understood as the training of the

[227] The terms "habituating" and "training" refer, in the broadest sense, to the mastery of one's mental capacities, especially of the qualities explained in the Buddha's teachings. In a narrower sense, they refer to the cultivation of the qualities of love, compassion and *bodhicitta.* The term "purification" of the mind refers to the elimination of mental poisons that impede spiritual awakening, such as anger, attachment and delusion. "Transformation" refers to the changing the ordinary self-centered mind into genuine aspiration for awakening and the welfare of others. See also Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen (2006, 1).

awakening mind, and thus as specifically Mahāyāna mind training (*theg pa chen po'i blo sbyong*). The outstanding characteristic of Lojong, which sets it apart from other spiritual disciplines, is its highly practical, non-ritualistic and down-to-earth character. Lojong practice consists of two aspects: first, the formal, contemplative practice, and secondly, the active applications in day-to-day life. The former includes preliminary contemplations, evaluating the meaningfulness of human existence, its uncertain duration and dissatisfactory nature, and culminating in setting the intention to engage wholeheartedly in mind training (MTGC, 89). The main formal contemplative practice is *tonglen* (*gtong len*)*,* "giving and taking." It is framed as the cultivation of relative and ultimate *bodhicitta*. The emphasis is on relative *bodhicitta* (*kun rdzob sems bskyed*), which includes the generation of loving-kindness and compassion. The technique is fairly simple and straightforward, consisting of imaginatively giving (*gtong*) to others one's own happiness, good fortune and positive karma, while taking on (*len*) others' suffering, misfortune, and negative karma. The purpose of repeatedly contemplating such thoughts is the complete reversal of all self-centered attitudes into a genuinely altruistic outlook on life, which entails qualities such as fearlessness and resilience. In the words of Atīśa's teacher Dharmarakṣita, bodhisattvas must "convert afflictions that resemble a jungle of poisons into an elixir" (MTGC 134),[228] alluding to the near-alchemical transformative capacities of *tonglen*. In addition to the contemplative exercises, great importance is attributed to the active aspect of the training. The altruistic ideal acquired in contemplation must be implemented in everyday situations. To do so demands a heightened state of self-awareness, particularly of the three

[228] The entire verse reads (LG, 81): *de phyir sems dpa' rma bya lta bu yis / dug gi nags dang 'dra ba'i nyon mongs rnams / bcud du bsgyur la 'khor ba'i nags su 'jug / dang blang la 'dug 'di gzhom par bya* // Translation by Jinpa: Therefore peacock-like heroes must convert afflictions that resemble a jungle of poisons into an elixir and enter the jungle of cyclic existence; embracing the afflictions, heroes must destroy their poison (MTGC 134, 5). The metaphor is further explained in MTGC 133,1: When peacocks roam through the jungle of virulent poison, Though the gardens of medicinal plants may be attractive, the peacock flocks will not take delight in them; for peacocks thrive on the essence of virulent poison.

mental poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance, and the willingness to confront adverse conditions in life, using them as opportunities for transforming these poisons. Adverse conditions, such as loss, sickness and even death thereby become opportunities for spiritual growth.

Lojong instructions are given in short, pithy "mind training root lines" (*blo sbyong gi rtsa tshig*), which are accompanied by commentaries. Chekawa's *blo sbyong don bdun ma* (*Seven-Point Mind Training*), for instance, consists of fifty-nine verses which have served as the basis for many commentators' interpretations. The short verses are memorized to serve as a "red thread," a reminder of one's intentions in everyday life. For example, verses such as "When the world and its inhabitants boil with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of enlightenment" (MTGC, 97) advise a resilient and intrepid attitude towards adverse conditions; while "Relate whatever you encounter to your meditation" (MTGC, 381)[229] instructs Lojong practitioners to relate to both, unfortunate and fortunate conditions in life with an impartial attitude. Joy and sorrow, health and sickness should be experienced without preference or aversion, so as to engender an even-tempered resilience, or, to use a modern expression, to foster emotional self-regulation. The character of the active Lojong practice is relational: The trainees use their relationships to animate and inanimate aspects of life, i.e. to other beings or to situations, as material for transformation. Because of the relational character of its exercises, many Lojong instructions are concerned with the impact of such emotions (afflictions) as attachment, envy, jealousy, anger, resentment, etc. which contributes to Lojong's accessisble,

[229] LG, 50: *snod bcud sdig pa 'khol ba'i tshe//rkyen ngan byang chub lam du sgyur//* and LG, 352: *'phral la gang thug bsgom du sbyor//* This second verse is derived from Sangye Gompa's commentary "Public Explication Mind Training" (MTGC, 313-419). Chekawa's version of this line reads" Relate to your meditation whatever you can right now. Tib.: *'phral la gang thub bsgom du sbyor//* (LG 2004, 111). Jinpa explains that the difference results from the difference of spelling; *thug* means to encounter, while *thub* means can.

psychological, and every-day-life character. Nevertheless, one should not forget that the final goal of Lojong is the perfection of the two *bodhicitta*s. The goal is described in its literature as the fundamental transformation of the ordinary mind from a self-centered mode of functioning to an other-oriented, altruistic conduct of an awakened and wise person. It is, in Thupten Jinpa's words, a "*metanoesis*" (MTGC 2),[230] a transformative change of heart, a spiritual conversion that demands the willingness to cast away the self.[231] It is clear then, that the transformation of emotions is seen as a preliminary step to attaining omniscience.[232]

1.2. The Evolution of *Tonglen*

The meditation of *tonglen* as it is known and practiced today by adherents of Buddhist traditions, is the result of a progressive evolution from a simple concept into an increasingly sophisticated construct that integrated emotional, psychological, and philosophical elements to form a fully-fledged contemplative exercise, embedded in ritualized prayer and authoritative scriptural and logic reasoning. The following survey traces the chronological evolution of *tonglen* instructions in Lojong literature in the earliest extant commentarial work. In addition, a case study of a ritualized *tonglen* practice will demonstrate how the meditation is used today.

---

[230] In a Christian context, the term gained the connotation of repentance, and a change of purpose. See Luthers Werke, Vol. 48, Briefe (May 30, 1518 Brief an Johann von Staupitz), 65-70.

[231] *Metanoesis* is an important term in the philosophy of the Kyoto School. It was coined by the Japanese philosopher Hajime Tanabe (1885-1962) and designates a transformation as radical as "death and resurrection." Tanabe admonishes people to recognize the "valuelessness and meaningless of our existence." See Tanabe (1986).

[232] The Lojong teacher Sangye Gompa, presented below, writes: "We follow in the footsteps of these masters and aspire to turn whatever we do into a cause for omniscience" (MTGC 319).

1.3. Early Commentarial Literature

The *blo sbyong brgya rtsa* (LG), translated as *Mind Training: The Great Collection* (MTGC) is an anthology compiled in the fifteenth century by two important scholars associated with the Kadam (*bka' gdams*), Sakya (*sa skya*) and Lojong lineages, Shonu Gyaltchog (*gzhon nu rgyal mchog*) and Könchog Gyaltsen (*dkon mchog rgyal mtshan*, 1388-1469, MTGC, 13-16). The anthology contains several of the earliest commentaries of Lojong. In the edition published by the Library of Tibetan Classics, the order of the root lines[233] and their first commentaries is given as follows:

1. *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba* (The *Root Lines of Mahayāna Mind Training,* attributed to Atīśa, 11th century)
2. *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba mtshan brags ma* (The *Annotated Root Lines,* attributed to Atīśa)
3. Root lines embedded in Chekawa's *blo sbyong don bdun ma* (*Seven-Point Mind Training,* Chekawa, 12th century)
4. Root lines embedded in *theg pa chen po'i blo sbyong* (*Mahāyāna Mind Training,* ca 12th century)
5. Root lines embedded in Sangye Gompa's *blo sbyong tshogs bshad che ma* (*Public Explication,* 12th-13th century)
6. Versified redaction of root lines in Shönu Gyalchok's *blo sbyong legs bshad kun btus* (*Compendium of All Well-Uttered Insights*, 14th century).[234]

[233] Tib. *blo sbyong gi rtsa tshig.* See p.147 of this thesis.

[234] The instructions on *tonglen* in this text are an exact copy of the instructions in the *Mahāyāna Mind Training.* (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2006, 10). For this reason, this text will be omitted in the following discussion.

By comparing the instructions pertaining to *tonglen* in these six texts, the small differences will explain the progressive evolution of this meditation.

1.3.1. The *Root Lines of Mahāyāna Mind Training*[235]

The *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba* (*Root Lines of Mahāyāna Mind Training*), though not an original composition by Atīśa, is believed to be a compilation of his oral instructions. The lines relevant to *tonglen* constitute the beginning of the text and read as follows:

> [1] First, train in the preliminaries
> For the main practice, train alternately in giving and taking.
> There are three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue-
> This, in brief, is the instruction for subsequent practice.
>
> [2] Commence the sequence of taking from your own self.
> Place the two astride your breath.[236]

In this text, the bare bones of *tonglen* are laid out: The meditation is an alternating mental giving and taking, which, according to the instructions, begins with the element of taking, or accepting one's own suffering. It is combined with a type of breathing meditation, the origins of which are not further explained.

1.3.2. The Annotated Root Lines[237]

The next text, the *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba mtshan brags ma,* is another compilation of instructions retrospectively attributed to Atīśa. It differs from the previous text in

---

[235] MTGC, 71-73. Tib. (LG, 203): *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba /*

[236] MTGC, 71. Translation: Jinpa, emphasis mine.

[237] MTGC, 75-82. Tib. (LG, 36-40).: *theg pa chen po blo sbyong gi rtsa ba mtshan brags ma/*

that it inserts additional instructions for meditation. It specifies that what is to be given are "body, resources and roots of virtue." These three categories broadly correspond to Śāntideva's presentation in the ŚS of the perfection of giving, in which he distinguishes three categories that should be purified, prepared, and enhanced, so as to offer them, namely self *(ātmabhāva),* enjoyments *(bhoga),* and merit (*śubha*) (Śāntideva and Goodman 2016). It should be noted that the first objects of giving are concrete and material in nature (body, resources), not a gift in a vague sense of happiness. Another important feature in this text is the nature of the recipients of compassion: they include non-humans, and particular attention is given to challenging and controversial objects of compassion, such as personal enemies or criminals.

> [1] […] Train alternately in the two – giving (to others of your body, resources, and roots of virtue) and taking.
>
> [2] Place the two (giving and taking) astride your breath as it exits. […]
>
> [3] […] Toward all beings (humans, non-humans, enemies, friends, and in particular the perpetrators of harm), contemplate their great kindness. (MTGC 75-76)

1.3.3. Chekawa's Seven-Point Mind Training[238]

The Kadampa teacher Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (*'chad kha ba ye shes rdo rje*, 1101–1175) is known as the great systematizer of the Lojong teachings. Following the instructions of his teacher Sharawa (*Sha ra ba*, 1070-1141), Chekawa arranged the root lines in seven categories, which became the standard presentation of Lojong, thus establishing the term "seven points" (*don bdun ma*) as synonymous to Lojong. The seven points are listed as follows.

I. Presentation of the preliminaries, the basis
II. Training in the awakening mind (*bodhicitta*), the main practice
III. Taking adverse conditions onto the path of enlightenment
IV. Presentation of a lifetime's practice in summary

[238] MTGC 83-86. Tib. (LG 41-80): *blo sbyong don bdun ma'i 'grel pa/.*

V. Presentation of having trained the mind
VI. Presentation of commitments of mind training
VII. Presentation of the precepts of mind training (MTGC 83-85)[239]

Tonglen belongs to Point II in this classification, the main practice, which is the training in *bodhicitta*. The commentary distinguishes the twofold scheme of ultimate and conventional *bodhicitta* and establishes *tonglen* as the tradition's principal meditation for cultivating conventional *bodhicitta* – as mentioned previously, a distinction that is altogether absent in Śāntideva's BCA.[240] The specific instructions are identical to the two previously listed texts:

> Train the two – giving and taking – alternately.
> Place the two astride your breath.

The commentary recorded by Chekawa's student Se Chilbu Chökyi Gyaltsen (*se spyil bu chos kyi rgyal mtshan*, 1121-89) is remarkable for its innovative interpretations (MTGC 94-96). First, it introduces the object of the "dear mother" as the main focus for the practitioner's love and compassion, thus representing the earliest occurrence in the anthology of using the recollection of one's mother as a psychological tool to stimulate an emotional experience of compassion. The text instructs practitioners to reflect upon their mother's kindness and care in the past, and her hardships and suffering in the present, until they are deeply moved, and "tears fall from [their] eyes and the hairs of [their] pores stand on end" (MTGC 94). *Tonglen* is then introduced as a moral obligation, an act of paying back her kindness. The sequence starts with the second part, *len* – taking the mother's suffering which is explained as the result of her unwholesome actions,

---

[239] Tib.: I. *sngon 'gro rten gyi chos bstan pa/* II. *dngos gzhi byang chub kyi sems sbyong ba/* III. *rkyen ngan byang chub kyi lam du bsgyur ba/* IV. *tshe gcig gi nyams len dril nas bstan pa/* V. *blo 'byongs pa'i tshad/* VI. *blo sbyong gi dam tshig* VII. *blo sbyong gi bslab bya//*

[240] Tibetan Stages of the Path (*lam rim*) literature explains *bodhicitta* as twofold and ascertains that it is the determining factor at every stage on the path. The conventional thought of awakening (*saṃvṛtibodhicitta, kun rdzob byang chub kyi sems*) is the motivating impetus and ritually enacted resolution to attain buddhahood. It also sustains each stage of the gradual transformation towards awakening. It is divided into aspiration (*smon pa'i sems*) and application (*'jug pa'i sem*s). In its ultimate form (*paramārthabodhicitta, don dam byang chub kyi sems*), bodhicitta refers to both, the inborn potential to become awakened, and the mind that has reached the final goal of buddhahood.

in accordance with the teaching on karmic causes and results (*las rgyu 'bras*). The meditator takes not only the mother's manifest suffering, but also the causes of her suffering.

The second noteworthy innovation in Se Chilbu's commentary is the introduction of a rudimentary visualization, or creative imagination. Practitioners are told to imagine: "Take the sufferings and pile them into your heart in clean swaths—as if layers sheared off by a sharp knife." (MTGC 94) Over time, *tonglen* was enriched with various elements of visualization, as will be shown below. Visualizing became a standard way of practicing *tonglen.* The present text proposes to imagine wish-fulfilling jewels to symbolize the goods that are offered to the mother. The jewels stand for "all the conditions for engaging in spiritual practice, such as food, clothing, shelter, assistants, as well as reliance on a spiritual teacher – all the conditions favorable to the attainment of enlightenment" (MTGC 94). The psychological function of visualizing is twofold. Firstly, instructions are given to stimulate emotions. It amplifies the practitioners' recollection of their mother's care, hardships and present state of suffering, so as to evoke a strong emotional response. Secondly, visualizations have the function of condensing the conceptual content into symbols, such as, for example, sharp knives and wish-fulfilling jewels. Both elements can be seen, in various degrees, in subsequent commentaries.[241] It is also worth noticing that the material character of the goods of generosity is re-interpreted in a philosophical sense. They are not desirable in themselves but only as conditions conducive to spiritual realization.

[241] For instructions on stimulating an emotional response, see particularly "Atīśa's *Seven-Point Mind Training*," (250-255) of unknown authorship. It contains the yogic exercise of body speech and mind, which refers to enacting an empathetic state of despair with the mother's situation, reinforced by a crouched body posture and by shouting "My mother, my mother" (250).

1.3.4. Root Lines embedded in *Mahāyāna Mind Training*[242]

The *Mahāyāna Mind Training* presumably predates Chekawa's *Seven Points* presented in the previous section. Jinpa suggests it belongs to the transmission lineage of Jayülwa (*bya yul ba*),[243] which is also called the "Kadam lineage of instructions (*gdams ngag*)," and differs from the "Kadam lineage of treatises (*gzhung*)" to which Chekawa belongs.[244] The text represents an interesting alternative interpretation of Atīśa's instructions. The commentary shows strong parallels with Chekawa's text, such as the symbolism of the slicing razors, the wish-fulfilling jewel, or the mother as a meditation object. However, it differs in its total absence of positive emotional affect stimuli such as the gratitude towards the mother accompanied by tears and goosebumps. The mother simply serves as a proxy for the infinite number of sentient beings in the *trichiliocosm*.[245] The instructions thus have a much cooler tone, giving more importance to impartiality and equanimity than to emotional stimulation.

> *For the main practice, cultivate alternately giving and taking*; Take upon yourself the suffering of sentient beings along with the origins of their suffering, transform your body into a precious wish-fulfilling jewel, and then give this to sentient beings.
>
> *Commence the sequence of taking from your mother*. As is stated here, you should imagine in front of you sentient beings equal to the limits of space in all ten directions, such as your real-life mother, father, siblings, members of your community, the people of your region […]. Then reflect the following manner: This sentient being, my real-life mother, gave me the human existence of leisure and opportunity […]
>
> Thinking thus, take from sentient beings their suffering and its origin as if you were slicing them off with a sharp razor; these then enter through your heart. Transform your body into a precious wish-fulfilling jewel and give it to all sentient beings.

---

[242] MTGC 299-312, Tib. (LG 194): *theg pa chen po'i blo sbyong/.*

[243] The lineage starting from Bya yul ba Gzhon nu 'od (1075-1138), influential Kadam teacher.

[244] MTGC 10. See also note on 617, n.472. After the demise of Atīśa, the Kadam tradition branched into the textual lineage (*gzhung pa*) of Po to ba and the instructional lineage (*gdams ngag pa*) of Spyan snga ba tshul khrims 'bar (1033-1103), who followed the essential or personal instructions.

[245] Tib. *stong gsum gyi stong chen gyi 'jig rten,* literally, the three-thousandfold universe, which is an astronomical term to describe the immensity of the universe.

> Since the fulfillment of all wishes flows from this jewel, imagine that all beings achieve in the immediate term, all the conditions favorable for Dharma practice and are led ultimately to the state of buddhahood. This is the practice of giving and taking within a single session. […]
>
> *Place the two astride your breath.* […] When practiced in this manner, giving is loving-kindness, while taking is compassion that aspires [for others] to be free of immediate and long-term suffering. As you are aspiring to lead [others] to happiness, it is joyfulness; as you are free of bias, it is equanimity; placing [beings] directly in the state of buddhahood is the awakening mind. This is, therefore, Serlingpa's instruction on training in the conventional awakening mind. (MTGC 301-302)

Since the *Mahāyāna Mind Training* is a lesser-known text, I have quoted the passage here in full, giving the root lines in italics. This early variant of *tonglen* exemplifies the creative stage of the evolution of the idea of *tonglen* in Tibet.

1.3.5. Root Lines embedded in Sangye Gompa's *Public Explication*[246]

Sangye Gompa's (*Sangs rgyas sgom pa*, 1179-1250)[247] *blo sbyong tshogs bshad ma* (*Public Explication of Mind Training*) is significant in several respects. Firstly, the author structures the text differently than the *Seven Points,* likening the progression to a tree, with a trunk-like main practice and secondary branch practices. The main practice corresponds to Chekawa's first two points that cover the preliminaries and the formal practice of ultimate and conventional *bodhicitta*, whereas the branch practices refer to the remaining post-meditation practices, that is, points III through VII. The comparison is remotely reminiscent of Asaṅga's MSA XVII 36-40, in which compassion is compared to a tree. Asaṅga explains the tree's roots and trunk as compassion and forbearance, from which spread the branches, leaves, flowers and

[246] MTGC 299-417; Tib. (LG 203-284): *blo sbyong tshogs bshad ma/*.

[247] Sangye Gompa was the sixth abbot of Narthang monastery and a teacher of Chim Namkha Drak, the famed Abhidharma scholar and the author of Atisa's main biography. For explanations about the origin of this text, see MTGC 620, n. 500.

fruit, which stand for the bodhisattvas' activities of right reflection, taking of vows, perfecting inner conditions, and their maturation of qualities.[248]

Secondly, Sangye Gompa offers the most extensive theoretical discussion of the practice of *tonglen* among all mentioned texts, drawing support from scripture, reasoning, and phenomenological observation. Firstly, he presents a uniquely extensive range of scriptural evidence, including eighteen quotations from ten different *sūtra*s and *śāstra*s. Among these, the verses of Śāntideva's BCA are quoted six times in total and provide the most pertinent relevance for *tonglen*. The following sources are given:

1. The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Flower Ornament Scripture*), Toh 44, KG phal chen *a*, chap.45, 50b:4 (Jinpa 627: the wording is different from the version in the KG)
2. The *Agracaryapraṇidhāna* (*Aspiration Prayers for Supreme Conduct*) Toh 4396 TG sna tshogs *nyo*, 327b:6.
3. The *Aspiration Prayers of Granting the Gift of Loving-kindness* (source not identified)
4. Nāgārjuna's *Ratnāvalī* (Garland of Jewels), 5:48, Toh 4158 TG skyes rabs *ge*, 125a:6.
5. Śāntideva's BCA VII:16, VIII:113, 120, 131, 136, X:56; Toh 3871 TG dbu ma *la*.
6. Maitreya's MSA VI:2-VI:3. Toh 4020, TG sems tsam *phi*, 5b:6.
7. Aśvagoṣa's *Praṇidhānasaptatimānagāthā* (*Seventy Stanzas of Aspiration*), Toh 4392 TG sna tshogs *nyo*, 321a:4.
8. Vasubandhu's *Saṃbhāraparikathā* (*Discussion of Merit Accumulation*) Toh 4166 TG spring yig *ge,* 173b:3, 174b:5, 175a:3.
9. Asaṅga's BBh*,* exact quotes not identified)
10. The *dpal 'khor lo bde mchog gi rgyun gshags rgyas pa* (*Extensive Daily Confessions of Cakrasaṃvara [Practice]*), Toh 1533 TG rgyud 'grel *za*, 95a:4.

With quotations from these authoritative texts, Sangye Gompa establishes the authenticity of *tonglen* by citing precedents, such as the meditations on accepting pain for the sake of others, ripening others' negative karma in one's own mind stream, and cherishing others more than

[248] The elements of this metaphor are summarized by Gadjin Nagao as 1. *mūla,* root: *karuṇā,* compassion; 2. *skandha*, trunk: *kṣānti*, tolerance; 3. *śākhā*, branches: *cintā*, thinking; *yoniśomanaskāra*, right mental reflection; 4. *patra*, leaves: *praṇidhāna*, vow; 5. *puṣpa*, flowers: *janman*, birth; 6. *phala*, fruits: *paripāka*, maturation (Nagao 2000).

oneself. The author also displays great erudition in presenting compassion meditations of various masters, such as Serlingpa,[249] Kamalaśīla[250] and Atīśa. He specifies, for instance, that not all scholars agree on the question whether Lojong is accessible to beginner meditators, or rather necessitates an understanding of the two selflessnesses. He asserts that in Serlingpa's tradition even beginners that are deluded by self-grasping can begin the practice (MTGC 335, 486).[251] He also presents his research of variations, pertaining to [1] the hierarchy of the meditations, starting with either giving or taking (MTGC 348); [2] the sequence of the recipients, starting either from the real-life mother to all sentient beings, or from *Avici* hell beings to bodhisattvas; [3] the levels of practice, namely, imagination-, bodhisattva- and buddha-level (MTGC 348);[252] and [4] the nature of the exchange-objects, being wish-fulfilling jewels, the natural elements, one's body, resources or roots of virtue.[253]

---

[249] Serlingpa (*Gser gling pa*), also known as Suvarṇadvīpa Dharmakīrti (*Chos kyi grags pa*), or Dharmapala (*Chos skyong*), ca. 10th century, principal teacher of Atīśa. *Gser gling pa* literally means the island-dweller, alluding to his residence in Suvarnadvīpa, presumably Sumatra. Two of the commentaries in the LG are attributed to him, namely: G*ser g.ling pas jo bo la gnang ba'i mtha' 'khob 'dul ba'i chos* [*ngang rtog pa 'bur 'joms*] (LG 113), (Translation in MTGC 195: "Levelling Out All Conceptions;" and *Blo sbyong sems dpa'i rim pa* (LG 105-112) Translation in MTGC (177-194): "The Stages of the Heroic Mind."

[250] Kamalaśīla (*padma'i ngang tshul*), (713-763 or 740-795) was a scholar at Nālandā University, student of Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava; author of the three volume *Bhāvanākrama*; he followed the invitation of King Trison Detsen (*Khri-srong lDe-btsan*) to Tibet, where he introduced Madhyamaka philosophy.

[251] "In general, the great Atīśa possessed three different traditions, or instruction lineages, of training in the awakening mind. There is the lineage stemming from his teacher Dharmarakṣita, who, through the power of his compassion, was capable of giving away parts of his body by slicing them off; there is the lineage stemming from his teacher Maitrīyogi, who was capable of actually taking the suffering of others upon himself; and there is the lineage stemming from his teacher Serlingpa. Of these, the method of training according to the first two is to engage first in the practice of the ultimate awakening mind, and then with respect to the conventional awakening mind, practice equalizing self and others and then exchanging self and others. This is difficult for a beginner, the master said. According to the tradition of teacher Serlingpa, however, you undertake the practice of conventional awakening mind while remaining in your present state—with self-grasping still manifest—and do not first practice the ultimate awakening mind. Here, too, you engage in the practice of exchanging self and others right from the start. This method is far superior, it is taught, because it is easier to foster in the heart of a beginner and since it yields great benefits" (MTGC 486-7).

[252] He also mentions that some people might not feel attracted to the practice, because they think "Such thought processes are ridiculous" (MTGC 349).

[253] The objects of meditation are [1] like in the *Mahāyāna Mind Training*, i.e. practitioners visualize themselves as wish-fulfilling jewels that grants all desires. [2] Another visualization has desired goods emanate from one's body, or the body manifesting as the natural elements, or the body is dissected and offered in pieces. [3] The objects are

Thirdly, in addition to his proof of scriptural authority, Sangye Gompa's commentary stands out in that he explains the rationale for *tonglen* more systematically and extensively than others. In his reasoning, *tonglen* is capable of accomplishing the entire bodhisattva path, "all the conditions for attaining buddhahood are complete in these two – giving and taking" (MTGC 353). Thus tonglen takes the same importance as compassion and wisdom (*karuṇā* and *prajñā*) in Indian Mahāyāna literature. The author ascertains that *tonglen* purifies the mind-stream of mental afflictions, strengthens merit and wisdom and accomplishes in the long-term buddhahood, while in the short-term enhancing fearlessness and knowledge (MTGC 349). The fundamental motivation for cultivating compassion and *bodhicitta* is, in his view, logical reasoning rather than affective reactions based on love and attachment to the mother. Sangye Gompa's approach, devoid of emotional stimuli, is logical and radically impartial, as he repeatedly emphasises generating compassion for criminals and perpetrators of negative actions considering their future suffering. In sum, Sangye Gompa stands out as the most versatile and innovative of these early commentators in drawing on scriptural and logical arguments to inspire the practice of *tonglen.*

This survey of early Lojong works demonstrates the various authors' creativity in developing *tonglen* practice. The didactic method evolves from a simple, rather abstract contemplation, towards increasingly sophisticated exercises that integrate a phenomenology of suffering and several visualization techniques. To various degrees, commentators integrate psychological elements, such as positive affect stimulation by means of recollecting one's mother's care and suffering. The meditations are enhanced by visualizations that have the function of condensing philosophical concepts into symbols. The sophistication of visualizations

---

categorized as bodies, resources and roots of virtue, like the previous commentary. (346) These three themes correspond to Śāntideva's presentation in the *Training Anthology* (*Śikṣasamuccaya*).

in *tonglen* practice is an area that deserves further examination. A survey of these early texts shows that the liberating quality (*pāramitā*) of tolerance, or forbearance, is associated with visualizations slicing razors, while generosity is symbolized by wish-fulfilling jewels. In later texts, the visualizations evolve further, possibly under the influence of tantric practice that came to dominate the Tibetan religious landscape. The thirteenth-century *dpal ldan bir wa ba'i blo sbyong* (*Glorious Virvapa's Mind Training*, LG 173, MTGC 269) introduces the tantric-influenced meditation of rays of a rising sun emanating from one's heart to symbolize the giving aspect of Lojong. Similarly, the *byang chub sems dpa' kun tu bzang po'i blo sbyong* (*Samantabhadra Mind Training*, LG 129, MTGC 220) uses crypto-tantric visualization techniques of light rays drawing forth the suffering, afflictions, sins, etc. from other sentient beings which then enter one's body. Over time, the visualizations associated with giving and taking have evolved into the symbols of the polarities of white and black, light and darkness, clarity and smoke. While the origin of this association is not clear and cannot be found in Atīśa's instructions or any of the early commentaries, one can see that by the nineteenth century the white light/black smoke-visualization has become standard, as for example in the *byang chub gzhung lam* (*The Great Path of Awakening*) by the polymath Jamgön Kongtrül (*'jam mgon kong sprul*, 1813-1899) (Jamgön Kongtrül 2002, Jamgön Kongtrül and McLeod 1987, Jamgön Kongtrül 2008). In contemporary *tonglen* practice, both its Buddhist and secular variations, it is common practice to visualize white light and black smoke to symbolize respectively giving and taking.[254]

[254] See, for example:Sogyal Rinpoche, Gaffney, and Harvey (1992); Trungpa and Lief (1993) A contemporary format of *tonglen* practice will be desbribed in more detail in Chapter V of this study.

2. The Complex Relationship of *Tonglen* to Śāntideva's Teachings

2.1. Literature and Transmission Lineage

It is a well-known fact that Śāntideva's work has had a lasting impact on the formation of moral philosophy in Tibet. The bodhisattva vow ritual borrows verses of the BCA, which are recited daily by clergy and laity alike; the BCA is a standard work in most contemporary monastic curricula. In regard to Lojong, the previous section has shown that scholars Sangye Gompa and others credit Śāntideva's exposition of exchanging self and others for having inspired *tonglen.* Lojong literature in general contains a disproportionately high number of citations from the BCA in Lojong texts, especially after the appearance of Chekawa's *blo sbyong don bdun ma* (Jinpa 2018, 2). Because of these facts, one would expect that Śāntideva is part of the Lojong transmission lineage and that his role is acknowledged by the founding father of the lineage, Atīśa Dīpaṃkara. Neither, however, is corroborated by textual witnesses. It is certain that Atīśa was familiar with Śāntideva's work, since he was the abbot of the monastic university of Vikramalaśila, studied with about one hundred and fifty teachers, and two of his main teachers, namely Dharmakīrti[255] and Dharmarakṣita, authored commentaries on the BCA,[256] one of which was requested and translated by Atīśa.[257] In addition, the Kadam lineage inaugurated by Atīśa's students counts the BCA as one of its six authoritative treatises.[258] Atīśa acknowledged

[255] For more information on this scholar, see n.248 of this thesis.

[256] *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāraṣaṭtriṃśatpiṇḍārtha (byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i don sum cu rtsa drug bsdus pa)* (Dharmarakṣita 1994-2008). This is an extended version of the previous text. Both texts are synopses of the BCA, condensing Śāntideva's work into eleven or thirty-six points, respectively. See Eimer (1981, 71-78).

[257] The *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāraṣaṭtriṃśatpiṇḍārtha* was requested by Kamalarakṣita and Atīśa Dīpaṃkara and was translated into Tibetan by Atīśa and the translator Tsültrim Gyalwa (*Lo tsa ba tshul khrim rgyal ba*).

[258] Atīśa also held the same bodhisattva vow lineage as Sāntideva. Of the three lineages, which are [1] the lineage of the profound view (*zab mo lta ba'i brgyud pa*), [2] the lineage of vast practice (*rgya chen spyod pa'i brgyud pa*) and [3] the lineage of inspiration (*nyams len byin rlabs kyi brgyud pa*), Śāntideva is part of the lineage of the profound view which is associated with Mañjuśrī, Nāgārjuna and the Madhyamaka philosophy. Atīśa is praised for holding all three lineages. For more information, see Atiśa Dīpaṃkāra and Dromtön (2008, 529-530).

Dharmakīrti/Serlingpa as the principal source for generating *bodhicitta*, and Serlingpa's approach is thought to emphasize exchanging self and others (Jinpa 2018, 1).[259] Yet, Atīśa's major works give no evidence of him teaching *tonglen.* The two works considered Atīśa's major compositions, namely the *Bodhisattvamaṇevalī* (*Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland,* Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'nor bu'i phreng ba*),[260] and the *Bodhipāthapradīpa* (*Lamp for the Path to Awakening,* Tib. *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*),[261] do not even mention the term *blo sbyong* or *gtong len* or their Sanskrit equivalent. The acknowledgement of Atīśa as the spiritual father of Lojong thus seems to be retrospective attribution, possibly to validate the Tibetan innovative tradition as authentically Indian in origin.[262] To further complicate the situation, the only text by Atīśa that, to my knowledge, explicitly references the meditation on equalizing and exchange attributes the instruction to Nāropa, not Śāntideva. The abbot of Nālandā and tantric yogin Nāropa (1016-1041) is one of Atīśa's teachers,[263] and mostly known for the practice of the *Six Dharmas* (*na ro chos drug*) relevant for the completion stage of the *anuttarayogatantra* (*bla na med pa'i rgyud*). In the *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭa*[264] Atīśa writes:

> The Guru Nāropa taught: One should exchange self and others with direct and indirect compassion. For whatever reason, cherish sentient beings [more] than oneself. Since the bodhisattva needs to cherish others more than him/herself, s/he

---

[259] Jinpa notes another connection between the BCA and Lojong in the fact that many "BCA enthusiasts were also great advocates of Lojong. This is true from the earliest Tibetan Lojong teachers, especially Langri Thangpa (1054-1123) and Chekawa (1101-75), to Ngulchu Thokmé Sangpo (1297-1371) and Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), and from Yongzin Yeshé Gyaltsen in the eighteenth century to Dza Paltrül in the nineteenth century" (Jinpa 2018, 2).

[260] Toh 3951, dbu ma khi. P5347, *ki*. For an English translation, see MTGC 21-24.

[261] Toh 3947, dbu ma khi. P 5343, *ki*. For an English translation see Geshe Sonam Rinchen (1997).

[262] It is stated that Atīśa transmitted Lojong instructions orally and in secret, which only later masters compiled, systematized and popularized. The *Root Lines for Mahāyāna Mind Training* discussed above claim to be a compilation by students of pithy saying uttered by Atīśa.

[263] The TBRC database lists Nāropa as one of Atīśa's direct teachers: "a tis ha," https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P3379, accessed July 1, 2018.

[264] *Open Basket of Jewels (Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭa-nāma-madhyamakopadeśa, Dbu ma'i man ngag rin po che'i za ma tog kha phye ba*), Toh. no. 3930. Derge TG dbu ma *ki*, folios 96b1‑116b7. Translated by James Apple (2010).

> should exchange self and other. The mind of awakening, compassion, and love are also essential for secret mantra [practice]. (Apple 2010, 159)

So far, I have not been able to locate this quote in the writings of Nāropa. Traces of this master are present in the Lojong literature elsewhere, however marginally. Könchok Gyaltsen, the compiler of the Lojong anthology, mentions Nāropa as part of the transmission lineage in the text entitled *Atīśa's Seven-Point Mind Training* (MTGC 247-248).[265]

Thus, the transmission lineage relationship between Śāntideva, Atīśa, and the Lojong tradition reveals a complex picture. Despite the Lojong tradition's assertion of these two masters as the originators of the idea and practice of *tonglen*, scriptural evidence indicates only retrospective attributions. Sangye Gompa's *blo sbyong tshogs bshad ma* (*Public Explication of Mind Training*) represent the earliest explicit textual avowal to the BCA's equalizing and exchange as the origin of *tonglen*, thereby starting a discourse that would become the standard narrative of Lojong masters.[266] The reason for their affirmative tone in spite of the lack of clear textual evidence might lie in a desire to present valid transmission lineages that authenticate the newly emerging schools in the later dissemination in Tibet.[267] The analysis of the socio-political environment that might have led to the formation of transmission narratives deserves further investigation but is not the focus of this research. It suffices to note that Tibetan scholars have successfully established a narrative of *tonglen* as a legacy of Śāntideva and Atīśa despite a lack of strong scriptural evidence.

---

[265] The lineage begins with "Vajradhara, Tilopa, Nāropa, Dombīpa, master Atīśa, Dzeng Wangchuk Gyaltsen, Potowa," etc. This lineage is unusual also because of the absence of Dromtöpa, as Jinpa remarks (MTGC 608, n. 373). Dromtön is known to have requested Atīśa to not give transmissions in his absence as he wished to receive all his transmissions.

[266] He interprets the Lojong line "For the main practice, train alternately in giving and taking" as an expression of BCA 8,120, "You should practice the secret instruction: The exchanging of self and others." See above, I,5 (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2006, 335).

[267] For an interesting analysis of the use of Lojong for the purpose of lineage building, see Chien (2016).

2.2. Transformation of Śāntideva's Teachings

A comparison of the compassion training proposed by Śāntideva's equalizing and exchange and the *tonglen* practice in terms of philosophical content also reveals important novel elements in the latter. *Tonglen* proves to be an innovative adaptation, containing omissions of, and additions to Śāntideva's teachings. In the previous chapter, it has been shown that early Tibetan commentators of the BCA interpreted self-grasping (*bdag 'dzin*) as self-cherishing (*bdag gces 'dzin*) and determined the meditation's purpose as conventional *bodhicitta* alone, thereby setting the course for an interpretation of the meditations as being more affect-based and operating within a dualistic frame of mind. The continuation of this direction can be seen in Lojong literature.

2.2.1. Omission: Emptiness of Self

The first difference pertains to the understanding of emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *stong pa nyid*) and its role in [1] the BCA's exchange and [2] in *tonglen* practices. The position of the two practices within the larger framework of the bodhisattva path shows that the practice of equalizing and exchange is considered an advanced practice on the bodhisattva path, whereas *tonglen* is comparatively less demanding, requires fewer prerequisites and preparations. Śāntideva presents the equalizing and exchange in Chapter VIII on meditative stability, that is, the penultimate liberating quality (*pāramitā*) of bodhisattvas; he views compassion as a logical consequence of contemplating the equality of self and other, which relies on the emptiness of self. In contrast, the Lojong tradition minimizes the importance of meditating on emptiness, which is referred to as ultimate *bodhicitta* (*don dam byang sems*). Lojong's main practice *tonglen* is part of conventional *bodhicitta* (*kun rdzob byangs sems*). Chekawa and his student Se

Chilbu, the author of the earliest extant commentary, treat ultimate *bodhicitta* training as a short precursor to *tonglen*,[268] the purpose of which is "to avoid being tainted by a conceptualization of subject-object duality" when practicing *tonglen* (MTGC 92). Alternatively, Sangye Gompa, the author of *Blo sbyong tshogs bzhad ma* (LG 203-284) (*Public Explications of Mind Training*, MTGC 313-418), places his explanation of ultimate *bodhicitta* at the very end of his commentary to indicate that ultimate *bodhicitta* is practiced only after conventional *bodhicitta*.[269] These two commentaries exemplify the fluidity with which Lojong commentators treat the sequence of practicing conventional and ultimate *bodhicitta*. Whatever the case, the most important point to note here is the radical character of Śāntideva's exchange-contemplation has been significantly "tamed" in the context of Lojong. This can also be seen in the fact that the practice of *tonglen* is an exchange of objects or goods, namely one's own happiness against the suffering of others, which corresponds to the third and least demanding type of exchange in the BCA.[270] It entails a change of attitude but is not the radical and destabilizing transfer of self-identification of the BCA. Chekawa explicitely traces the dualistic basis for *tonglen* in his commentary to

[268] They instruct bodhisattvas to contemplate first the preliminaries (which consist of the four thoughts that turn the mind to spiritual practice), then ultimate bodhicitta, before engaging in *tonglen* and post-meditative practices. The root verses for ultimate bodhicitta read:

Train to view all phenomena as dreamlike.
Examine the nature of unborn awareness.
The remedy, too, is freed in its own place.
Place your mind in the basis-of-all, the actual path.
In the intervals, be a conjurer of illusion. (MTGC, 90-93)

[269] According to Jinpa, the arrangement of Sangye Gompa influenced Namkha Pal's *Rays of the Sun* in that both texts place ultimate bodhicitta at the end of the text. This became the common presentation in Geluk schools while most non-Geluk authors use the text embedded in Thokme Sangpo's commentary and place the meditation on ultimate bodhicitta before conventional bodhicitta (MTGC, 13 n.26).

[270] The three types of exchange, namely conceptual, evaluative, and objective, are described in Chapter III.2.

Serlingpa's philosophy which was "akin to non-Buddhist schools" (MTGC 87) since it is not based on abandoning self-grasping. Citing as scriptural reference the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*'s statement, "The self-view based on the perishable composite is the seed of the tathāgata."[271]

> Just as a lotus does not grow out of a well-leveled soil but from the mire, in the same way the awakening mind (*bodhicitta*) is not born in the hearts of disciples in whom the moisture of attachment has dried up. It grows instead in the hearts of ordinary sentient beings who possess in full all the fetters of bondage. Therefore, in dependence on self-grasping, it is possible to cultivate the awakening mind that exchanges self and others, which is the uncommon cause for attaining buddhahood. This very self-grasping is, therefore, the "bone" of the buddhas.

This approach stands diametrically opposite to Śāntideva's exposition of the meaning of exchange. In sum, the comparative investigation of both practices reveals that *tonglen* is significantly less radical as it relies to a lesser degree on the understanding of emptiness and non-duality than the BCA's equalizing and exchange, and thus is presented as an exercise accessible to novice meditators.

2.2.2. Addition: Emotional Stimuli

The second difference pertains to the role of emotional arousal in compassion training. Whereas Śāntideva views the realization of the equality of self and other as the basis from which compassion and *bodhicitta* manifest, Lojong commentaries promote the stimulation of positive affects such as gratitude, motherly love, or empathy in the sense of "feeling-with" at the sight of another's suffering to generate compassion. Śāntideva endorses painful experiences, and even forms of self-denigration as devices in the deconstructive didactic approach that aims as reducing self-clinging and thereby enhancing compassion, whereas Lojong emphasizes the constructive approach of stimulating and strengthening emotions, pleasant and unpleasant, as catalysts for

[271] *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*, Toh 176, KG mdo *ma*, chap.7, 215a :5. MTGC 87, Jinpa 2019, 8.

spiritual growth. As the survey of Lojong commentaries shows, Chekawa's commentary introduces the psychological bond to the mother of this life as the starting point for generating an emotional basis for compassion that is to be expanded to all other beings. There is the contemplation of one's mother's sufferings, and of razorblade swathes of her suffering laid in one's heart, etc. which will result in an affective response. Stimulating memories, imaginations and affects until "tears fall from [their] eyes and the hairs of [their] pores stand on end" (MTGC 94) introduces a psychological and emotional approach to compassion cultivation rather than a conceptual or rational one. The power of emotions is used as a skillful means to bridge the dualistic self-other divide, as the bodhisattvas in training are asked to transfer the intense emotions generated for their mother onto other beings. This transfer will work effectively wherever there is a strong belief in the rounds of rebirth which explains the infinite interconnectedness with all beings who have been mothers in past lives.

In conclusion, one can state two different didactic approaches that inform compassion cultivation in the meditation on equalizing and exchange and in Lojong. Śāntideva's compassion didactics are characterized by a radical, deconstructive approach that aims at the elimination of self-identification, and entails the breaking of dualistic barriers to establish genuine selfless behavior. In contrast, *tonglen* is practiced on the basis of self-grasping and does not challenge dualistic perception. *Tonglen* is relational, and a psychological approach that aims at restructuring one's attitudes and emotions. Therefore, its technique also involves affect stimulation to urge the trainees into action. As stated before, the deconstructive approach entails a commitment to a long-term vision, whereas the Lojong approach is more readily accessible for beginners and promises middle- and short-term results in enhancing compassion and the resulting joy within the compassion trainee.

3. Śāntideva's Legacy beyond Lojong

Compassion cultivation practices other than *tonglen* emerged in Tibet, either as an adaptation or in opposition to Śāntideva's work. The third part of this chapter discusses two examples of creative adaptations of Śāntideva's principle of equalizing and exchange, but also a critical reception by foundational figures of Tibetan Buddhism. The scholars whose work is discussed in the following are all foundational figures from the fertile first centuries of the later dissemination of Buddhism, that is, in the eleventh to the fifteenth century, when rivalling scholars vied for establishing their respective interpretation of Indian Buddhism as the most accurate and authentic. I have chosen them for their influential roles in shaping specific Tibetan traditions. [1] Chronologically the first scholar is Gyalse Thokmé Sangpo (1295-1369), the thirteenth/fourteenth-century Kadampa master, who has been introduced in Chapter III as one of the earliest influential commentators on the BCA. His famous *rgyal sras lag len so bdun ma* (*Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*) integrates equalizing and exchange as one of the essential bodhisattva practices, which is an early indicator, as I argue, for the growing acceptance of this practice as standard compassion cultivation method. [2] The second example I discuss is the highly creative adaptation of Śāntideva's principle by the important religious philosopher and founder of the Gelug (*Dge lugs*) School, Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) in his opus magnum, *The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (*Lam rim chen mo*) (Tsongkhapa 1985).[272] I argue that his employment of the practice of exchanging self and other (*bdag gzhan brje ba*) as a preliminary practice for generating *bodhicitta* dissociates it even further from an understanding of emptiness than the *tonglen* practice does, and consolidates the idea of compassion as a

[272] Translation: Tsongkhapa (2000), commentary by his disciple the first Dalai Lama Gendun Drub (*dge 'dun grub*, 1391- 1474); Tsongkhapa is said to have blended both lineage methods of mind training in his *Lam rim chen mo*.

beginner practice. [3] Thirdly, I investigate a debate between early eminent scholars of the Drikung Kagyu (*'bri kung bka' rgyud*) and Sakya (*sa skya*) schools on the topic of the appropriateness of the equalizing and exchange practice. This thirteenth-century controversy sheds further light on the reception of Śāntideva's teachings in Tibet and reflects the struggle of popularizing this practice as beginner compassion training, as opposed to preserving its elite character as an advanced meditation.

3.1. Popularizing Compassion Training: Thokmé Sangpo (1295-1369)

Although the cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion enjoyed great popularity at all times in Tibetan Buddhism, certain scholars are remembered for their lasting contributions to the field.[273] One such person was Thokmé Sangpo, who was a distant relative of the Sakya patriarch Chögyal Pakpa (*chos rgyal 'phags pa*, 1235-1280). He became an important master of the Kadam (*bka' gdams*), Bodong (*bo dong*) and Sakya (*sa skya*) traditions, and is also associated with the Lamrim and Lojong lineages.[274] He was ordained at a young age and spent the last twenty years of his life in retreat (Chien 2016). His hagiographies tell of his exemplary virtuous character from early childhood onwards, depicting him as an embodiment of bodhisattva qualities, such as compassion and generosity. His biography *rgyal sras thogs med rin po che'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i gsal 'debs* (*A Clear Exposition of Faith: The Story of the Complete Liberation of the Precious Gyalse Tokme*) by Zhönnu Gyaltsen (*gzhon nu rgyal mtshan*, 13th

[273] Earlier small texts with instruction on cultivating compassion are: Götsangpa's (*rgdo tshang pa*) two instruction manuals (*khrid yig*), a short one in prose that contains highly evocative compassion inducing practice known simply as *byams khrid* (*Loving-Kindness Instructions*), and the other a longer one in verse known as *byams snying rje byang chub kyi khrid* (*Instructions on Loving-Kindness, Compassion and Bodhicitta*). Also, Virvapa's mind training (mentioned previously, MTGC 269-274) contains a five-point meditation on generating compassion for others.

[274] For his activity as a prolific Lojong master, see Chien (2016).

century) contains stories that attest to his unusually compassionate nature (Chien 2016, 56), describing him as a child who felt the pain of others; who cried when he saw other children beaten; displayed a generous character (Chien 2016, 58), helped people and animals, and even treated plants as if they had senses capable of experiencing suffering. In his biography, four out of eleven chapters are devoted to altruistic behavior:[275] Chapter Three narrates "how he benefitted miserable sentient beings with great compassion" (*snying rje chen pos nyams thag gi 'gro ba'i don byas tshul*); Chapter Six "how he accomplished essential activities" (*sgrub pa snying po mdzad tshul*); Chapter Eight: "how he was capable of actually taking the suffering of others" (*gzhan gyi sdug bsngal dgnos su len pa'i tshul*); and Chapter Nine, "how he went all over Ü and Tsang and benefitted many beings with Dharma and material goods" (*dbus gtsang gi sa cha gang sar phebs nas 'gro nas 'gro bam ang por chos dang zang zig gis phan btag tshul*). An often-repeated story describes Thokmé Sangpo offering his own body to lice to feed on. Out of compassion, he refuses to remove them (Chien 2016, 72-73). These and other narratives create an image of Thokmé Sangpo as the embodiment of genuine, radical compassion, making him an authoritative voice in the practice of the bodhisattva path. His exemplary behavior earned him the title *Gyalse* (*rgyal sras*), literally "son of the victorious one," but commonly translated as "bodhisattva." Thokmé Sangpo is believed to be the author of one hundred and thirteen texts,[276] the most well-known being the *rgyal sras lag len so bdun ma* (*The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*), *blo sbyong don bdun ma'i khrid yig* (*Commentary on the Seven-Point Mind Training*), and *legs par bshad pa'i rgya mtsho* (*Ocean of Excellent Advice*), a commentary on the

[275] The chapter titles were incorporated by the editor of this biography, Orgyan Chöpel (*o rgyan chos 'phel*). See gzhon nu rgyal mtshan (13th c.) (2008), *rgyal sras thogs med rin po che'i rnam thar dad pa'i gsal 'debs dang gzhan la phan pa'i 'od zer*, Lhasa: bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang (Chien 2016, 50-51).

[276] For a detailed discussion of his collected works (*bka' 'bum* or *gsung 'bum*), see Chien (2016).

Bodhisattvacāryāvatāra ,[277] to which, it is said, he entertained a special heart connection. When he preached this text, legend tells that flowers fell from the sky (Chien 2016, 68). Thokmé Sangpo's commentary served as the matrix for later Tibetan scholar's work,[278] and is the main commentary studied in modern-day Sakya monastic colleges (*bshad grwa*).

3.1.1. The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas

A short text that attracted special attention from modern Tibetan and Western audiences is *rgyal sras lag len so bdun ma* (Thokmé Sangpo 2004), [279] which is regularly taught by the Fourtheenth Dalai Lama, prompting a proliferation of English language commentaries.[280] Written in retreat in Ngulchu Rinchen (*ngul chu rin chen*) in southwestern Tibet, Thokmé Sangpo gives, as the title reveals, thirty-seven verses of advice on how a Buddhist practitioner practically applies (*lag len*) the bodhisattva ideal in daily life. The repetition of the line, "This is the practice of bodhisattvas" (*rgyal sras lag len yin*) at the end of each verse serves as a rhetorical contrivance with which Thokmé Sangpo simplifies and unifies a wide variety of complex

[277] Samten Chosphel, „Gyele Tokme Zangpo," http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Gyelse-Tokme-Zangpo/3153, accessed July 1, 2018.

[278] An important example is Patrul Rinpoche Orgyen Jigme Chökyi Wangpo (*dpal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po*, 1808-1887), better known as Dza Patrul (*rdza dpal sprul*), the Nyingma master and reviver of Śāntideva's teachings in nineteenth-century Tibet. He is the author of several texts on the bodhisattva path and on the BCA, namely a lineage prayer, and an outline and a practice manual, entitled *The Brightly Shining Sun* (*byang chub sems dpa'i spyod p la 'jug pa'i sgom rim rab gsal nyi ma*). His exegesis of the BCA relied on Thokmé Sangpo's commentary, recorded by his disciple Khenpo Künpal (*mkhan po kun dpal*, 1862–1943) as *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i tshig 'grel 'jam dbyangs bla ma'i zhal lung bdud rtsi'i thig pa* (translated as *The Nectar of Mañjuśrī's Speech* (Künsang Palden 2007).

[279] The TBRC archives Tibetan commentaries by Padma dkar po (1527-1592), Karma chags med (1613-1687), Dharmabhadra (1772-1851), Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1864-1940), Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1762-1837), 'Jigs med tshul khrims dpal bzang (19th century), Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899), Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (1823-1905), Dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1852-1912),'Chi med rig 'dzin (20th c), Sems dpa'i rdo rje (20th), Bkra shis dbang 'dus (20th c), Thub stan chos kyi grags pa (b. 1916), Bstan pa'i dbang phyug (1938), Tshe dbang rig 'dzin (1958), and Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1935).

[280] The best known Western translations with commentaries are: Dilgo Khyentse and Thokmé Sangpo (2007); Tegchok and Thubten (2005); Thupten Chökyi Drakpa (2004).

practices. The expression "practice of bodhisattvas" serves as a prism that condenses the entire path to awakening, extracting key points of treatises such as Śāntideva's BCA, Āryaśūra's *Pāramitāsamāsa* (Ārya Śūra 1986) or Asaṅga's BBh. Verse 11 of the *Thirty-Seven Practices* summarizes compassion training in the following way:

> All suffering without exception arises from desiring happiness for oneself,
> While perfect buddhahood is born from the thought of benefiting others.
> Therefore, to really exchange my own happiness for the suffering of others is the practice of a bodhisattva.[281]

The first two lines of this verse resemble BCA VIII, 129 while the latter VIII, 161.

> All the joy the world contains
> Has come from wishing happiness for others
> All the misery the world contains
> Has come through wanting happiness for oneself.

Verse BCA VIII 161ab reads:

> Happiness I give away,
> The suffering of others I embrace.[282]

Despite the near identical wording, the order of the meditation on exchange within the whole composition gives a picture similar to *tonglen* in Lojong context, in that it is an exercise in conventional application-*bodhicitta* (*'jugs pa'i sems bskyed*) that does not demand meditating on the emptiness of self, or on the identity of self and other, these being presented as advanced stages of the six *pāramitā*s (*pha rol tu phyin* pa) later in the text.[283] Thus, just like the Lojong

---

[281] *rgyal sras lag len* 11 (Thokmé Sangpo 2004, 4)*: sdug bsngal ma lus bdag bde 'dod las byung/ rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas gzhan phan sems las 'khrung/ de phyir bdag bde gzhan gyi sdug bsngal dag/ yang dag brje ba rgyal sras lag len yin//*

[282] BCA VIII, 129 (TG dbu ma *la* 28b3): *'jig rten bde ba ji snyed pa // de kun gzhan bde 'dod las byung // 'jig rten sdug bsngal ji snyed pa // de kun rang bde 'dod las byung* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 127).

BCA VIII, 161ab (TG dbu ma *la* 29b6-7): *bdag ni bde daṅ bral gyis te // gźan gyi sdug bsṅal bdag la sbyor* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 132).

[283] The preparatory practices are renunciation, non-attachment, relying on a good teacher and taking refuge (verses 1-7); which is followed by an explanation of the three types of the spiritual capacity (*skyes bu gsum)* (8-10). Compassion is the first practice of a person of the highest capacity, the Mahāyāna practitioner. The verse following the *tonglen* type compassion training give [1] detailed advice on how to train in post-meditation, namely how to

commentaries, Thokmé Sangpo brackets the aspect of equalizing, and operates compassion training solely within a dualistic mind-set of a beginner bodhisattva. This text exemplifies yet again the evolution of the exchange practice as the prototype of compassion training and a meditation for beginners. The text's brevity and mnemonic character presumably also contributed to the popularity and accessibility of the *Thirty-Seven Practices*, complementing or replacing the more theoretical treatment of the topic of compassion in earlier Indian Mahāyāna works, such as Asaṅga's *Bodhisattvabhumi*, or Āryaśūra's *Pāramitāsamāsa*.

3.2. Combining Two Approaches to Compassion Cultivation: Tsongkhapa

One of the most influential figures of Tibetan Buddhism and founder of the Gelug School, Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa (*tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, 1357–1419) incorporated numerous passages of the BCA in his celebrated work *lam rim chen mo* (*The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*) in which he expounds his systematization of the Mahāyāna curriculum, from the beginning contemplations to the final stage of awakening. Following Atīśa's model of the three types of persons, Tsongkhapa explains compassion cultivation in the context of the person of great capacity, that is, the bodhisattva. He follows the common Mahāyāna approach of explaining compassion as part of the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, but explicitely puts it as a prerequisite for generating *bodhicitta*. Tsongkhapa's original contribution is his highly systematized, detailed and practice-oriented exposition of the generation of *bodhicitta*, in which he gives compassion a pivotal role, explaining the other instructions as either causes or effects of compassion. Tsongkhapa demonstrates his allegiance to

---

transform unfavorable circumstances into conducive practice situations (verses 12-21), [2] instructions on ultimate bodhicitta (verses 22-24), [3] an overview of the six *pāramitā*s (*pha rol tu phyin pa*, transcendent qualities) (25-30), and [4] some advice for wholesome conduct (31-34).

Śāntideva by citing 213 of the BCA's 914 verses, either wholly or in part (Jackson 2019, 2).[284] However, he does so in order to develop his own, systematized approach, thereby "taming" the BCA's thought, as Roger Jackson notes.

Tsongkhapa's exposition of compassion cultivation is unique for his innovative combination of two distinct practices, namely the [1] the "seven cause-and-effect personal instructions" (*rgyu 'bras man ngag bdun*) which he attributes to Atīśa (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 29-49),[285] and [2] the "exchanging self and other" method (*bdag gzhan mnyam brje*) which he attributes to Śāntideva (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 51-60).

The seven cause-and-effect practice is preceded by meditations on equanimity or impartiality (*sems snyoms*) (Tsongkhapa 2010, 314) and appreciation and affection for all beings (*yid 'ong gi rnam pa*). The first is specified as immeasurable equanimity (*tshad med btang snyoms*), being the fourth of the four immeasurables, which Tsongkhapa here repositions into the first position and uses to reduce attachment, and aversion (*chags sdang la sogs pa*). The practice of the seven cause-and-effect instructions resemble Lojong in that they first focus on the mother to stimulate positive affects, which are then expanded to include all beings, recognized as mothers from previous lives. The bodhisattva then progressively develops gratitude, resolution, loving-kindness, compassion, and a mind intent on awakening (aspiration *bodhicitta*).

This is followed by the contemplation of exchanging self and other. Even though Tsongkhapa cites extensively from the BCA, he does not follow Śāntideva's radical approach of exchanging self-identity or self-grasping. Instead, just like in the Tibetan BCA commentaries

[284] The page number refers to the unpublished manuscript, since the *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice* was not published at the time of the submission of this thesis.

[285] The exercise has been explained in chapter II.2.1. of this thesis as an example of the constructive approach to compassion cultivation.

discussed previously, Tsongkhapa's instructions aim at the exchange of cherishing, and thus at a change of attitude or attachment. Tsongkhapa elucidates this reductive interpretation of Śāntideva's principle of exchange when he explains:

> The phrases "exchanging self and other" and "making oneself others and others oneself" do not indicate a training in an attitude which thinks "I am others" or "Others' eyes, etc. are mine." They indicate a change in the orientation of the two states of mind of cherishing yourself and neglecting others, wherein you develop the attitude of cherishing others as you presently do yourself and neglecting yourself as you presently do others. (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 53)

Cherishing is expressed is an attitude of generosity of one's "body, resources and roots of virtue" (Tsongkhapa 2000b, 55), the three classical categories that are also listed in Śāntideva's ŚS, and in Lojong literature. Tsongkhapa's step-by-step compassion training leads up to formally adopting *bodhicitta* by means of a ritual (in Chapter V). The order of stages differs from Śāntideva in that the BCA presents equalizing and exchange as an advanced and demanding meditation, to be practiced after having adopted a formal commitment to the bodhisattva path, and this approach seems to be followed by Lojong masters, Thokmé Sangpo and others. Tsongkhapa, however, expounds compassion as the most fundamental practice to be undertaken at the very beginning and as a prerequisite for developing *bodhicitta*. One might say that the BCA is "tamed" in a double sense in the *Lam rim chen mo*, first by structuring it in a precise systematic way, and secondly by omitting the most radical aspect of its exchange meditation.

3.3. Polemics around Equalizing and Exchange Practices

The previous sections of this chapter have shown that the equalizing and exchange meditation has been adopted quite freely as compassion didactics by Tibetan masters across all sectarian divides. Controversies around compassion are a rare phenomenon in Buddhist history, contrary to the nuanced and extensive debates about the interpretation of emptiness. However, an

exception to this rule is the thirteenth-century debate between Drikung Kagyu (*'bri kung bka'rgyud*) and Sakya (*sa skya*) masters about the limitations of the equalizing and exchange practice.[286] The critique that this meditation might not be appropriate for everybody has some pertinence also to contemporary secular compassion training, as it addresses one of the concerns newcomers have about the effect of accepting and "taking" others' suffering. Is it meant literally? Will you experience the suffering that you mentally extracted from others? And if so, how will this be conducive to, and not disruptive of, your spiritual progress? Two students of the Drikung Kagyu founder Jigten Sumgön, (*'jig rten gsum mgon*, 1143-1217), namely Dorje Sherab (*rdo rje shes rab,* 13th century) and Rinchen Djangchub (*rin chen byang chub,* 13th century), presenting their views in the form of a list of more than twenty theses called "vajra statements," argue that the exchange of self and others can be "untimely" (*dus la ma babs* pa) and "on occasion becomes itself a fault" (*nyes par 'gyur ba'i skabs yod*).[287] These vajra statements subsequently become the object of debate between Sakya and Drikung Kagyu scholars in the thirteenth century. Sakya Paṇḍita (*sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan*, 1182-1251) attacks them in his *sdom gsum rab*

[286] Jinpa mentions another disagreement that lead to the little-known division of Northern and Southern school of Lojong, a division that centered around the question of interpreting the term *kun gzhi* (all-ground) as emptiness or luminous mind (MTGC 12).

[287] Dorje Sherab, *dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i 'grel chen snang mdzod ye shes sgron me* (short: *rdo shes ma*) 44, edited by Rinchen Puntsog (*rin chen phun tshogs*, Dehradun: Drigung Kagyu Institute, 1990); and Rinchen Djangchub (*rin chen byang chub*) entitled *dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i khog dbub don bsdus,* (short: *rin byang ma*) (unpublished photocopy of a *dbu med* manuscript acquired from Lhasa in 13 folios). Both authors present twenty-four and twenty-seven vajra statements regarding the bodhisattva vow. Among these, statement eight in the former, and nine to ten in the latter text refer to the practice of exchanging self and other. For an extensive discussion see Liu (2002).

dbye (*Clarifying the Three Vows*), where he accuses his opponents, whom he does not identify by name,[288] of categorically dismissing the practice.[289]

> For the training of the mind of awakening, two [practices] are taught: equalizing self and others and exchanging self and others. Some masters maintain that training the awakening mind through exchanging is not suitable. The reason, they argue, is that if you give happiness to others, and then take their suffering upon yourself, you will constantly suffer because prayers are bound to be fulfilled. Therefore, the cultivation of the mind of awakening with this method they claim to be unskilful, and a greatly mistaken teaching.

Sakya Paṇḍita refutes this reasoning by arguing that a virtuous practice can, by definition, not result in suffering, and since the exchange is based on the absence of the three poisons, a painful result is excluded.[290] In his *Clarifying the Sage's Intent*, he argues that novice trainees do not have the power of attracting suffering in any real sense. Instead, the very thought of accepting pain will destroy suffering, he argues by means of a ridiculing metaphor:

> [J]ust as if after drawing close to wild birds or animals, if you shout out: 'Everyone assemble in front of me!' they will all run away, so by uttering the words, 'May the suffering of all sentient beings come to me!' the sufferings of yourself and others will be destroyed, but they will not actually be experienced.[291]

According to Sapan, practitioners will not experience the suffering of others that they wish to ripen in their own mind streams, because there is a "difference between possible (*sthāna*)

---

[288] According to David Jackson, Sakya scholar Śākya Chokden (*shAkya mchog ldan*, 1428-1507), identifies the opponent that Sapan criticizes as Je Drigung (*rje 'bri gung*) and Pamo Drupa (*rje phag mo gru pa*, dates). Shākya mchog ldan, works, vol. 6, p. 640.1 (Sakya Paṇḍita and Jackson 1987, section "Cultivating the thought of awakening in which you change places with others").

[289] Sakya Paṇḍita (1992, Chapter "bsam gtan bsgom pa," 74-98): *byang chub sems kyi bslab pa la / bdag gzhan mnyam brje gnyis su gsungs / kha cig brje ba'i byang chub sems / bsgom du mi rung zhes su smra / de yi rgyu mtshan 'di skad lo // bdag bde gzhan la byin nas ni / gzhan sdug bdag gis blangs gyur na / smon lam mtha' ni bstan pa'i phyir / bdag ni rtag tu sdug bsngal 'gyur / des na 'di 'dra'i byang chub sems / bsgom pa de dag thabs mi mkhas / nor pa chen po'i chos yin lo //.*

[290] Sakya Paṇḍita (1992) *brje ba dug gsum ma yin pas / de las sdug bsngal ga la 'byung //.*

[291] Sakya Paṇḍita (1992b) *bya dang ri dags kyi drung du bsnyen te bdag gi mdun du thams cad 'dus shig ces brjod kyang thams cad 'bros pa ltar/ sems can thams cad kyi sdug bsngal bdag la smin cig ces brjod pas kyang bdag dang sems can kyi sdug bsngal zhi bar 'gyur gyi smin par mi 'gyur ro//* Translation: David Jackson (Sakya Paṇḍita and Jackson 1987, 43b).

resolutions that are assured of yielding their result, and impossible (*asthāna*) resolutions that have no assured result."[292] With these words, Sapan implies that the karmic fruits of one individual cannot possibly ripen in another person's stream of consciousness. He adds a scriptural example of a person who wished for others' negative karma to ripen upon him, which resulted in his liberation rather than eternal pain.[293] In sum, Sapan argues by means of simile, reasoning, and scripture that there is no fault with the practice of exchanging self and other, which, for him, is to be understood as purely *blo sbyong* in the literal meaning of the word of "mind training" and "mental purification."

The controversial statements can be found, as indicated above, in the vajra statements ascribed to Jigten Sumgon, founder of the Drigung Kagyu School. In following centuries, Kagyu scholars defended Jingten Sumgon's view. The fourth Shamarpa (*zhwa dmar* IV *chos kyi grags pa*, 1453–1526) states that the practice should not be dismissed entirely, but only for beginner bodhisattvas up until the seventh ground (*bhūmi*). From the eighth ground onwards, bodhisattvas are capable of the exchange, and have a moral obligation to put it into practice. However, ordinary individuals lack the wisdom necessary to engage in such an advanced practice. In the eighth point of his *Clarifying Explanation on the Single Intent* (*dgongs gcig*), he elaborates:[294]

> The general [explanation]: On the path of accumulation and of junction, the power of intention has been generated, but one applies [one's intentions] according to one's capacities. From the path of seeing up until and including the seventh ground, the power of intention and of application are equal. From the eighth to the tenth ground,

---

[292] *'di mi 'thad de gnas kyi bsngo ba mtha' btsan la/ gnas ma yin pa'i bsngo ba mtha' mi btsan pa'i khyad par mi shes shing/* (Sakya Paṇḍita and Jackson 1987, 44a).

[293] Captain Maitrakanyaka, *ded dpon mdza' bo'i bu mo*. Sapan tells the story in full in his commentary on the BCA. (Rinchen Pal 1995).

[294] Zhwa dmar IV Chos grags ve shes. *Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gsal byed*. Bir: Bir Tibetan Society, 1992. 111-172, Section 8. *spyir tshogs sbyor du bsam pa'i stobs bskyed nas sbyor ba gang lcogs spyad / mthong lam nas sa bdun man chad du bsam sbyor gnyis ga stobs mnyam / sa brgyad pa nas bcu pa'i bar du de gnyis shin tu stobs dang ldan pas spyod pa 'ang de 'thun du spyad dgos la / bye brag tu so so skye bo dad pa che / shes rab chung bas bdag gzhan brje ba'i smon lam btab na nyes par 'gyur ba'i skabs srid de/*.

> one is endowed with enormous power in intention and action. Therefore, one has an obligation to act in accordance [with one's intentions]. More specifically, an ordinary individual might have great faith but only little discriminating awareness. Therefore, it is quite possible that by engaging in aspiration prayers of exchanging self and other, these turn into a fault.

The argument that only bodhisattvas on the eighth ground are capable of verily giving happiness and taking suffering provokes the Sakya scholar Shakya Chokden (*shākya mchog ldan*, 1428-1507) to reply that this would contradict the laws of karma, which determines that happiness or suffering will infallibly ripen in the mind stream of the person who committed the causal actions.[295]

Another important defense of the vajra statements can be found in a text of the sixteenth century, by the prolific master of the Drukpa Kagyu (‘*brug pa bka‘brgyud*) School, Pema Karpo (*kun mkhyen padma dkar po*, *ngag dbang nor bu*, 1527-1592). He argues that Jigten Gonpo's cautious view was in accordance with standard Mahāyāna understanding when he warns against practicing the exchange as a beginner bodhisattva.[296]

> It is said that the venerable great protector (a.k.a *'Jig rten gsum mgon*) stated in a vajra statement that the exchange of self and other may become a fault. His understanding of this limitation follows an essential point of the Bodhisattva Piṭaka,

---

[295] Liu cites Śākya mchog ldan, *Sdom gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i bstan bcos kyi 'bel gtam gser gyi thur ma* (439-648), *The Complete Works* (*gsung 'bum*) *of Gser mdog Pan chen Sakya mchog ldan*, vol. 6. 641-642 (Liu 2002, 146).

(3) If the bodhisattva above the eighth stage can receive all others' sufferings, then it is impossible for such sufferings to occur in others.

(4) If the bodhisattva above the eighth stage can give all his happiness to others, then others would become liberated without effort, and self-liberation would become impossible. As a result, the bodhisattva would always get the sufferings.

[296] *rje skyob pa chen pos bdag gzhan brjes pa nyes par 'gyur ba'i skabs srid bya ba'i rdo rje gsung 'di bzhugs zhes pa de la zer bar 'dug ste / 'dis ni srid mtha' gzung ba ste / de ni byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod du las dang po pas bsgrub mi nus pa bsgrubs ba ltung bar gsungs pa dang gnad gcig / bdag gzhan brje ba'i byang chub sems /dge ba yin nam sdig yin brtag/ sogs kyi skyon thams cad ni bdag gzhan brjer mi rung zer khas blangs 'dug go snyam byas nas btang bas phyogs snga ma lon / skyon gtong na srid mtha' de 'gog pa'i rigs pa dgos la de yod na 'gro bar snang ngo //* (Meaning of second half possibly: Rather than seize upon the issue as a pretext to debate whether or not the 'exchange' should be practiced, Sa skya Pandita should have directed his efforts to refuting, if possible, the thesis that things can go wrong in practice.(translation Liu) 'Brug chen IV Padma dkar po. Sdom pa gsum gyi srtying po bstan pa. In Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of Kun mkhyen Padma dkar po. vol.6. 499-577. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973, 551-552.

> namely that beginners commit a downfall when they practice what they are not yet capable of.

The debate between the Kagyu and Sakya masters pivots around the question whether the exchange is an actual exchange of karmic merit and demerit that would result in suffering on the part of the practitioner, or whether it is to be understood as purely *blo sbyong* in the literal meaning of the word as mind training and mental purification. The use of the *tonglen* practice in Lojong, or the equalizing and exchange practice in the *Lamrim* genre indicates that the great majority of Tibetan masters considered it a training tool that should not be read literally. Śāntideva's verses include both readings: he emphasizes transforming the ordinary mind into a mind of awakening, but he also prioritizes a transformation of the mind over physical concerns. This means that he does not exclude suffering and pain for the practitioner, but he avoids a philosophical discussion about whose pain it is.[297] The question of whether a bodhisattva on advanced levels are able of effectively alleviating suffering of others by experiencing it themselves cannot be answered with certainty. Tibetan hagiographies regularly claim, however, that some masters have done just that.

---

[297] BCA V, 86-87 explains the circumstances in which accepting harm, and suffering is acceptable:

BCA V, 86-87 (TG dbu ma *la* 13b3-4): *dam pa'i chos ni spyod pa'i lus // phran tshegs ched du gnod mi bya // de ltar byas na sems can gyi // bsam pa myur du rdzogs par 'gyur // snying rje'i bsam pa ma dag par // lus 'di gtang bar mi bya ste // ci nas 'di dang gzhan du yang // don chen sgrub pa'i rgyur gtang ngo //* Transl.: Padmakara (2006, 73): The body that serves the practice of the sacred Dharma/ should not be harmed for smaller purposes./ Beings who act accordingly will quickly fulfill their intentions.// Those whose compassionate intentions are not yet pure (alternatively: For those whose compassionate intentions are not yet pure),/ one should not give one's body./ But one must give it when great benefit can be obtained in this and future lives.

Conclusion

The comparative examination of Śāntideva's compassion training of equalizing and exchange of self and other (*svaparasamatā parātmaparivartana, bdag gzhan mnyams pa bdag gzhan brje ba*) with several of its adaptations in the later dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet reveals important innovations in the Tibetan understanding of compassion, and thus of moral ethics, which stand in ambivalence to Tibetan masters' ostensible faithful adherence to the BCA by Śāntideva. The Tibetan practice of *tonglen* is the most well-known adaptation of the exchange practice and has become a standard compassion cultivation pedagogy. The majority of Tibetan variations of compassion training emphasise the contextual and social nature of human lives, using the positive emotional relationship to the mother as constitutive element of impartial altruism. This approach requires believing in rebirth, and in the infinity of inter-connections among all beings, thus creating underpinnings of emotional and social obligation to the cultivation of altruism and compassion. Śāntideva's didactics, however, does not involve positive affect building but is grounded in epistemological and ontological foundations. It requires the recognition of the absence of a substantially existing self as the moral basis for annihilating suffering wherever it occurs, not only in the narrow context that a person defines as "self." By deemphasizing the epistemological dimension of compassion training, which is only accessible to bodhisattva trainees of advanced standing, Tibetan scholars engaged in a process of simplification and popularization of compassion training. They bracketed Śāntideva's meditation on the identity of self and other, relocating it to later stages of the bodhisattva path. Both Indian and Tibetan masters agree, however, in their normative claim about the necessity of compassion for attaining buddhahood. The way in which Tibetan Buddhist masters adapted Śāntideva's teachings offers insights relevant to the contemporary discussion on globalization, and the

problem of parochialism clashing with diversity (Flanagan, 2017). Tibetan masters incorporated Indian Buddhist thought in accordance with their own sensibilities, negotiating a cohabitation of conservative traditionalism and creative innovation. Compassion training thereby evolved from an advanced cognitive procedure in the BCA towards an emotionally-induced ethical stance in the Lojong and Lamrim traditions. In this sense, they are precursors of the contemporary "compassion revolution," in that they transformed the meditation of a spiritual elite to a practice for a much wider circle of beginning and intermediate practitioners.

Chapter V

Secular Compassion Training and *Tonglen*

"Breathe in pain and sorrow and breathe out peace and happiness."

CCT Instructor's Manual

This chapter takes a temporal leap from the previous chapters and presents secular compassion training in the twenty-first century in North America. It analyses the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) developed at Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE), critically comparing its Buddhism-derived content to its antecedents in traditional sources. The chapter is divided into three sections, namely context, content, and comparison. [1] Beginning by briefly contextualizing secular compassion training historically and theoretically at the convergence of Buddhism and science, [2] the chapter's main focus is a close reading of the CCT *Instructor's Manual* (IM). Its pedagogical approach, formal structure and main practice elements will be presented, followed by [3] a comparative analysis of CCT with its Buddhist antecedents, highlighting its similarities and tensions.

1. Context: Science, Secularism, and Buddhism

In chapter II, I argued that we need to consider the specific context, or meditation culture, to fully understand a contemplative practice. To understand the Mahāyāna construct of compassion and its cultivation, I therefore examined what I called the compassion culture of the bodhisattva path. Similarly, secular compassion training emerged within a culture which determines and delimits its meaning and scope. With "culture," I mean here the context within which secular compassion was introduced as a novel phenomenon, and in which it has to

negotiate its new place and role – a culture at the confluence of science, secularism and Buddhism. Other than in the traditional Buddhist context where compassion is considered a fundamental building block of its culture, secular compassion is not part of mainstream North American culture, and their propagators are still in the process of advertising its value and necessity for individual and societal well-being. For the understanding of secular compassion training, it is therefore necessary to explore its context. The complex, and at times contentious relationship between Buddhism and science has already been explored elsewhere;[298] the following exposition is therefore only a review of specific developments relevant to the present subject.

Secular compassion training emerged in the first decade of the twenty-first century as the latest offspring of the marriage of Buddhism and science. Buddhism is known to have adapted to every new culture that adopted it. Its philosophy and practices were changed so as to respond to the important questions and sensibilities of each new target culture. While in Asia Buddhist traditions had to face foreign religious cultures, Donald Lopez sees Buddhism's latest challenge in its relationship to science:

> Buddhism made its remarkable migration across Asia through a process of assimilation. In India, the Vedic gods became disciples of the Buddha. There were traditionally thirty-three Vedic gods. The lowest of the Buddhist heavens, a place of blissful but temporary rebirth, is called the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. In Tibet, the fierce protectors of the snowy peaks were defeated in mystic battle by Buddhist masters and, in exchange for their lives, took oaths to always protect Buddhism. In Japan, the more prominent of the local spirits, the *kami*, were identified as manifestations of various bodhisattvas. In order for Buddhism to establish itself in

[298] Donald Lopez retraces the colonial influences on framing Buddhism as a religion compatible with science and expresses his reservations about the authenticity of such interpretations. David McMahan (2008) examines the range of influences that have shaped Buddhism in America today. Next to scientific naturalism, he identifies Western monotheism, rationalism and romantic expressivism. Jose Cabezon (2008) distinguishes three ways in which the Buddhists have conceived the nature of the relationship between Buddhism and science: either as conflictual-ambivalent, or as compatible-identical, or as complementary,. Other recent publications related to the subject are Wallace (2003, 35-70), McMahan and Braun (2017), and Wilson (2014).

> Europe and America, must the god of the West, the god of Science, also find its place in the Buddhist pantheon?" (2008, 37)

Since the target culture in North America is a secular society dominated by a science-driven discourse and strong consumerist materialistic influences, we can witness the paradoxical phenomenon of an appreciation and an exploitation of Buddhism as a source for personal development, spiritual ideas, secular pedagogies and scientific research, while simultaneously there is a relatively small interest in Buddhism as a religious practice, including its forms of devotional worship and ritual, monasticism and belief systems. In social media we can even find an ongoing debate about whether Buddhism is a religion at all.[299]

How did we get there? Americans started importing Buddhism in the middle of the nineteenth century, but it took about a hundred years before they showed interest in the actual *practices* proposed by Buddhist traditions. The main focus was then mainly on formal sitting meditation which was considered the most valuable Buddhist feature, if not the very essence of Buddhism. Paradoxically, meditation also came to be seen as a universal good that could be divorced from its cultural characteristics. Coming to North America, Buddhism interacted with a secularized society,[300] and while some Buddhist teachers presented, and continue to present, Buddhist teachings in the traditional form known to them, others sought to reach their audiences by adapting to the sensibilities of the time; thereby participating in processes of individualizing, psychologizing, medicalizing, and simplifying the Dharma (Wilson 2014). Adapting to influences of romanticism, meditation practice was described as a personal endeavor to better

---

[299] https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nicholas-liusuwan/is-buddhism-a-philosophy-_b_10176992.html, https://bigthink.com/21st-century-spirituality/is-buddhism-a-religion, accessed August 18, 2018.

[300] To consult the statistics, see http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/, accessed July 9, 2017.

one's life, notably to improve one's mental and physical health. Probably the earliest assessments of Buddhist practice for therapeutic purposes was the influential book *What the Buddha Taught* by the Sri Lankan monk Walpola Rahula in 1959. The author explains the benefits of meditation practice as being "good for your physical health, for relaxation, sound sleep, and for efficiency in your daily work" (Rahula 1974, 71). It is precisely these promising or promised results of Buddhist practice that have drawn the attention of scientists, first with regard to mindfulness-type meditations, then followed by other forms of practice. In the late 1970s, Jon Kabat-Zinn started his successful mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR);[301] and in the 1990s, loving-kindness meditation (LKM) was introduced in America thanks primarily to the pioneering work of the American Vipassana teacher Sharon Salzberg, author of *Loving-Kindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness* (Salzberg 1995). On the basis of Salzberg's secularized *metta* (Pāli, Skt *maitrī*) meditation derived from the Theravada tradition, pioneering research was done by the psychologist Barbara Frederickson, among others. Starting in 1999, meditation has been analysed by means of neuroimaging (Lou et al. 1999), neurobiological testing[302] and psychological assessments (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017). The benefits of meditation for psychological and physical well-being, such as increased attentional stability, reduced mind wandering (Jazaieri et al. 2016), increased cortical thickness in areas associated with practice (Lazar et al. 2005), improved emotion regulation, improved immune function and response to psychological stress (Jacobs et al. 2011), and a greater resistance against aging, as evidenced by an increase in telomerase and telomere length (Jacobs et al. 2011, Hoge et al.

[301] The history of MBSR and its relationship to secular compassion training will be developed in section 1.5 of this chapter.

[302] Rockliff, H., Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Lightman, S., & Glover, D. (2008). A pilot exploration of heart rate variability and salivary cortisol responses to compassion-focused imagery. *Journal of Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, *5*, 132–139.

2013), have been popularized in research publications and mainstream media. Buddhism is therefore, on the one hand, benefitting from the scientific interest and widespread popularity it has gained. It is depicted as compatible with science: a "science of mind," a life-style, a philosophy rather than a religion, and as the only religion "that would cope with modern scientific needs," according to a statement falsely attributed to Albert Einstein (Lopez 2008). On the other hand, however, secularized meditation has been contested and criticized from both sides, scientific and Buddhist. North America psychologists warn that the therapeutic use of meditation as a medicine for a broad range of ailments is often accompanied by misinformation about possible negative outcomes and provokes false expectations (Van Dam et al. 2018, McMahan and Braun 2017). Buddhist scholars see the dangers of scientism (Compson 2017). Given the power that scientific discourse carries in contemporary societies, accepting this alliance entails the risk of reductionist results: As the scientific measurability determines the value of a teaching, Buddhism gets reduced to a small range of subjects that are deemed relevant. Other topics, such as the afterlife, supra-natural capacities, awakening, or karma, become the "damned topics" of Buddhism, to use Karin Meyer's term;[303] they are deemphasized or omitted in academic scholarship. Thupten Jinpa elucidates the science-Buddhism dialogue from both perspectives. Traditionally educated Buddhist scholars are grounded in a Buddhist worldview and tend to treat science as a rival philosophy with which they engage critically, incorporating only "those elements that have much higher empirical support." (Jinpa 2014) Westerners are generally engaged in a personal quest and educated in an intellectual tradition dominated by science. Therefore, traditional Buddhists have a limited scope with regard to science, while for many Westerners, scientific facts alone determine truth and reality, a perspective that Jinpa calls

[303] I borrow this expression from Karin Meyers, "The Damned Topics of Buddhist Philosophy," AAR 2016.

naive. He categorizes Tibetan scholars' attitude into three groups, namely those who see science as a rival philosophy, an ally, or an equal partner, but expresses some doubts that an informed and profound exchange between Buddhist and scientific worldviews has already happened, given the language barriers on both sides, and the scarcity of scientific literature in Tibetan language (Jinpa 2003, 79-81). The Dalai Lama, who is generally known for promoting a relationship of equal partners, has also voiced criticism, pushing back against a secular, scientific, materialistic worldview which he criticizes for its harmful effects on human and non-human life, society and the natural environment.[304]

1.1. The Scientific Exploration of Compassion

For the past decade, compassion has been a growing field of interest in the natural sciences. Compassion is being explored from various perspectives, of which three main approaches stand out, namely evolutionary biology, neuroscience, and psychology. I will give a short introduction to each of these fields. Regarding the first, research findings in evolutionary biology corroborate the idea that compassion has evolved from the mammalian caring motivational systems, and is thus innate and common to all humans (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017, 153, 255, Gilbert 2014). Compassion has allowed the human species to survive and evolve over millennia (Carter 2017, "Mission & Vision, CCARE" 2018). This position contradicts long-established ideas of social Darwinism promulgated by the nineteenth-century evolutionary philosopher Herbert Spencer, who claimed that nature followed a strict discipline of

[304] For a general discussion, see McMahan (2008). Recent non-academic articles include: https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-dalai-lama-says-world-in-for-century-of-suffering-if-science-isn-t-used-to-create-peace, https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/dalai-lama-warns-of-dangers-of-scientific-advancement-in-the-21st-century, https://fpmt.org/mandala/archives/mandala-issues-for-2010/october/distorted-visions-of-buddhism-agnostic-and-atheist/, accessed November 11, 2017.

competition and elimination of its weakest elements, and suggested that societies should emulate this pattern rather than caring for the weakest (Spencer 1851). His ideas have long been influential but are now being rebutted by the revised view that compassion is not only natural but that societies that have strong caring behavior are more successful than those without it (Harrington 2002, 25). Based on the assumption that caring and compassion are intrinsic parts of human evolution, recent biological research measures the effect of compassion training on the autonomic nervous system, such as the neuropeptide hormone oxytocin (Seppälä et al. 2017, 159-188), the heart rate variability (Kirby J.N. 2017), and other phenomena, suggesting that it is an effective remedy for stress relief (Pace et al. 2009, Leung et al. 2013, Lutz et al. 2009).

The second main approach to compassion research is the neuroscientific perspective. The neuroscientists Marco Iacoboni and Gian Lenzi have argued that mirror neurons are the neural basis of the human capacity for emotions such as empathy (Iacoboni and Lenzi 2002). In addition, the phenomenon of neuroplasticity came to account for the possibility of enhancing compassion through disciplined training, as neuroscientist Richard Davidson explains:

> The term neuroplasticity is used to describe the brain-changes that occur in response to experience. There are many different mechanisms of neuroplasticity, ranging from the growth of new connections to the creation of new neurons. When the framework of neuroplasticity is applied to meditation, we suggest that the mental training of meditation is fundamentally no different than other forms of skill acquisition that can induce plastic changes in the brain (Davidson and Lutz 2008).

The discovery and growing acceptance of the phenomenon of neuroplasticity led scientists to become interested in the effects of extensive meditation on the brain. In 2004, a first experiment suggested the short-term and long-term neural changes in expert meditators (Lutz et al. 2004). In 2008, Richard Davidson, Antoine Lutz and colleagues published an article on the “Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise” (Lutz et al. 2008), using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to create brain images of

the insula, a small region of the cerebral cortex, and anterior cingulate cortices in meditators' and novices' empathic response to another person's pain. The results showed that expert meditators, i.e. those who had previously completed from 10,000 to 50,000 hours of meditative training in a variety of practices, displayed a heightened activity in brain circuitries previously linked to empathy. The publication was immediately received as a study showing that compassion meditation changes the brain (Gaggioli 2008), and it sparked scientific and popular interest in compassion training. Thus, neuroimaging technology provided the opportunity to observe the neural correlates of positive emotions such as compassion and altruism.

The third important field of compassion research is psychology. According to a recent meta-analysis of the current state of compassion research by psychologist James Kirby, over the last ten years, twenty-three projects that followed the "gold standards" of randomized controlled trials and included self-report measures have given evidence of beneficial effects of compassion in the areas of physiology, mental health and emotion regulation, interpersonal and social relationships (Kirby 2017). Through these various research approaches, compassion has become quantifiable; it is demystified and its training and promotion have gained legitimacy. This has been an important paradigm shift: Compassion is no longer considered of the domain of religion but of human nature, and thus, of biology, psychology and science. As a religious phenomenon, compassion is often associated with super-human sacrifice and heroism. As a natural phenomenon, naturalized compassion becomes approachable and domesticated; it becomes part of mental health and hygiene.

1.2. The Role of the Dalai Lama

Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet, has shown special interest in fostering a scientific understanding of compassion. For decades, he has been dialoguing with scientists to find correlates with Buddhist understanding of the nature of consciousness, reality, emotions, and related topics. His approach to compassion is marked by a broad pan-religious, pan-cultural, pan-human concept of compassion, accompanied by a moral imperative to foster compassion for the survival of the human species on earth (Dalai Lama 2011). The Mind and Life Institute with its "Dialogues with the Dalai Lama" is an example of the successful collaboration of representatives of Buddhism and modern science. Founded in 1987 after an encounter of the Dalai Lama with lawyer and entrepreneur Adam Engle, and neuroscientist Francisco Varela, the institute's initial self-proclaimed aim was to contribute contemplative practices and introspective methods to complement a narrow scientific approach that would only accept empirical evidence.[305] Among their over thirty dialogues during the thirty years since its inauguration, six dialogues dealt with the themes of compassion and altruism.[306] During these talks, the focus shifted from evolutionary psychology and biology towards a neuroscientific angle. Participants in these talks such as Neuroscientist Richard Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience at the University of Wisconsin, have been front runners in

[305] Varela states that he was discontent with the fact that the scientific paradigm insisted on procedures of objectification to derive its data findings, and that it discarded the data content of contemplative experience as personal, utterly subjective, and therefore unreliable. He also stated that the initiators of the dialogues have been exploring ways to include raw subjective data in sound scientific research. Tibetan Buddhist traditions with their highly-structured approaches to contemplative explorations of the mind proved to be fruitful dialogue partners in this endeavor. https://www.mindandlife.org/mission/, accessed November 11, 2017.

[306] 1995 Mind and Life V: Altruism, Ethics, and Compassion; 2003 Mind and Life XI — Investigating the Mind: Exchanges Between Buddhism and Biobehavioral Science on How the Mind Works; 2007 Mind and Life XV — Mindfulness, Compassion, and the Treatment of Depression; 2010 Mind and Life XX — Altruism and Compassion in Economic Systems: A Dialogue at the Interface of Economics, Neuroscience, and Contemplative Sciences; 2014 Mind and Life XXVIII — Ethics, Education and Human Development; 2016 Mind and Life XXXI — Power & Care; https://www.mindandlife.org/dalai-lama-dialogues/, accessed May 20, 2017.

the scientific exploration of compassion. The scientific exploration of compassion also plays an important role in the Dalai Lama's understanding of "secular ethics," which he develops in his books *Ethics for the New Millennium* (1999) and *Beyond Religion* (2011). He discusses ethics not as a set of rules of human conduct, but more broadly, as a worldview of harmonious interaction among humans and their environment. Secular ethics is based on common sense, common experience, and research findings, rather than metaphysics and religion. Arguing that religion does not provide a basis for a universally accepted ethical model, he sees compassion not as a service to God or Buddha, nor as a means to accumulate positive karma, but simply as the logical consequence of having explored human nature. The empirical and scientific underpinnings that guarantee the universal acceptability of secular ethics are the recognition of a shared humanity, a shared aspiration to happiness, a shared avoidance of suffering, and the interdependence of all beings (Dalai Lama 2011, 19). The Dalai Lama subsumes them under the term "the two pillars of secular ethics:" shared humanity and interdependence. The logical consequence of these recognitions is for humans to understand that compassion is the only reasonable guideline for flourishing, if not survival, on earth. In sum, the Dalai Lama holds a unique position at the intersection of Buddhism and science; his intense involvement in both areas has gained him a certain amount of authority and influence, which he uses to warn about the devastating potential of unchecked scientific advancement, and to promote its employment in advancing the welfare of humans. One of the scientific projects that he actively supported through personal engagement and financial support is CCARE, which will be presented in the following section.

1.3. The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE)

The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE) at Stanford University School of Medicine, envisioned by the clinical professor of neurosurgery Dr. James Doty and founded in 2008 with Dr. Thupten Jinpa as a founding member, is a research- and education-oriented center with the explicit goal of promoting, supporting, and conducting rigorous scientific studies of compassion and altruistic behavior. The center's research ranges, in its online self-presentation,

> …from the use of optogenetics in rodents to understanding the neural circuitry associated with nurturing, to the use of neuro-economic models to understand the determinants of altruistic giving, to the use of fMRI and other psychological measures to determine the effects of [the] Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) protocol on the development of compassion in individuals. (Jazaieri et al. 2013, 1)

CCARE is an attempt of medicine and science to accommodate, promote and validate themes that were previously considered of the religious domain, namely altruism and compassion (Davidson and Harrington 2002, 22, 208). The Dalai Lama gave two pieces of advice for the center, reports his translator and author of the CCT's *Instructor's Manual*, Dr Thupten Jinpa: The project ought to be "impeccable from a scientific standard" and strictly secular in its educational aspect: "no back-door Buddhism," as he put it (Gates, Cullen, and Boucher 2011). Despite its scientific frame, the online self-presentation of CCARE contains a missionary dimension in that it wishes for a world in which compassion is "taught and applied in schools, hospitals, prisons, the military and other community settings," because "compassion is understood to be as important for health as physical exercise & healthful diet" ("Mission & Vision, CCARE" 2018). Interestingly, the logo that CCARE designed to express its vision shows striking parallels to Buddhist religious symbolism. The logo's center is reminiscent of the inner part of Tibetan *maṇḍala*s. Consisting of concentric circles, the two innermost circles contain nine lotus petals, while the two outer ones hold the name of the center and the repeated words "project

compassion" written like a mantra around the center. The colors correspond to the Stanford university colors: a dark red that resembles Tibetan monastic robes; green and white. In Tibetan Buddhist symbolism, the lotus is one of the hand-implements of Chenrezig (s*pyan ras gzigs*), the bodhisattva of compassion. It also commonly signifies the mind's purity that emerges from the swamp of mental impurities. Untypical is that the CCARE's lotus is a nine-petalled lotus, which does not exist in Tibetan iconography. The logo can be said to express the hybridity of the "project compassion," which uses Buddhism as a resource while pursuing the principles of secular, academic and scientific standards.

1.4. Compassion-Based Interventions

The interest in compassion research has led to a surge in compassion-based interventions and publications on the topic.[307] Training programs have been developed for both, educational-therapeutic purposes and as platforms for research. The 2017 *Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science* presents the current state of the field, including self-assessments, neuroscientific, neurobiological and behavioral assessments. Scholars still deplore the lack of common definitions and research standards that impede a broader comparison of experiments, but individually confirm positive results in the domains of physical and mental health and an increase in prosocial behavior. Some go so far as to praise compassion training as a means for guaranteed personal happiness, calling it "the best kept secret of happiness"(Seppälä 2012), while a few publications have a more cautionary tone, pointing towards possible painful experiences of negative emotions and memories (Goldin and Jazaieri 2017, 239), or admitting

[307] A simple Google search for academic papers on "compassion training" gives 47 entries in the quarter century before 2007, but 1270 entries since the neuroscientific study by Lutz and Richardson in 2008.

the occasional absence of any positive results (Mascaro, Negi, and Raison 2017). The only meta-analysis so far has been conducted by James Kirby, psychologist at the University of Queensland, Australia. He presents six interventions that are currently supported by empirical studies (Kirby 2017):

1) Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT), developed by Thupten Jinpa and colleages at CCARE, 2009;
2) Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) developed by Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Charles Raison, and colleagues at Emory University, 2005, initially for undergraduate students;
3) Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), developed by Paul Gilbert, 2006, a form of psychotherapy that includes Compassionate Mind Training (CMT);
4) Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC), Kristen Neff and Christoph Germer, 2012;
5) Cultivating Emotional Balance (CEB), developed by Paul Ekman, Alan Wallace, Eve Ekman, 2000;
6) Compassion and Loving-Kindness Meditations (LKM), first developed by Sharon Salzberg, derived from Buddhist and Eastern Traditions, analysed by Julieta Galante 2014.

In addition, he mentions two other programs that offer compassion education but are not, or not yet, scientifically evaluated. These include:

1) Being With Dying Programme, founded by Joan Halifax in the 1970s;
2) The ReSource Training Protocol, developed by Tania Singer and colleagues at the Max-Planck Institute, for a long-term study of compassion (39 weeks);

Not included by Kirby but also worth mentioning is Sustainable Compassion Training (SCT) formerly called Innate Compassion Training (ICT), developed by John Makransky and Brooke Lavelle, initially geared for social service professionals (Lavelle 2017).

According to Kirby, one reason for the growing interest in compassion-based interventions is the perception of current psychotherapies as imperfect and lacking in good results. With the intention of clarifying and improving the methodological rigour for this field, he compares the programs in terms of their theoretical underpinning, intended population, content overview, and their scientific evidence including randomized controlled trials (RTCs), non-RTCs,

and case studies. Among these, CCT and CBCT stand out as the most popular, according to Kirby, and the most studied, according to another study by Alea Skwara et al. (Skwara, King, and Saron 2017, 221). The popularity of these two programs is corroborated by the size of their faculties. According to their websites, in 2018, CBCT has thirty-one, and CCT has eighty accredited facilitators across several countries including the US, Canada, Australia, Chile, and the United Kingdom, with yearly additions from recurrent CCT teacher training programs. While all of the above-mentioned compassion training programs acknowledge Buddhist influences, CCT and CBCT are the only programs developed by Tibetan scholars; they refer particularly to the Tibetan traditions of Lojong and Lamrim. The particularities of their relationship will be elucidated in the third part of this chapter. To conclude this survey of secular compassion training, it is worth noting that compassion, just like mindfulness, is starting to emerge in mainstream North American culture, particularly in the fields of business, education, and health care (Wear 2008, Papadopoulos 2015, Goldin 2017). According to the CCT founding member Leah Weiss, the program has been offered to the general population, healthcare workers, teachers in K-12 education and business leaders, but also in clinical settings such as to trauma survivors. It was taught at a variety of settings such as Stanford University, UC Berkeley, Google, the Cancer Support Community, Sharp Healthcare in San Diego, VA hospitals, hospice centers, and PTSD treatment centers (Weiss 2015).

1.5. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Compassion research follows the lead of the slightly older and steadily expanding mindfulness movement (Boyce 2011). Both fields, mindfulness and compassion, have brought forth secular training programs that constitute a hybridization of contemporary science and

Buddhist-derived contemplative practices. Compassion training programs owe their rapid success to the popularity of mindfulness training, and particularly that of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR). MBSR was developed in 1979 and trademark protected in 2000 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, professor of medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, initially as a method to reduce medical and psychological symptoms, e.g. chronic pain and anxiety (The Center of Mindfulness 2017). As the program's popularity spread, its scope was adapted to cater to larger, and also wealthier, audiences as a form of self-help for improving personal and professional life. The success of mindfulness has been analysed as a distinctly Western phenomenon that interweaves romantic desires of Western societies, neoliberal individualism, trust in scientific empiricism and a fascination with Asian mysticism (McMahan 2008, Wilson 2014). While some see mindfulness as a remedy for the existential malaise of Western societies, others criticize that the "McMindfulness craze" fosters false hope (Rubin 2015). Buddhist teachers worry about the unskillful appropriation of Buddhist thought, which is used not to renounce the causes of suffering, but as a therapeutic technique to better cope with the stressful side effects of mainstream American culture (Sharf 2015, McMahan and Braun 2017). This type of mindfulness training has been criticized for selectively appropriating Buddhist ideas and turning them into a commodity that caters to the needs of capitalist neo-liberalism, thereby ignoring or concealing the very values for which the Buddhist practices were designed (Sharf 2015, Kirmayer 2015). In the middle of these criticisms stands MBSR, which tries to find a balance between its Buddhist roots, scientific support and secular presentation. The founder of MBSR finds his solution in declaring that he teaches a Dharma that is "in essence universal," and promises a refinement of "attention and awareness, compassion and wisdom"(Kabat-Zinn 2017). MBSR is in several aspects important to compassion training.

Secular compassion training emerged, in part, as an answer to criticisms of mindfulness programs, as it offers constructive content instead of the value-free, non-judgmental "bare attention," "focused concentration," or "open monitoring" that mindfulness programs offer. In addition, CCT and other compassion programs adopted the MBSR's outer format of an eight-week curriculum, weekly meetings and daily homework for the participants. Moreover, mindfulness practice is integrated in CCT's program as a foundational skill for the following steps, being trained during the first week and at the beginning of each training session.[308] However, compassion training differs from MBSR in that it does not assume that mindfulness alone is capable of bringing out positive character traits such as loving-kindness and compassion.[309]

1.6. Lojong in America

The practice of *tonglen*, which both CBCT and CCT have adapted to serve as their main formal practice, is not altogether novel on the American continent. Lojong had already been introduced in the 1990s by the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, whose English language commentary for Buddhist converts was published in 1993, entitled *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness* (Trungpa and Lief 1993). He calls the Lojong root lines the "fifty-nine pithy slogans," and his community invents new ways of integrating these into daily life by means of cards that serve as mnemonic devices. Trungpa's American student, the nun Pema Chödron made Lojong her field of speciality, publishing her own commentaries, the best

[308] The CCT IM states that if the course stretches over nine weeks, it comprises two mindfulness sessions.

[309] Tania Singer in an interview at the Mind and Life Institute in Virginia 2017, argues that the results of measurable compassion are directly linked to the type of meditation performed. https://www.mindandlife.org/tania-singer-resource-project/, accessed February 2, 2018.

selling *Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living* (1994) and *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (Chödrön 1994, 1997) and numerous other publications, including the *Compassion Box*, that combines written advice with audio recordings, cards with slogans and a wooden stand for the cards to be placed on the desk.[310] Although these two teachers present themselves as representatives of a Tibetan Buddhist tradition, their books appeal to a broad audience in Western societies. Pema Chödron, in particular, explains the spiritual instructions with numerous anecdotes from everyday life in modern North America. Chögyam Trungpa is known for having experimented with secularizing and popularizing Tibetan wisdom traditions, founding a two-track transmission of Buddhism, with Shambhala designating the secular track, with its own six-year curriculum, and its particular vision of a secular enlightened society (Chögyam Trungpa 1988). While the work of Trungpa and his students allegedly did not play a direct role in the creation of CCT, it did however contribute to the popularization of Lojong principles to the audience of Tibetan Buddhist converts in North America.

2. Content: The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)

CCT constitutes the educative aspect of CCARE. It is a contemplative, pedagogical program that combines elements from various disciplines, namely formal meditations derived from Tibetan Buddhist traditions, exercises derived from Western psychology, and a scientific rationale based on current research. It was developed in 2009 by Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., Tibetan

[310] Pema Chödrön, *Awakening Compassion: Meditation Practice for Difficult Times*, Audiobook, Sounds True, Louisville, Colorado, U.S.A., 1997; *Comfortable with Uncertainty 108 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness & Compassion*, Penguin Random House, United States, 2002; *The Compassion Box – Book, CD, and Card Deck – Powerful Practice from the Buddhist Tradition for Cultivating Wisdom, Fearlessness, and Compassion*, Boston: Shambhala, 2003; Pema Chödrön's *Compassion Cards: Teachings for Awakening the Heart in Everyday Life Cards* (Boston: Shambhala, 2016) and *The Compassion Book: Teachings for Awakening the Heart* (Boston: Shambhala, 2017).

scholar, author, and principal translator of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.[311] Initially offered directly through CCARE, since 2016, CCT programs and CCT teacher training are organized by the Compassion Institute, headed by Thupten Jinpa as CEO. As a regular participant and chairman of the Mind and Life Institute's Dialogues with the Dalai Lama, Jinpa was intimately familiar with both, Tibetan Buddhist and Western perspectives on contemplative sciences. CCT's training protocol, the IM, was produced in 2009 and revised in 2013 by him as the principal author, with the collaboration of a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and therapists, consisting of Margaret Cullen, M.F.T., Philippe Goldin, Ph.D., Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D., and Erika Rosenberg, Ph.D. and later joined by Leah Weiss, Ph.D. and Monica Hanson. Today, except for Philippe Goldin, all the contributors to the IM constitute the founding faculty of the Compassion Institute. The IM underwent a few revisions based on the experiences with the first formal training of CCT. Jinpa notes,

> I recognized that the first version of the program relied too heavily on meditation practice, which didn't work so well for people who were not temperamentally inclined to the silent reflective approach typical of formal sitting. For these people, more active or interactive exercises proved more effective in evoking the mental and emotional states we aimed to cultivate. (Jinpa 2015, xxvi)

In particular, the extensive section on cultivating loving-kindness and compassion for oneself was added to address the needs and deficiencies that participants manifested in this domain.[312] The notion of self-compassion training constitutes an important difference to traditional Buddhist approaches and will be discussed in a separate section below. The IM is not for sale and only available to course participants and certified course instructors. However, its content is partially

---

[311] Thupten Jinpa has translated and collaborated on numerous books by the Dalai Lama, *Ethics for the New Millennium* (2001) and *The Art of Happiness* (Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998), as well as *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World* (2011). His own publications include *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives* (2015) and translations of major Tibetan works featured in The Library of Tibetan Classics series (http://www.tibetanclassics.org/).

[312] Personal communication with the author Thupten Jinpa, September 2012, in Montreal, Canada.

presented in Jinpa's book *A Fearless Heart: How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives* (2015) and has been discussed in several academic publications (Brito-Pons, Campos, and Cebolla 2018, Kirby 2017). The IM has been consulted in full by the author of this study.

2.1. The Pedagogical Approach of CCT

The psychology behind CCT relies on the theory of personal change through intention setting and habit transformation. The training's ulterior goal, according to Jinpa's explanations, is to internalize an attitude or a standpoint in life that is grounded in compassion, which means that compassion becomes an instinctive, automatic response to any situation encountered. The training's resultant compassion should therefore be "more than fleeting feelings [but] a way of seeing and being in the world" (2015, 197). To explain how such a profound character transformation can be achieved, Jinpa points to the work of Nobel prize laureate, economist and psychologist Daniel Kahneman and his analysis of fast system and slow system thinking. "Fast thinking" refers to automatic operations in the mind that facilitate rapid decision making, while "slow thinking" describes the effortful, conscious, rational functioning of the mind. According to this theory, humans form habits by converting sequences of actions to automatic routines, which leads to their capacity to function fast and efficiently by associating new information to these existing, internalized patterns. Fast thinking describes the functioning of positive, constructive habits, but also that of negative prejudices and biased behavior (Kahneman 2011). Habits, however, can be changed, Jinpa argues, based on both Buddhist theory as well as on findings in psychology and neuroscience such as neurogenesis and neuroplasticity. Habits can be rebuilt through conscious, methodical and repeated effort. The didactic process thus can be described as

a transformation of slow thinking to fast thinking. The notion that humans are capable of self-transformation through self-controlled methods is not only an old Buddhist theory or a recent American discovery. It should not be forgotten that it also has strong roots in the European Enlightenment in which the ideal of a self-determined human agent emerged, one who is capable of reinventing him- or herself through methodical and disciplined action (McMahan 2008, 201; Taylor 1989, 159).

CCT's pedagogical method to bring about this type of personal transformation is a combination of several elements, namely [1] a psychological education that fosters greater insight into the functioning of one's mind, such as a deeper understanding of how one's thoughts, feeling, experience and behavior are interconnected and influence one another; [2] guided meditations; [3] interactive exercises, most of them dyadic, to evoke certain affective states; and [4] reinforcing the newly learned ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling through consciously bringing them into everyday situations. While the first two elements have a contemplative character, the latter two are concerned with embodying compassion in action. Jinpa explains the pedagogical approach in terms of cognitive psychology which distinguishes between two types of knowledge, declarative and procedural. Declarative knowledge is concerned with facts and acquired through mental processing, while procedural knowledge is embodied, acquired primarily through actual performance (Jinpa 2015, 207). Compassion training aims at fostering the latter, which is embodied knowledge. The rationale behind this approach is the understanding that it is impossible to change feelings, emotions and affects directly, but that they can be indirectly modified by changing one's perception of the world and one's attitude towards the perceived, particularly towards other beings. By expressing these new attitudes through new behaviors, they eventually become new habits. Only when compassion

becomes a natural outlook on, and a proactive behavior in life without relying on conceptual analysis and slow, critical reflection, will it be embodied knowledge, "a way of being in the world" (Jinpa 2015, 201, 209). Based on the theory of change, Jinpa identifies five targets of transformation, namely [1] awareness and presence, [2] perception and outlook, [3] intention and motivation, [4] empathy and affect, [5] behavior and habit (Jinpa 2016). This wide range of targets illustrates the complexity of the construct of compassion. However, as Jinpa repeatedly emphazises, training compassion means enhancing an inherently present potential in the mind and is therefore a process of revealing what is naturally there. As it fosters positive connection with other beings it is accompanied by joy and contentment.

2.2. The Six-Step Pedagogy of CCT

The pedagogy for achieving the described personal transformation consists of six progressive steps described in CCT's IM which complies with the needs of science for structured, measurable, and repeatable interventions. The program is an eight- or nine-week course, held once a week for two hours and demands participants to uphold continuously formal meditation sessions at home. CCT homework meditations begin with fifteen minutes daily, progressively building up to thirty minutes, and are facilitated by recordings of guided meditations that the course instructor records for the participants. Training groups consists ideally of twenty to thirty participants, which, according to Goldin and Jazaieri, allows sufficient diversity for paired exercises, discussions and variegated experiences (2017, 238-239). Participants can be novice or experienced meditators. The CCT program consists of the six steps or modules that spread over eight (or nine) weeks.

1. Settling and focusing the mind; intention-setting;
2. Loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one;

3a. Compassion for oneself;
3b. Loving-kindness for oneself;
4. Embracing shared common humanity and developing appreciation of others;
5. Cultivating compassion for others;
6. Active compassion practice (*tonglen*);
Conclusion: Integrated daily compassion cultivation practice.

The IM provides at each step explanations for the rationale of its training, emphasising the idea that all the specific qualities that will be trained throughout the program are natural and innate to the human mind and heart, but need strengthening in terms of skill acquisition (Jinpa et al. 2013, 15). Participants are also being educated about the long-term pedagogical approach of the program to prepare against possible discouragement in the face of stressful experiences (Goldin and Jazaieri 2017, 239). The first of the eight weeks is devoted to acquiring the most basic skill necessary for any reflective or contemplative practice, that is, focusing and settling the mind.[313] The relevant training techniques include cleansing breaths, diaphragmatic breathing, silent counting of breathing cycles, and observing the movement of breathing. The learning outcome of these preliminaries is said to be the skill of becoming aware of one's thoughts, emotions, and distractions in a non-judgmental, non-reactive, purely observational frame of mind (Goldin and Jazaieri 2017, 240). The capacity to do so is a prerequisite for re-directing one's mind towards new ways of thinking and forming new attitudes.

Step 2 begins teaching two fundamental skills necessary for training compassion which are fundamental throughout the program, namely intention-setting, and sharpening one's awareness, which means not only noticing the suffering of others, but also seeing one's natural capacity to connect and care. The IM's slogan, "Habits of the mind, habits of the heart" expresses the above mentioned pedagogical idea of shaping one's fast thinking, which includes

[313] In the case of a nine-week program, the content of the first session is spread out over two classes.

emotions, intuitions, biases, “habits of the heart,” by means of directed, purposeful training of certain thinking patterns of slow thinking, or “habits of the mind” (Jinpa et al. 2013, 38). The strategy relies on the idea that feelings although they appear to be natural and instinctive, can be transformed by choosing to influence one’s thinking through exercises that sharpen one’s awareness, strengthen one’s intentions and reflexive contemplation.

Steps 2 through 6 gradually develop compassion cultivation. First, participants are led to identify naturally occurring expressions of love, affection and warmth for a loved one. To carry out this part of the training, participants are introduced to the technique of visualizing, that is, holding a mental picture of a specific person, and imagining simple processes, such as warm light emanating from one’s own heart to touch the other person. The visualization is accompanied by controlled conceptual processes, such as generating the idea that the visualization produces happiness and alleviates pain. The next step, divided into two aspects, is devoted to generating (3a.) compassion and (3b.) loving-kindness for oneself. The purpose of this step is to acknowledge one’s natural aspiration for happiness and develop clarity about one’s profound aspirations in life, while generating positive mental states such as self-acceptance, tenderness, non-judgment, warmth, appreciation, joy, and gratitude towards. The rationale for step 3 is the need for trainees to be capable of regulating their emotions and soothing systems, as this is required for being compassionate toward others without negative judgment. Step 4 further prepares the generation of compassion toward others by means of two consecutive steps, namely “embracing a shared common humanity,” and “developing appreciation of others”(Jinpa et al. 2013, 11, 78-82). The first aspect refers to the recognition that “just like me,” others wish to avoid suffering and are in search of happiness, and entails the quality of empathy, i.e. the ability to identify with others, and to recognize their suffering. The second aspect directs participants

towards an understanding of the interconnectedness of beings, the dependency on others for every aspect of their lives, resulting in appreciation and gratitude. With this preparation, participants continue, in step 5, to cultivate compassion towards others. This begins with an educational section on the meaning of compassion, clarifying its distinction from pity and self-sacrifice, and introducing the idea of impartial and global compassion. The training technique is a progression of well-wishing starting from easy targets towards more challenging ones, that is, participants begin with compassion for a loved one, then a neutral person, a difficult person, and finally they develop a compassionate attitude towards all humanity. The well-wishes are maintained by repeating silent utterances, such as, "may you be free from suffering; may you achieve peace and joy," and concluded with a reflection on "rejoicing in the glory of the open heart" and the practice of dedication (Jinpa et al. 2013, 103). Finally, Step 6 introduces "active compassion." The rationale is that the previous steps have generated a sense of urgency and the resolve for an altruistic commitment. It is expressed in the contemplative technique of "sending and taking," which the IM presents with its Tibetan name *tonglen,* and a footnote for further reading on this meditation that includes *Essential Mind Training* (Jinpa 2011)*,* the only reference to traditional Buddhist source texts relevant to this meditation.[314] The formal technique of *tonglen* is a continuation of the visualization described above. It begins with the aspect of "taking:" Imagining the suffering of another person as dark black clouds, the trainees imaginatively absorb it in their hearts, thinking that they verily relieve the other from suffering. Trainees are instructed then to visualize that the black clouds dissolve into a pearl of radiant white light at their heart, which represents the essence of strength and goodness in them. The

[314] The second recommendation is a commentary in contemporary language by the previously mentioned American-born Tibetan nun, teacher and prolific writer on the subject of Mind Training, Pema Chodrön (2001).

meditation then continues with the "sending" sequence, in which trainees imagine sending out bright, white, healing light from their hearts, symbolizing a healing energy that acts as an offering. With this visualization they contemplate that they have the power to transform suffering with the healing energy of the heart. The text instructs them further to repeat the described visualization cycle multiple times, combining it with their natural breathing cycle. The pedagogy of this meditation relies on creative imagining, which captures the previously trained abstract aspirations in symbolic visualizations. The object of compassion shifts to progressively larger cycles of compassion recipients, as mentioned in step 5. The meditation concludes with rejoicing and a dedication. The IM concludes with the "Integrated Daily Compassion Cultivation Meditation," a practice that the instructor reads as a guided meditation, and that participants should continue to use as a personal "self-guided" daily meditation. This step 6 combines all elements of the program into a digest of thirty minutes. Participants are strongly advised to develop a training discipline beyond the eight-week course, and to learn to adapt the compassion meditation for their own purposes (Jinpa et al. 2013, 6). According to the research by Goldin and Jazaieri (2017), research has shown that trainees are much more likely to recollect compassionate responses to others and to themselves on days which began with a session of compassion training.

Although the six steps include a broad range of pedagogical elements, one can identify the overarching pedagogical idea of intention-setting running through the program. Every session during the course, as well as every session of daily training begins with and is based on intention-setting, which is expressed in terms of well-wishing for others and oneself, as explained above. Deliberate and repeated intention-setting is the pedagogical tool that makes compassionate thinking a habit, an element of "fast thinking."

2.3. Structure

The IM prescribes each pedagogical step in precise detail, down to the suggested minutes of meditation between each step of the guided meditations. Although instructors are encouraged to develop their own personal style, the IM gives a detailed description of each two-hour class. Their structure suggests that coherence is a strongly desired characteristic of the program, as each of the weekly sessions follows the exact same structure, consisting of the following eight sections.

1. Overview and class plan, settling the mind and intention-setting
    - A brief introductory guided group meditation to settle the mind, and exercises to set the intention, such as the well-exercise;
2. Check-in
    - A discussion about the previous week's home practice, both in small groups of two or three participants, followed by a larger group conversation;
3. Pedagogy
    - An introduction to the pedagogy and specific step of the week, with interactive group discussions, reading literature or poetry, and exposure to creative visual material, to evoke nurturing sentiments;
4. Science
    - A presentation of relevant scientific research;
5. Exercises
    - Relevant therapeutic exercise, often practiced in dyads.
6. Guided Meditation
    - A 30-minute guided meditation on the specific theme of the week, followed by a group debrief and discussion;
7. Home practice
    - The assignment of new homework consisting of both informal and formal practices for the week;
8. A closing gesture. (Jinpa et al. 2013, 33-35)

The class schedule expresses a balance of theory and practice, with the guided meditation only taking thirty minutes of the class time. The IM provides not only the overview and structure, but also the relevant scripts and literature recommendations for each section, such as a description of the pedagogy of the specific theme of each class, a description of the practical exercises, the meditation script for the classes and for the audio recordings for the guided

meditations that trainees use at home, and suggestions for informal "in the world" tasks to carry out by the participants in their everyday lives. The program is based on repetition and provides a slow, progressive development of the training so that the culminating *tonglen* practice can be understood and accepted by the trainees. The structure's detail and precision express the desire to present a comprehensive and coherent curriculum and to guarantee a uniform education of all participants.

2.4. Self-Compassion and Self-Kindness

Buddhism, evolutionary biology and neuoscience assume that compassion is a natural trait of human nature. Buddhist instructions imply that appreciation and compassion for oneself is even more ingrained than compassion for others. It seems like a contradiction then that CCT devotes a quarter of its training to deliberately developing self-compassion. The rationale for this step in CCT's pedagogy is the observation that many people living in highly competitive life-styles dictated by modern societies have lost access to these natural attitudes, entailing numerous negative health implications (Jinpa 2015, 27). As many compassion trainees suffer from excessive self-criticism and even self-loathing, CCT includes a two-step pedagogy, consisting of first dissociating with one's thoughts, and secondly introducing constructive thought patterns of self-acceptance and self-forgiveness. The goal is to arrive at a mental state that is "nonjudgmental, open, and future-oriented, rather than conditional, judgmental, recriminatory, and stuck in the past" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 68). This section of CCT draws on Marshall Rosenberg's *Nonviolent Communication* and employs his pedagogy to teach the capacity to distinguish between observation and evaluation, and to foster self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, self-soothing and resilience (Rosenberg 2003). All of these qualities are necessary to develop

warmth, tenderness, and nonjudgmental acceptance not only towards onself but also to others. The IM refers to foundational research by Barbara Fredrickson that claims that such positive emotions lead people to experiencing an increased sense of purpose in life, increased social support, decreased depressive symptoms and increased life satisfaction (Jinpa et al. 2013, 69), all of which are foundations for generating compassion towards others.

2.5. Interactive Exercises

The IM contains eight exercises derived from the field of psychotherapy, which are added to each of the eight sessions. In contrast to the solitary contemplative experience of the meditations, these exercises provide the space for interaction with a partner, for communication, for listening and seeing, and for embodied expression of emotions. According to CCT instructors, participants enthusiastically embrace this dialogical facet of the training.

> Course after course, these small-group and partner exercises are reported as being some of the most impactful experiences of the CCT program. These partnered exercises allow for the experience of compassion in action in a simple, powerful, and meaningful manner. (Goldin and Jazaieri 2017, 240)

The eight exercises are followed by group discussions to explore the lessons gained from the exercise. An important aspect of the training throughout the program is to develop an awareness of one's own mental states that arise in parallel or as a response to the generation of compassion. The eight exercises are as follows:

1. the "well" exercise"

- A creative mental exercise using the image of a stone thrown into a well to bring the motivation for the training into consciousness.

2. the stabilizing and intention-setting exercise:

- A breathing-relaxation exercise, followed by silently formulated wishes for a loved one's happiness and freedom from suffering; reflections about one's purpose and aspirations in life

3. the exercise in embodying compassion and other feeling-states:

- A progression of exercises: 1.) tuning into the surrounding sounds, 2.) remembering and recreating a positive feeling-state, 3.) expressing positive feeling through a body posture; 4.) expressing anger through a body posture; 5.) a group discussion about the exercise.

4. the self-acceptance and self-forgiveness exercise:

- dyadic or solitary recollection of negative self-judgement and exploration of the needs concealed in this behavior

5. the self-appreciation exercise:

- dyadic exercise training in silent, appreciative looking at one another; alternated with dialogic exercise, asking the other to express positive thoughts about themselves, listening, and thanking.

6. the "empathic attunement" exercise:

- dyadic exercise in sharing sorrow and disappointments, and receiving and offering empathic attention.

7. the "eyes on" exercise:

- dyadic exercise in progressive steps of (1.) looking at the other person, (2.) cognitive perspective taking, imagining how s/he feels being seen, (3.) considering the other as fellow human being with human sufferings, (4.) wishing him/her well. Each step is alternated with self-reflection; the exercise concludes with a group discussion.

8. the "breathe in, breathe out" exercise:

- the practice of *tonglen*, practiced in dyads, facing one another, eyes closed, ending with looking into each others' eyes.

2.6. The Guided Meditation

In contrast to these exercises that allow for some individual, creative expression, and for dialogical interaction with a partner, the guided meditations follow the Buddhist model in that they are individual contemplative exercises. Their content corresponds to the six-step pedagogy explained above and does not need to be repeated here. As the name says, the instructor is

guiding the meditation by giving verbal instructions, which is a format unknown in traditional Buddhist settings. Since participants are expected to practice at home and to continue their training after the two-month program, they are provided with handouts and recordings.

2.7. Instructors

This description of CCT reveals a robust program for cultivating compassion that leaves little room for deviation in its didactic approach. Although the instructors are encouraged to contribute their own experience and personality, the IM guarantees a high degree of uniformity in the education of secular compassion. Although the scientific evaluation of the program is less developed than that of other compassion interventions, CCT is popular. By 2013, it had already been taught 21 times in different countries worldwide (Jinpa and Weiss 2013). CCARE and the Compassion Institute offer not only compassion training but also CCT trainer certification which guarantees that CCT is spreading throughout North America and is taught by qualified instructors. Teacher training is offered by a team of instructors that includes the original authors of the IM for a selected audience of "professionals interested in compassion education"(Compassion Institute 2017-2018).[315] This relatively open description aims at people with a background in psychology or related fields who intend to teach the 8-week CCT program. Participants are advised not to alter the program for their own purposes. The CCT 2017-18 program accepted 55 participants for a six-month course, who attend two residential retreats in the high-end Jesuit retreat center in Los Altos, California, participate in an online curriculum, and undergo an 8-week supervised teaching practicum following successful completion of the

[315] http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/cct-teacher-certification-program/, Flyer 2017. https://media.wix.com/ugd/e947af_9d096a79894146f9b9de2b941d746d3a.pdf , accessed October 30, 2017.

course itself. The basic tuition fee is a staggering 6500 USD for the 2017 training (with opportunities for need-based scholarships offerred), suggesting that the clientele of CCT is restricted to the educated American middle- and upper-class. The academic coursework covers the "philosophical perspectives of compassion" and the "science of compassion," and relevant research publications will be made available for instructors on an ongoing basis so as to keep their teaching up-to-date. Instructor trainees will receive small group supervision in personal meditation practice and teaching. They receive the IM from which they are expected to teach, and during their supervised teaching, instructors videotape each class in order to submit the recordings for the purpose of consultation with other teachers in training, for receiving feedback, and finally for obtaining a teacher certification. Once certified, teachers are listed on CCARE's website.[316] At present, CCT has eighty accredited facilitators across the world from countries including the US, Australia, Chile, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The community of teachers that watches over the correctness of teachings transmitted to the next batch of CCT teachers fulfills many of the functions that the elite community of monastic teachers holds in the Buddhist educational structure. They preserve the authenticity of the teaching and create the sense of belonging to a special community

3. Comparative Analysis of Secular and Traditional Compassion Training

Having presented the CCT in some detail, I will turn now to a comparative analysis that reviews the program in light of its Buddhist antecedents. [1] The first part is a descriptive comparison. As the IM states in the introduction that its formal meditations are principally derived from compassion practices found in the Tibetan Buddhist traditions (Jinpa et al. 2013, 7),

[316] http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/directory-of-certified-teachers/, accessed November 5, 2017.

while however deliberately eschewing explicit Buddhist concepts and terminology,[317] the following section explores the numerous implicit Buddhist references the IM contains, and compares these to their antecedents. [2] The second part is an evaluative comparison of traditional and secular compassion pedagogies that examines the scope and methods of these two approaches. The insights drawn from these comparisons will then inform the final analysis of the meaning and critiques of secularizing Buddhist practice in the "Concluding Reflections" section of this thesis.

3.1. Descriptive Comparison: Implicit Buddhist References in CCT

Secular compassion training begins with learning the skill of focusing and settling the mind. The term mindfulness is often used indiscriminately for various mental states such as concentrated focus, bare attention, or open monitoring.[318] The IM emphasises the meaning of settling, suggested by Tibetan terms such as calm abiding (*zhi gnas*) and settling meditation (*'jogs sgom*), which are explained, for instance, in the second *Bhāvanākrama* by Kamalaśīla. The IM explains two mental faculties, namely "(1) mindfulness, which helps keep our attention on the chosen object of our focus, and (2) meta-cognition, an awareness that helps monitor whether or not our attention is still present" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 21). These two are known as mindfulness (*dran pa*) and alertness (*shes bzhin,* alternatively, clear comprehension) in the *Bhāvanākrama*.[319]

---

[317] One exception is the mention of *bhāvanā* (Skt. cultivation) or *gom* (Tib. *sgom,* familiarization).

[318] For a differentiated explanation of different styles of mindfulness, see Dunne (2015).

[319] See for example BhK 2 (D 48a2-a4): *de nas rnam par gyen ha zhi bar byas nas dran pa dang shes zhin gyi thag pas yid kyi glang po che dmigs pa'i sdong po de nyid la gdags par bya'o// gang gi tshe bying ba dang rgod pa med par gyur te/ dmigs pa de la sems rnal du 'jug par mthong ba de'i tshe ni rtsol ba glod la btang snyoms su bya zhing// de'i tshe ji srid 'dod kyi bar du 'dug par bya'o// de ltar zhi gnas goms par byas pa de'i lus la sems shin tu sbyangs par gyur pa dang // ji ltar 'dod pa bzhin du dmigs pa de la sems rang dbang du gyur pa de'i tshe de'i zhi gnas grub pa yin par rig par bya'o//* Translation Adam: After calming the distraction, the great ox of the mind should be bound to that very tree-trunk of the object with the rope of clear comprehension (or alertness) and mindfulness. When one is without sinking and excitement and one sees that the mind is settled on the object, then

CCT uses breathing techniques such as counting the breathing cycles, which are common methods for settling the mind. The IM also introduces the less common "cleansing breaths" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 17) which are known in the Tibetan yogic traditions as "clearing away the dead air" (*rlung ro bsal ba*).[320] Right from the first step of the CCT program, the trainees are introduced to the idea of continuing an informal practice in day-to-day life. This is a direct reflection of the traditional Buddhist twofold aspects of formal practice sessions (*thun*) and post-sitting practices (*thun mtshams kyi nyams len*) (Tsongkhapa 2000a, 100-108).[321] The latter refers to the idea of applying whatever one has learned in meditation in everyday situations. In support of this instruction, the IM even cites one of Atīśa's mind training verses verbatim: "Relate whatever you encounter to your meditation practice right now" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 32; MTGC, 71, 381).[322]

The CCT then turns to its central theme of intention setting, which is a fundamental element of every traditional Buddhist practice. A common formalized way for Buddhists to recall and establish their intentions are the recitations of taking refuge (*skyabs 'gro*) and generating *bodhicitta* (*sems bskyed*). More importantly is to mentally cultivate the related states of directing their minds towards awakening. Another preparatory step in CCT is sharpening the awareness for suffering. The Buddhist parallel for this can be found in the contemplation known as the "four mind-changers" (*blo ldog rnam bzhi*),[323] which comprises contemplations on impermanence,

---

one relaxes one's effort and should be equanimous, remaining that way as long as one likes. Thus, the mind and body of one who has practiced tranquillity become very disciplined; (when) one can freely direct the mind to the object in the manner desired, tranquillity should be known to the established. Translated by Adam (2002, 95, n.135).

[320] For example, they constitute the opening exercise of Tibetan yogic exercises (*'khrul 'khor*) of the *Six Dharmas* of Nāropa.

[321] The corresponding original Tibetan passage can be found in Tsongkhapa 2010, Vol. 1, 56-68.

[322] Tib. *'phral la gang thug bsgom du sbyar* (LG 35, 352).

[323] The *blo ldog rnam bzhi* is a collection of contemplations that have become known as preliminary practices, mainly in the *rnying ma* and *bka' rgyud* schools. The themes of contemplation are commonly listed as the precious

death, the shortcoming of samsaric existence, the infallibility of karma, but also on the good opportunities for training at hand. The purpose of all these contemplations is to create a solid motivation for spiritual practice.

The training then focuses on loving-kindness and compassion for a loved one (step 2). Many parallels to the previously presented Lojong and Lamrim instructions are obvious and do not need to be repeated in detail. Here I would like to draw attention to CCT's emphasis on emotional intensity in one's relationship to the "loved one." In traditional Buddhist context, the idea of cultivating universal loving-kindness and compassion with a loved one as the starting point has previously been seen in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā,*[324] the Lojong literature and Tsongkhapa's Lamrim instruction on the seven cause-and-effect instructions (*rgyu 'bras man ngag bdun*), which is grounded in *yid 'ong rnam pa*, the idea of endearment and affection towards beings. The IM has adapted the definition of the "loved one" to modern sensibilities, and suggests as objects of one's affection "a grandparent, mentor, close friend, or even a pet," with the idea of stimulating "unconditional love, affection and respect" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 39-40).[325] The rationale for emphasizing the emotional component is the idea that it allows beings to connect to one another, to cherish the other, and generate genuine compassion (Gates, Cullen, and Boucher 2011). Brendan Ozawa de Silva, compassion instructor of CBCT, goes even further and argues that the intimacy connected to this love through the force of attraction "far exceeds the intensity

---

human body, death and impermanence, the infallibility of karmic cause and effect, and the dissatisfactory nature of saṃsāra. See for example *phyag chen rgyas pa nges don rgya mtsho* or the *karma kam tshang sngon 'gro* by Wangchuk Dorjé (1971).

[324] See Chapter II.2.4 of this thesis.

[325] The IM clarifies that it has to be "[…] an uncomplicated, loving and secure connection (as opposed to a relationship that entails everyday interactions such as household chore negotiations, complaints, and recriminations, such as with your spouse or teenaged children). The person should be someone for whom you feel unconditional love, acceptance, and respect. This could be your infant child, a grandparent, a mentor, or even your pet. (Jinpa et al. 2013, 39-40).

of immeasurable love, which merely has the content of wishing all others to be free from suffering, but which is not conjoined with seeing all others as delightful and as precious as one's own child" (Ozawa-de Silva 2015, 119-126). In sum, both contexts, traditional compassion cultivation and CCT, make use of the pedagogy of recollecting constructive kinship or friendship relations, in order to access the emotional aspects of compassion. Both approaches also include the generation of associated positive emotions, such as gratitude (*bka' drin dran pa*), joy (*dga' ba*), and rejoicing (*rjes su yi rang*) in the virtue of oneself and others.[326] However, it should also be remembered that not all Buddhist scholars favor affection and attachment-based methods, most notably seen in the BCA.

The CCT then teaches "loving-kindness and compassion for oneself." Although it is possible to find associated ideas in Buddhist thought, there exists no self-standing practice of self-compassion in Buddhist traditions. I will turn to this novel phenomenon in the next section.

The following step 4 prepares a rationale for global compassion. The challenge of developing this rationale is the fact that the traditional Buddhist ontological explanation that all beings have been mothers throughout countless lifetimes (*mar shes*, "recognizing them as mothers") cannot be adopted by the secular CCT for its incompatibility with secularism. Instead, the IM develops the two concepts of (1) a common humanity and (2) interdependence, echoing the two pillars of the Dalai Lama's secular ethics (Dalai Lama 2011, 21,73). The idea of a shared humanity and of all humans equally striving for happiness draws on Śāntideva's rationale

[326] The IM refers multiple times to gratitude, joy and rejoicing, particularly in steps 2 and 4. In traditional literature, *bka' drin dran pa* is of importance in the Lojong literature (Shönu Gyalchok and Könchog Gyaltsen 2004); *dga' ba* is the third of the four immeasurables, and *rjes su yi rang* occurs, among other, as the seven limb practice (*yan lag bdun*) as for example in the previously mentioned *Ārya Bhadracaryā Praṇidhāna Rāja* (Tib. *bzang po'i spyod pa'i smon lam kyi rgyal po*).

regarding the equality of self and others (*bdag gzhan mnyam pa*). The second principle, interdependence, reflects an aspect of the theory of dependent origination (Skt *pratītya samutpāda,* Tib. *rten 'brel, rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*). In the present context, it refers to the idea that no phenomenon and no being exists independently. The IM expresses the notion of interdependence in psychological and material terms in the following statement that participants have to ponder: "My life and the lives of the countless beings on this planet are intertwined in a network of relationships on which I completely depend for my survival and well-being" (Jinpa et al. 2013, 87). Step 5 of the program is the cultivation of compassion. The Buddhist background of this step is most clearly expressed by the emphasis on its boundless quality, the inclusion of all beings (Ibid. 92, 102), even one's enemies (94). This echoes the universal compassion of the four immeasurables (*tshad med snying rje*), and the impartial attitude in Śāntideva's exchanging self and other (*bdag gzhan brje ba*). Finally, CCT presents the complete practice of "active compassion," which refers to "giving and receiving," a clear adaptation of *tonglen* (*gtong len*). The CCT program integrates the "giving" part early on in the training, relying on the technique of visualization (*dmigs pa*) and of aspirations (*lhag bsam, smon lam*), most notably the standard formulas derived from the four immeasurables (*tshad med bzhi*), such as "May you be happy […], May you be free from suffering […], May you find peace and joy." (Jinpa et al. 2017, 37) The more difficult part of "taking others' suffering onto oneself" is presented at the very end of the training. Just like in the Lojong commentaries, the IM suggests using *tonglen* in an emergency situation, such as being faced with the suffering or sickness of a loved one. The IM suggest that participants "take away" from others both their suffering and the destructive patterns of thought and behavior that underlie their suffering (Ibid., 11), which is a direct parallel to the idea of "suffering and the causes of suffering" that a bodhisattva aims at eliminating. These and

numerous other details demonstrate that the influence of Buddhist thought in the program of CCT is by no means limited to the adaptation of the *tonglen* meditation. Besides the explicit adoption of a formal Buddhist contemplative practice, CCT implicitely contains and adapts a large number of pedagogical elements derived from various Buddhist sources, thus creating an intricate and complex relationship between the two systems.

3.2. Evaluative Comparison: Differences and Tensions

The multitude of references to Buddhist sources revealed in the descriptive comparative survey of CCT suggests a closely aligned adaptation from the Tibetan source tradition, a permeation by implicit Buddhist concepts that determine its structure, content and meditation techniques. Due to the two different meditation cultures surrounding the respective practices, there are however important differences between traditional Buddhist compassion cultivation and secular compassion training. In the following I contrast [1] the dissimilar scopes of the secular and traditional Buddhist pedagogies, and [2] the discrepancies and tensions in their respective training methods.

3.2.1. Different Scope

The most fundamental difference between traditional and secular approaches to compassion training is their respective final goal and scope. Buddhist compassion cultivation partakes of the larger soteriological perspective of awakening, whereas secular training eschews all aspects of spiritual liberation. *Karuṇā* is practiced as part of *bodhicitta* with the goal of transcending saṃsāra and becoming the perfect embodiment of *karuṇā* and *prajñā* in the state of a buddha. Bodhisattvas practice therefore *great* compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) instead of ordinary

compassion. They aspire to a state in which great compassion is characterized by radical impartiality, equanimity, and the ontology of emptiness and non-duality. In contrast, the scope of CCT is much more modest. What are the goals of compassion training in secular context? Jinpa (2016) identifies five target-areas of transformation in CCT. First, it aims at establishing a heightened awareness of one's state of mind and trains the capacity of staying present with it. Second, it seeks to transform the outlook onto the world from a selfish to a compassionate perspective. Third, it establishes altruistic intentions, which will affect one's motivation. Jinpa understands motivation as emotion-driven, and thus difficult to influence in a direct way. Instead, through deliberate training of altruistic concepts and intentions, one is able to transform one's motivation. The fourth is to broaden our range of empathy, which should extend beyond a small circle of loved ones, beyond one's limited ingroup. And fifth, the transformed attitude should manifest in behaviour and habit. If the training does not result in an increase of compassionate behavior, its purpose is wasted (Jinpa 2016). Generally speaking, the goal of CCT training is for trainees to recognize their innate compassionate nature and reconnect with this natural potential so as to strengthen its impact onto their outlook on life, their attitudes and ethical conduct. Thus, CCT's scope is less ambitious than its Buddhist antecedent, as it remains within the realm of personal development. Participants seek to improve their personal and professional relationships and to generally become happier people. For example, with questions such as, " In my heart of hearts, what do I really want in my life?", "If anything were possible, what would I really wish myself and others to find in life?", "If anything were possible, how would I really wish myself and others to develop as a human being?," the CCT protocol suggests ways to connect to one's own inner resources (Jinpa et al. 2013, 53). In contrast, Buddhist literature on the topic does not envision the cultivation of compassion for its own sake, or for the sake of personal health or

well-being, but for the sake of attaining the lofty goal of awakening. Buddhist traditions tend to present standardized prescriptions of the goal and of ritualized forms of intention-setting, such as aspiration prayers or dedications for the benefit of all beings. In sum, the most fundamental difference between the two approaches lies in their respective compassion cultures: Buddhist approaches include transcendent, soteriological, universal and trans-personal dimensions in its view, whereas secular approaches are immanent, relational, personal, and thus more modest in its ambition.

3.2.2. Differences in Method

Given the different scopes of compassion cultivation, it is only natural that their methods also differ.[327] In Chapter II, I introduced the categorization of the constructive, deconstructive and cognitive-analytic approaches in traditional Buddhist compassion cultivation. CCT works mostly with the first and third of these: the constructive in the form of intention-setting and training altruistic attitudes; the cognitive-analytic in the form of developing self-awareness, a transformed world view, and greater knowledge of compassion science. While Buddhist approaches also contain these elements, they place a comparatively greater emphasis than CCT on the cognitive-analytic method of investigating the suffering in all its various forms and manifestations within the six realms of Buddhist cosmology. They also favor deconstructive methods that aim at leveling out attachments and aversions to others. Buddhist texts vary in their degree of deconstruction, the BCA advocating a radical breakdown of the barriers of dualistic perception, whereas Lojong and Lamrim propose moderate forms of changing one's appreciation

[327] The following analysis is based on discussions with CCT's principal author, Thupten Jinpa, in Montreal, Canada, during the years of my Ph.D. program, 2012-18. For his own comparative analysis, see Jinpa (2016).

of self and others. In their last consequence, these methods lead to an equanimous attitude towards all beings, which implies rejecting ingroup-outgroup thinking and giving up preferential attitutes even toward loved ones, and the like. Such radical impartiality presumably is not aspired to by all CCT participants.

Since compassion cultivation concists of a broad range of ingredients, additional themes emerge from a critical comparative analysis of individual elements. I have grouped the comparison as the following three paires of opposites: dialogic versus introspective, emotional versus dispassionate, and self-compassion as primary focus versus self-compassion as side-product. The oppositions should not be understood as hard barriers, but as tendencies of emphasis.

3.2.3. Dialogic versus Introspective

The first contrast pertains to the level of relational dynamics in compassion cultivation. Whereas CCT's dyadic exercises involve a high level of relational involvement in the form of dialogue and non-verbal communication with a physically present partner, the contemplative exercises of equalizing and exchange or *tonglen* internalize the relation to others and demand introspection and even isolation.

An important experiential part of the CCT group session are the eight exercises contributed by psychotherapists to the program. Most of these exercises are dyadic and include verbal and non-verbal communication. Goldin and Jazaieri reported that the partnered exercises were particularly favored and deemed impactful by CCT participants (Goldin and Jazaieri 2017, 240). Compassion trainees learn to attentively see and listen to others, as well as experience "being seen" and "being heard" (IM 71, 96). Traditional Buddhist practices generally lack this

type of improvised, dialogic interaction, even though one might argue that certain ritual elements such as the conferral of vows could be understood as dialogic. The lack of this type of creative dyadic practices in traditional settings suggests that "being seen" and "being heard" were not felt to be a lacuna in practitioners' lives, nor a practice conducive to spiritual progress. In contrast, the dialogic nature of *tonglen* happens first of all in the imagination of the meditator; its relational character has been internalized. Generally speaking, one can say that traditional Buddhist compassion cultivation relies more heavily on methods that demand the capacity to evoke the object of compassion in one's imagination rather than interacting with other trainees. This requires that the meditators are able to sustain introspection, control their thoughts and imagine the objects of compassion and their various forms of suffering. The relational dynamic becomes important only outside the formal sessions, when meditators have to transfer the transformed attitude to everyday life situations. As has been shown, Lojong literature gives focused instructions for this interactive part of compassion training in everyday life.

3.2.4. *Tonglen* in Contemporary Buddhism

Even though *tonglen* can be practiced in informal ways, in contemporary traditional Buddhist context there exist formal *tonglen* "liturgies," or practice texts. In CCT, *tonglen* is embedded in guided meditations, which are unknown in this form in traditional settings. To give an idea of a contemporary form of *tonglen* meditation among followers of the Kagyu (*bka' rgyud*) school of Tibetan Buddhism, I will briefly present a Lojong "liturgy," compiled by the nineteenth-century scholar Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (*'jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas*, 1813-1900). His formal Lojong practice consists of a set of recitations, contemplations and *tonglen.* These exemplify that in spite of the solitary character of contemplation, Lojong

practitioners engage imaginatively in multiple relationships, not only with the objects of compassion but also with the spiritual teachers and lineage fathers.

The following Lojong "ritual" is practiced in the traditional three-year retreat,[328] which is the standardized contemplative educational format designed by the polymath Jamgön Kongtrül, and its program includes a simple practice of Lojong, based on a commentary by the same author.[329] The formal practice of Lojong only comprises one or two months out of the three-year program, which indicate its comparatively minor importance. It also reflects the fact that Lojong is primarily considered an informal spiritual practice that is trained alongside all other practices. Each day of those two months, practitioners spend four sessions (Tib. *thun*) of three hours each practicing Lojong meditation. According to Kongtrül's commentary, a Lojong session contains the following seven elements: [1] the refuge prayer and the four immeasurables, expressing the basic Mahāyāna commitment to attain awakening for the sake of all sentient beings. It continues with the [2] *blo sbyong tshigs rkang brgyad ma* (*Eight Verses of Mind Training*) by Langri Thangpa (*glang ri thang pa,* 1054-1123), [3] the recitation describing the visualization of the root lama abiding on the meditator's head, symbolizing the essence of all lineage lamas, and radiating compassion; [4] the Lojong lineage prayer, *dad pa'i gdung sel* (*Curing the Longing of the Faithful*), by Kongtrül, [330] and [5] the following prayer to the lama:

---

[328] The three-year retreats with a comprehensive curriculum of a set number of practices are carried out mostly in the Kagyu and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The three-year retreat is a unique institutionalized educational system for educating Tibetan Buddhist clergy, created in the nineteenth century and still actively pursued today. The Lojong practice described here is practiced four times daily in retreat but is also practiced in less intensive ways outside of retreat.

[329] Jamgön Kongtrül, *theg pa chen po blo sbyong don bdun ma'i khrid yig blo dman 'jug bder bkod pa byang chub gzhung lam*, Dpal spungs dgon pa'i par khang. Translated into English by Ken McLeod (Jamgön Kongtrül and McLeod 1987).

[330] In *gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod,* Volume 4 (ཀ), 277-278. New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 1999. Enlarged reprint of the 1979 edition published by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche from prints from the dpal spungs xylographs. The colophon says it is an addition to the *Mind Training Commentary* by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye, translated as *The Path to Awakening.*

> Lama, great completely perfect spiritual friend! I pray give me your blessing that love, compassion and extraordinary *bodhicitta* may be born in my mind stream.[331]

This short prayer must be repeated a hundred or a thousand times, after which [6] the meditator recites and visualizes the lama descending from the head into the heart, where he/she remains in a sphere of light. At this point, the meditator begins a silent meditation, first shortly dwelling on ultimate *bodhicitta*, and then doing *tonglen*, which the Lojong commentaries describe as a meditation of *bodhicitta* rather than compassion. For this, meditators are instructed to first think of their mother, remember her kindness and consider all beings as mothers from previous lives. They visualize inhaling dark clouds that symbolize suffering and exhaling white light symbolizing positive qualities and happiness. These visualization instructions are very similar to the visualizations provided in the IM. The session ends with the recitation of the [7] *blo sbyong smon lam byang sems rgya mtsho'i 'jug ngogs* (*The Mind Training Prayer "Entrance to the Ocean of the Awakening Mind"*) . This final prayer is a verbal expression of the motions of giving and taking, focused on each of the six realms respectively, beginning with the hell realms:

> Sublime, powerful Chenrezig, buddhas and bodhisattvas! By the power of your perfect mind may the highest enlightenment mind arise in myself and the myriad beings that fill the universe.
>
> May the suffering of beings that are filled with hatred, and therefore experience the hot and cold hells, the causes of their suffering along with their consequences, dissolve into me. I give my loving mind and all the roots of virtue that result from freedom from hatred, to the innumerable beings that fill the universe. May the hells of hatred become empty and may all become Chenrezig of the Vajra family, and achieve supreme mirror-like wisdom. (*blo sbyong smon lam* 2001, 597-604)

The same structure is followed for all six realms. Along with the recitation, the meditators imagine taking (*len*) different types of sufferings and sending (*tong*) specific positive mental states. For example, the first verse describes the hell realms as experiences of extreme heat or

---

[331] Tib.: *bla ma yang dag pa yongs kyi dge ba'i bzhes gnyen chen pos bdag la byin gyis brlab tu gsol/ byams snying rje byang chub kyi sems khyad par can rgyud la skye bar mdzad du gsol/*. Ibid.

cold. Since they are caused by hatred, meditators *take* the suffering along with its cause, hatred, thereby alleviating the suffering of hell-beings. In return, they *send* loving-kindness and the absence of hatred, then rejoice in the happiness created for others.

The "liturgy" of this traditional Lojong practice exemplifies the ways in which traditional practice relies on prayer and contemplations in which relational structures are imagined rather than interactively exercised, in contrast to the interactive dialogical pedagogy of CCT. On the other hand, the traditional practice involves a greater variety of imagined relationships. First, it gives great importance to establishing a mental communication with the spiritual forefathers of the lineage. The devotion to spiritual teachers is viewed as an indispensable support for generating compassion. Secondly, Lojong practitioners imagine not only humans but beings of the six realms, thus establishing an awareness of the entire Buddhist cosmology, instead of fostering an anthropocentric worldview. In sum, one can conclude that *tonglen* practice aims at developing a rich net of internalized relationships with others, but in contrast to CCT, does not rely on modern ideas of dialogic exercises with partner practitioners. In this sense, traditional *tonglen* is more demanding in relying on the individual's intentions and is less dependent on external feed-back from others.

3.2.5. Empathic versus Dispassionate

In both Buddhist and secular compassion training we have distinguished various degrees of empathic involvement with the suffering of others as a method for connecting with one's inborn compassionate nature and for stimulating further cultivation of compassion. The method of arousing empathy and positive affects as a didactic method stands in constrast to a dispassionate understanding of conventional reality, including the dissatisfactory nature of

saṃsāra, impermance, no-self and emptiness, as described in the three *ālambana*s of compassion or the BCA's deconstructive didactics. One should also remember Sangye Gompa's *Public Explications* (MTGC 313-418) which develops a rationale for *tonglen* that does not depend on empathy for the suffering mother. While Buddhist approaches describe a progression that leads increasingly to a dispassionate approach, CCT, while aspiring to train people in embodying a compassionat attitude that does not depend on external stimulation, nevertheless makes heavily use of the power of emotions to touch participants and move them towards a transformation of mind. Therefore, I argue, CCT's methods are not analytical in the sense of traditional Buddhist analysis of the nature of reality, impermanence, suffering, or interdependence. Rather, CCT relies strongly on generating feelings of warmth and tenderness, evoked by recollecting specific situations with a loved one. This view is not necessarily shared by the developers of secular compassion training. Ozawa de Silva has described CBCT and CCT's pedagogy as analytical, derived from the Tibetan analytical meditation (*dpyad sgom*), as opposed to resting meditation (*'jog sgom*) (Lavelle 2017, 12, 102, Ozawa-de Silva 2015). However, this attribution is more misleading than clarifying, I believe, because a large percentage of the training techniques focuses on enhancing positive emotions rather than on analytical activities, which in a Buddhist context mainly refers to examining the nature of reality. A close reading of the pedagogical instructions, and a quantitative verb analysis of the IM indicates a clear preference for motivational and contemplative activities ("wish, feel, meditate, contemplate") over analytic methods ("analyze, examine, reflect, think").[332] The importance of emotions for embodied

[332] The following quantitative textual analysis shows the number of occurrences of the following terms in the IM. It shows that participants are not required to analyse, but to develop affects and aspirations:

wish	115	analyze, examine	0	contemplation/ contemplate	27
feel, feeling	300	reflect, reflection, reflective	32		
meditate/ meditation/ meditator	189	think	49		

knowledge is expressed by Jinpa when he explains in *Fearless Heart*, "We feel most alive when we are touched and moved by other people and the world around us, when we feel connected with others…" (Jinpa 2015, 115). While it can be argued that many Lojong and Lamrim instructions begin with the same approach, the analysis of Buddhist sources has shown that Buddhist instructions aim at establishing great compassion in the final end, that is, a state that transcends emotionality and is a general outlook on life based on an understanding of reality (*prajñā*) rather than a response to a specific sight of suffering. In the final stage, great compassion is radically impartial, and therefore dispassionate in the sense of being equanimous and universal.

3.2.6. Self-Compassion as Primary Focus versus Side-Product

CCT contains two weeks of training in self-compassion and self-kindness. It has already been pointed out that there exists a certain tension to the assumption that compassion is inherent in human nature if we must deliberatly generate it even towards ourselves. Buddhist traditions do not offer explicit practices for self-compassion. However, compassion for the self is constantly included in wishes for happiness and ultimate awakening. In the Tibetan tradition, several prayers begin with the formula "*bdag dang sems can thams cad*" ("I and all beings"), "*bdag dang ma 'gyur sems can thams cad*" ("I and all beings who have been my mothers"), which clearly expresses the inclusion of one's own benefit in all spiritual practice, as has been explained with the concept of the two benefits in Chapter II. One can assume that the idea of a person loving and caring for themselves (Tib. *rang la brste ba*) is taken for granted in Buddhist literature. The BCA I, 24 expresses this idea that humans are first of all concerned with their own welfare:

> For in the past they never,
> Even in their dreams,
> Wished something like this even for themselves.
> How could they do so for another's sake?[333]

Similarly, the 7th Dalai Lama's verse – "ordinary people's love for themselves cannot match even a fraction of your love for all beings"– assumes that love for themselves is naturally present (Kelzang Gyatso 1976, 307). An alternative approach to tracing Buddhist roots of self-compassion is Tsongkhapa's explanation that renunciation (*nges 'byung gi blo*) and *bodhicitta* (*sems bskyed*) are two mutually inclusive mental states, as one is the wish to gain freedom from suffering with respect to one's own self and the latter is the same wish with respect to others. (Ozawa-de Silva 2015, 136-139, Ozawa-de Silva and Negi 2013) The most explicit statement can be found in the work of the early Geluk teacher and senior student of Tsongkhapa, Tokden Jampel Gyatso, who explicitly states that in order to have compassion for others it is necessary to have it for oneself. (*thog mar mi la snying rje byed pa las rang la snying rje byed dgos par 'dug gsungs*) (Chenga Lodro Gyaltsen 2010, 41). However, in all these practices, self-compassion is cultivated simultaneously with compassion for others. Śāntideva's BCA even suggests that focusing on self-compassion alone is a cause of suffering.

> All the misery the world contains
> Has come through wanting happiness for oneself. (BCA VIII, 129)[334]

We have seen in the previous three chapters that Śāntideva tends to take the most radical position in compassion cultivation. Even so, it would be farfetched to claim that Buddhist literature contains instructions on cultivating self-compassion. This is however what Kristin Neff asserts

---

[333] BCA I, 24 (Min 156,27-157,1): *teṣām eva ca sattvānāṃ svārthe 'py eṣa manorathaḥ | notpannapūrvaḥ svapne 'pi parārthe saṃbhavaḥ kutaḥ* || Tib. (TG dbu ma *la* 3a3) : *sems can de dag nyid la sngon // rang gi don du 'di 'gra'i sems // rmi lam du yang ma rmis na // gzhan gyi don du ga la skye* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 34).

[334] BCA VIII, 129 (Min 203, 20-21) *ye kecid duḥkhitā loke sarve te svasukhecchayā | ye kecit sukhitā loke sarve te 'nyasukhecchayā* (TG dbu ma *la* 28b3): *'jig rten bde ba ji snyed pa // de kun gzhan bde 'dod las byung // 'jig rten sdug bsngal ji snyed pa // de kun rang bde 'dod las byung* // Transl. Padmakara (2006, 127).

when she introduces the psychological category of self-compassion as an "important Buddhist concept" (2003, 223). Neff has popularized self-compassion in North America as a distinct construct of Western psychology; she designed it as a new field of scientific research with its own self-compassion scale and developed a related training program called "Mindful Self-Compassion" (MSC) (Neff 2003, 2005, 2011, Neff and Germer 2017). According to her explanations, self-compassion consists of three principal facets, namely kindness, connectedness, and mindfulness, and is therefore distinct from selfishness, self-indulgence or narcissism. While the therapy Neff developed might yield promising results, from a Buddhist studies perspective, it is inaccurate to claim that there might be a Buddhist practice with the explicit focus of training self-compassion. CCT has chosen a middle way by including self-compassion as a response to the needs of its participants as a preparatory step to developing compassion for others, but without treating it as a separate, individual practice. Despite the lack of Buddhist scriptural sources, the idea that there might be a Buddhist practice of self-compassion is gaining momentum. For instance, in the Buddhist magazine *Lion's Roar, Buddhist Wisdom for Our Time* (3/2017), psychologist Therese Jacobs Stewart re-interprets the Tibetan Lojong slogans, claiming that one begins with the practice of self-compassion. Similarly, in *Mind, Brain and the Path to Happiness: A Guide to Buddhist Mind Training and the Neuroscience of Meditation,* Dusana Dorjee (2014), who self-identifies as an academic and a practitioner in a Buddhist tradition discusses the *Buddhist* concept of self-compassion. These examples show that the term and concept is slowly infiltrating contemporary North-American understanding of Buddhism.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the Compassion Cultivation Training of CCARE developed at Stanford University as it emerged at a specific point in history and within its own science-dominated secular culture. CCT, serving as a prototype for secular compassion training, is embedded and defined by its scientific, psychotherapeutic, secular context. Beginning in the early 2000s, the scientific exploration of positive mental states, such as empathy, compassion and altruism has led to a paradigm shift in the conception of compassion: Previously, compassion was associated mainly with religion and moral ethics, since all major religions teach compassion as one of their core values. In this view, compassion is often associated with moral obligation, sacrifice and heroism. Recently, however, by treating compassion as an object of scientific research, it has been accepted as a biological, psychological, and natural aspect of human nature. This paradigm shift sparked a hitherto unknown interest in compassion and a demand for training compassion without appealing to religious structures.

CCT and other secular compassion training programs emerged as a response to this new opening and perceived need for transforming the mind outside religious settings. The pedagogy of CCT, although self-identifying as secular and strictly non-denominational, derives its formal meditations from Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The close analysis in this chapter has shown that CCT derives not only its formal practice from Buddhist sources, but echoes Lojong theory and practice in every step of its pedagogical program. This raises the question of what it means to secularize Buddhist meditation practices. Does secularization mean eliminating Buddhist terminology, amending concepts that imply transcendence, but otherwise implying a Buddhist worldview? The next chapter will explore the meaning of secularization and evaluate criticisms as to its ethical soundness.

Despite the many similarities that the comparison of compassion practice in the two contexts, secular and traditional Lojong and Lamrim, revealed, it has also becomes evident that their major difference lies in their conceptual frameworks of their respective cultures which determines the aim and scope of the training. While Buddhist compassion cultivation constitutes an essential part of the bodhisattva path to buddhahood, secular compassion is being trained with much more modest goals. While bodhisattvas envision universal compassion, aiming at complete impartiality, secular training aims at simply connecting and reviving the natural propensity of humans for compassion, loving-kindness and prosocial attitudes. CCT is characterised by its reliance on science, individualism, psycho-therapeutic self-cultivation, and the felt need to foster compassion to counteract hostility, both self-directed or societal. The compassion trainees within this culture rely on science to give them confidence in the training; they train compassion and self-compassion as ways to improve their personal and professional lives, employing a variety of pedagogical methods of self-cultivation. They are pursuing, in Charles Taylor's words (1989, 159–60), "the ideal of a human agent who is able to remake himself by methodical and disciplined action."

VI. Concluding Reflections

This thesis combines two complementary lines of analysis: It is an analytic comparative study in the field of cross-cultural comparative religious studies. It is also a case study in the field of intellectual history. Regarding the first, I have presented a comparison of traditional Buddhist and secular compassion cultivation. The comparison encompassed three aspects, namely the concepts, the contexts and the pedagogies of compassion. To clarify the basic concepts, I started by analysing the underlying philosophical and psychological foundations provided by the respective approaches. This comparison revealed a convergence in the idea of a natural and inborn potential for compassion in humans, but a divergence in the conceptualization of cultivated and perfected forms of compassion. Whereas Buddhist thinkers developed elaborate schemes of identifying ordinary and extra-ordinary levels of compassion, the secular context limits itself to ordinary compassion.

I then contextualized the two pedagogies in their surrounding compassion cultures. The Mahāyāna Buddhist compassion culture is defined by Buddhist cosmology of the six realms, a moral philosophy based on karma, and the didactics of the bodhisattva path. The secular compassion culture is grounded in a scientific worldview, an individually designed pursuit of human flourishing, liberal consumerism, and, to a degree, by a sense of an urgent need for secular ethics to foster and preserve world peace.

The comparison of the two pedagogies of compassion training focused on the contemplative technique of *tonglen.* This part of the study necessitated the second line of analysis from the perspective of intellectual history. Since *tonglen* and its antecedents in Indian literature present a wide range of contemplative practices, it was necessary to examine the transformative processes that gave rise to a variety of techniques of compassion cultivation that

are all generally understood as meditations of equalizing and exchange. I therefore surveyed the evolution of the notions of equality/equalizing and exchange from early Mahāyāna scripture from the beginning of the common era up to the Tibetan commentarial literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This historical survey revealed the astonishing innovative, creative impetus that Tibetan scholar-meditators have brought to the field. They transformed a demanding meditation of advanced bodhisattvas into a contemplation accessible to beginner practitioners. To wit, they transformed a compassion cultivation that demands an understanding of no-self and emptiness into a much more accessible meditation of giving and taking (*tonglen*) which can be practiced without having deconstructed the dichotomy of dualistic perception. Because of these transformations at the hand of Tibetan scholars, I have argued that the most recent secularization of Buddhist compassion cultivation techniques is not a dramatic break, or a degeneration of sophisticated Buddhist philosophy and practice, but is, instead a continuation of the transformative process towards greater accessibility that had been initiated in Tibet. In this sense, the Tibetan innovations paved the way for the secularization of compassion training in North America.

Based on the findings of this historico-textual analysis, I returned to the comparison of compassion training in CCT with its Buddhist roots. This analysis revealed that, more than the mere technique of *tonglen*, CCT pedagogy is infused with Buddhist ideas at every step of the program. Nevertheless, it has become clear that secular training is distinct from Buddhist didactics in that it emphasises personal development and is much less ambitious in its goal. In contrast, Buddhist compassion cultivation is interwoven with the bodhisattva path leading up to complete and perfect awakening, which will manifest the great compassion of a buddha, among other qualities.

Having accomplished this complex comparison, what remains to be explored are fundamental questions regarding the meaning and implications of secularizing traditional Buddhist practices for an audience in twenty-first century North America. In the following, I will examine the most dominant criticisms of this type of secularization, and offer, based on the findings of this study, a more optimistic interpretation of this novel phenomenon of secularization. I shall start with a general reflection on what it means to secularize traditional Buddhist compassion practices. Secondly, I will discuss various critiques of the secularization project and offer a response in defense of secularized compassion training. Thirdly, I will conclude by suggesting questions to be explored by future research in the field.

1. The Meaning of Secularization

What does it mean to secularize Buddhist compassion training? Discussions about the meaning of the secular have multiplied in recent years, especially since Charles Taylor's influential *A Secular Age* in which he describes three types of secularity, namely [1] the expulsion of religion from the sphere of public life, that is, the economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational spheres of activity; [2] secondly, the decline of religious belief and practice, and [3] thirdly the understanding of the belief in God as a free personal choice, "one human possibility among others" (Taylor 2007, 1-3). Particularly the third variant illustrates the situation in which secular compassion training has arisen. Taylor calls it the "immanent frame" which he describes as a constructed social space, in which "instrumental rationality is a key value and time is pervasively secular" (Taylor 2007, 542). Living in the immanent frame implies relying on empirical reason, while religious belief becomes optional. In CCT, religious belief is optional; the program is designed to be compatible with all religious

affiliations, as well as atheism and agnosticism. “Secular” in the context of compassion training refers not to an exclusion or rejection of religion, but to an all-inclusive attitude towards religion. This all-inclusive stance is precisely the model of secularism that the Dalai Lama sees as the foundation of his secular ethics. In *Beyond Religion*, he references the Indian definition of a secular state as a space that, at least in theory, impartially allows all religions free expression (Dalai Lama 2011, 8). Religious belief is not excluded in CCT but relegated to the private sphere of the individual, as compassion is associated with a naturalistic worldview based on rationality and scientific empiricism rather than religious or moral obligation. The motives for secularizing compassion training did not emerge from a disenchantment with magical elements of religion, but rather from the wish to make the training available for the largest possible audience. Taylor argues that the creation of secular spaces incorporates explicit and tacit ideas of the religious culture in opposition to which it emerges (2007, 124, 275). The secularities that the West has brought forth are imbued with values of European and American Christianity. Numerous tacitly accepted values influence “secular” ideas about a fruitful, successful life, the value of work, mental health, the role of the individual in society, etc. Similarly, one would like to ask whether the secularity of CCT is imbued by the Buddhist culture from which it emerged. Is it, to borrow David McMahan’s term, a phenomenon of post-Buddhist secularity, just as the West has produced post-Christian secularities (2012, 141)? The comparative analysis of CCT with Buddhist antecedents has shown that, while using secular language, CCT does indeed express a worldview that is strongly influenced by Buddhist thought. This starts by the multifaceted definition of the construct compassion and includes numerous didactic elements for its training. Most important, however, is the implicit view that cultivating universal, impartial compassion is not only possible but an integral part of actualizing our human potential. Caring for others is

what makes us human and is indispensable for finding fulfillment and meaning in life. In a Buddhist context, this is expressed with the two benefits of striving for awakening for oneself and others; in CCT, this holistic view is expressed with the idea that scientific research of compassion should benefit the society as a whole. The CCARE founder's introduction also presents compassion as a necessity for our species to survive, echoing the words of the Dalai Lama (IM, 2).

The comparative analysis has shown that the IM communicates in large part Buddhist didactic methods without using Buddhist terminology (except for the term *tonglen*). However, it uses these methods stripping them from the Buddhism-specific conceptual frame that is constituted by the elements of no-self, emptiness, buddha-nature, buddhahood, karma, awakening, and more. As stated before, the IM does not deny these though, nor does it stand in conflict to the idea of divine inspiration or blessing for the training. Secularizing Buddhist compassion cultivation in the case of CCT thus refers to the result of two processes. The first is the removal of Buddhist terminology and Buddhist concepts to the degree that the training may stand without conflict to currently accepted scientific ideas, while keeping intact as much as possible the didactic methods developed over centuries in Buddhist traditions, going back even to the beginning of the first millennium. The second process is that of hybridizing: The training elements derived from sources other than Buddhism such as the psychotherapeutic and dyadic exercises, or the training in self-compassion, are inserted for the purpose of making the training "workable" for Western audiences. They facilitate access and prepare participants for a successful training. In view of their complementary and preparatory functions, and the importance of Buddhism-derived concepts of universal compassion and compassion didactics,

secular compassion training should indeed be considered a phenomenon of post-Buddhist secularity.

2. Evaluating the Secularization of Buddhist Contemplative Practices

2.1. Various Critiques of Secularized Buddhist Practices

Secular compassion training has received less criticism than its popular predecessor, mindfulness training. However, some of the various critiques are of relevance here and deserve to be discussed. The secularization of Buddhist practices has been criticized variously as canonically, ethically and socio-culturally unsound, according to a systematization by Ann Gleig.[335] "Canonically unsound" refers to the false presentation of ideas as Buddhist although they have no authentic root in the Buddhist canons, or are a reduction thereof. In this view, secularized programs lack the depth and long-term perspective implicit in Buddhist self-cultivation. Robert Sharf points out that Buddhist practices are built on different models of mental health than those pursued by Western audiences, a fact which is not always clearly communicated (Sharf 2015). Taking the example of mental distress and depression, Sharf argues that early Buddhist *sūtra*s depict suffering as an inevitable ingredient of being alive, positing that "the only genuine remedy to suffering is escape from *saṃsāra* (the phenomenal world) altogether, and escape requires, among other things, abandoning hope that happiness in this world is possible"(2015, 200). This type of hopelessness, which in Buddhism represents a state of spiritual maturity, is regarded as a form of depression in present day American culture. Current mainstream media prefers to see spiritual practice as a "science of happiness." While

[335] Compson cites the research of Ann Gleig (*Enlightenment after the enlightenment: American Buddhism after modernity* (2018, forthcoming) in (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017).

Sharf addresses specifically popular mindfulness, the argument holds true for compassion training. We have seen that Buddhist thinkers such as Śāntideva acknowledge that suffering can serve as a catalyst for spiritual practice. Therefore, Buddhist contemplative practice does not always aim at soothing short-term suffering when this pain serves eradicating the causes for long-term suffering. Western models of mental health however tend to see distress and depression as undesirable mental states that must be remedied. Secular compassion training too is vulnerable to this criticism as it runs the risk of being used to pacify short-term forms of suffering instead of using them as catalysts for a more profound transformation.

The "ethically unsound" critique is a conglomeration of arguments disapproving of the claim to universality of Buddhism-derived secular practices. The main argument posits that select aspects of Buddhist doctrine such as mindfulness or compassion are being promoted as the universal essence of Buddhism applicable to people of all backgrounds. In addition, they are presented as secular by simply eliminating all Buddhist terminology (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017, 32). According to Candy Gunther Brown, concealing the true source of these ideas is a stealth move to "sneak Buddhist value systems of compassion and empathy" into areas of Western society (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017, 45-85), postulating them as universal truths and values needed by all of society. Moreover, such discourse "condescends to racial and ethnic others as having unenlightened cultural practices" that should be replaced or improved upon by Buddhist techniques. Framing secularized Buddhist practices as scientifically proven also gives false legitimacy to secular programs, according to Jane Compson. In her view, "scientism has its roots in modernism and describes the view that the most authoritative and valid forms of knowledge are scientific and that other ways of knowing (religious, for example) are inferior and incomplete." In the scientific world view, "religious practices and beliefs remain

conditional until granted the imprimatur of empirical verification" (Compson 2017, 33; citing P. Harrison 2006). These various points of contention may apply to compassion training programs, as they are complicit in collaborating with science for the sake of promoting and validating their practices. Because of the power that scientific discourse carries in today' world, there is the strong risk that it will dominate the future development of compassion training. It is possible that science will dictate the public's interest in compassion, determine how it is measured, and drive the Buddhist roots of compassion into invisibility. Scientism is all the more ethically questionable as researchers of compassion training have admitted that they cannot claim evidence for the health benefits of compassion training in every single study (Mascaro, Negi, and Raison 2017).

A third set of critiques argues that secular programs are "socio-culturally unsound" because they are the product of a selective appropriation and commodification of Buddhist contemplative practices for the sole purpose of satisfying the widespread consumerism of Western liberal, capitalist societies. In mainstream media the capitalism-critique has been dubbed "McMindfulness," a term coined by Buddhist psychotherapist Miles Neale to describe "a kind of compartmentalized, secularized, watered-down version of mindfulness, […] a meditation for the masses, drive-through style, stripped of its essential ingredients, prepackaged and neatly stocked on the shelves of the commercial self-help supermarkets"[336] While the term "McCompassion" has not yet been coined, compassion training programs are also sold as a commodity for several hundred dollars, and are sometimes marketed as a remedy for one's own distress instead of focusing on *others'* suffering and the acquisition of means to alleviate *their* distress. The authors

[336] Miles Neale, "McMindfulness and Frozen Yoga: Rediscovering the Essential Teachings of Ethics and Wisdom," 2011, https://www.lionsroar.com/frozen-yoga-and-mcmindfulness-miles-neale-on-the-mainstreaming-of-contemplative-religious-practices/, accessed June 10, 2017.

of CCT advertise for compassion by calling it "the best-kept secret for happiness"(Seppälä 2012). Commodifying Buddhist ideas for self-centred purposes entails tailoring them for the individualistic consumer orientation of Western capitalist societies instead of eradicating egocentrism, the basic root of suffering.[337]

2.2. Response to the Critiques

Are these three sets of critique applicable to secular compassion training, and particularly to CCT? For the first two critiques, I have answered in the affirmative above. CCT does indeed involve aspects of reductionism, universalism, and scientism. However, being a secular program, one might argue that it has no claim to authenticity in a Buddhist sense of transmission, and that its validity comes from the fact that "it works." The critique that CCT does not sufficiently explicate in detail to its participants the extent of Buddhist thought beneath its appearance of scientific secularity is certainly valid. The present study provides the necessary comparative analysis for participants of compassion training to acquire a clear theoretical understanding of the origins of various didactic methods.

The third critique of being socio-culturally unsound deserves a more extensive response. The reproach of being a selective appropriation assumes that Buddhism is treated like a passive resource which is being exploited by Western agents for the purpose of commodification and commercialization. This view is reminiscent of orientalist views of the passive Asian object versus the active Western agent and is certainly mistaken. To correctly understand the

[337] Critics of the "socio-culturally unsound" argument are Jane Compson; Ronald Purser, David Roy, Michael Stone, Bhikkhu Bodhi, among others. Compson also includes a critique of maintaining an unwholesome status quo: "Mindfulness training has wide appeal because it has become a trendy method for subduing employee unrest, promoting a tacit acceptance of the status quo, and as an instrumental tool for keeping attention focused on institutional goals" (Monteiro, Compson, and Musten 2017, 33).

secularization of compassion cultivation, it is important to note that it is not a selective appropriation at the hands of foreign exploiters, but, as has been shown, is a process initiated by representatives of Buddhist traditions. The authors of the two most prominent compassion training programs are both renowned Tibetan scholars. The Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) was developed by Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Ph.D., the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) was developed by Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., both scholars (*dge shes*) trained in the Tibetan Gelug (*dge lugs*) tradition. The most important agent in the secularization project is probably the Dalai Lama himself. He has financially contributed to the Stanford program, regularly participates in conferences, is co-founder of the Mind and Life Dialogues, and has, over the years, developed his secular ethics, with which he promotes compassion as a human, not a religious quality. In countless communications he attempts to educate the world in understanding compassion as the core of human nature.[338] It is clear then that the secular compassion training scene has been created by representatives of Buddhist traditions with concrete educational or missionary goals in mind.

Secondly, this study has shown the perpetual ability for transformation of ideas in the history of Buddhist thought. It is not necessary to repeat this argument, since at the beginning of this chapter I provided a concluding summary of various developments of compassion cultivation in Mahāyāna literature, with the remarkable example of the transformation of the advanced bodhisattva practice of equalizing and exchange to the novices' *tonglen* in Lojong and Lamrim. As I have argued in Chapter IV, the transformation of an advanced meditation to a

[338] Secular ethics is built on the same philosophical pillars as CCT, namely, the recognition of, combined with the demand to educate people in understanding the shared human propensity for suffering, the wish for happiness, and the interdependence among all beings.

beginner's meditation involuntarily paved the way to the possibility of secularizing this meditation. Although I am not claiming that the secularization of Buddhist practice is the only logical continuation in the continual transformation of Buddhist thought, it is certainy one of the ways in which it adapts to the needs of its host culture in North America. By stepping outside the context of transmission lineages, secularized compassion training is not part of Buddhist traditions. However, it is one of many forms in which Buddhist thought evolves, and it might succeed in creating a new, distinctively secular compassion culture in North America. I have therefore argued that the recent transformation of *tonglen* in the context of secular compassion training cannot be seen as a radical break from its antecedents but as a continuation of the progressive transformation of Buddhist practice throughout the centuries.

Thirdly, this study has demonstrated how a religious concept changes when science gets involved. The secularization of Buddhist contemplative practices for the cultivation of compassion was stimulated by neuroscientific findings about the effects of meditation on the brain, and in particular the cultivation of compassion by expert meditators, as neuroscientists Lutz and Davidson showed with their ground-breaking research. By connecting to the scientific discourse of compassion being a natural, psychological category, compassion is being re-interpreted and established as the core of human nature rather than a religious or Buddhist ethical imperative. It is ascertained as a *sui generis* universal quality of every human being. However, it is also important to note that even though it is established as a natural phenomenon, the fact that the program of CCT and other secular compassion trainings derive their didactic methods from Buddhist traditions establishes Buddhism as the source that holds the key to unlocking universal truths of human nature. The Dalai Lama promotes the idea of a universalizable core of Buddhism when he "emphasize[s] more and more the importance of a secular, non-Buddhist approach to

contemplative practice that might draw deeply from Buddhism's experience but would be profoundly universal" (Gates and Nisker 2008, 40). Thus, the implicit message in the secularization project is an advertisement for Buddhism, by which the authors of secular programs affirm that the combination of Buddhism and science is desirable and fruitful, and more specifically, that one can draw on Buddhist didactic methodology to access profound, universal, and scientifically verifiable truths.

3. Future Research

The emergence of hybridized, secularized compassion cultivation programs raises important issues, not all of which could be covered in this thesis. The rising popularity of secular compassion training in mainstream American culture starts to show influences on traditional presentations of compassion within Mahāyāna Buddhism in America, as teachers and representatives of Buddhist traditions regularly refer to scientifically measurable health benefits as a motivating advertisement for encouraging meditation. Or they present self-compassion as a Buddhist practice, to name just a few loopback effects. Moreover, members of Buddhist clergy turn to secular programs to become certified MBSR or CCT teachers. Presumably, they turn to these as means of acquiring professional certification in order to work as chaplains or related professions, but their training will most likely also influence their teaching and activities in Dharma centers, as representatives of their respective Buddhist traditions. The full impact of these developments will only manifest with time. Future research will have to explore the transformations that Buddhist thought and practice undergo, not only in America, but also worldwide.

Throughout their history, Buddhist traditions have had to deal with the tension between innovation and preservation. In order to adapt to new sensibilities and disseminate Buddhist thought and practice, staying relevant to novice and lay practitioners, while preserving what was understood as core teachings, one can observe that Buddhist traditions throughout history have developed what one might call a "two-track approach." Traditionally, the conservative forms of the tradition are preserved in the monastic institutions, which maintain the monastic code (Vinaya), the scholastic by means of extensive philosophical study and the yogic traditions through prolonged meditation retreats, while various popular practices are being carried out by the laity called the householders in Tibetan (*khyim pa*).[339] These lay traditions may take very different forms in Tibet, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc., but a common feature is that they all address worldly concerns, such as good health, prosperity and long life. In this sense, secular Buddhism with its emphasis on this life's well-being can be understood as a householder version of Buddhism in America, and secular compassion training may well contribute to establishing American Buddhism's own particular features.

In the history of Tibetan Buddhism, the two-track approach has been recommended by Gendun Choepel (1903-1951), one of the earliest Tibetan scholars that took the challenge of a science-Buddhism dialogue seriously. He advised his contemporaries not to be gullible to scientism, but not to reject science either. He admonished to adopt a wider perspective: "Tibetan thinkers should strive for means to ensure the continuation of the Buddha's teachings hand in hand with the ways of the new discipline called science" (Jinpa 2003, 75, 2010). In the same line, David McMahan identifies the two track-approach as the solution that several contemporary

[339] These categories cannot be understood as rigidly defined groups. The two-track approach refers to two types of engagement in spiritual practice. Traditionally, Buddhist tradition associated them with the monastic clergy on the one hand and the householder-lay practitioners on the other. The reality is, of course, more complex.

teachers have chosen in North America, notably Chögyam Trungpa and Tongey Mingyur Rinpoche (McMahan 2012). The foremost representative of an open-minded approach is certainly the Dalai Lama, who advances the transmission of traditional Buddhist philosophy and ritual in Tibetan exile in all their sophistication and complexity, while being one of the main dialogue partners in the Buddhism-science dialogue. In the latter function, he enthusiastically promotes secularized forms of Buddhist ethics, giving the classical ideal of compassion and loving-kindness a distinctively modern this-worldly orientation of life.

The findings of this study suggest that to avoid a reductionist assimilation of the more demanding and complex aspects of Buddhist compassion cultivation it is important to keep the two tracks in a power-balance, resisting the draw towards popular interpretations at the expense of the more radical interpretations of Buddhist thinkers like Śāntideva. With this study I have shed some light on the tensions between innovation and preservation which has stimulated transformative processes of Buddhist compassion cultivation in the past. Future research will have to explore how these tensions are negotiated in current times.

Glossary

Phonetic Transliteration	Wylie Transliteration (expanded name)	Life dates
Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso	tA la'i bla ma Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho	b. 1936
Chekawa	'chad kha ba (ye shes rdo rje)	(1101–75)
Drakpa Gyaltsen	grags pa rgyal mtshan	(1147–1216)
Drikung Kagyu	'bri kung bka' rgyud	
Dromtön	'brom ston (rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas)	1005-1064
Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse	rdzong gsar 'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse	1961-
Gampopa	sgam po pa (bsod nams rin chen dvag pol lha rje)	1079-1153
Jamgön Kongtrül	'jam mgon kong sprul (blo gros mtha' yas)	1813-1899
Jampel Gyatso	'jam dpal rgya mtsho	1356-1428
Kagyu	bka' rgyud	
Kawa Paltsek	ska ba dPal brtsegs	8th century
Kelzang Gyatso (7th Dalai Lama)	bskal bzang rgya mtsho	1708 -1757
Könchok Gyaltsen	dkon mchog rgyal mtshan	1388-1469
Künsang Palden	kun bzang dpal ldan	1872-1943
Langri Thangpa	(dge bshes) glang ri thang pa	1054-1123
Loden Sherab	blo ldan shes rab	1059–1109
Pabonka	pha phong kha (byams pa bstan 'dzin 'phrin las)	1878-91
Potowa	po to ba (rin chen gsal)	1027-1105
Rinchen Pal	(lho pa kun mkhyen) Rin chen dpal	12th/13th century
Rinchen Sangpo	rin chen bzang po	958–1055

Sakya	sa skya	
Sakya Paṇḍita	sa skya paNDita	1182-1251
Sangyé Gompa	sangs rgyas sgom pa	1179-1250
Se Chilbu	se spyil phu (ba)	d.1189
Śākya Lodrö	shA kya blo gros	11th century
Shönu Gyalchok	gzhon nu rgyal mchog	15th century
Sönam Tsemo	bsod nams rtse mo	1142-1182
(Gyalsé Ngulchu) Thokmé Sangpo	(rgyal sras ngul chu) thogs med bzang po	1295-1369
Tokden Jampel Gyatso	rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho	1356-1428
Tsongkhapa	tsong kha pa (blo bzang grags pa)	1357-1419
Thupten Chökyi Drakpa	thub bstan chos kyi grags pa	1823-1905
Wangchuk Dorjé	dbang phyug rdo rje	1556-1601/1603

References

Sources in Sanskrit Language

Asaṅga. 1950. *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*. Edited by E.H. Johnston. Patna: Bihar Research Society, Museum Buildings.

Asaṅga. 2007. *Abhidharmasamuccaya (Compendium of Higher Teachings)*. Edited by Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon.

Asaṅga, and Nalinaksa Dutt. 1966. *Bodhisattvabhūmi: Being the 15th Section of Asaṅgapāda's Yogacārabhūmi*. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute.

Atīśa Dīpaṃkāra. *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭamadhyamakopadeśa (dbu ma'i man ngag rin po che'i za ma tog kha phye ba)*. Toh 3930. Dege TG dbu ma *ki*, folios 96b1–116b7.

Bodhisattvaprātimokṣasūtra, 1931. Translated by Nalinaksa Dutta. *The Bodhisattvaprātimokṣasūtra*: Buddhist Himalaya: A Journal of Nagarjuna Institute of Exact Methods. Vol. VII, 2, 259-286.

Candrakīrti, ed. 2005. *Madhyamakavataraḥ*. Edited by Tashi Tsering and Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies.

Dharmarakṣita. 1994-2008. *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāraṣaṭtriṃśatpiṇḍārtha (byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i don sum cu rtsa drug bsdus pa),* . Vol. 62. Peking No. 5280, vol. 100. TG (dpe bsdur ma): krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang.

Haribhadra, and U. Wogihara. 1932-35. "Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā (Abhisamyālaṃkārālokā Prajñāpāramitāvyākhyā)." In *The Work of Haribhadra*, edited by U. Wogihara. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko.

Kamalaśīla, and Vimalamitra. 1977. *The Five Bhāvanākrama Of Kamalaśīla and Vimalamitra: a Collection of Texts on the Nature and Practice of Buddhist Contemplative Realisation.* . Gangtok: Gonpo Tsheten.

Nāgārjuna, and Michael Hahn. 1982. *Nāgārjuna's Ratnāvalī. Vol. 1, The Basic Texts (Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese)*. Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.

Śāntideva, and Minayeff. 1889. "Bodhicaryāvatāra." In *Zapiski Vostočnago Otdeleniya Imp. Russkago Arxeologičeskago Občšestva (Transactions of the Oriental Section of the Royal Russian Archeological Society)*, edited by Ivan Pavlovich Minayeff, 153-228. St. Petersbourg.

Śāntideva and Vaidya, P.L. 1999. *Śikṣāsamuccaya of Śāntideva*, *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts no. 11*. Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute Reprint, 1960.

Vasubandhu and Pradhan, Prahlad. 1967. *Abhidharma-koshabhāṣyaṃ of Vasubandhu*. Edited by Prahlad Pradhan. Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, TSWS.

Sources in Tibetan Language

Ākāśagarbha Sūtra. Toh 260, Degé KG, vol. 66, mdo sde *za*, folios 264.a–283.b.

Asaṅga (thog med). *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos rnam par bzad pa (Ratnagotravibhāga)*. Translated by Sajjana and blo ldan śes rab. TG sems tsam *phi*.

Asaṅga (thogs med). *theg pa chen po mdo sde'i rgyan gyi bshad pa*. TG sems tsam *phi*

Asaṅga (thogs med). 1994-2008. "rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las byang chub sems dpa'i sa'i rnam par bshad pa (Bodhisattvabhūmi)." In *TG (dpe bsdur ma)*. Pe cin: krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang.

blo sbyong smon lam byang sems rgya mtsho'i 'jug ngogs. 2001. Edited by sherab gyaltsen. Vol. 1, *kaM tshang chos spyod sogs kha ton gces btus*. Delhi.

Buddhagupta (sangs rgyas gsang ba). 1994-2008. "tshad med bzhi'i rgya cher 'grel pa." In *TG (dpe bsdur ma)*, TBRC W1PD95844. 64: 92-99. Pe cin: krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang

Buddhagupta (sangs rgyas gsang ba). 2016. "An Extensive Commentary on the Four Immeasurables." Lotsawa House, accessed July 1, 2018. http://www.lotsawahouse.org/indian-masters/buddhagupta/four-immeasurables-commentary.

bzang spyod smon lam gyi rgyal po (Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna). Toh 1095, gzungs 'du *waṃ* 262b5-266a3, P 716, rgyud *ya* 262a2-271b4, P 1038 'dul ba *phe* 296b1-299a7, and P 5924, ngo mthar bstan bcos *mo* 288b6-292a7.

Candrakīrti (zla ba grags pa). 1994-2008. *dbu ma la 'jug pa*. Vol. 60, *TG (dpe bsdur ma)*. Pe cin: krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang.

Chenga Lodro Gyaltsen. 2010. *Biography of Tokden Jampel Gyatso*, *Collected Works of Chenga Lodro Gyaltsen*. Lhasa: ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrigs khang.

Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (dvags po bkra shis rnam rgyal). 2019. *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*. Translated by Elizabeth M. Callahan. First edition. ed, *The Tsadra Foundation Series*: Shambhala Publications.

Drakpa Dhondup (grags pa don grub). 2009. *byang chub lam sgron gyi 'grel ba mar gyi nying khu*. Zi ling: mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Jamgön Kongtrül. 2002. "theg pa chen po blo sbyong don bdun ma'i khrid yig blo dman 'jug bder bkod pa byang chub gzhung lam." In *rgya chen bka' mdzod*, 5: 701-745. New Delhi: Shechen.

Jamgön Kongtrül. 2008. "blo sbyong don bdun ma'i khrid yig byang chub gzhung lam " In *lam rim dang blo sbyong nyams len gces btus*, 197-245. Kathmandu: Rigpe Dorje Publications.

Kelzang Gyatso. 1976. *'phags pa thugs rje chen po la bstod cing gsol ba 'debs pa phan bde'i char 'bebs (A Hym to Great Compassionate One Bring Rains of Benefit and Happiness)* Vol. 2, *Collected Works of Seventh Dalai Lama*. Gangtok: Dhardo Rinpoche.

Pabonka. 2009. "jam mgon bla ma tsong kha pas lam gtso rnam gsum/ pha phong kha pa byams pa bstan 'dzin 'phrin las." In *rgyun mkho'i bstod smon khag gi 'grel ba phyogs sgrig*, 33-102. Lha sa: ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang.

Prajñākaramati (shes rab 'byung gnas blo gros). 1902-14. *Bodhicaryāvatāra-Pañjikā (byang chub kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i dka' 'grel)*. Edited by Louis de La Vallée-Poussin. Commentary on the Difficult Points of The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life. Commentary on Chapters 1-9 ed. Culcatta: Bibliotheca Indica. P5273. ACIP TD3872. TG dbu ma *la,* 41b1-288a7.

Rinchen Pal. 1995. *byang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i zin bris 'jam dpal zhal lung*. Delhi: dpal ldan sa skya'i gsung rab.

Sakya Paṇḍita. 1992. *sdom gsum rab dbye'i bstan bcos. sa pan kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*. Vol. 3. Lhasa: bod ljongs bod yig dpe mying dpe skrun khang.

Śāntideva (zhi ba lha). *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*. Translated by Sumatikīrti and Blo ldan śes rab (11th-12th Century A.D.). Toh 3871, TG dbu ma *la*, 1b1-40a7.

sdong po bkod pa (Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra). Chapter 44 of the Avataṃsaka, Toh 44. Degé KG vols. 37 and 38, phal chen *ga-a*, folios ga 274.b–363.a.

Shönu Gyalchok, and Könchog Gyaltsen, eds. 2004. *theg pa chen po blo sbyong brgya rtsa*. Edited by Thupten Jinpa. Vol. 1, *bod kyi gtsug lag gces btus*. New Delhi: Institute of Tibetan Classics.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Patrick Gaffney, and Andrew Harvey. 1992. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. San Francisco: Harper.

Thokmé Sangpo. 2004. "rgyal sras lag len." In *rgyal sras lag len rtsa ’grel* edited by mkhan po rdo rje, 1-11. zhang khang: zhang khang then mA dpe skrun khang.

Thokmé Sangpo. 2006. "byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa’i 'grel pa legs par bshad pa’i rgya mtsho [Ocean of Excellent Advice]." In *rgyal sras kyi spyod pa la 'jug pa'i chos skor*, edited by Thupten Jinpa, 9-188. Delhi: Institute of Tibetan Classics.

Tsongkhapa. 1985. *skye bu gsum gyi rnyams su blang ba'i rim pa thams cad tshang bar ston pa'i byang chub lam gyi rim pa/ byang chub lam rim che ba*. Zi-ling (Xining): Tso Ngön (mtsho sngon) People's Press. Also: Ganden Bar Nying edition (early 15th century) and Dharamsala edition (1991).

Tsongkhapa. 2010. *byang chub lam rim che ba*. 3 vols. Vol. 2, *bod rgya shan sbyar ma*. Pe cin: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang.

Wangchuk Dorjé. 1971. *sgrub bryud karma kam tshang pa’i phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gyi sngon ‘gro bzhi sogs kyi ngag ’don ’phags lam bgrod pa’i shing rta: Karma Kam tshang sngon ’gro*. Edited by ’jam mgon kong sprul. Vol. VI, *gdams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: N. Lungthok and N. Gyaltsan.

Sources in Western Languages and Translations

Adam, Martin T. 2002. "Meditation and the Concept of Insight in Kamalaśīla's Bhāvanākramas." Ph.D., Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University.

Apple, James B. 2010. "Atiśa’s Open Basket of Jewels: A Middle Way Vision in Late Phase Indian Vajrayāna. An Annotated English Translation of the Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭamadhyamakopadeśa." *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 11:117-198.

Aristotle. 1926. *The Art of Rhetoric*. Translated by J. H. Freese. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Aronson, Harvey B. 1980. *Love and Sympathy in Theravāda Buddhism*. 1st ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Ārya Śūra. 1986. *Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections: Translation and Analysis of the Pāramitāsamāsa*. Translated by Carol Meadows, *Indica et Tibetica*. Bonn: Indica & Tibetica Verlag.

Asaṅga, and Étienne Lamotte. 1973. *La Somme du Grand Véhicule d'Asaṅga (Mahayānasaṃgraha). Tome II, Traduction et Commentaire*, *Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Université de Louvain Institut Orientaliste.

Asaṅga, and Maitreyanātha. 2014. *Ornament of the Great Vehicle Sūtras: Maitreya's Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra with Commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham*. Translated by Dharmachakra Translation Committee. First edition. ed. Boston: Snow Lion.

Batson, C. D. 2009. "These Things Called Empathy." In *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, edited by J. Decety & W. Ickes. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bhikkhu Bodhi. 2000. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*: Simon and Schuster.

Boyce, Barry Campbell. 2011. *The Mindfulness Revolution: Leading Psychologists, Scientists, Artists, and Meditation Teachers on the Power of Mindfulness in Daily Life*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Braarvig, Jens, and Asgeir Nesøen, eds. 2016. *Thesaurus Literaturae Buddhicae (TLB)*. University of Oslo: The Norwegian Institute of Palaeography and Historical Philology.

Braun, Erik. 2013. *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw*, *Buddhism and Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Brito-Pons, Gonzalo, Daniel Campos, and Ausiàs Cebolla. 2018. Implicit or Explicit Compassion? Effects of Compassion Cultivation Training and Comparison with Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction. *Mindfulness*. doi:10.1007/s12671-018-0898-z.

Candrakīrti, and Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche. 2000. *Introduction to the Middle Way, Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara, With Commentary by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche*. 4th ed: Khyentse Foundation.

Candrakīrti, and Jamgön Mipham. 2005. *Introduction to the Middle Way: Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara with Commentary by Ju Mipham*. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. Boston: Shambhala.

Carter, C. Sue, Inbal Ben-Ami Bartal, and Eric C. Porges. 2017. "The Roots of Compassion: An Evolutionary and Neurobiological Perspective." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion*

Science, edited by Emma M. Seppälä, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, and James R. Doty, 173-188. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Chien, Gloria I-Ling. 2016. "Examining the Blo sbyong Component in Thogs med bzang po's Collected Works." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* (37):48-68.

Chödrön, Pema. 1994. *Start Where You Are: a Guide to Compassionate Living*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Chödrön, Pema. 1997. *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Chödrön, Pema. 2001. *The Places that Scare You: a Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Chögyam Trungpa. 1988. *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*. Boston: Shambhala.

Chopel, Gendun, Thupten Jinpa, and Donald Lopez. 2014. *Grains of Gold Tales of a Cosmopolitan Traveler*, *Buddhism and Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clayton, Barbra R. 2001a. "Compassion as a Matter of Fact: The Argument from No-self to Selflessness in Sāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya." *Contemporary Buddhism* 2 (1):83-97. doi: 0.1080/14639940108573740.

Clayton, Barbra R. 2001b. "Ethics in the Śikṣāsamuccaya: a Study in Mahāyāna Morality." Ph.D., Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University.

Clayton, Barbra R. 2005. *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's "Śikṣāsamuccaya:" Cultivating the Fruits of Virtue*, *Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism*. London: Routledge.

Cleary, Thomas. 1984. *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*. Boulder, New York: Shambhala Publications.

Compassion Institute. 2017-2018. "Compassion Cultivation Teacher Certification Program." accessed October 30, 2017. http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/cct-teacher-certification-program/.

Compson, Jane F. 2017. "Is Mindfulness Secular or Religious, and Does It Matter?" In *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions, Mindfulness in Behavioral Health*, edited by Lynette Monteiro, Jane Compson, and Frank Musten, 21-44. Cham: Springer.

Conze, Edward. 1975. *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom, with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Conze, Edward. 1983. "The Cultivation of the Social Emotions." In *Buddhist Thought in India*, 80-91. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Cowherds. 2015. *Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness*: Oxford Scholarship Online.

Dalai Lama. 2001. *Ethics for the New Millennium*. 1st Riverheadtrade paperback ed. New York: Riverhead Books.

Dalai Lama. 2011. *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Dalai Lama, and Howard C. Cutler. 1998. *The Art of Happiness*. Translated by Thupten Jinpa. Riverhead: Easton Press.

Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatsho, and Nicholas Vreeland. 2001. *An Open Heart: Practicing Compassion in Everyday Life*. 1st ed. Boston: Little, Brown.

Darwin, Charles. 1874. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. 2 ed. Beckenham, Kent: Down House.

Davidson, R. J., and A. Lutz. 2008. "Buddha's Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation." *IEEE Signal Process Mag* 25 (1):176-174.

Davidson, Richard J., and Anne Harrington. 2002. *Visions of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists examine Human Nature*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Dayal, Har. 1970. *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Dietz, Sieglinde. 1999. "Santideva's Bodhicaryavatara, Das Weiterwirken des Werkes dargestellt anhand der Überlieferungsgeschichte des Textes und seiner Kommentare."

Dilgo Khyentse, and Thokmé Sangpo. 2007. *The Heart of Compassion: the Thirty-seven Verses on the Practice of a Bodhisattva: a Commentary*. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Dodson-Lavelle, Brooke 2015. "Against One Method: Toward a Critical-Constructive Approach to the Adaptation and Implementation of Buddhist-based Contemplative Programs in the United States." Ph.D., West and South Asian Religions, Emory University.

Dorjee, Dusana. 2014. *Mind, Brain and the Path to Happiness: A Guide to Buddhist Mind Training and the Neuroscience of Meditation*: Routledge.

Dreyfus, Georges 2002. "Is Compassion An Emotion? A Cross-Cultural Exploration of Mental Typologies." In *Visions of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists Examine Human Nature*, edited by Richard J. Davidson and Anne Harrington, 31-44. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Dreyfus, Georges, and Evan Thompson. 2007. "Asian Perspectives: Indian Theories of Mind." In *Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, edited by Morris Moscovitch Philip David Zelazo, and Evan Thompson. Cambridge University Press.

Dunne, John D. 2015. "“Buddhist Styles of Mindfulness: A Heuristic Approach” " In *Handbook of Mindfulness and Self-Regulation*, edited by Michael D. Robinson Brian D. Ostafin, and Brian P. Meier, 251–270. New York: Springer.

Eimer, Helmut. 1981. "Survanadvīpa’s Commentaries on the Bodhicaryāvatāra." In *Studien zum Jainismus und Buddhismus. Gedenkschrift fuer Ludwig Alsdorf*, 73-78.

Ekman, Paul and Eve. 2017. "Is Global Compassion Achievable?" In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emma M. Seppälä et al., 51-50. Online: Oxford Publication.

Engle, Artemus and Asaṅga. 2016. *Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Translated by Artemus Engle, *Ārya Asanga, The Bodhisattva Path to Unsurpassed Enlightenment, A Complete Translation of the Bodhisattvabhūmi*. Boulder: Snow Lion, Shambhala Kindle Edition.

Engle, Artemus, Vasubandhu, and Sthiramati. 2009. *The Inner Science of Buddhist Practice: Vasubandhu's Summary of the Five Heaps with Commentary by Sthiramati*, *The Tsadra Foundation Series*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

Flanagan, Owen J. 2017. *The Geography of Morals : Varieties of Moral Possibility*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gaggioli, Andrea 2008. "What's in your mind? Study shows compassion meditation changes the brain." *Positive Technology Journal Mind, brain, and emerging technologies*, July 9. http://gaggio.blogspirit.com/archive/2008/03/27/study-shows-compassion-meditation-changes-the-brain.html.

Gampopa. 1998. *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation: The Wish-Fulfilling Gem of the Noble Teachings*. Translated by Khenpo Könchok Gyaltsen. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

Garfield, Jay L. , Stephen Jenkins, and Graham Priest. 2015. "The Śāntideva Passage, Bodhicaryāvatāra VIII.90–103." In *Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness*, edited by The Cowherds, 55-76. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Gates, Barbara , Margaret Cullen, and Sandy Boucher. 2011. Compassion Curriculum, An Interview with Geshe Thupten Jinpa. *Inquiring Mind* 28 (2). Accessed 8-31-2016.

Gates, Barbara, and Wes Nisker. 2008. *The Best of Inquiring Mind: Twenty-Five Years of Dharma, Drama, & Uncommon Insight*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Gayley, Holly. 2016. "Controversy over Buddhist Ethical Reform: A Secular Critique of Clerical Authority in the Tibetan Blogosphere."

Geshe Sonam Rinchen. 1997. *Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Translated by Ruth Sonam. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Getz, Daniela A. 2003. "Precepts." In *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Jr. Robert E. Buswell, 673-675. New York, NY: Macmillan Reference USA.

Gilbert, Paul. 2014. "The Origins and Nature of Compassion Focused Therapy." *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 53:6-41. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/bjc.12043.

Gilbert, Paul. 2017. *Compassion: Concepts, Research and Applications*. New York: Routledge.

Gilbert, Paul, and S. Procter. 2006. "Compassionate Mind Training for People with High Shame and Self-Criticism: Overview and Pilot study of a Group Therapy Approach." *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy* 13 (6):353-379. doi: 10.1002/cpp.507.

Goetz, J. L., D. Keltner, and E. Simon-Thomas. 2010. "Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review." *Psychological Bulletin* 136 (6):351-374. doi: 10.1037/a0018807.

Goldin, Philippe R. and Hooria Jazaieri. 2017. "The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) Program." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emiliana Simon-Thomas Emma M. Seppälä, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, C. and and James R. Doty Daryl Cameron.

Goleman, Daniel, and Tenzin Gyatsho. 2003. *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them? A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama*. New York: Bantam Books.

Gomez, Luis O. 1996. *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light: Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhavativvuha Sutras*. Honolulu: U. Hawaii.

Gomez, Luis O. 2003. "Psychology." In *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Jr Robert E. Buswell. Macmillan Library Reference, Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Goodman, Charles. 2016. "Santideva's Impartialist Ethics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*, edited by Jonardon Ganeri. Online Publication.

Griffiths, Paul E. 2002. Emotions. *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind.* Edited by Stephen P. Stich and Ted A. Warfield doi:10.1111/b.9780631217756.2002.00012.x.

Harrington, Anne. 2002. "A Science of Compassion or a Compassionate Science? What Do We Expect from a Cross-Cultural Dialogue with Buddhism?" In *Visions of Compassion: Western Scientists and Tibetan Buddhists examine Human Nature*, edited by Richard J. and Anne Harrington Davidson, 18-29. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harris, Stephen E. 2014. "Demandingness, Self-Interest and Benevolence in Śāntideva's Introduction to the Practice of Awakening (Bodhicaryāvatāra)."Dissertation, Philosophy, University of New Mexico.

Harris, Stephen E. 2015. "On the Classification of Śāntideva's Ethics in the Bodhicaryāvatāra." *Philosophy East and West* 65 (1):249-275. doi: 10.1353/pew.2015.0008.

Harrison, Paul. 2007. "The Case of the Vanishing Poet: New Light on Śāntideva and the Śikṣāsamuccaya." In *Festschrift für Michael Hahn, Zum 65. Geburtstag von Freunden und Schülern überreicht*, edited by K. and J.-U. Hartmann Klaus, 215–48. Vienna: Indica et Tibetica.

Hoge, E. A., M. M. Chen, E. Orr, C. A. Metcalf, L. E. Fischer, M. H. Pollack, I. De Vivo, and N. M. Simon. 2013. "Loving-Kindness Meditation Practice Associated with Longer Telomeres in Women." *Brain Behav Immun* 32:159-63. doi: 10.1016/j.bbi.2013.04.005.

Hopkins, Jeffrey. 1998 and 2007. *Nagarjuna's Precious Garland, Buddhist Advice for Living and Liberation*. Ithaka, NY: Snow Lion Publications.

Iacoboni, M., and G. L. Lenzi. 2002. "Mirror Neurons, the Insula, and Empathy." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25 (1):39-+.

Ishida, Chiko. 2010. "Relocation of the Verses on 'The Equality of Self and Others' in the Bodhicaryāvatāra " *Hokke-Bunka Kenkyujo (Journal of Institute for the Comprehensive Study of Lotus Sūtra)* 36 (March 2010):1–16.

Ishihama, Yumiko. 1993. "On the Dissemination of the Belief in the Dalai Lama as a Manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara." *Acta Asiatica* 64 (38-56).

Jackson, Roger. 2019. "Taming Śāntideva: Tsongkhapa's Use of the Bodhicaryāvatāra." In *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*, edited by Jonathan Gold and Douglas Duckworth. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jacobs, T. L., E. S. Epel, J. Lin, E. H. Blackburn, O. M. Wolkowitz, D. A. Bridwell, A. P. Zanesco, S. R. Aichele, B. K. Sahdra, K. A. MacLean, B. G. King, P. R. Shaver, E. L. Rosenberg, E. Ferrer, B. A. Wallace, and C. D. Saron. 2011. "Intensive meditation training, immune cell telomerase activity, and psychological mediators." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 36 (5):664-81. doi: 10.1016/j.psyneuen.2010.09.010.

Jamgön Kongtrül. 1998. *Buddhist Ethics*. Translated by Kalu Rinpoche Translation Group. X vols. Vol. V, *The Treasury of Knowledge*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

Jamgön Kongtrül, and Kenneth McLeod. 1987. *The Great Path of Awakening*. 2nd ed, *Shambhala Classics*. Boston, Mass. ; London: Shambhala.

Jazaieri, H., G. T. Jinpa, K. McGonigal, E. L. Rosenberg, J. Finkelstein, E. Simon-Thomas, M. Cullen, J. R. Doty, J. J. Gross, and P. R. Goldin. 2013. "Enhancing Compassion: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Compassion Cultivation Training Program." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 14 (4):1113-1126. doi: 10.1007/s10902-012-9373-z.

Jazaieri, H., I. A. Lee, K. McGonigal, T. Jinpa, J. R. Doty, J. J. Gross, and P. R. Goldin. 2016. "A wandering mind is a less caring mind: Daily experience sampling during compassion meditation training." *Journal of Positive Psychology* 11 (1):37-50. doi: 10.1080/17439760.2015.1025418.

Jenkins, Stephen. 1999. "The Circle of Compassion: An Interpretive Study of Karuna in Indian Buddhist Literature." Ph.D., Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University.

Jenkins, Stephen. 2015. "Waking into Compassion: The Three Ālambana of Karuṇā." *Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness*:97-119. doi: DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190260507.003.0007.

Jinpa, Thupten. 2003. "Science As an Ally or a Rival Philosophy? Tibetan Buddhist Thinkers." In *Buddhism & Science: Breaking New Ground, Columbia Series in Science and Religion*, edited by B. Alan Wallace, 71-90. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jinpa, Thupten, ed. 2008. *The Book of Kadam: The Core Texts*, *Library of Tibetan Classics*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Jinpa, Thupten. 2010. "Buddhism and Science: How Far Can the Dialogue Proceed?" *Zygon* 45 (4).

Jinpa, Thupten. 2011. *Essential Mind Training : Tibetan Wisdom for Daily Life*. 1st ed, *Tibetan Classics*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Jinpa, Thupten. 2014. "Under One Umbrella, Can Tradition and Science Both Fit? An Interview with Thupten Jinpa Langri by Linda Heuman." *Tricycle Magazine* 23 (4).

Jinpa, Thupten. 2015. *A Fearless Heart, How the Courage to Be Compassionate Can Transform Our Lives*: Penguin.

Jinpa, Thupten. 2016. "Understanding the Psychology Behind Compassion Meditation." Master Lecture Mind and Life Conference, San Diego, November 11, 2016.

Jinpa, Thupten. 2019. "Bodhicaryāvatāra and Tibetan Mind Training (Lojong)." In *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*, edited by Jonathan Gold and Douglas Duckworth. New York: Columbia University Press.

Jinpa, Thupten, Ph.D., with contributions from, M.F.T. Margaret Cullen, Ph.D. Philippe Goldin, Ph.D. Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D. Erika Rosenberg, and Ph.D. Leah Weiss. 2013. *Instructor's Manual, Compassion Cultivation Training Program, An Eight-Week Course on Cultivating A Compassionate Mindset*. Stanford University: Unpublished.

Jinpa, Thupten, and Leah Weiss. 2013. "Compassion Cultivation Training." In *Compassion: Bridging Practice and Science*, edited by T. Singer and M. Bolz, 398–414. Munich, Germany: Max Planck Society.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. 2017. "History of MBSR." University of Massachusetts Medical School, accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mindfulness-based-programs/mbsr-courses/about-mbsr/history-of-mbsr/.

Kabat-Zinn, Jon, and University of Massachusetts Medical Center/Worcester. Stress Reduction Clinic. 1990. *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*. New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Kapstein, Matthew. 1992. "Remarks on the Mani bKa'-'bum and the Cult of Avalokiteshvara in Tibet." In *Tibetan Buddhism, Reason and Revelation*, edited by Goodman Steven D. and Ronald M. Davidson, 79-93. SUNY,.

Kapstein, Matthew. 2000. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kashinath, Nyaupane, and Julia Stenzel. 2016. "On Sanskrit Prosody – an Interview with Prof. Kashinath Nyaupane." accessed October 1, 2017. http://www.bodhisvara.com/?page_id=671.

Kirby, J. N. 2017. "Compassion Interventions: The Programmes, the Evidence, and Implications for Research and Practice." *Psychol Psychother* 90 (3):432-455. doi: 10.1111/papt.12104.

Kirby J.N., Doty J.R., Petrocchi N. and Gilbert P. . 2017. "The Current and Future Role of Heart Rate Variability for Assessing and Training Compassion." *Front. Public Health* 5 (40). doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2017.00040.

Kirmayer, L. J. 2015. "Mindfulness in Cultural Context." *Transcult Psychiatry* 52 (4):447-69. doi: 10.1177/1363461515598949.

Kripal, Jeffrey J., ed. 2017. *Religion: Sources, Perspectives, and Methodologies*, *Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Macmillan Reference USA, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning.

Künsang Palden. 2007. *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva*. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. 1. ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Lamotte, Etienne. 1976. *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa): From the French translation with Introduction and Notes (L'enseignement de Vimalarkirti)*, *Sacred books of the Buddhists*. London, Boston: Pali Text Society.

Lavelle, Brooke D. 2017. "Compassion in Context: Tracing the Buddhist Roots of Secular, Compassion-Based Contemplative Programs." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emma M. Seppälä, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, Daryl Cameron and James R. Doty, 17-26. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lazar, S. W., C. E. Kerr, R. H. Wasserman, J. R. Gray, D. N. Greve, M. T. Treadway, M. McGarvey, B. T. Quinn, J. A. Dusek, H. Benson, S. L. Rauch, C. I. Moore, and B. Fischl. 2005. "Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness." *Neuroreport* 16 (17):1893-7.

Lazarus, Richard S., and Susan Folkman. 1984. *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. New York: Springer Pub. Co.

Leung, M. K., C. C. Chan, J. Yin, C. F. Lee, K. F. So, and T. M. Lee. 2013. "Increased gray matter volume in the right angular and posterior parahippocampal gyri in loving-kindness meditators." *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci* 8 (1):34-9. doi: 10.1093/scan/nss076.

Lévi, Sylvain. 1907. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra, Exposé de la Doctrine du Grand Véhicule*. Vol. I. Paris.

Lewis, Sara E. 2018. "Contemporary Buddhism, Resilience, Agency, and Everyday Lojong in the Tibetan Diaspora." *Contemporary Buddhism*. doi: 10.1080/14639947.2018.1480153.

Liland, Frederik. 2009. "The Transmission of the Bodhicaryāvatāra, The History, Diffusion, and Influence of a Mahāyāna Buddhist Text." Master's Degree in History of Religions MA, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo.

Lindtner, Christian. 1982. *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag.

Liu, Kuo-wei. 2002. "'Jig rten mgon po and the "Single intention" (Dgongs gcig), His view on Bodhisattva vow and its influence on Medieval Tibetan Buddhism." Ph.D. Dissertation, Tibetan Studies, Harvard (UMl Number 3038478).

Lopes, Ana Cristina O. 2015. *Tibetan Buddhism in Diaspora: Cultural Re-Signification in Practice and Institutions*, *Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism*: Routledge.

Lopez, Donald S. 2008. *Buddhism and Science: a Guide for the Perplexed*, *Buddhism and modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lou, H. C., T. W. Kjaer, L. Friberg, G. Wildschiodtz, S. Holm, and M. Nowak. 1999. "A (15)O-H(2)O PET study of meditation and the resting state of normal consciousness." *Human Brain Mapping* 7 (2):98-105.

Lutz, A., J. Brefczynski-Lewis, T. Johnstone, and R. J. Davidson. 2008. "Regulation of the Neural Circuitry of Emotion by Compassion Meditation: Effects of Meditative Expertise." *PLoS One* 3 (3):e1897. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0001897.

Lutz, A., L. L. Greischar, D. M. Perlman, and R. J. Davidson. 2009. "BOLD signal in insula is differentially related to cardiac function during compassion meditation in experts vs. novices." *Neuroimage* 47 (3):1038-46. doi: 10.1016/j.neuroimage.2009.04.081.

Lutz, A., L. L. Greischar, N. B. Rawlings, M. Ricard, and R. J. Davidson. 2004. "Long-term meditators self-induce high-amplitude gamma synchrony during mental practice." *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A* 101 (46):16369-73. doi: 10.1073/pnas.0407401101.

Maithrimurthi, Mudagamuwe. 1999. *Wohlwollen, Mitleid, Freude und Gleichmut: Eine ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung der vier apramanas in der buddhistischen Ethik und Spiritualitat von den Anfangen bis zum fruehen Yogacara*. Vol. 50, *Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien*. Institut fur Kultur und Geschichte Indiens und Tibets, Universitaet Hamburg. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Maitreyanātha/Āryāsanga, and Vasubandhu. 2004. *The Universal Vehicle Discourse Literature: Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra by Maitreyanātha/Āryāsanga Together with Its Commentary (Bhāsya) by Vasubandhu*. Translated by R. Clark L. Jamspal, J. Wilson, L. Zwilling, M. Sweet, R. Thurman., *Treasury of the Buddhist Sciences Series*. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies.

Mascaro, Jennifer S., Lobsang Tenzin Negi, and Charles L. Raison. 2017. "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training: Gleaning Generalities from Specific Biological Effects." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emma M. Seppälä et al., 247-258. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mathes, Klaus-Dieter. 2005. "Viévard, Ludovic, Vacuité (śūnyatā) et Compassion (karuṇā) dans le Bouddhisme Madhyamaka [Publications de l'Institut de Civilisation Indienne. Fascicule 70]. Paris: De Boccard 2002, pp. 340. ISBN 2-86803-070-X." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 48 (1):145-150. doi: 10.1007/s10783-005-8886-5.

Mathes, Klaus-Dieter 2008. *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within Go Lotsāwa's Mahāmudrā Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhāga*, *Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

McCutcheon, Russell T. 2014. "Studying Religion: an Introduction." In. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McKnight, Daphna Erin. 2014. "Tonglen Meditation's Effects on Compassion in Novice Meditators."Dissertation, University of the West.

McMahan, David, and Erik Braun. 2017. *Meditation, Buddhism, and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McMahan, David L. 2008. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

McMahan, David L. 2012. "Intersections of Buddhism and Secularity." In *Interreligious Dialogue and Cultural Change* edited by Catherine Cornille, 136-158. Eugene, Or.: Cascade Books.

Meadows, Carol and Āryaśūra. 1986. *Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections: Text, Translation, and Analysis of the Pāramitāsamāsa*, *Indica et Tibetica*. Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.

"Mission & Vision, CCARE." 2018. accessed September 1, 2018. http://ccare.stanford.edu/about/mission-vision/.

Monteiro, Lynette, Jane Compson, and Frank Musten, eds. 2017. *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics and Mindfulness-Based Interventions*, *Mindfulness in Behavioral Health*. Cham: Springer

Nagao, Gadjin. 2000. "The Bodhisattva's Compassion Described in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra." In *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding: The Buddhist Studies Legacy of Gadjin M. Nagao, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions*, edited by Gadjin Nagao and Jonathan A. Silk, 1-38. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Nāgārjuna, John Dunne, and Sara McClintock. 1997. *The Precious Garland: An Epistle to a King*. Translated by John Dunne and Sara McClintock: Wisdom Publications.

Neff, Kristin. 2003. "The Development and Validation of a Scale to Measure Self-Compassion." *Self and Identity* Taylor & Francis Inc. (2):223–250.

Neff, Kristin. 2005. "Self-compassion, Achievement Goals, and Coping with Academic Failure." *Self and Identity* 4 (3):263-287.

Neff, Kristin. 2011. "Self-Compassion, Self-Esteem, and Well-Being." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 5 (1):1-12.

Neff, Kristin, and Christopher Germer. 2017. "Self-Compassion and Psychological Well-being." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emiliana Simon-Thomas Emma M. Seppälä, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, C. and and James R. Doty Daryl Cameron. Oxford.

Nussbaum, Martha Craven. 2001. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha Craven. 2010. *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law*, *Inalienable rights series*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Ohnuma, Reiko. 2000. "Internal and External Opposition to the Bodhisattva's Gift of his Body." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (1):43-75. doi: Doi 10.1023/A:1004785327150.

Ozawa-de Silva, Brendan. 2015. "Becoming the Wish-Fulfilling Tree: Compassion and the Transformation of Ethical Subjectivity in the Lojong Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism." Ph.D. Dissertation, Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies, Emory University.

Ozawa-de Silva, Brendan, and Lobsang Tenzin Negi. 2013. "Cognitively-Based Compassion Training: Protocol and Key Concepts." In *Compassion: Bridging Theory and Practice.*, edited by Tania and Mathias Bolz Singer. Max Planck Gesellschaft.

Pabonka. 1993. *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. London: Wisdom Publications.

Pace, T. W., L. T. Negi, D. D. Adame, S. P. Cole, T. I. Sivilli, T. D. Brown, M. J. Issa, and C. L. Raison. 2009. "Effect of compassion meditation on neuroendocrine, innate immune and behavioral responses to psychosocial stress." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 34 (1):87-98. doi: 10.1016/j.psyneuen.2008.08.011.

Pagel, Ulrich. 1992. "The Bodhisattvapiṭaka: Its Doctrines, Practices and their Position in Mahāyāna Literature."Dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies.

Panaïoti, Antoine. 2014. "Are Freedom from Suffering and Boundless Compassion Contradictory Ideals? A Critical Examination of Buddhist Moral Psychology." *ARC: McGill Journal of Religious Studies* 44:1-25.

Papadopoulos, I., & Ali, S. 2015. "Measuring compassion in nurses and other healthcare professionals: An integrative review." *Nurse Education in Practice* 16:133–139. doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2015.08.001.

Potter, Karl H. 1974. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*. Repr. ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Rahula, Walpola. 1974. *What the Buddha taught*. 2nd ed. New York: Grove Press.

Roberts, Robert. 2016. Emotions in the Christian Tradition. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed 7 Feb 2017.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. 2003. *Nonviolent Communication: a Language of Life*. 2nd ed. Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press.

Rubin, Jeoffrey. 2015. "The McMindfulness Craze: The Shadow Side of the Mindfulness Revolution." Trouthout, accessed Oct 30, 2017. http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/28278-the-mcmindfulness-craze-the-shadow-side-of-the-mindfulness-revolution.

Ruegg, David Seyfort. 1969. "La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra." *Paris, EFEO (École française d'Extrême-Orient)*.

Ruegg, David Seyfort. 1976. *The Meanings of the Term gotra and the Textual History of the Ratnagotravibhāga*. London: SOAS.

Saito, Akira. 1993. *A Study of Akṣayamati (Śāntideva)'s Bodhisattvacāryavatāra as Found in the Tibetan Manuscripts from Tun-huang., De Jong Collection (University of Canterbury Library)*. Place of publication not identified: Miye University.

Saito, Naoki, Vairocana, and Āryaśūra. 2005. *Das Kompendium der moralischen Vollkommenheiten: Vairocanarakṣitas tibetische Übertragung von Āryaśūras Pāramitāsamāsa samt Neuausgabe des Sanskrittextes*, *Indica et Tibetica,*. Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.

Sakya Paṇḍita, and David Jackson. 1987. *Sakya Pandita's Clarifying the Sage's Intent: An Exposition of the Stages for Embarking upon the Excellent Path of the Bodhisattva*. Translated by David Jackson: unpublished translation.

Salzberg, Sharon. 1995. *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Śāntideva, Kate Crosby, and Andrew Skilton. 1995. *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Translated by Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, *The World's Classics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Śāntideva, and Charles Goodman. 2016. *The Training Anthology of Śāntideva: A Translation of the Śikṣāsamuccaya*. Translated by Charles Goodman. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Śāntideva, and Padmakara. 2006. *The Way of the Bodhisattva: A Translation of the Bodhicaryavatara*. Translated by Padmakara Translation Group. 2nd revised ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. 1841. *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik, Preisschrift über die Grundlage der Moral*: Hermann Verlag.

Seppälä, Emma. 2012. The Best Kept Secret of Happiness. *Psychology Today*. Accessed July 10, 2017.

Seppälä, Emma M., Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, and James R. Doty, eds. 2017. *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, *Oxford Library of Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shamar Rinpoche. 2015. *The King of Prayers: a Commentary on the Noble King of Prayers of Excellent Conduct*. Edited by Julia Stenzel and Lara Braitstein: Birds of Paradise Press.

Sharf, Robert. 2015. "Is mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters)." *Transcult Psychiatry* 52 (4):470-84. doi: 10.1177/1363461514557561.

Shönu Gyalchok, and Könchog Gyaltsen, eds. 2006. *Mind Training: The Great Collection*. 1st ed, *Library of Tibetan Classics*. Boston, Mass.: Wisdom Publications, in association with the Institute of Tibetan Classics.

Singer, Tania, and Matthias Bolz, eds. 2011. *Compassion. Bridging Practice and Science*. Online: Max Planck Society.

Singer, Tania, and Olga M. Klimecki. 2014. "Empathy and Compassion." *Current Biology* 24 (18):R875-R878.

Skwara, Alea C., Brandon G. King, and Clifford D. Saron. 2017. "Studies of Training Compassion: What Have We Learned; What Remains Unknown?" In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emma M. Seppälä et al.

Smith, E. Gene. 2001. *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Sobisch, Jan-Ulrich. 2002. *Three-Vow Theories in Tibetan Buddhism: a Comparative Study of Major Traditions from the Twelfth through Nineteenth Centuries*, *Contributions to Tibetan studies*. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag.

Sparham, Gareth. 1992. "Indian Altruism: A Study of the Terms bodhicitta and bodhicittotpada." *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies JIABS* 15 (2):224-41.

Spencer, Herbert. 1851. *Social statics, or, The conditions essential to human happiness specified, and the first of them developed*. London: John Chapman.

Standen, Amy. 2012. "Through Meditation, Veterans Relearn Compassion." National Public Radio, accessed July 15, 2018. https://www.npr.org/2012/11/21/165667696/through-meditation-veterans-relearn-compassion.

Strauss, C., Taylor, B.L., Gu, J., Kuyken, W., Baer, R., Jones, F., Cavanagh, K. 2016. "What is Compassion and How Can We Measure it? A Review of Definitions and Measures." *Clinical Psychology Review*. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004.

Takasaki, Jikido. 2000. "Tathagatagarbha Theory Reconsidered, Reflections on Some Recent Issues in Japanese Buddhist Studies." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 27 (1-2).

Tanabe, Hajime. 1986. *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. Translated by Takeuchi Yoshinori. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1989. *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Tegchok, Jampa, and Chodron Thubten. 2005. *Transforming Adversity into Joy and Courage: An Explanation of the Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*. Ithaca, NY u.a.: Snow Lion Publications.

The Center of Mindfulness. 2017. "Mindfulness-Based Programs." University of Massachusetts Medical School, accessed October 30, 2017. https://www.umassmed.edu/cfm/mindfulness-based-programs/.

Thupten Chökyi Drakpa. 2004. *Uniting Wisdom and Compassion: Illuminating the Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*. Translated by Heidi Köppl. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Trungpa, Chögyam. 1975. *Glimpses of Abhidharma: From a Seminar on Buddhist Psychology*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications.

Trungpa, Chögyam. 1988. *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*. 2nd (First edition 1976) ed, *Shambhala dragon editions*. Boston, New York, N.Y.: Shambhala.

Trungpa, Chögyam, and Judith L. Lief. 1993. *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala.

Trungpa, Chögyam, and Judith L. Lief. 2009. *The Truth of Suffering and the Path of Liberation*. 1st ed. Boston: Shambhala : Distributed in the United States by Random House.

Tsai, Birgit Koopman-Holm and Jeanne L. 2017. "The Cultural Shaping of Compassion." In *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science*, edited by Emma M. Seppälä et al., 273-287. Online: Oxford Handbooks.

Tsongkhapa. 2000a. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume One: The Lam Rim Chen Mo*. Translated by Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee. Vol. 1. Boston: Snow Lion.

Tsongkhapa. 2000b. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Two: The Lam Rim Chen Mo*. Translated by The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee. Vol. 2. Boston: Snow Lion.

Vallée-Poussin, Louis de La. 1923. *Abhidharmakośabhāsya*. Vol. I. Paris: Paul Geuthner.

Van Dam, N. T., M. K. van Vugt, D. R. Vago, L. Schmalzl, C. D. Saron, A. Olendzki, T. Meissner, S. W. Lazar, C. E. Kerr, J. Gorchov, K. C. R. Fox, B. A. Field, W. B. Britton, J. A. Brefczynski-Lewis, and D. E. Meyer. 2018. "Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 13 (1):36-61. doi: 10.1177/1745691617709589.

Van Schaik, Sam. 2006. "The Tibetan Avalokitesvara Cult in the Tenth century: Evidence from the Dunhuang Manuscripts." In *Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis (Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003, Volume 4)*, edited by Ronald M. Davidson and Christian Wedemeyer, 55-72. Leiden: Brill.

Van Schaik, Sam 2014. "The Original Bodhicaryāvatāra." *Early Tibet*. http://earlytibet.com/2014/02/04/the-original-bodhicaryavatara/.

Vasubandhu, and Louis de La Vallée Poussin. 1923. *L'Abhidharmakośa, Traduit et Annoté par Louis de la Vallée-Poussin*. Vol. III. Paris: Louvain.

Vasubandhu, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, and Leo Pruden. 1988. *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. Translated by Leo M. Pruden. 4 vols. Vol. I. Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press.

Viehbeck, Markus. 2016. "An Indian Classic in 19th-Century Tibet and beyond: Rdza Dpal sprul and the Dissemination of the Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 36:5-44.

Viévard, Ludovic. 2001. "L'Origine de la Compassion selon Yogācāra et Mādhyamika." *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft, Études asiatiques: revue de la Société Suisse-Asie* 55.

Wangchuk, Dorji. 2007. *The Resolve to Become a Buddha: a Study of the Bodhicitta Concept in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica : Monograph Series*. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

Wear, D., & Zarconi, J. 2008. "Can compassion be taught? Let's ask our students." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 23:948–953. doi: 10.1007/s11606-007-0501-0.

Webster, Noah. 1919. "Compassion." In *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 3rd ed. of the Merriam Series*, 205. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co.

Weiss, Leah. 2015. "Bringing Compassion to Everyday Life with Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT)." Last Modified July 2, 2015, accessed July 15, 2017.

http://theshiftnetwork.com/blog/2015-07-02/bringing-compassion-everyday-life-compassion-cultivation-training-cct.

Weiss, Leah Rebecca. 2012. "Pedagogy for Buddhist-Derived Meditation in Secular Settings: An Exercise in Inculturation." Doctoral Dissertation, Arts and Sciences, Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, Boston College.

Williams, Paul. 1998. *Altruism and Reality: Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicaryavatara*, *Curzon critical studies in Buddhism.* Surrey: Curzon Press.

Wilson, Jeff. 2014. *Mindful America: the Mutual Transformation of Buddhist Meditation and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Zimmermann, Michael. 2002. *A Buddha Within: The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra: the Earliest Exposition of the Buddha-Nature Teaching in India*, *Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica*. Tokyo: International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology Soka University.