

COOKING LIVING BEINGS

The Transformative Effects of Encounters with Bodhisattva Bodies

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ABSTRACT

Bodies play important and diverse roles in Buddhist ethics. Drawing upon an Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist compendium of bodhisattva practice, this paper explores the role bodhisattva bodies play in the ethical development of other living beings. Bodhisattvas adopt certain disciplinary practices in order to produce bodies whose very sight, sound, touch, and even taste transform living beings in physical and moral ways. The compendium uses a common South Asian and Buddhist metaphor to describe a bodhisattva's physical and moral impact on others. Bodhisattvas are said to "cook living beings." The paper considers how this metaphor suggests ways of nuancing modern Western conceptions of ethical self-cultivation, particularly as articulated by Michel Foucault in his studies of the technologies of the self.

KEY WORDS: *Foucault, Mahāyāna Buddhism, bodhisattva, bodhicitta Śikṣāsamuccaya*

1. Introduction¹

This paper offers a new approach to Buddhist ethics. It asks us to consider what we can learn about Buddhist ethics if we take body, rather than mind, as the starting point of ethical inquiry. Bodies figure prominently in Buddhist ethical discourse. Studies of Buddhist ethics, however, rarely speak of bodies. Instead these tend to emphasize the importance of mind in Buddhist ethics. According to Buddhism, mind is the forerunner of all deeds. Wholesome states of mind produce good deeds and unwholesome states of mind produce bad deeds. Thus Buddhist ethics places great weight on the cultivation of wholesome mental states and the eradication of their opposite. The importance of mind in Buddhist ethics, however, does not mean that Buddhist ethical discourse ignores body. To the contrary, body is a subject of great concern in this discourse.

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The privileging of mind in studies of Buddhist ethics has obscured the important and diverse roles bodies play in Buddhist ethical traditions. Here I examine one particularly significant role that to date has received little scholarly attention. In Buddhist traditions certain kinds of bodies such as those of buddhas, bodhisattvas, arhats, or monastics are believed to have ethically transformative effects on other living beings. This paper examines the critical role that the bodies of bodhisattvas, or buddhas-to-be, play in the ethical development of other living beings.

My analysis centers on one important early medieval Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist text called the *Compendium of Training* (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*). According to tradition, this Sanskrit text was composed in North India in the seventh or eighth century by a celebrated monk and scholar named Śāntideva.² The text is a compendium of bodhisattva practice written primarily, although not exclusively, for monastic bodhisattvas.³ The *Compendium of Training* prescribes many different practices. This paper focuses on one practice highlighted in the text's discussion of bodhisattva bodies, namely, the practice of making vows. Buddhist literature describes bodhisattvas making diverse kinds of vows, all of which are intended to benefit other living beings. Bodhisattvas represent one of the highest ethical ideals in Buddhist traditions because they dedicate themselves in all their lifetimes to rescuing living beings from various kinds of suffering. In this paper I examine the role bodhisattva vows play in the production of bodhisattva bodies whose very sight, sound, touch, and even taste have ethically transformative effects on other living beings.

I pay particular attention to a common South Asian and Buddhist metaphor that the *Compendium of Training* uses to describe a bodhisattva's impact on other living beings: Bodhisattvas are said to "cook" (*paripac-*) living beings, that is, they perfect, mature, or ripen them. The metaphor of "cooking living beings" (*satva-paripācana / paripāka*)⁴ is

² The sole extant Sanskrit manuscript of the *Compendium of Training* was dated by its editor, Cecil Bendall, initially to the 14th–15th c. C. E. and subsequently to the 13th–14th c. C. E. (Bendall 1992, 106; Bendall 1970, xxiv–xxvii). The colophon does not identify an author. This study is in sympathy with Gregory Schopen's suggestion that we study texts in their historically attested form (Schopen 1989, 95–98). Therefore it leaves aside questions of the original authorial version of the text.

³ The *Compendium of Training* calls itself a bodhisattva vinaya (Bendall 1970, 366). Vinayas are monastic regulations. Although the text makes references to householder (*gṛhin*) bodhisattvas, i.e., lay bodhisattvas, it strongly advocates a monastic lifestyle (for instance, Bendall 1970, 14.17–20). Many of its instructions are thus addressed specifically to monastic bodhisattvas.

⁴ Please note that the *Compendium of Training* frequently spells *sattva* as *satva*. When quoting in Sanskrit from the *Compendium of Training* I follow the spelling as given in Cecil Bendall's edition (Bendall 1970); otherwise I follow scholarly convention in Sanskrit spelling. While there are some problems with Bendall's edition, these are not critical to the interpretation of this paper unless otherwise noted.

especially appropriate for the *Compendium of Training* because cooking implies a literal transmutation of substances. When bodhisattvas cook living beings, these beings are transformed in both physical and moral ways. As we shall see, the *Compendium of Training* suggests that bodhisattvas are themselves cooked, or physically and morally transformed, by their vows. Once cooked, bodhisattvas use their bodies to cook others. The *Compendium of Training* thus foregrounds the role bodhisattva bodies play in the bodhisattva ideal of dedicating oneself to the well-being of others.

Along with illuminating an important dimension of Buddhist ethics, I intend this paper to contribute to the study of what Michel Foucault has called “technologies of the self.” Technologies of the self are those disciplinary practices individuals self-consciously adopt in order to transform themselves into ethical subjects (Foucault 1988, 1990; see also Martin et al. 1988). Foucault defines this process of ethical self-cultivation as a process of “subjectivation” (*assujétissement*) because it entails first and foremost the cultivation of a new awareness of oneself as an ethical subject and thus in need of constant self-correction, transformation, or purification (Foucault 1988, 42). Foucault’s research on technologies of the self provides a useful framework for studying the significance of bodies in Buddhist disciplinary practices. The *Compendium of Training* prescribes diverse disciplinary practices for the specific purpose of enabling individuals to fashion themselves into a distinct kind of ethical subject, namely, a bodhisattva. Of particular relevance is the fact that Foucault illuminates the physical, as well as moral, effects of disciplinary practices. The *Compendium of Training* reflects a widespread assumption in South Asian traditions, Buddhist and otherwise, that body and morality are closely connected (Mroziak 1998, 2002; see also Daniel 1984; Inden and Nicholas 1977; Marriott 1976; and Marriott and Inden 1977). Thus physical and moral transformation go hand in hand. Bodhisattva disciplinary practices produce bodhisattvas with distinct physical, as well as moral, qualities. Moreover, the *Compendium of Training* insists that the physical qualities of bodhisattvas, no less than their moral qualities, are transformative of others. It emphasizes the role bodhisattva bodies play in the ethical development of other living beings. Although Foucault offers valuable insights into the nature of disciplinary practices, the *Compendium of Training* also offers the possibility of nuancing Foucault’s concept of subjectivation, or ethical self-cultivation. I conclude this paper by considering how the metaphor of “cooking living beings” generates different ways of thinking about the formation of ethical subjects.

1.1 A note on the text

The *Compendium of Training* consists of brief comments made by the author and quotations from approximately one hundred Buddhist texts,

variously classified as *sūtra*, *pariṛcchā*, *dhāraṇī*, *prātimokṣa*, *avadāna*, and *vimokṣa*. The *Compendium of Training* has been valued in the modern scholarly community primarily for its citation of texts which are otherwise no longer extant in Sanskrit. In this paper I study the *Compendium of Training* as a text in its own right—one which offers a coherent and compelling vision of the bodhisattva ideal. Tradition ascribes authorship of the text to Śāntideva. Śāntideva is the author of another and more extensively studied text, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I do not, however, take the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as the framework for my investigation of the *Compendium of Training* both because I wish to place the *Compendium of Training* on its own terms and because of problems of transmission not yet settled.⁵

2. Purifying Bodied Being

Bodies are front and center in the *Compendium of Training*.⁶ From the very first chapter of the text bodhisattvas are exhorted to make their bodies become “something for the enjoyment of living beings” (Bendall 1970, 22.2–3 [quotation from the *Akṣayamati sūtra*]). Bodhisattvas should be prepared to give away everything they have to others, including their bodies. At the highest levels of the bodhisattva path, this can entail the gift of life or limb, but the *Compendium of Training* does not enjoin such extreme sacrifice upon its readers. Instead bodhisattvas engage in a wide range of practices, including diverse forms of ritual, meditation, monastic discipline, and study, in order to cultivate bodies that can benefit others.

Bodhisattvas must purify themselves before they can use their bodies to cook others. Vow-making is one of many disciplinary practices, or technologies of the self, prescribed to purify bodhisattvas. Purity always has physical and moral connotations in the *Compendium of Training*, as in many other Buddhist texts. Bodhisattvas are to purify their “bodied beings” (*ātmabhāva*) of sin (*pāpa*) and defilements (*kleśa*). Sin

⁵ It is impossible to determine at this point exactly what form the *Compendium of Training* (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*) and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* may have taken at the moment they were penned. The relationship between the extant recensions of these texts remains unclear, particularly in light of evidence that an earlier Tibetan recension of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, preserved among the Tun-huang manuscripts, is shorter than the later Tibetan and extant Sanskrit recensions by ca. 210 verses (Crosby and Skilton 1996, xxx–xxxiv).

⁶ For all its interest in bodies, the *Compendium of Training* does not discuss or make reference to buddha-body theory such as the *trikāya* doctrine. This is perhaps surprising since authorship of the text is attributed to Śāntideva, a skilled philosopher. Buddha-body theory is a sophisticated Mahāyāna scholastic discourse on the natures and numbers of a buddha’s body (see Eckel 1992, Griffiths 1994, Harrison 1992, and Makransky 1997). Whether or not the author of the *Compendium of Training* was versed in buddha-body theory, his interests lay elsewhere in the *Compendium of Training*, reminding us that there are diverse kinds of discourses on bodies in Buddhist literature.

is bad karma. Defilements are the negative conditions of lust (*rāga*), anger (*dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*) which cause living beings to sin in the first place. *Ātmabhāva*, or bodied being, is a complex notion in the *Compendium of Training*. This is not the place for an extended philological analysis.⁷ Suffice it to say that the *Compendium of Training* employs a diverse Sanskrit vocabulary for body, often dictated by the sources it cites. However, *ātmabhāva*, or bodied being, appears to be the text's term of choice when speaking in its own voice. In such instances *ātmabhāva* refers to more than a physical body; it refers to an entire bodied being—body, feelings, and thoughts. Translation of *ātmabhāva* is context-specific and thus at times I translate the term as “body” and at other times as “bodied being,” borrowing this felicitous phrase from Margaret R. Miles (Miles 1999, 14).

Purifying bodied being has marked physical, as well as moral, effects. Bodhisattva vows produce bodied beings with very particular kinds of bodies—bodies whose sight, sound, touch, and taste can physically and morally alter living beings for the better. The *Compendium of Training* foregrounds the transformative power of bodhisattva bodies. In the following section, I give specific examples of physically and morally transformative encounters with bodhisattva bodies. The examples come from chapter eight of the *Compendium of Training*, which is devoted to describing how bodhisattvas should purify bodied being of sin and defilements.

3. Bodhisattva Vows and Bodies

Chapter eight of the *Compendium of Training* opens with the rather startling claim that purified bodhisattva bodies are good to eat. We are told:

The enjoyment or consumption (*bhoga*) of a purified body (*śodhita ātmabhāva*) will be healthy (*pathya*) for bodied beings (*dehin*), just like well-prepared (*samyak-siddha*), boiled rice (*bhakta*) without husk-powder (*niṣkaṇa*).⁸

This enigmatic statement is explained by the following example: Animals who eat the dead body of a bodhisattva lying in a cemetery are reborn

⁷ For a discussion of body vocabulary in the *Compendium of Training* see Mroziak 1998, chapter one.

⁸ Bendall 1970, 158.14–15: śodhitasyātmabhāvasya bhogaḥ pathyo bhaviṣyati | samyaksiddhasya bhaktasya niṣkaṇasyeva dehinām || *Kaṇa* refers to “the fine red powder between the husk and grain of rice, husk-powder”; *akaṇa* means “free from the coating of red powder, characteristic of the best rice” (*The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*, s.v. *kaṇa*). *Niṣkaṇa* is a synonym for *akaṇa* (*Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, s.v. *niṣkaṇa*).

as gods in heaven and eventually attain *parinirvāṇa*, or final liberation. Why? Because the bodhisattva had made a previous vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna*) that those who should enjoy, or eat (*paribhuj-*), his flesh (*māṃsa*) be reborn in heaven and eventually attain *parinirvāṇa*:

The great cemeteries that are found in great cities are filled with many hundreds of thousands of living creatures. Even there, the bodhisattva mahāsattva displays a great body (*mahānta ātmabhāva*) when it is dead and has reached the end of its time. There, beings who are born as animals eat his flesh, according to need, and, at the completion of their life spans when they have died and reached the end of their time, are reborn in a good realm (*sugati*), namely, among the gods in heaven. And he alone is the cause of them going up to and including (*yāvat*) *parinirvāṇa*—that is, it is by means of the purity of that very bodhisattva’s previous vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna-parisuddhi*). The one who made a vow (*praṇidhāna*) for a very long time as follows—“May those who eat my flesh when I am dead and have reached the end of my time”—he alone would be the cause of them arising in heaven and going up to and including (*yāvat*) *parinirvāṇa*. The intention (*cetanā*) of that moral person is accomplished. The aspiration (*prārthanā*) is accomplished. The vow (*praṇidhāna*) is accomplished.⁹

This passage is immediately followed by another which similarly suggests that bodhisattvas make vows to produce bodies which have a physically and morally transformative effect on others. The second passage describes a bodhisattva who conveys benefit on beings “even when they see him (*darśanenāpi*) . . . even when they hear him (*śravaṇenāpi*), even when they touch him (*sparśanenāpi*)” (Bendall 1970, 159.7–8 [quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*]). The bodhisattva is likened to a medicine girl (*bhaiṣajya-dārikā*) created from a collection of medicinal herbs by the legendary Buddhist physician, Jīvaka. When sick men “are united [sexually] (*saṃyojayati*)¹⁰ by the king of physicians, Jīvaka,

⁹ Bendall 1970, 158.16–159.6 (quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*): yāni ca tāni mahānagareṣu mahāśmaśānāni bhavanti anekaprāṇīśatasahasrākīrṇāni ’ tatrāpi sa bodhisatvo mahāsatvo mahāntam ātmabhāvaṃ mṛtaṃ kālagatam upadarśayati | tatra te tiryagyonigatāḥ satvā yāvadarthaṃ māṃsaṃ paribhujyāyuhparyante mṛtāḥ kālagatāḥ sugatau svargaloke deveṣūpapadyante | sa caiva teṣāṃ hetur bhavati yāvat parinirvāṇāya | yad idaṃ ’ tasyaiva bodhisatvasya pūrvapraṇidhānaparīsuddhyā ’ yena dīrgharātram evaṃ praṇidhānaṃ kṛtaṃ ’ ye me mṛtasya kālagatasya māṃsaṃ paribhujīran | sa eva teṣāṃ hetur bhavet svargotpattaye yāvat parinirvāṇāya tasya śīlavataḥ | ṛdhyati cetanā ’ ṛdhyati prārthanā ’ ṛdhyati praṇidhānam iti ||

I am reading against the *daṇḍa* that follows “*tasya śīlavataḥ*.” Reading with the *daṇḍa*, the translation is as follows: “. . . The one who made a vow (*praṇidhāna*) for a very long time as follows—“May those who eat my flesh when I am dead and have reached the end of my time”—he alone would be the cause of them arising in heaven and going up to and including (*yāvat*) the *parinirvāṇa* of that moral person. The intention (*cetanā*) is accomplished. The aspiration (*prārthanā*) is accomplished. The vow (*praṇidhāna*) is accomplished.”

¹⁰ See Bendall 1970, 245.9 for a similar use of *saṃyuj-*.

with the medicine girl (*bhaiṣajya-dārikā*)... all the illnesses of those who had been afflicted are alleviated (*prasrabhyante*) and they became healthy, happy, and balanced (*nirvikāra*).¹¹ So too when women, men, boys, and girls, “who are inflamed with lust, anger, and delusion,” touch the bodhisattva’s body (*kāya*) “immediately upon their touch all their defilements (*kleśa*) are alleviated (*prasrabhyante*) and they recognize that their bodies are no longer afire (*vigata-saṃtāpaṃ ca kāyaṃ saṃjānanti*)” (Bendall 1970, 159.14–17 [quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*]). Why? Again, we are told this is due to the “excellent purity of that very bodhisattva’s previous vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna-supariśuddhatva*).¹² In

¹¹ Bendall 1970, 159.10–13 (quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*). *Nirvikāra* means “unchanged,” “unchangeable,” “immutable,” “uniform,” or “normal.” I believe it has the sense here of maintaining one’s natural balanced state. W. S. Karunatilake suggested to me that it may refer to the balance of bodily humors (personal communication, Sri Lanka, 1997).

¹² Bendall 1970, 159.17 (quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*). The passage reads in full: “One who is constituted by the dharma-body (*dharma-kāya-prabhāvita*) benefits beings (*arthaṃ karoti*) even when they see him. He benefits beings even when they hear him, even when they touch him. Śāntamati, just as the king of physicians, Jīvaka, collected all medicines and created the form (*rūpa*) of a girl, made of the collection of medicinal trees, who was pleasing, good-looking, beautifully made (*sukṛta*), beautifully finished (*sunīṣṭhita*), and beautifully done up (*suparikarma-kṛta*). She comes, she goes, stands, sits, and sleeps. Sick persons who come there—great-souled kings, or royal ministers, or merchants, householders, ministers, and fort rulers—are united [sexually] (*saṃyojayati*) by the king of physicians, Jīvaka, with the medicine girl (*bhaiṣajya-dārikā*). Immediately following their union (*saṃyoga*), all the illnesses of those who had been afflicted are alleviated (*prasrabhyante*) and they became healthy, happy, and balanced (*nirvikāra*). Śāntamati, see if the knowledge of the king of physicians, Jīvaka, concerning curing worldly illness is found among other physicians. So too, Śāntamati, as many beings as there are—women, men, boys, and girls—who are inflamed with lust, anger, and delusion, who touch the body (*kāya*) of a bodhisattva who is constituted by the dharma-body (*dharma-kāya-prabhāvita*), immediately upon their touch all their defilements (*kleśa*) are alleviated (*prasrabhyante*) and they recognize that their bodies are no longer afire (*vigata-saṃtāpaṃ ca kāyaṃ saṃjānanti*)—that is, it is by means of the excellent purity of that very bodhisattva’s previous vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna-supariśuddhatva*). This is the reason a body or bodied being (*ātmabhāva*) should be purified (*śodhya*).”

Bendall 1970, 159.7–18 (quotation from the *Tathāgataguhyā sūtra*): sa dharmakāyaprabhāvito darśanenāpi satvānāṃ arthaṃ karoti | śravaṇenāpi sparśanenāpi satvānāṃ arthaṃ karoti | tad yathāpi nāma śāntamate jīvakena vaidyarājena sarvabhaiṣajyāni samudāniya bhaiṣajyatarasamhātamaṃ dārikārūpaṃ [kṛtaṃ] prāsādikam darśaniyam sukṛtaṃ sunīṣṭhitaṃ suparikarmakṛtaṃ | sāgacchati gacchati tiṣṭhati niṣīdati śāyāṃ ca kalpayati | tatra ye āgacchanty āturā mahātmāno rājāno vā rājamātrā vā śreṣṭhigṛhapatyamātyakotṭarājāno vā ’tān sa jivako vaidyarājas tayā bhaiṣajyadārikayā sārddham saṃyojayati ’teṣāṃ samanantarasaṃyogam āpannānāṃ sarvavyādhayaḥ prasrabhyante ’rogāś ca bhavanti sukhino nirvikārāḥ | paśya śāntamate jīvakasya vaidyarājasya laukikavyādhickitsājñānaṃ yady anyeṣāṃ vaidyānāṃ saṃvidyate | evam eva śāntamate tasya dharmakāyaprabhāvitasya bodhisatvasya yāvantaḥ satvāḥ strīpuruṣadārakadārikā rāgoṣamohasamāptāḥ kāyaṃ sprśanti ’teṣāṃ saṃsṛṣṭamātrānāṃ sarvakleśāḥ prasrabhyante vigatasamāptāṃ ca kāyaṃ saṃjānanti || yad idaṃ tasyaiva bodhisatvasya pūrvapraṇidhānasupariśuddhatvāt | etad artham ātmabhāvāḥ śodhyaḥ ||

this instance, the precise content of his vow is not given in the text, but we can infer from the context that the vow concerns the capacity of the bodhisattva's body to transform living beings.

In the following example we are left in no doubt as to the nature of the bodhisattva's vow. A bodhisattva, appropriately named Pleasure-maker (Priyaṃkara), makes a vow (*praṇidhi*) that should a woman gaze at him with lust (*rāga*) she will be reborn as a man and perhaps even a male god.¹³ In each of these examples bodhisattvas make vows to produce bodies whose very taste, touch, and sight transform living beings, physically and morally. Animals become gods and eventually attain *parinirvāṇa*, women become men, and human beings inflamed by the defilements (*kleśa*) of lust, anger, and delusion are alleviated of their torment. In traditional Buddhist cosmology, the transition from animal to god, and female to male reflects an improvement in both physical and moral status.¹⁴ Likewise the alleviation of the torment of the defilements is described in this text in both physical and moral terms. According to the *Compendium of Training*, bodhisattvas make vows to produce bodies that change the physical and moral condition of other living beings. All three passages foreground the role bodhisattva bodies—fashioned by vows—play in fulfilling a bodhisattva's commitment to liberating others from diverse kinds of suffering. Most strikingly, even when that body is no longer living, it is still able to transform others, as in the case of animals who eat a bodhisattva's corpse.

In each of the passages concerning bodhisattva vows, living beings are transformed when they engage in some form of sensory—even sensual—contact with bodhisattva bodies. Bodhisattva vows render not

The *Compendium of Training* does not define *dharma-kāya-prabhāvita* (on this compound see Harrison 1992, 81, n. 50; see also Makransky 1997, 373, n. 6). It is further unclear from the passage how the bodhisattva's *dharma-kāya* relates to his *kāya*—which living beings touch—and to his *ātmabhāva*—which should be purified. The text, unfortunately, provides no discussion of these terms, nor should we assume, as Paul Harrison argues, that all references in Buddhist literature to the term, *dharma-kāya*, imply that literature's engagement with *trikāya* theory, that is, with *sāstric* buddha-body theory (Harrison 1992, 74–75, and *passim*; and footnote 7 above).

¹³ Bendall 1970, 168.5–6 (quotation from the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra*): priyaṃkarasya praṇidheḥ punaḥ punar yā istri prekṣeta sarāgacittā | sā istrībhāvaṃ parivarjayitvā puruṣo bhavet yādr̥gudārasatvaḥ ||

It is not clear from the passage whether the woman is reborn as a human man or male god. The *Compendium of Training* is quoting from the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra*. In the Tibetan recension of the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra*, the woman is reborn as a male god (Tatz 1994, 39–45).

¹⁴ On several occasions the *Compendium of Training* indicates that male sex is superior to female sex: Bendall 1970, 175.14–16 (quotation from the *Bhaiṣajyagurvaidūrya-prabharāja sūtra*), 176.1–2 (quotation from the *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraḡuṇavyūhalaṃkāra sūtra*), 219.3–4 (quotation from the *Suvarṇabhāsa*). Please note I cite titles as given in the *Compendium of Training*.

only specific kinds of bodies transformative, but also specific kinds of sensory contact with these bodies. While the *Compendium of Training* repeatedly warns both lay and monastic bodhisattvas about the dangers of indulging in “foul, disgusting, and stinking sensual pleasures” (*durgandhi-kāma aśuci-jugupsanīya*) (Bendall 1970, 305.5 [quotation from the *Avalokana sūtra*]), such pleasures are productive when their object is a bodhisattva. Thus the *Compendium of Training* claims with respect to Priyaṃkara’s vow: “See, Ānanda, the virtues [of lust] are such that they cause some people to go to hell, but, having given rise to lust for the heroes, they cause others to go to heaven and indeed a state of masculinity.”¹⁵ The *Compendium of Training* concludes its discussion of Priyaṃkara’s vow by arguing that even the defilements (*kleśa*) bring happiness (*sukha*) when their object is a bodhisattva.¹⁶ Base cravings such as those for meat or sex, which under other circumstances might have negative karmic effects, here have marked positive effects. Bodhisattva vows transform the arena of sensual pleasures into one that is physically and morally productive. These vows produce bodhisattva bodies which, like “well-prepared, boiled rice without husk-powder” convey both benefit and pleasure on living beings.

Buddhist confidence in the efficacy of vows reflects both general South Asian views on the power of certain linguistic utterances to affect reality, as well as Buddhist belief that as bodhisattvas progress toward buddhahood they attain, among other qualities, supernormal powers and vast amounts of merit, or good karma, which they can use to make their vows a reality. The *Compendium of Training* is aware of different classes of bodhisattvas. There are superhuman bodhisattvas, often called “celestial bodhisattvas,” such as Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Ākāśagarbha. There are also ordinary human bodhisattvas such as those who comprise the audience for this text. Although the kinds of vows discussed so far may pertain especially to superhuman bodhisattvas, the *Compendium of Training* closes chapter eight by discussing a bodhisattva vow that all bodhisattvas—human and superhuman—must make. That vow is the *bodhicitta*, or the aspiration for awakening. Making this vow commits bodhisattvas to attaining liberation, or buddhahood, specifically for the sake of liberating others from suffering. It is by making this vow that a person becomes a bodhisattva in the first place. The vow will be renewed lifetime after lifetime until that person attains buddhahood.

¹⁵ Bendall 1970, 168.7–8 (quotation from the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra*): paśyasva ānanda guṇās ya iḍrśāḥ ‘yenānyasatvā nirayaṃ vrajanti | tenaiva śūreṣu janitva rāgaṃ gacchanti svargaṃ puruṣatvam eva ca ||

¹⁶ Bendall 1970, 168.9–10 (quotation from the *Upāyakaūśalya sūtra*): bhaiṣajyarājeṣu mahāyaśeṣu ‘ko bodhisatveṣu janayeta dveṣam | yesāṃ kileśo ‘pi sukhasya dāyakah ‘ kim vā punar yaḥ tān satkareyā ‘ iti ||

Generating *bodhicitta* is the final and, perhaps, most powerful disciplinary practice the *Compendium of Training* prescribes in chapter eight for purifying bodied being. The text uses an alchemical metaphor to describe the effects of this vow. *Bodhicitta*, also called the aspiration for omniscience (*sarvajñatā-citta*), is likened to mercury (*rasa-jāta*). We are told that just as mercury transforms copper into gold, so too the mercury-like *bodhicitta* transforms the coppers, defined as the obstructions living beings experience on account of their bad karma and defilements (*sarva-karma-kleśa-āvaraṇa-loha*), into the color that is omniscience (*sarvajñatā-varṇa*).¹⁷

The alchemical metaphor is not accidental in a chapter that opens by describing the physical and moral effects of encounters with bodhisattva bodies. Alchemists in medieval India were not just interested in producing gold; they also sought to produce immortal bodies by ingesting refined mercury. As David Gordon White argues, the ingested mercury, “takes over the body into which it enters, transforming human tissue into alchemical diamond or gold” (White 1996, 269). The alchemical adept who has transformed himself in this fashion, “becomes capable, in turn, of transforming other beings, indeed, the entire universe, through his limitless powers” (White 1996, 272). The alchemical passage suggests that all bodhisattvas—not just those with superhuman powers—make vows that produce bodies that have beneficial effects on others.

The alchemical metaphor further demonstrates that the *Compendium of Training* regards purification as a physical, as well as a moral, process. Alchemy clearly implies a transmutation of material substances, whether of base metals to gold, or of mortal flesh to immortal bodies. The alchemical metaphor thus renders particularly problematic any attempt to posit an absolute distinction between the physical and moral

¹⁷ The passage reads: “Well-born son, just as there is a mercury (*rasa-jāta*) called ‘having the appearance of *hātaka* gold (*hātaka-prabhāsa*),’ one measure of which turns one thousand measures of copper into gold, but the measure [of mercury] cannot be overcome by one thousand measures of copper or turned into copper, so too, the essence, or element (*dhātu*), of mercury that is the arising of the aspiration for omniscience, grasped with the knowledge of the transformation of the roots of skillful actions, having overcome the coppers that are the obstructions of all karma and defilements, turns all dharmas into the color [i.e., gold] that is omniscience. But the essence, or element, of mercury that is the arising of the aspiration for omniscience cannot be defiled or overcome by the coppers that are all karma and defilements.”

Bendall 1970, 177.15–178.2 (quotation from the *Maitreyavimokṣa*, now a part of the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra*): tad yathā kulaputra hātakaprabhāsaṃ nāma rasajātaṃ | tasyaikam palaṃ lohapalasaḥsraṃ suvarṇīkaroti | na ca tatra tat palaṃ śakyate tena lohapalasaḥsreṇa paryādātuṃ | na lohikartuṃ | evam evaikāḥ sarvajñatācittotpādarasadhātuḥ kuśalamūlapariṇāmanājñānasamgrhītaḥ sarvakarmakleśāvaraṇalohāni paryādāya sarvadharmān sarvajñatāvarṇān karoti | na ca sarvajñatācittotpādarasadhātuḥ śakyāḥ sarvakarmakleśalohaiḥ samkleśayitum paryādātuṃ vā |

dimensions of living beings. Significantly, even *bodhicitta*, which is literally the thought or aspiration for awakening, is conceived of as a material substance, namely, mercury. Thus while vows refer to thoughts, aspirations, intentions, or resolutions, they should not be characterized as purely mental events. They are better characterized as disciplinary practices, or technologies of the self, intended to have both physical and moral effects. Bodhisattvas make vows, like the *bodhicitta*, in order to physically and morally purify themselves. Once purified, they become capable of transforming others.

The *Compendium of Training* draws particular attention to the transformative power of a bodhisattva's body. According to this text, the physical qualities of bodhisattvas, no less than their moral qualities, have beneficial effects on other living beings. The *Compendium of Training* thus foregrounds the role bodhisattva bodies play in the fulfillment of the bodhisattva ideal. In the final section of this paper, I explore the *Compendium of Training's* use of the metaphor of "cooking living beings" (*satva-paripācana/paripāka*) to describe a bodhisattva's transformative effects on others. Specifically, I consider how the *Compendium of Training's* use of the metaphor enables us to nuance Foucault's concept of subjectivation, or ethical self-cultivation.

4. Cooking Living Beings

Much of Mahāyāna literature, including the *Compendium of Training*, employs the master trope of cooking—more correctly, fully cooking (*paripācana, paripāka*)—to describe a bodhisattva's effects on living beings. In chapter eight, as elsewhere in the *Compendium of Training*, bodhisattvas are instructed to dedicate themselves to fully cooking living beings (Bendall 1970, 167.15–17, 170.13, see also 171.3–4). As David Gordon White notes, the metaphor of cooking emerges in South Asia out of the Vedic context to describe "such transformative processes as sacrifice, cremation, digestion, aging, and the yogic austerities. As in Vedic sacrifice, so in yoga and Āyurveda: the body is to be 'cooked to a turn' (*paripakvā*)" (White 1996, 20). In the *Compendium of Training* bodhisattvas use their bodies to cook others. As we will see, the *Compendium of Training* suggests that bodhisattvas can do so precisely because they have themselves already been cooked.

I follow Charles Malamoud in translating *paripac-* as "cooking." Malamoud studies the meaning of the expression, *loka-pakti*, or "cooking the world," in Brahmanic literature. Brahmins are said to cook the world when they perform the Vedic sacrifice which is itself an act of cooking, and which recreates the world anew (Malamoud 1996, 34, 48). Malamoud argues against scholars who prefer less literal translations of *loka-pakti* such as "perfecting," "maturing," or "ripening the world." As

Francis Zimmerman observes, such translations give to the expression, *loka-pakti*, a “spiritual sense” which loses any reference to the material image underlying it, namely, that of cooking (Zimmerman 1987, 207). Malamoud urges scholars not to dilute the metaphor, but to retain in their translations some of the literal sense of cooking implied by the metaphor.

Building on Malamoud, I wish to restore to the Buddhist metaphor, “cooking living beings” (*satva-paripācana/paripāka*), the material image underlying it. Cooking entails a literal transmutation of substances. When bodhisattvas cook living beings, they alter them physically and morally for the better. The *Compendium of Training* conceives of cooking as a process of physical and moral transformation. Just as “cooking the world” describes best, according to Malamoud, the function of brahmins, so too “cooking living beings” is the quintessential definition of a bodhisattva’s practice according to the *Compendium of Training*. Further, the *Compendium of Training* makes clear that *all* bodhisattvas at all stages of the path to buddhahood should dedicate themselves to cooking others. Yet, how do we connect the fantastic stories about eating, touching, and seeing bodhisattvas with the perhaps more mundane reality of daily Buddhist life? Specifically, how do bodhisattvas with ordinary human powers cook living beings? One answer is suggested by the following quotation:

Lord, a bodhisattva should behave in such a way that upon seeing him alone beings are pleased (*satvāḥ prasīdeyuḥ*). Why? Lord, a bodhisattva has no other duty than attracting living beings (*satva-āvarjana*). Lord, the cooking of living beings (*satva-paripāka*) is a bodhisattva’s only recitation (*saṃgīti*) of the Dharma.¹⁸

Bodhisattvas with ordinary human powers cook living beings by acting in such a way that the mere sight of them pleases and attracts living beings. Significantly, the passage occurs in chapter six of the *Compendium of Training*, which provides instructions on monastic etiquette and deportment. Monastic bodhisattvas are trained to cook living beings by cultivating a pleasing and attractive appearance and deportment. Hence chapter six makes reference to the following: posture (*īryāpathā*) (Bendall 1970, 124.18), tone of voice and proper speech (Bendall 1970, 124.18, 125.13–127.5), the importance of maintaining a very pleasing countenance (*suprasanna-mukha*) (Bendall 1970, 124.19), prohibitions against disgusting acts such as discharging urine, excrement, phlegm,

¹⁸ Bendall 1970, 124.6–8 (quotation from the *Dharmasaṃgīti sūtra*): tathā tathā bhagavan bodhisatvena pratipattavyaṃ yat sahadarśanenaiva satvāḥ prasīdeyuḥ | tat kasmād dhetoḥ | na bhagavan bodhisatvasyānyat karaṇīyam asty anyatra satvāvarjanāt | satva-paripāka eveyaṃ bhagavan bodhisatvasya dharmasaṃgītir iti ||

or pus in inappropriate places (Bendall 1970, 125.2–3), and regulations concerning eating and begging for food (Bendall 1970, 125.11–12, 127.16–131.12). The text’s emphasis on monastic etiquette and deportment reminds us that monastic vows, no less than bodhisattva vows, are designed to produce particular kinds of bodies, namely, the pleasing, attractive, graceful, and decorous bodies of monks and nuns. The *Compendium of Training* enjoins upon monastic bodhisattvas diverse kinds of vows, all of which contribute to the formation of bodied beings whose very physical qualities are transformative of others.

The idea that the well-disciplined bodies of monastic bodhisattvas have both physical and moral effects on other living beings is supported by a passage in the text that describes the effects of *not* being cooked by such bodhisattvas. Immediately following the passage cited above, bodhisattvas are warned that if they do not please, attract, and fully cook (*paripac-*) living beings, these beings will be roasted (*pac-*) in hell: “But what is the fault in not doing so [cooking living beings]?” The text answers: “But the world, having despised the nascent Jina [i.e., bodhisattva] as unwelcome like fire covered with ash, is roasted (*pacyeta*) in hell, and so forth.”¹⁹ The *Compendium of Training* plays with the metaphor of cooking to suggest that those not fully cooked by bodhisattvas will be roasted in hell. Rebirth in hell has physical and moral consequences for living beings. Physically, they suffer horrific torment. Morally, they have little or no opportunity to earn merit, or good karma. Encounters with bodhisattvas, even monastic bodhisattvas with ordinary human powers, alter living beings for the better; failed encounters alter living beings for the worse.

But chapter eight opens with an image of a cooked bodhisattva, not cooked living beings. A purified bodhisattva body is likened to “well-prepared, boiled rice without husk-powder” (Bendall 1970, 158.14–15). What can we do with this image of a cooked bodhisattva who cooks others? Malamoud argues that Brahmanic ascetics internalize the Vedic sacrifice and thereby cook themselves. For this reason, ascetics are not cremated at death; they have already been cooked while alive (Malamoud 1996, 46–48). I suggest that bodhisattvas likewise cook, that is, physically and morally transform, themselves by means of disciplinary

¹⁹ Bendall 1970, 124.9–11: *evam punar akriyamāṇe ko doṣa ity āha | anādeyaṃ tu taṃ lokaḥ paribhūya jināṅkuraṃ | bhasmachann[am] yathā vahni[m] pacyeta narakādiṣu ||*

Bendall reads *channā*, but emends to *channo* (Bendall 1970, 124, n. 4). I read *channaṃ* and have emended accordingly, although it must be noted that this *aḥsara* is difficult to read in the manuscript. Bendall also emends *vahniṃ* to *vahniḥ* even though the manuscript clearly reads *vahniṃ*. Prajñākaramati’s commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* reads: *anādeyaṃ tu taṃ lokaḥ paribhūya jināṅkuraṃ | bhasmachannaṃ yathā vahniṃ pacyeta narakādiṣu ||* (La Vallée Poussin, 1901–1914, 136). At issue is whether it is the nascent Jina, i.e., the bodhisattva, or the world that is likened to a fire covered by ash.

practices such as vow-making. Only a cooked bodhisattva is able to cook others. At one point the *Compendium of Training* makes a suggestive reference to the cooking of a bodhisattva's *bodhicitta*, or aspiration for awakening (*bodhicitta-paripācana*) (Bendall 1970, 51.16). The reference to cooking *bodhicitta* occurs in the context of discussing bodily sacrifice. Bodhisattvas are warned not to engage in a premature gift of life or limb. Specifically they are told that a bodhisattva should not offer his flesh to others if his resolve has not been fully cooked (*aparipakva-adhimukti*) (Bendall 1970, 51.10–11). Although ultimately a bodhisattva should be prepared to sacrifice his life for others, he must guard against an “untimely enjoyment” (*akāla-paribhoga*) of his body or else “the seed of his *bodhicitta*” will be destroyed (Bendall 1970, 51.10–13). In other words, if beginner bodhisattvas engage in bodily mutilation or sacrifice before they are ready, the physical and mental pain of the experience might tempt them to give up their aspiration for awakening. Consequently living beings will not benefit from their efforts. According to the *Compendium of Training*, an “untimely desire” (*akāla-pratikāṅkṣaṇatā*) to give away life or limb is none other than the work of Māra, a supernatural being and personification of death. Thus bodhisattvas are explicitly warned to protect themselves from beings who prevent the cooking of their *bodhicitta* (*bodhicitta-paripācana-virodhin*) (Bendall 1970, 51.14–17 [quotation from the *Gaganagaṇja sūtra*]).

Just as eating uncooked rice would be unhealthy for living beings, so too eating an uncooked bodhisattva is unhealthy for living beings because it destroys his or her *bodhicitta*. This interesting reference to cooking *bodhicitta* suggests that bodhisattvas cook others only once they have been cooked themselves and that, moreover, vows are an integral part of the cooking process. The image of the cooked bodhisattva at the outset of chapter eight of the *Compendium of Training* is surely not accidental in a text that argues a bodhisattva's highest duty is to please, attract, and cook others. The *Compendium of Training* envisions bodhisattva training as a process of self-cooking in the service of the cooking of others—whether by means of extraordinary deeds such as bodily sacrifice or the more mundane acts of mastering monastic etiquette and deportment.

While the *Compendium of Training* frequently employs the metaphor of cooking to describe the transformative effects of a bodhisattva on others, the text more commonly uses the language of purification to describe a bodhisattva's self-transformation. The purification of bodied being is, perhaps, the best equivalent in the *Compendium of Training* to Foucault's concept of subjectivation, or ethical self-cultivation. Subjectivation is understood in the *Compendium of Training* as a process of physical and moral purification. Subjectivation produces a distinct kind of bodied being, namely, a bodhisattva, whose very physical

qualities are transformative of others. Nevertheless, the metaphor of cooking can be applied as well to the process of self-purification, as indicated by references to cooking *bodhicitta* or to images of a cooked bodhisattva.

I find the metaphor of cooking particularly suggestive because it offers a more complex concept of ethical self-cultivation than that initially envisioned by Foucault. The metaphor of cooking implies a literal transmutation of substances. As such, both the *Compendium of Training* and Foucault blur the boundaries between the physical and moral dimensions of living beings by demonstrating that disciplinary practices produce an embodied ethical subject. Yet the *Compendium of Training* blurs other boundaries as well, thereby offering new ways of thinking about the formation of ethical subjects. For instance, the *Compendium of Training* renders problematic an absolute distinction between self and other or ethical agents and patients. In the *Compendium of Training*, self-transformation is always in the service of the transformation of *others*. Bodhisattvas undertake disciplinary practices such as vow-making in order to produce bodies capable of changing other living beings. The quintessential bodhisattva act is thus defined as cooking *others*. The ethical formation of self and other are fully interconnected processes in the *Compendium of Training*. Further, while Foucault notes that the formation of ethical subjects entails “the interplay of the care of the self and the help of the other” (Foucault 1988, 53), his primary focus remains the “ethical work” (Foucault 1990, 27) one performs on oneself. The *Compendium of Training*, on the other hand, is more interested in the ways in which individuals shape each other into ideal ethical subjects—that is, into bodhisattvas. The ethical subject of the *Compendium of Training* is not a discrete and autonomous individual as is so often the case in modern Western ethical discourse; rather this ethical subject takes form within and by means of a broader community—he or she is simultaneously ethical agent and patient.

According to the *Compendium of Training*, the ideal community for ethical cultivation is the monastic community, suggesting that this is the arena within which bodhisattvas are most likely to cook and be cooked by others. Thus the *Compendium of Training* conceives of the monastic community as a place of communal cooking, or transformation. The *Compendium of Training* calls into question any absolute distinction between self and other or ethical agents and patients because it envisions monastic communities as places in which it is not only possible to cook oneself, for instance, by generating *bodhicitta*, but it is also possible to cook and be cooked by others. The intervention of other bodhisattvas—whether those with superhuman powers or one’s very human monastic companions—is vital to a monastic bodhisattva’s ethical development. The metaphor of cooking, which implies an agent and a patient,

presupposes that bodhisattvas take shape as such not just by self-effort, but by the effort of others as well.

But there is something else the metaphor of cooking suggests about the formation of ethical subjects that enables us to nuance Foucault's concept of subjectivation. The imagery of cooking suggests that living beings have an innate capacity for physical and moral perfection since cooking requires both a good chef and good ingredients to be successful. It is not accidental that when a purified bodhisattva body is likened to cooked rice, the rice is of the finest quality, i.e., without husk-powder. Similarly, even the best alchemist cannot change brick into gold. Living beings possess a raw capacity for physical and moral perfection—a capacity that must be cooked to be actualized. We might say that when bodhisattvas cook living beings, they bring out the flavor (*rasa*) of those beings, just as cooking brings out the flavor of once flavorless, raw meat. The metaphor of cooking blurs the distinction between what one is and what one will become by suggesting that the formation of ethical subjects is a process of bringing out their flavor. Cooking is, in the end, an alchemical process in which raw or base beings—beings who, for instance, eat the flesh of dead bodhisattvas—are transformed into sublime beings. As we have seen, the *Compendium of Training* highlights the role bodhisattva bodies play in cooking others. Just as an alchemical adept can transmute base metals into gold simply by his touch (White 1984, 57), so too bodhisattvas use their bodies to transmute base beings into sublime ones, having first transformed themselves with vows such as the mercury-like *bodhicitta*. Cooking in all its permutations—self-cooking, cooking others, being cooked by others—is a process of bringing out the best in living beings, transforming them physically and morally so that they too become capable of cooking others.

5. Conclusion

Taking body, rather than mind, as the starting point for ethical inquiry offers new insights into the nature of Buddhist ethics, particularly in its South Asian Mahāyāna form. The *Compendium of Training* reflects a widespread view in Buddhist and South Asian traditions that body and morality are closely linked. Thus bodies figure prominently in Buddhist ethical discourse. According to the *Compendium of Training*, the formation of ethical subjects entails both physical and moral transformation. Indeed, the two go hand in hand. Consequently, the text displays a keen interest in bodhisattva bodies. It is especially interested in the critical role these bodies play in the ethical development of other living beings. The physical qualities of bodhisattvas, no less than their moral qualities, have transformative effects on others. When living beings encounter

bodhisattva bodies they are changed for the better in physical and moral ways.

Although the *Compendium of Training* is but one text, the very fact that it draws upon approximately one hundred Buddhist sources suggests that its interest in the transformative power of bodhisattva bodies is not without precedent in Buddhist literature. Indeed, similar stories of bodhisattvas making vows to create bodies that have positive physical and moral effects on living beings can be found in other Buddhist texts, not all of which are quoted in the *Compendium of Training*. For instance, Paul Demiéville cites from a number of *sūtras*, or scriptures, which describe bodhisattvas making vows that should beings hear, touch, see, smell, or eat them, they will be healed of illnesses or defilements (Tatz 1985, 44–50). By drawing such marked attention to the transformative power of bodhisattva bodies, the *Compendium of Training* illumines a concern that has a broader currency in Mahāyāna literature. It also suggests that future studies in Buddhist ethics might profit from exploring more broadly the effects diverse kinds of bodies have on the ethical development of others.

Taking body as the focus of ethical inquiry also restores to the metaphor of “cooking living beings” the material image underlying it. Cooking is a process of physical and moral transformation. The *Compendium of Training* suggests that bodhisattvas are themselves cooked, or physically and morally transformed, by disciplinary practices such as vow-making. Once cooked, bodhisattvas use their bodies to cook others. The *Compendium of Training* defines the cooking of living beings as the quintessential bodhisattva act. Monastic bodhisattvas receive extensive training in etiquette and deportment for the express purpose of cultivating bodies that please, attract, and cook others. Thus their monastic vows, no less than their bodhisattva vows, produce bodies that have beneficial effects on others. Surprisingly, fantastic stories about eating, touching, and seeing bodhisattva bodies are of a piece with regulations governing how to eat or how to walk. Both display an assumption that bodies, fashioned by vows of diverse sorts, are capable of cooking other beings.

Taking body as the focus of ethical inquiry has also enabled me to suggest ways of nuancing Foucault’s concept of subjectivation, or ethical self-cultivation. Bodhisattva bodies cook other living beings. As we have seen, the metaphor of cooking living beings blurs the boundaries between self and other, ethical agents and patients, and even between what one is and what one will become. The distinction between self and other breaks down in the *Compendium of Training* because ethical self-cultivation is always in the service of the ethical cultivation of others. Thus cooked bodhisattvas cook others. But bodhisattvas are also cooked *by* others. Bodhisattvas are simultaneously ethical agents and

patients, cooking themselves, cooking others, and being cooked by others. The *Compendium of Training* envisions monastic bodhisattva communities as places of communal cooking—as places where physical encounters with a variety of bodhisattvas, both human and superhuman—are occasions for mutual physical and moral transformation. The *Compendium of Training* challenges modern Western characterizations of ethical subjects as discrete and autonomous individuals. Bodhisattvas take shape as such not just by self-effort, but by the effort of others as well. Finally, the metaphor of cooking suggests that the formation of ethical subjects is a process of bringing out the flavor (*rasa*) of living beings, thereby blurring the distinction between what one is and what one will become. Living beings possess a raw capacity for perfection, but unless they are cooked by bodhisattvas this capacity cannot be actualized. Cooking in all its forms—self-cooking, cooking others, and being cooked by others—is, in the end, an alchemical process that transforms base beings into sublime ones, rendering them thereby capable of doing the same for others.

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