

Part One:
THE PERFECTION OF GIVING
(Chapters 17–20)

b. THE DĀNA PĀRAMITĀ OF THE DHARMA BODY

How does the Dharma-body bodhisattva cultivate *dāna pāramitā* to fulfillment? In his very last fleshly body, the bodhisattva achieves the unproduced-dharmas patience. He relinquishes the fleshly body and gains the Dharma body.²⁹ In the six destinies and throughout the ten directions, he transformationally creates bodies in response to what is appropriate, and thereby goes about transforming beings. He provides all sorts of precious jewels, clothing, and food and drink as gifts to everyone and then additionally gives exhaustively of everything he possesses, whether inwardly or outwardly, including even his own head, his eyes, his marrow, his brain, his country, his wealth, and his wives and sons.

1) BUDDHA'S PAST LIFE AS AN ELEPHANT (STORY)

A case in point is that of Shākyamuni Buddha when he was once a six-tusked white elephant. A hunter had ambushed him and shot him with poison arrows. The herd of elephants stampeded towards him with the intention of trampling the hunter to death. The white elephant used his own body to defend [the hunter], protecting that man and having pity upon him just the same as if he had been his own son. He ordered the herd of elephants away and then calmly asked the hunter, "Why did you shoot me?"

He replied, "I need your tusks." Immediately, blood and flesh spontaneously pushed forth all six tusks from their sockets. He then used his trunk to pick up the tusks and give them to the hunter.

Although this was described as the [animal] body of an elephant, where the mind is used in this manner, one should realize that this elephant could not have come into existence as retribution for the karmic actions typical of animals. Nowhere among the dharmas of those [on the path of the] arhat are there mental practices of this sort. One should realize that this was a Dharma-body bodhisattva.

2) THE ELEPHANT, THE MONKEY, AND THE BIRD (STORY)

There once was a time when people in Jambudvīpa did not know enough to render proper reverence and respect to those who are older and those who are virtuous. At that time they were not yet amenable to being taught the means to liberation through the use of words alone.

At that time, a bodhisattva transformed his body and manifest there in the form of a *kapiñjala* bird. This bird had two close friends. The first was a great elephant and the second was a monkey. They

all lived together around the base of a pipal tree. They once happened to inquire of one another, wondering, "We don't know who among us ought to be accorded the status of 'elder.'"

The elephant said, "In the past I viewed this tree when it was shorter than the height of my belly. Now it is so huge. From this we can deduce that I ought to be known as the eldest."

The monkey said, "In the past I've squatted down and plucked with my hand at the top of the tree. From this we can deduce that I should be recognized as the eldest."

The bird said, "In the past I fed on the fruit of such trees in the pipal forest. The seed then passed out with my feces and as a result this tree grew forth. It can be deduced from this that it is I who ought to be recognized as the eldest." The bird continued, saying, "As a matter of propriety, the first born, being the eldest, ought to be the recipient of offerings."

The great elephant immediately took the monkey on his back and the bird then rode on the back of the monkey. They traveled all around in this fashion. When all of the birds and beasts observed this, they asked them, "Why are you going about like this?"

They replied, "We mean by this an expression of reverence and offerings to the one who is the eldest." The birds and the beasts all accepted this teaching and all practiced such reverence. They no longer invaded the fields of the people and no longer brought harm to the lives of other animals. The people were all amazed that all of the birds and beasts no longer engaged in harmful activities.

The hunters went into the forest and observed that the elephant bore the monkey on his back, that the monkey carried along the bird, and that they so transformed the creatures through cultivating respectfulness that the creatures all cultivated goodness. They passed this on to the people of the country. The people all celebrated this and remarked, "The times are growing peaceful. Though but birds and beasts, they are nonetheless possessed of humanity."

And so the people as well modeled themselves on this. They all cultivated propriety and respectfulness. From ancient times until the present, this transformative teaching has flowed on down through a myriad generations. One should know that this was brought about by a Dharma-body bodhisattva.

3) CONCLUSION OF DHARMA-BODY *DĀNA* DISCUSSION

Additionally, the Dharma-body bodhisattva, in a single moment, can transformationally produce countless bodies with which he

makes offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions. He is able in a single moment to transformationally create an immeasurable number of valuable jewels which he supplies in abundance to beings. He is able in a single moment, in accordance with all of the different superior, middling, and lesser languages, to universally speak Dharma for them. And so he proceeds on in this fashion until he comes to sit at the base of the tree of the Buddhas.

All sorts of cases such as these exemplify the Dharma-body bodhisattva's fulfillment of the practice of *dāna pāramitā*.

F. THREE KINDS OF DĀNA

Then again, *dāna* is of three varieties: The first is the giving of material objects. The second is giving which consists of offerings of reverence. The third is the giving of Dharma.

What is meant by "the giving of material objects"? It refers to jewels, precious things, robes, food, one's head, eyes, marrow and brain. One gives exhaustively of such things as these, giving all that one owns, whether they be inward or outward possessions. This is what is meant by the giving of material objects.

As for "the giving of reverence," it refers to having a mind of faith which is pure as one reverently performs acts of obeisance. It refers to offerings which consist of looking after, seeing off, welcoming, making expressions of praise, and circumambulating. All sorts of actions such as these constitute what is referred to as the giving of reverence.

As for "the giving of Dharma," it refers to actions performed for the sake of virtue associated with the Path. This includes such activities as discoursing, dialectical discussion, reciting, reading, lecturing, dispelling doubts, answering questions, transmitting the five precepts to people, and all sorts of other acts of giving such as these which are performed for the sake of the Buddha Path. This is what is meant by the giving of Dharma. When these three kinds of giving are fulfilled, this is what is meant by "fulfilling *dāna pāramitā*."

G. THE THREE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF DĀNA

Moreover, the causes and conditions associated with three factors are what produce *dāna*: The first is a faithful mind which is pure. The second is a valuable object. The third is a field of merit.

1. THE MIND OF THE BENEFACTOR

As for the mind [associated with giving], there are three types: that which is characterized by sympathy; that which is characterized by

reverence; and that which is characterized by both sympathy and reverence. If one gives to those who are poverty-stricken, to those of low social station, or to those who inhabit the animal world, this is sympathetic giving. If one gives to buddhas, to Dharma-body bodhisattvas, or to others of this sort, this is reverential giving. If one gives to elderly, sick, or destitute arhats, or to pratyekabuddhas, this constitutes giving which is both reverential and sympathetic.

2. THE GIFT

The object which is given must be pure, having neither been stolen nor obtained through forced confiscation. It is to be given at the right time and it is not to be given because one seeks to gain a reputation from it or because one seeks profit or sustenance.

One may at times gain great merit which arises on account of the quality of the mind. Perhaps one may gain great merit which arises on account of the quality of the field of merit. Or perhaps one may gain great merit which arises on account of having given a marvelous object.

As for the first, where it arises on account of the quality of the mind, it is exemplified by the four equitable minds (*samatā-citta*),³⁰ by the mindfulness of the Buddha samādhi (*buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*), and by [the Buddha's] having given his body to the tigress. Examples such as these indicate what is meant by gaining great merit on account of the quality of the mind.

3. THE FIELD OF MERIT

As for the field of merit (*punyakṣetra*), it is of two types: The first is the compassion-based field of merit (*karuṇā-punyakṣetra*). The second is the reverence-based field of merit (*satkāra-punyakṣetra*). The field of merit associated with compassion is such that it is able to inspire the arising of a sympathetic mind. The field of merit associated with reverence is such that it is able to inspire the arising of a reverential mind. This is illustrated by the case of King Aśoka who [as a child in an earlier life] had made an offering to the Buddha fashioned from mud. (Chinese textual note: In our language, this [Aśoka] means "free of worry.")

Moreover, regarding the giving of material objects, it is illustrated by the case of the woman who, on account of her mind's being immersed in inebriation, spontaneously made a gift to the stupa of Kāśyapa Buddha, bestowing on it a necklace made of the seven precious things. On account of that merit, she was reborn in

the Heaven of the Thirty-three. All sorts of cases such as this indicate what is meant by the giving of material objects.

a. How "NOTHING WHATSOEVER IS RELINQUISHED"

Question: *Dāna* refers to the relinquishing of valuable things. Why does it state in the *Sutra* text that one perfects it through "the dharma of having nothing whatsoever which is relinquished"?

b. TRANSCENDENT VERSUS NON-TRANSCENDENT *DĀNA*

Response: *Dāna* is of two types: The first transcends the world. The second is that which fails to transcend the world. We are now discussing *dāna* which transcends the world and which, [at the realization level at which it is practiced], accords with signlessness. Because it is characterized by [the cognition of] signlessness, nothing whatsoever is relinquished. Hence it speaks of perfecting "the dharma of having nothing whatsoever which is relinquished."

Moreover, it is because valuable things cannot be gotten at that it refers to having nothing whatsoever which is relinquished. In both the future and the past, these things are empty [of intrinsic existence]. And when they are analyzed in the present moment, they are found to be devoid of any definitely fixed dharma. It is for these reasons that [the *Sutra*] states that there is "nothing whatsoever which is relinquished."

Additionally, when the practitioner relinquishes valuable things, he may be liable to think to himself, "This act of giving is greatly meritorious." Then, based on this, he may become prone to bringing forth such fetters as pridefulness and affection. It is for this reason that it states here that there is nothing herein which is relinquished. Because there is nothing which is actually relinquished, there cannot be any pridefulness. Because there is no pridefulness, other fetters such as affection and so forth are not brought forth either.

c. TRANSCENDENT VERSUS NON-TRANSCENDENT BENEFACTORS

Additionally, there are two types of people who give: First, the worldly person. Second, the person who has transcended the world. The worldly person may be able to relinquish valuable things but is nonetheless not able to relinquish his giving. The person who has transcended the world is able to relinquish valuable things and is also able to relinquish his giving. Why? Because neither valuable things nor the mind which gives can finally be found.

It is for this reason that [the *Sutra*] speaks of perfecting the dharma of having nothing relinquished. What's more, in its treatment of

dāna pāramitā, it explains that the three factors of the valuable object, benefactor who gives it, and the recipient of the giving cannot ultimately be apprehended at all.

4. OBJECTION: "NOTHING WHATSOEVER" IS CONCEPTUALLY FALLACIOUS

Question: It is the conjunction of the three factors which constitutes *dāna*. Now, it is being explained that those three factors are ultimately unfindable. How then can one even refer to the perfect fulfilment of *dāna pāramitā*?

We do now have something of value [serving as a gift], the act of giving, and the recipient. How is it that these three factors cannot be found? For example when a piece of cloth is given, it does actually exist. How is this so? If the cloth has a name, then there is the dharma of cloth. If there were no dharma of cloth, then there would not be the name "cloth," either. Because the name exists, then it ought to be the case that cloth itself actually *does* exist.

Furthermore, pieces of cloth may be long, short, coarse, fine, white, black, yellow, or red. There are causes, there are conditions, there is a creation, there is a destruction, and there is a result in the realm of effects whereby a thought is produced which corresponds to the given dharma. A piece of cloth which is ten feet in length is long and one which is five feet in length is short. When the thread is thick, it is deemed to be coarse. When the thread is thin, it is said to be fine. In correspondence with the dye used on it, it has a particular color.

The existence of thread serves as the cause for its existence. The loom serves the condition. Because of the conjunction of this cause and condition, it becomes a piece of cloth. A person's effort brings about its actual creation. A person's damaging of it brings about its destruction. Its ability to control cold and heat and its serviceability in covering up of the body are the rewards in the realm of karmic effects. When a person gains it, there is great delight and when he loses it, there is great distress.

As a result of using it to make a gift, one gains karmic blessings which assist the Path. If one steals it from someone or takes it by force, he undergoes public punishment and then, on dying, enters the hells. On account of all sorts of reasons such as these, one knows that this cloth actually does exist. This is what is meant by the dharma of cloth. How then can one claim that the thing which is used as a gift is ultimately unfindable?

a. REPUTATION OF CLAIM THAT INTRINSIC EXISTENCE IS VALID

Response: You claim that, because there is a name, this entity exists. However, this is not the case. How does one know this? Names are of two kinds: those which are reality-based and those which are not reality-based. As for those names which are not reality-based, we have for example a type of grass known as *caurī*. (Chinese textual note: In our language, this means “thief.”) For its part, the grass does not steal. It does not take things by force. In truth, it is not the case that it is a thief, and yet it is referred to as “thief.”

This is just like the cases of the proverbial hare with horns and the turtle with fur. In those cases as well, they merely possess a name but have no corresponding reality.

Although cloth is not nonexistent in the same fashion as the horns of the hare or the fur of the turtle, still, it is by virtue of the coming together of causes and conditions that it is said to “exist” and by virtue of the scattering of causes and conditions that it becomes “nonexistent.” In this respect, it is just like a “forest” and like an “army.”³¹ These each possess a name but are devoid of any reality.

This is also like a wooden man. Although it possesses the name “man,” one ought not to seek there for its dharma of humanity. Although cloth possesses a name, still, one ought not to seek there for a cloth’s true reality.

Cloth may be able to serve as a cause or condition associated with a person’s thoughts. [For instance], when someone obtains it, he may become delighted whereas, when he loses it, he may become distressed. These circumstances serve as causes and conditions associated with thought. Now, when thoughts arise, there may be two types of originating causes and conditions. It may be that they arise based on something which is actually real. But it may also be that they arise based on something which is not actually real.

This is just like what is seen in a dream, like the moon reflected in water, and like seeing a bare tree trunk at night and being of the opinion that it is a person. Designations of these sorts are cases wherein the mind is caused to arise on the basis of something which is not actually real. Conditions of these sorts are not definite [in terms of their reliability].

One should not claim that, because some thought arises, a corresponding phenomenon must therefore exist. If it were the case that something must exist simply because of the arising of a corresponding thought, then one should not need to seek for any additional

verification of valid existence beyond that. Take for instance when the eye sees a reflection of the moon in the water and then a thought arises which takes that to be the moon. If it were the case that a moon should actually exist there merely because of the arising of a thought [which deems this to be the case], then there could be no other genuinely existent moon in addition to that one [thought to exist in the reflection atop the water].

1) THREE TYPES OF FALLACIOUS EXISTENCE

Moreover, "existence" is may be of three sorts. The first is relative existence. The second is [conventional] existence based on false names. The third is existence based on [constituent] dharmas.

2) RELATIVE EXISTENCE

As for relative existence, this is a reference to "long" versus "short," "that" versus "this," and so forth. In reality, there is no "long" or "short," nor is there a "that" or a "this." It is on account of an interdependent relationship that these designations come to exist. "Long" exists because of "short" and "short" exists because of "long." "That" exists because of "this" and "this" exists because of "that." If one is to the east of something, then one takes it to be "westerly." If one is to the west of it, then one takes [that same thing] to be "easterly." [In both cases], it is but a single given entity which has not changed at all, and yet it is given these distinctions of "easterly" [in one case] and "westerly" [in another].

These are all cases wher a designation exists, but there is no corresponding reality [on which it is based]. Cases such as these exemplify relative existence. There is no actual dharma herein. It is not the same [order of existence] as pertains to phenomena [perceptible] through their visible forms, smells, tastes, tangibility, and so forth.

3) CONVENTIONAL EXISTENCE BASED ON FALSE NAMES

As for [conventional] existence based on false names, it refers for example to such things as yoghurt which actually *are* perceptible through their visible forms, smells, tastes, and tangibility. [In these cases], it is simply on account of the coming together of particular causes and conditions that the given phenomenon is provided such false designations as "yoghurt."

Although such phenomena do "exist," their existence is an existence based on the presence of different causal and conditional dharmas. Although such phenomena [may be said to be] "nonexistent," still such nonexistence is not of the same order of nonexistence as

that of the horns of the hare and the fur of the turtle. [In these cases], it is only on account of the coming together of particular causes and conditions that there is this [conventional] existence based on false names. Yoghurt and cloth are both the same in this respect.

4) EXISTENCE BASED ON CONSTITUENT DHARMAS

Moreover, it is based on the most minute constituent elements perceptible through their visible forms, smells, tastes, and tangibility that there exist the components of a fiber. It is based on the causes and conditions inherent in the components of a fiber that a fiber exists. It is based on the causes and conditions of fibers that there exists a mass of fibers. It is based on the causes and conditions of a mass of fibers that there exist threads. It is based on the causes and conditions of threads that there exists cloth. It is based on the causes and conditions of cloth that there exists a robe.

Wherever there do not actually exist such causes and conditions of the extremely subtle elements perceptible through their visible forms, smells, tastes and tangibility, then the components of a fiber do not exist either. Because the components of a fiber do not actually exist, then a fiber does not exist either. Because a fiber does not exist, then a mass of fibers does not exist either. Because a mass of fibers does not exist, then thread does not exist either.

Because thread does not exist, then cloth does not exist either. Because cloth does not exist, then a robe does not exist either.

b. OBJECTION: BUT IRREDUCIBLY MINUTE ENTITIES DO EXIST

Question: Still, it's not necessarily the case that everything exists on account of the coming together of causes and conditions. For instance, because tiny particles are the most extremely minute, they have no constituent components. Because they have no components they have no combining [from which they are produced]. It is because cloth is coarse that it can be broken down [into constituent components]. But there are no components within tiny particles. How then can *they* be broken down [into constituent components]?

Response: "The most extremely minute" entity has no reality to it. It is itself a forced designation. Why? Because "coarse" and "subtle" are mere relative terms. It is based on "coarseness" that there exists "subtlety." This entity which is subtle should additionally contain that which is comparatively more subtle yet.

Moreover, if this most extremely minute form were to exist, then it would have spatial divisions corresponding to the ten directions. If it had divisions corresponding to the ten directions [based upon

which one could divide it up], then this could not be designated as “the most extremely minute” entity. If it did not have divisions corresponding to the ten directions, then it could not be [legitimately] referred to as “form.”

Moreover, if this most extremely minute entity exists, then it still ought to have [segmentable perimeter] boundaries which divide it off from empty space. If it is divisible, then it cannot be referred to as “the most extremely minute” entity.

Moreover, if this most extremely minute entity exists, there exist within it the constituent parts perceptible through their visible form, smell, taste, and tangibility. If it possesses constituent parts perceptible through their visible form, smell, taste, and tangibility, then it cannot be referred to as “the most extremely minute” entity.

If one pursues analysis in this manner, as one seeks to find a most extremely minute particle, then one remains unable to find it.

This corresponds to a statement in a sutra: “Forms, whether coarse or whether subtle, whether inward or whether outward, are all inclusively contemplated as impermanent and devoid of self.” It does not state therein that there exists a most extremely minute entity. [This mode of analysis] constitutes what is known as “emptiness reached by breaking down into component parts.”

C. EMPTINESS REALIZED THROUGH CONTEMPLATION

In addition to this, there is also “emptiness arrived at through contemplation.” This cloth comes into existence in accordance with the mind. In the case of the person who sits in dhyāna meditation, as he contemplates a piece of cloth, he may make it into earth, or make it into water, or make it into fire, or make it into wind. Or he may make it blue, or yellow, or white, or red, or entirely empty, entering contemplation thereby in accordance with the ten universal bases (*kṛtsnāyatana*).

1) EXAMPLE: THE BUDDHA SITS ON WATER (STORY)

Take for example one time when the Buddha was at Mount Ḡḍhrakūṭa. He went together with the Bhikshu Sangha into the city of Kings’ Abode. They came upon a large pool of water in the road. The Buddha spread out his sitting cloth on the surface of the water and sat down. He told the Bhikshus, “When a bhikshu’s entry into dhyāna reaches the point where his mind gains a state of sovereign independence, he becomes able to cause a great body of water to act as earth and immediately become like solid ground.

How is this so? It is because this water contains earthen components within it. Thus, within water, fire, and air, the gold, silver, and various other precious things contained therein may all be made to immediately manifest their solidity. How is this possible? This is possible because the water, [fire, and air] all contain a portion of those things within them.”

2) EXAMPLE: HOW QUALITIES HAVE NO OBJECTIVELY REAL EXISTENCE

This is also exemplified by a particular beautiful physical form. When a lustful person looks at it, he takes it to be pure and marvelous and so his mind develops a defiling attachment. When a person who practices the contemplation of impurity looks at it, he perceives all manner of disgusting discharges and finds that there is not a single part of it that is pure. When one who is also a woman looks at it, she may be jealous and hateful to the point where she is filled with disgust, cannot bear to look upon it, and is of the opinion that it is impure.

The lustful person contemplates this same thing and regards it as pleasurable. The jealous person contemplates this and takes it as a cause of bitterness. The yogin contemplates this and gains the Path. A person with no particular interest contemplates this and finds nothing either attractive or repellent in it. It is the same for him as looking at earth or trees.

If this beautiful form was actually pure, when these four types of people contemplated it, they should all perceive purity. If it was actually impure, when the four kinds of people contemplated it, they should all see it as impure. On account of this one knows “fine” and “ugly” abide in the mind. Objectively, there is nothing which is fixed. When one pursues the realization of emptiness through contemplation, the situation is much the same.

d. CONCLUSION: THE MATERIAL GIFT CANNOT BE FOUND

Moreover, because this cloth is characterized by the eighteen kinds of emptiness, when one contemplates it, one finds it to be empty [of inherent existence].³² Because it is empty, it cannot be gotten at. On account of all sorts of causal bases such as these, a valuable material object is empty [of inherent existence]. It definitely cannot finally be apprehended.

5. HOW THE BENEFACTOR CAN'T BE FOUND EITHER

How is it that the “benefactor” cannot be gotten at? It is just as with the piece of cloth which exists on the basis of the coming together

of causes and conditions, and which cannot be gotten at through analysis of its constituent parts.

It is just the same with the one who gives. It is the four primary elements surrounded by empty space which constitute the body. This body's consciousness, movements, comings and goings, sitting and rising are artificially designated as a "person." However, when, part by part, one seeks to locate [this person], it still cannot be found anywhere.

Additionally, the self cannot be found among any of the aggregates, sense realms, or sense bases. Because the self cannot be gotten at, the benefactor cannot be gotten at. How is this so? The self has all manner of designations: human, god, male, female, person who gives, person who receives, person who experiences suffering, person who experiences bliss, animal, and so forth. These possess only a name. Hence an actual dharma cannot be found there.

a. OBJECTION: IF SO, BODHISATTVAS COULDN'T EXIST TO PRACTICE *DĀNA*

Question: If the "benefactor" cannot be gotten at, how can there exist a bodhisattva who practices *dāna pāramitā*?

Response: It is based on the coming together of causes and conditions that a name exists. It is just as with a building or a cart wherein actual dharmas cannot be found.³³

1) OBJECTION: HOW IS IT THAT THE SELF CANNOT BE FOUND?

Question: How is it that the self cannot be found?

Response: This is as discussed above in the explanation of "Thus I have heard at one time..."³⁴ Now we shall discuss it further.

2) REFUTATION OF SELF IN OBJECTS OF THE CONSCIOUSNESSES

In the Buddha's discussion of the six consciousnesses, he indicated that the eye consciousness as well as dharmas associated with eye consciousness together take visible forms as the objective condition. They do not take as objective conditions all sorts of names such as "building," "house," "city," and "outlying precincts." The consciousnesses of ear, nose, tongue, and body function in the same way in this respect.

The intellectual mind consciousness and the dharmas associated with the intellectual mind consciousness are aware of the eye, aware of form, aware of eye consciousness, and so forth until we come to their being aware of the intellectual mind faculty, aware of dharmas [as objects of mind], and aware of the intellectual mind consciousness itself.

Those dharmas which are taken as objective conditions by these consciousnesses are all empty and devoid of any “self.” This is on account of their being produced and destroyed, and on account of their not being inherently existent.

Nor can one reckon the existence of a self within the sphere of the dharmas which are unconditioned. This is because there is no experiencing therein of either suffering or bliss.

If, in the midst of all of this, one must still insist on the existence of a self, then it would have to involve the existence of a seventh consciousness which is aware of the existence of a self. However, that is not now the case. For this reason we know that there is no self.

b. OBJECTION: A SELF MUST EXIST

Question: How can one know that there is no self? Everyone gives rise to the idea of a self with respect to their own bodies. They do not give rise to such an idea with respect to the bodies of others. If there is no self associated with one’s own body and yet one erroneously perceives that it constitutes a self, one ought to also erroneously perceive the existence of a self in other people’s bodies where there is no self either.

Furthermore, if it is the case that subjectively there is no self, given that consciousness of forms is newly produced and destroyed in every thought-moment, how could one distinguish and know that these colors are blue, yellow, red or white?³⁵

Moreover, if it were the case that there were no self, since the human consciousnesses are now continuously being newly³⁶ produced and destroyed, when the physical lifespan is cut off, that would also put an end to the offenses and merits associated with one’s actions. Who then would there be to follow along with and undergo retributions? Who then would experience subsequent suffering or bliss? Who would obtain liberation? On account of all of these inward conditions [specific to the individual], one knows that a self must exist.

Response: These ideas all have problems:

1) REFUTATION OF ANY SELF BASED ON ITS ASSUMED LOCATION

If it were the case that one reckoned the existence of a self in the body of someone else, then we ought to next ask, “Why is it that [in such a hypothetical case], one would not [still continue to] reckon the existence of a self in one’s own body?”

Moreover, because the five aggregates, [which form the supposed bases for imputing a “self”], are themselves produced from causes and conditions, they are empty and devoid of the presence of any self. The twenty views associated with the body are produced from causes and conditions associated with ignorance. This view which perceives a self therein naturally arises through the apparent continuity of the five aggregates. Because it is produced from the conditions associated with these very five aggregates, one straightaway reckons that these five aggregates are what constitute the self. This does not occur with respect to another person’s body, this on account of the specificity of individual habituation.

Furthermore, if there did exist a spiritual soul (*ātman*), it could in fact be that one reckoned the existence of one’s “self” in the body of another. You have not yet even understood about the existence or nonexistence of your own spiritual soul and yet you inquire about reckoning the existence of one’s “self” in the body of some other person.

This is like being asked by someone about the horns of a hare and then replying to him that they are like the horns of a horse, this based on the assumption that, if the horns of a horse actually do exist, then they may be used as a basis for proving the existence of the horns of a hare. And so one proceeds in this manner, not yet having understood about the existence of the horns of a horse, yet still desiring to take them as proof for the existence of the horns of a hare.

Moreover, as for your idea that it is because one naturally generates the idea of a self with respect to one’s own body that one then holds the opinion that a spiritual soul exists, since you claim that the spiritual soul is all-pervading, one ought indeed to reckon the existence of a self in the bodies of others. Therefore one should not be asserting that one gives rise to the idea of a self with respect to one’s own body but does not give rise to it in relation to another person’s body and that therefore one knows that a spiritual soul exists.

Then again, there actually *are* people who *do* have the idea of a self arise in relation to other phenomena. Take for example certain non-Buddhists who sit in dhyāna meditation. When they employ the “earth” universal-basis (*kr̥tsnāyatana*) contemplation and thus perceive the [pervasive] existence of the earth element, they may then think, “The earth is me and I am the earth.” They may also

be prone to do this in regard to water, fire, wind or space. Thus, on account of such inverted views, they may then also be prone to reckoning the self as existing within the bodies of others.

2) THE TRAVELER AND THE GHOST (STORY)

Additionally, there are times when someone generates the idea that his "self" inhabits some other person's body. Take for example the case of a man who had been assigned a mission whereby he was compelled to travel a great distance. [While on the road], he spent the night alone in a vacant dwelling. In the middle of the night, a ghost carried in a man's corpse and laid it down in front of him. Then there was another ghost who chased along behind and angrily castigated the first ghost, yelling, "This corpse is mine! Why did you carry it in here?"

The first ghost said, "It belongs to me! I carried it in here myself!"

The second ghost retorted, "The fact of the matter is, *I* am the one who carried this corpse in here!" Then each of the ghosts grabbed one of the hands of the corpse and tried to pull it away from the other. Thereupon the first ghost said, "There's a man here. We can ask *him* to settle this."

The ghost who had come in later then asked the traveler, "Well, who was it that carried this corpse in here?"

The traveler thought to himself, "Both of these ghosts are very strong. If I report the facts, I'm bound to die. If I lie, I'm also bound to die. So, since I can't avoid being killed in either case, what's the point in lying about it?" And so he replied, "It was the first ghost who carried in the corpse."

The second ghost flew into a rage, grabbed one of the [traveling] man's hands, tore that limb off, and then threw it down on the ground. At this, the first ghost pulled off one of the arms from the corpse and attached it as a replacement. They then proceeded in this fashion with both arms, both feet, the head, the two sides, and so forth until the traveler's entire body had been switched. The two ghosts then proceeded to devour the body which they had gotten from the exchange. When they had finished, they wiped their mouths and departed.

At that point the traveler thought to himself, "With my very own eyes I saw those two ghosts entirely devour the body born of my mother! This body which I now have here is composed entirely of someone else's flesh! Do I really still have a body now? Or is it the

case that I have no body at all? If I hold the view that I *do* indeed have a body—that body is actually somebody else’s entirely. If I hold that I *don’t* have one—still, there *is* a body here right now! He continued to ponder like this until his mind became so confused and distressed that he became like a man gone mad.

The next morning, he went off down the road. When he reached the neighboring country, he saw that there was a buddha stupa and a group of monks. He couldn’t talk about anything else. He could only keep asking whether his body was existent or nonexistent. The bhikshus asked him, “Just who are you, anyway?”

The traveler replied, “Well, as for me, I don’t know myself whether I’m a person or a non-person.” He then described in detail for the group of Sanghins the events which had transpired.

The bhikshus remarked, “This man has comprehended on his own the nonexistence of a self. He could easily gain deliverance.” And so they offered an explanation, saying, “From its origin on up until the present, your body has always naturally been devoid of any self. It’s not something that just happened now. It is merely on account of an aggregation of the four primary elements that one conceives of it as *my* body. In this respect, your original body and this one you now have are no different.”

Thus the bhikshus succeeded in bring about the traveler’s deliverance to the Path, whereupon he cut off all afflictions and immediately realized arhatship. This is a case of there being times when one reckons the existence of oneself in the body of another person.

One cannot posit the existence of a self based on [the concept of] “that versus this.”

3) REFUTATION OF ANY VALID CHARACTERISTICS OF A SELF

Moreover, any actual [inherently existent] nature to this “self” most definitely cannot be gotten at. And whether it be the characteristic of permanency, the characteristic of being impermanent, the characteristic of being inherently existent, the characteristic of not being inherently existent, the characteristic being compounded, the characteristic of not being compounded, the characteristic of being form, or the characteristic of being formless—all such different sorts of characteristics cannot finally be found.

If a particular characteristic exists, then a corresponding dharma must also exist. If there is no such characteristic, then there is no corresponding dharma. Because it is now the case that this “self” is devoid of any characteristics, one knows consequently that there

is no self. And if the “self” were actually permanent, then there should be no such thing as the offense of killing. Why is this so? The body might be able to be killed, this because it is impermanent. However, the self could not be killed, this due to the [supposed fact] of its being permanent.

C. OBJECTION: OFFENSE LIES IN PHYSICAL KILLING

Question: Although one could not kill the self on account of its being permanent, even if one only killed the body, one would thereby incur the offense of killing.

Response: As for incurring the offense of killing from the killing of the body, it says in the Vinaya that if one commits suicide, there is no killing offense *per se*. Offense on the one hand or merit on the other derives from either afflicting someone else or, alternatively, from benefiting someone else. It is not the case that if one makes offerings to one’s own body or kills one’s own body one will have either offense or merit. It is for this reason that it says in the Vinaya that in the event that one kills one’s own body, there is no offense of killing *per se*. However, the faults of stupidity, greed, and hatred *are* present in such a case.³⁷

1) REFUTATION OF THE PERMANENCE OF THE ĀTMAN

If the spiritual soul (*ātman*) were eternal, then one should not be born and should not die. Why is this the case? According to the dharma of those such as yourself, the spiritual soul is eternal. It pervades everywhere filling up the five paths of rebirth. How could there be death or birth? Death is defined by disappearing from this place. Birth is defined by coming forth in another place. For this reason one cannot say that the spiritual soul is eternal.

If it were the case that the spiritual soul were eternal, it should also be the case that it does not experience either suffering or bliss. How is this the case? If suffering comes, then one is distressed. If bliss comes, then one is delighted. If it is the case that it is changed by distress or delight, then it is impermanent. If it were permanent, then it should be like empty space which cannot be moistened by rain nor dried by heat.

Nor would there be either present or future lifetimes. If it were the case that the spiritual soul were eternal, then it is manifestly the case that one should not have either birth into a later existence or any dying in the present existence.

If it were the case that the spiritual soul were eternal, then one would constantly have a view of a self and one should not then be

able to realize nirvāṇa. If the spiritual soul were eternal, then there would be no arising and no destruction. There should then be no forgetting and no errors.

On account of there being no consciousness on the part of this “spiritual soul” and on account of its being impermanent, there *is* forgetting and there *is* also error. Therefore it is *not* the case that the spiritual soul is eternal. On account of all sorts of reasons such as these, one can know that this spiritual soul [which you posit] would not actually be characterized by permanence.

2) REFUTATION OF IMPERMANENCE OF THE ĀTMAN

If on the other hand the spiritual soul were characterized by impermanence, there would be neither offenses nor merits. If the body were impermanent, then the spiritual soul would be impermanent as well. If the two phenomena were both destroyed, then one would fall into the extreme view known as annihilationism.

If one falls into this annihilationism, then that carries as a consequence the result that there would be no arriving at a later lifetime wherein one would undergo retribution for karmic offenses or meritorious deeds. If annihilation were the case, then in gaining nirvāṇa, it would not be necessary to cut off the fetters nor would there be any function in later lives for the causes and conditions associated with karmic offenses and meritorious deeds. On account of all sorts of reasons such as these, one can know that the spiritual soul is not impermanent either.

3) REFUTATION OF ĀTMAN FREEDOM, INVOLVEMENT, NON-INVOLVEMENT

If it were the case that the spiritual soul were characterized by being sovereignly independent or characterized by having that which it does, then it ought to be the case that, no matter what it desired, it would gain it in every case. Now, however, there are cases where one desires something, but, on the contrary, one does not gain it, while in other cases where there is something which one does *not* desire and nonetheless, contrary to one’s wishes, one gains precisely *that*.

If the spiritual soul were sovereignly independent, then it should not be the case that it could engage in evil conduct and then fall into the wretched destiny of birth among the animals. Moreover, it is the case that all beings are displeased by suffering. Who then would take pleasure in bliss and yet, contrary to those inclinations, deliberately procure suffering? On account of these factors, one

knows that the spiritual soul is not sovereignly independent. Nor does it involve itself in actions.

Again, take for instance when people force themselves to practice goodness out of fear of punishments. If it were the case that [the spiritual soul] is sovereignly independent, why would they force themselves to cultivate merit out of fear of punishments?

Furthermore, beings do not succeed in having things happen in accordance with their intentions. They are constantly dragged about by the bonds of afflictions and affection. For all sorts of reasons such as these one should realize that the spiritual soul is not sovereignly independent nor does it involve itself in actions. If it is the case that the spiritual soul is not sovereignly independent and does not involve itself in actions, then this constitutes the mark of the nonexistence of any spiritual soul. When one speaks of a “self,” this is actually just the six consciousnesses. There are no additional factors beyond that.

Then again, if [the soul] does not involve itself in actions, why is it that when King Yama asks a karmic malefactor—“Who ordered you to commit these offenses?”—the person who committed the offenses replies, “They were committed by myself alone”? One knows from this that it is not the case either that it does *not* involve itself in actions. As for the spiritual soul being characterized by [a basis in] form, this case is not valid, either. Why? Because all manifestations of form are impermanent.

d. OBJECTION: WHY THEN DO SOME SAY THAT SELF IS FORM?

Question: Why then do people claim that the self is characterized by [a basis in] form?

Response: There are those who say that the spiritual soul resides in the heart, is as tiny as a mustard seed, is pure, and is referred to as the pure form body. There are other people who say that it is the size of a grain of wheat. There are those who say it is in size like a bean. There are those who say that its dimension is one half inch. There are those who say it is an inch in size and that in the beginning, when one takes on a body, it is taken on as the very first thing.

It is supposed to be in shape like the skeleton of an elephant and as one’s body matures it becomes in shape like an elephant already well-formed. There are those who say its size corresponds to that of the given person’s body and that when one passes away at death, it is the first to go then as well.

All cases such as these do not correspond to the truth. Why not? All forms are created from the four primary elements. On account of their being produced from causes and conditions, they are impermanent. If it were the case that the spiritual soul were [based in] form, because form is impermanent, the spiritual soul would be impermanent as well. If it is the case that it is impermanent, then the inherent fallacies are such as have already been discussed previously.

e. OBJECTION: THE SPIRITUAL SOUL IS A MINUTE ENTITY

Question: There are two kinds of bodies, the gross body and the minute body. The gross body is impermanent. The minute body is the spiritual soul. In life after life, it constantly goes along and enters into the five paths of rebirth.

Response: This “minute body” cannot be found. If a minute body does exist, then there ought to be a location in which it can be found such as, for instance, in the five organs or in the four limbs. However, one can look for it in every single place, but it still cannot be found.

f. OBJECTION: ONLY AN ĀRYA CAN SEE IT

Question: This minute body is extremely minute. When one first dies, it has already gone. When one is alive, one cannot search for and find it. How could you be able to view it? Additionally, this minute body is not such as the five sense faculties would be able to perceive or would be able to be aware of. Only if one were an ārya possessed of the superknowledges would one then be able to succeed in seeing it.

1) REFUTATION OF A FORM-BASED ĀTMAN

Response: If that were the case, then it would be no different from being entirely nonexistent. And as for when a person dies, thereby relinquishing the aggregates of this life and entering the intermediary aggregates, at that moment when the body of the present life dies and one receives the intermediary-aggregates body, this process has no earlier and later stages. When one dies, one is immediately born [into the intermediary-aggregates body].

This is analogous to using a seal made of wax to stamp an impression in the mud. When the impression is received in the mud, the seal is immediately ruined. The creation and destruction occur at a single moment in which there is no prior and later. At that very time, one takes on the intermediary existence in the intermediary

aggregates. Then, when one relinquishes these intermediary aggregates, one takes on existence in the aggregates of the next life.

As for your saying that the minute body is just these intermediary aggregates, the body of the intermediary aggregates has no going on forth and it has no entering [the next incarnation]. This process is analogous to the lighting of a lamp wherein production and extinction occur continuously and wherein there is neither permanence nor complete interruption [of the appearance of that lamp flame].

The Buddha said that every constituent of the form aggregate, whether past, future, or present, whether inward, whether outward, whether gross or whether minute—all are utterly impermanent. Consequently this “extremely minute form” supposedly adopted by this spiritual soul of yours ought also to be impermanent and bound to utter destruction. Based on all sorts of reasons such as these, one can know that it is not the case that [this “spiritual soul”] is characterized by [a basis in] form.

2) REFUTATION OF FORMLESS ĀTMAN

Nor is it characterized by being formless. As for that which is formless, it consists of the four [non-form] aggregates and the unconditioned. Because those four aggregates are impermanent, because they are not inherently existent, and because they are subsumed within the sphere of causes and conditions, it should not be the case that they qualify as constituting a “spiritual soul.” Among the three unconditioned dharmas, there can be no reckoning of the existence of a spiritual soul. This is because there is nothing therein which may be experienced. Based on all sorts of reasons such as these, one realizes that it is not the case that this “spiritual soul” is characterized by formlessness.

3) SUMMARY STATEMENT ON NON-EXISTENCE OF ĀTMAN

In this manner, one looks for a self throughout heaven and earth, and, no matter whether one looks among that which is inward or that which is outward, or whether one looks throughout the three periods of time or the ten directions, it cannot be found. There is only a coming together of the twelve sense bases which in turn generate the six consciousnesses. Where these three factors³⁸ coincide, it is referred to as “contact.” “Contact” generates feeling, perception, consideration and other dharmas associated with the mind.

In the midst of these dharmas, on account of the power of ignorance, a view of the body as constituting a self (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*) arises.

On account of the arising of the view of the body as constituting a self, one is led to the opinion that a spiritual soul must somehow exist. As for this “view of a body constituting a self,” it is cut off at the point when one experiences the seeing of the truth of suffering (*duḥkhasatyadarśana*) and consequently gains the suffering-related dharma knowledge (*duḥkhe dharmajñāna*) and the suffering-related inferential knowledge (*duḥkhe 'nvayajñāna*). Once [the view of the body as constituting the self] is thereby cut off, one then no longer reckons the existence of any spiritual soul.

4) REFUTATION OF RELEVANCE OF ĀTMAN TO ONGOING AWARENESS

As for your earlier question which asked, “If there was no inward spiritual soul or related form, since consciousness is newly produced and destroyed in every instant, how could one distinguish and know the colors of blue, yellow, red and white?”—If it were the case that you in fact possessed such a spiritual soul, it would be equally unable to be aware of such data on its own. It would necessarily rely upon eye consciousness in order to be aware of them. This being the case, the spiritual soul would have no relevant function in this regard.

The eye consciousness is aware of visible forms and of the production and extinction of visual forms [by way of] a facsimile of production and a facsimile of extinction. Subsequently, a dharma arises in the mind referred to as “mindfulness.” This conditioned dharma characterized by mindfulness is such that, even though [a given objective condition] has already become extinguished and hence has already entered the past, this instance of mindfulness is nonetheless still able to maintain an awareness of it.

In the case of an ārya, by resort to the power of wisdom, he is able to know matters having to do with future time and is also able in each successive thought-moment to retain in much the same way an awareness of dharmas associated with the past.

When an earlier instance of eye consciousness is extinguished, there follows the production of a subsequent instance of eye consciousness. As for the later instances of eye consciousness, they become more acute [in their intensity] and become possessed with an attendant power. Thus, although the visual forms exist only temporarily and so do not continue to abide, due the acuity of the power of mindfulness, one is nonetheless able to remain aware of them. It is on account of these factors that, although there is impermanence by virtue of the production and extinction which takes

place in each successive thought-moment, one is nonetheless able to distinguish and be aware of visual forms.

5) REFUTATION OF REMAINING CONTINUITY-SEVERANCE OBJECTIONS

Next, I shall now reply to your claim that, since a person's present-life consciousness is continuously being newly produced and destroyed, it must therefore come to an end when the lifespan is cut off, [and shall also reply to your subsidiary questions about] who would then be bound to accord with and undergo retribution for offenses and merits accruing from actions, who would then experience suffering or bliss, and who would then gain liberation.

Now, when a person has not yet gained the genuine path, afflictions cover over his mind. He engages in karmic actions which serve as the causes and conditions for being reborn. When he dies, following upon these five aggregates [of this present life], there is a subsequent production of five aggregates.

a) LAMP AND SEED-GROWTH ANALOGIES

This is analogous to one particular lamp being used to ignite the flame in another lamp. It is also comparable to the production of grain. There are three causes and conditions: earth, water, and seed. The birth of the body in the later life is just like this: there is the body, there is karmic activity characterized by outflow-impurities, and there are the fetters. It is on account of these three factors that the subsequent body is produced. During this process, the causes and conditions associated with the karma of the body are such that they cannot be cut off and cannot be destroyed. Only the fetters can be cut off. When the fetters are cut off, although there still exists a residual body and residual karma, one nonetheless then becomes able to succeed in gaining liberation.

Just as when one has a seed and soil, but the seed is unable to grow for lack of water, so too, although one may have the body and have the karma, if there is no moistening by the water of affection-related fetters, one is not bound to be reborn. This is how one is still able to gain liberation even though there is no "spiritual soul" (*ātman*). It is on account of ignorance that one is bound up. It is on account of wisdom that one is released. This being the case, then the "self" [whose existence you assert] would serve no function.

b) FETTER-ROPE AND WISDOM-CLAW ANALOGIES

Then again, it is the coming together of this "name-and-form" (*nāmarūpa*, i.e. the five aggregates)³⁹ that is artificially referred to as

a “person.” This “person” is tied up by the fetters. When one gains the “claw” of that wisdom which is free of outflow-impurities, then one [uses that claw to] untie all of these fetters. It is at this time that we have what is referred to as “a person who has succeeded in gaining liberation.”

This process is analogous to the tying up and untying of a rope. [The “tying up” of] the rope is just [an analogy for] the fetters. There are no other dharmas involved in being tied up. In worldly parlance, one speaks of the tying up done with a rope and the untying of a rope. Name-and-form are just like this. The two dharmas of “name” and “form” are together referred to by artificial convention as “a person.” These fetters are no different from name-and-form. There is only that which might be referred to as name-and-form when “tied up” [by the fetters, or alternatively as] name-and-form when “untied,” [and hence “freed” from being bound up by the fetters].

Being constrained to undergo retribution for offenses and merits is just like this. Although there is no single dharma by which a “person” might be deemed “real,” it is based on “name-and-form” that there is the process of undergoing the karmic fruition resulting from either karmic offenses or meritorious deeds. Thus it is that a “person” becomes so named.

c) ANALOGY: AS CARTS HOLD GOODS, NAME-AND-FORM CARRY KARMA

This is analogous to a cart’s carrying of goods. If one examines it in terms of each and every component part, then one finds that there is finally no reality inhering in the term “cart.” Rather “cart” is simply a name reflecting the ability to hold a load of goods.

The taking on of karmic offenses or meritorious deeds on the part of a “person” is just the same. Name-and-form take on offenses and merit and so the corresponding designation “person” is derived. The undergoing of suffering or bliss are also just the same.

Based on all sorts of causal bases such as these, a “spiritual soul” can never be found. This “spiritual soul” is really simply [a designation applied to] that which serves as the “benefactor” [in any act of giving]. That which acts as the “recipient” is just the same. You take it that it is a “spiritual soul” which constitutes this “person.” However, for all of these reasons, a person who performs the giving cannot finally be found. A recipient cannot be found, either. It is on account of all sorts of causes and conditions such as these that it is said that the “valuable object,” the “benefactor,” and the “recipient” all finally cannot be found.

g. OBJECTION: UNFINDABILITY CONTRADICTS REALITY

Question: If the act of giving as well as its other associated dharmas actually correspond to the true character of reality wherein there is nothing demolished through reductive analysis, nothing extinguished, nothing produced, and no actions engaged in, why then is it claimed that, when subjected to reductive analysis, those three factors [involved in giving] cannot be found?

Response: In cases such as that of the common person who *does* perceive the existence of a benefactor, a recipient and a valuable object, this constitutes an inverted and false view. When one is born into the world, one may experience bliss. When the merit is exhausted, one then reverts to the circumstance of being bound to compensate [for whatsoever ease one thenceforth enjoys]. It is on account of this that the Buddha wished to cause the bodhisattva to practice the genuine path and gain the genuine resultant reward. The genuine resultant reward is just the Buddha Path.

It was in order to demolish false views by resorting to reductive analysis that the Buddha said that the three factors are ultimately unfindable. In actuality, there is nothing which is demolished through reductive analysis. How is this the case? It is because all dharmas, from their origin on forward to the present always have been ultimately empty [of any inherent existence]. The incalculable number of other such causes and conditions cannot be gotten at, either. It is based on [realizing] this that one speaks of the perfect fulfillment of *dāna pāramitā*.

Then again, if the bodhisattva practices *dāna pāramitā*, he is able on that account to generate all six of the *pāramitās*. It is at this time that it is properly referred to as “perfect fulfillment of *dāna pāramitā*.”