

XX Conclusion: leftovers and wrapping up

In this last, concluding chapter, I will proceed in seven steps. I begin by revisiting various distribution rules. I will then list diverse forms of giving and taking by Brahmins. Thirdly, I deal with the question of whether the often-encountered negative judgement of *dharmadāna*- and *dakṣiṇā*-receiving Brahmins is appropriate. Interesting commonalities and differences between sacrifices and dharmic giving will then be specified. In particular, I consider the question of how exactly the “shift” from sacrificing to gifting can be understood as a secularisation process. The fifth topic is a comparison of a “perfect gift” with a *dharmadāna*. After a few comments on a recent book by Seaford (2020), I revisit Freiburger’s twofold classifications.

A Diverse distribution rules

In various circumstances, specific distribution rules are prescribed. I will take a close quantitative look at distribution rules for treasure troves, inheritance, and partnerships of artisans.

(1) Treasure troves

According to Manu (<15> <h>), one of a Brahmin’s occupations is “appropriating things that do not belong to anybody”. Treasure troves are a case in point:

<246> He [the king, HW] should appropriate all the produce of mines. When he finds a treasure-trove, he should give half of it to Brāhmaṇas and deposit the other half in the treasury. When a Brāhmaṇa finds a treasure-trove, he may keep all of it; a Kṣatriya should give a quarter to the king, a quarter to Brāhmaṇas, and keep one half for himself; a Vaiśya should give a quarter to the king, a half to Brāhmaṇas, and keep a quarter for himself; a Śūdra should divide what he has found into twelve portions and give five portions to the king, five to Brāhmaṇas, and keep two portions for himself.⁸¹⁷

817 ViDh 3.55–61, Olivelle (2009)

Table 11: Portions of a treasure trove to be allotted to the finder and to others according to Vaiṣṇava Dharmaśāstra

Finder	self	(other) Brahmins	king	(other) <i>kṣatriyas</i>	(other) <i>vaiśyas</i>	(other) <i>śūdras</i>
Brahmin	1	0	0	0	0	0
king	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0	0	0	0
<i>kṣatriya</i>	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	0	0	0
<i>vaiśya</i>	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	0	0	0
<i>śūdra</i>	1/6	5/12	5/12	0	0	0

Table 12: Portions of a treasure trove to be allotted to the finder and to others according to Yājñavalkya Smṛti

Finder	self	(other) Brahmins	king
Brahmin	1	0	0
king	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	0
other <i>varṇas</i>	5/6	0	1/6

Apparently, the amount that can be kept depends on class. Table 11 arranges these portions in matrix-form.

The current author did not succeed in finding a simple formula that might explain these numbers. The rules given by YSm 2.36–37 are simpler, but cannot be reduced to an easy rationale either. They are summarised in Table 12.

(2) Inheritance

With respect to inheritance, YSm 2.129 explains how much a Brahmin should bequeath to sons he has fathered with women of different classes:

⟨247⟩ *catustridvye kabhāgīnā*⁸¹⁸ *varṇaśo brāhmaṇāt majāḥ* |
kṣatrajās tridvye kabhāgā vaiśyajau dvye kabhāginau ||⁸¹⁹

Shares of sons born to a Brahman are four, three, two, and one, according to their class; to a Kshatriya, three, two, or one; and to a Vaishya, two or one.⁸²⁰

818 difficult

819 YSm 2.129

820 Olivelle (2019b)

Table 13: Inheritance apportioned according to the class of the sons' father and mother

	Brahmin mother	<i>kṣatriya</i> mother	<i>vaiśya</i> mother	<i>śūdra</i> mother
Brahmin father	$\frac{4}{4b + 3k + 2v + ś}$	$\frac{3}{4b + 3k + 2v + ś}$	$\frac{2}{4b + 3k + 2v + ś}$	$\frac{1}{4b + 3k + 2v + ś}$
<i>kṣatriya</i> father	-	$\frac{3}{3k + 2v + ś}$	$\frac{2}{3k + 2v + ś}$	$\frac{1}{3k + 2v + ś}$
<i>vaiśya</i> father	-	-	$\frac{2}{2v + ś}$	$\frac{1}{2v + ś}$
<i>śūdra</i> father	-	-	-	$\frac{1}{ś}$

For Table 13 above, assume hypergamy, i.e., a man cannot take a wife from a class higher than his own. The above quotation presupposes that twice-born men have children from a *śūdra* woman, while YSm 1.56 (⟨109⟩) from the same *dharmaśāstra* text prohibits the marriage of twice-born men with *śūdra* women. Assume, furthermore, that a father has b sons from a Brahmin wife, k sons from a *kṣatriya* wife, v sons from a *vaiśya* wife and $ś$ sons from a *śūdra* wife. For a *vaiśya* man, one should expect $b = k = 0$ by hypergamy.

Thus, according to the first three rows in Table 13, the son of a twice-born father and a mother of a certain class would receive a higher portion of the inheritance than his brothers from mothers of a lower class.

(3) Partnership of artisans

Finally, I turn to the partnership of artisans. Partnerships of artisans for the purpose of price fixing was forbidden (YSm 2.254), in a similar fashion to modern anti-collusion clauses. Partnerships in production were of course allowed. In ⟨133⟩, the shares obtainable by teachers, experts, advanced students, and apprentices obey the proportions 4 : 3 : 2 : 1. Assume that an undertaking employs t teachers, e experts, s (advanced) students, and a apprentices. Then, the shares are similar to those in the inheritance case for sons with a Brahmin father (see Table 13). Indeed, one obtains the shares as in Table 14:

Table 14: Shares received by artisans according to skill

teacher	expert	student	apprentice
$\frac{4}{4t + 3e + 2s + a}$	$\frac{3}{4t + 3e + 2s + a}$	$\frac{2}{4t + 3e + 2s + a}$	$\frac{1}{4t + 3e + 2s + a}$

B The roles of Brahmins

(1) Brahmins as receivers of gifts—an empirical side remark

As receivers, Brahmins have played an important role in this book. Among other sources, their livelihood depended on *dharmadāna*, tax exemptions (<73>), and royal largesse, the latter being stipulated in *dharmā* texts (<61> and <73>), described and attested to in *mahādānas* (section VI.H(2)), historiographies⁸²¹, or (epigraphical) records⁸²², respectively.⁸²³ Bronkhorst (2016, p. 53) thinks that “support for Brahmanism, unlike support for currents such as Buddhism and Jainism, had to come primarily, if not exclusively, from rulers, not, for example, from the merchant class.” In defense of his thesis, Johannes Bronkhorst argues the following in a private message: “I would be surprised if Brahmanism received many gifts from merchants and other entrepreneurs. The reason is that orthodox Brahmanism had no sympathy for those professions. Moreover, it pretended to be independent of ‘the world.’”

I am not really convinced that the act of giving to Brahmins or priests or “church” organisations of different kinds (for example *paṣads* in India⁸²⁴ or the Catholic Church in the Europe of the Middle Ages), or the motivations for doing so, can be understood in terms of a few arguments along these or similar lines, even if they have some a priori plausibility. While some Brahmins (hardly a majority of them) might have had “no sympathy” for worldly professions, their standard attitude would tend to recognise that each member of society should act in line with his *svadharma*. With respect to being “of ‘the world’”, Brahmins who enjoyed the fruit of a king’s donation of land or village or who lived from daily *dharmadāna* knew of their dependence on the other classes. Surely, Brahmins as owners of villages could profit from the villagers via the king’s patronage (pp. 54), even if these were not devout Hindus prepared to give *dharmadāna*. We have no evidence to the effect that “all” Brahmins or even a majority of them enjoyed the usufruct of villages. Even village-possessing Brahmins were not safe. Withdrawal of patronage might take place if a patron king were defeated in war or decreased his patronage of Brahmins in favour of patronage of Buddhists or other groups. As is clear from the Kashmiri evidence, kings occasionally confiscated or reassigned endowments, eternity clauses (<63>) notwithstanding.⁸²⁵ There may well have been many instances of an old or a new king withdrawing endowments awarded by his ancestors or by his defeated rival.

Surely, some influential (i.e., very learned and/or politically relevant) Brahmins were successful in securing donations from kings. However, “Brahmins” form a het-

821 Slaje (2017) uses the several Kashmiri Rājatarāṅgiṅīs (among them KRT and ŚRT) for a description of endowments benefitting Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims.

822 See Strauch (2002, pp. 116–122, 244–266) and Schmiedchen (2013, 2014).

823 More generally, the history of the Brahmins still needs to be written, as argued by Witzel (1993).

824 See Slaje (2017, pp. 403–404).

825 See Slaje (2017, p. 410).

erogenous group in many respects.⁸²⁶ Not all of them could rely on givings from rulers. Some less-learned or less charismatic Brahmins had to live from *dharmadāna* or turn to “lower” occupations (see <15>). Thus, there are many reasons for which Brahmins would have welcomed donations by non-ruling classes. And, indeed, the copious prescription of *dharmadāna* indicates that these donations were not only sought-after, but also given. Furthermore, the very fact that many lines of tradition have remained more or less intact over the centuries supports this kind of reasoning. To summarise, whereas some Brahmins managed to get close to the ruling elites, larger sections probably depended on the non-ruling parts of society.

In the same communication, Bronkhorst adds that Brahmanical ideology might have been one factor behind the “economic decline and the emptying of cities that characterized the middle centuries of the first millennium”.⁸²⁷ Here, the idea seems to be that Brahmanical ideology would do damage to the economic interests of “merchants and other entrepreneurs”, who would be potential donors to these very Brahmins (see Bronkhorst (2021)). In my view, a counter-factual thought experiment regarding how merchants would have fared in a society devoid of Brahmins is just “too large”. In a similar manner, it is not fruitful to ask what Europe would have looked like without the Catholic church.

(2) Brahmins as economic actors

Brahmins play a special role in many forms of giving and taking, but surely not in all of them. As might be expected, the law texts do not envision any specific role of Brahmins in purely economic exchange. See, for example, the case of rescission of buying contracts (section VII.C, subsections (2) and (3)). A notable exception concerns interest rates for debts incurred by Brahmins (see section XIII.D).

Priests that officiate at a sacrifice are a specific instance of a partnership that is regulated by Kauṭilya (see subsection VII.B(5)). For the hybrid nature of a fee-gift, revisit section XVII.D. For Brahmins as *ācāryas*, see section XV.B.

826 Schmiedchen (2014) analyses the benefitting Brahmins in Dekkhan epigraphies of the 8th to 13th centuries. She distinguishes between the Brahmins’ *gotra* (“lineage”) (pp. 159–160), their Vedic branch (pp. 160–164), and their geographical origin (pp. 165–176).

827 A related, but different kind of claim (to which Johannes Bronkhorst kindly directed me) is put forward by Verardi (2018, p. 253) with respect to “the strengthening of the agrarian society and the deteriorating of the proto-capitalist economy of the Buddhists that maximised the profits of trade”: “The [Brahmin, HW] orthodox not only had nothing to lose from the general collapse of trade, but had everything to gain instead. The agrarian model that identified them at the social level, brought to perfection through centuries of experience, compensated for the losses in macro-economic terms.” I have to admit that I find bold and sweeping generalisations of this kind unhelpful.

C Greedy Brahmins?

In this section, I deal with the question of whether the often-encountered negative judgement of *dharmadāna*- and *dakṣiṇā*-receiving Brahmins is appropriate. Against that judgement, one might highlight the functions served by these institutions.

(1) Self-serving Vedic priests and Brahmanical theories of the *dakṣiṇā* and *dāna*

The *dakṣiṇā* collected by Vedic priests and the *dharmadāna* obtained by Brahmins have aroused suspicion in all times, including the present. Consider the following quotations:

- <44>, <228>
- “Back into this oldest period of Indian history [the Ṛgvedic period, HW] we can also follow the beginnings of the Indian caste system which at bottom is a product of priestly selfishness and weighs upon the Indian people like a nightmare even to the present day.”⁸²⁸
- “This poetry does not serve beauty as this religion does not serve the purpose to purify and uplift the souls. Instead, both serve the class interest, the personal interest, the remuneration.”⁸²⁹

Similarly, one can see the possibility of collecting *dāna* as yet another of the Brahmins’ privileges, as Brick (2015, pp. 41–42) seems to do: “Two fundamental motivations seem to explain both the prominence of the discussions of proper recipients within the *dānanibandhas*⁸³⁰ and the bulk of their contents. The first of these is a desire to establish orthodox, Vedic Brahmins as the ideal recipients and in many cases as the sole legitimate recipients of gifts. The second is the theoretical principle that the merit of a gift is directly proportional to the virtuousness of its recipient (with “virtuousness”, of course, here defined from a Brahmanical perspective). As is likely obvious to readers, the achievement of both of these desires would have been very much in the interests of the Brahmins who composed most of the *dānanibandhas*, including the *Dānakāṇḍa* [LDK, HW].” In their capacity as writers of the *dharmā* texts, Brahmins point to themselves as receivers of *dāna*. Thus, “one can easily interpret this stress on the Brahmin-ness and Vedic knowledge of proper recipients as intended to reserve for the authors’ own social group the entitlement to receive gifts.”⁸³¹

828 Garbe (1897, p. 58)

829 Oldenberg (1923, p. 20)

830 A *nibandha* is an anthology, a *dānanibandha* an anthology on the subject of (dharmic) giving.

831 Brick (2015, p. 42)

(2) Definition or requirements

Reconsider <102>:

<248> *yogas tapo damo dānaṃ satyaṃ śaucaṃ śrutam ghr̥ṇā |
vidyā vijñānam āstikyaṃ etad brāhmaṇalakṣaṇam ||*⁸³²

Discipline, austerity, self-control, liberality, truthfulness, purity, vedic learning, compassion, erudition, intelligence, and religious faith—these are the characteristics of a Brahmin.⁸³³

Two possible understandings of this quotation come to mind: (i) as “definitions of a proper Brahmin”⁸³⁴ with “unambiguously high opinions of themselves and of their place in society”⁸³⁵. Thus, Brahmins have somehow managed to enjoy privileges in the form of both material wealth (the *dāna*) and high rank. Using Trautmann’s (1981, p. 286) words, one might suspect a “conspiracy of priests”.

While this understanding is certainly not wrong, “discipline, vedic learning” may also point to (ii) requirements that the Brahmins have to fulfil. Consider the following:

<249> *śīlam samvasatā jñeyaṃ śaucaṃ samvyavahārataḥ |
prajñā samkathanāj jñeyā tribhiḥ pātraṃ parīkṣyate ||*⁸³⁶

One can know a person’s virtue by living with him, his purity by interacting with him, and his wisdom by talking with him. A recipient should be tested in these three things.⁸³⁷

Of course, the specific manner in which testing a recipient occurs (see <104>) should violate neither the dignity of the giver nor of the receiver.

One should bear in mind that both the ability to perform sacrifices and the attainment of Vedic learning required many years of study. See <15> and subsection XV.B(1). The understanding (ii) stresses the requirements that Brahmins as *pātras* have to fulfil. In contrast, understanding (i) stresses the definitional aspect, where Brahmins engage in self-exaltation. In line with (ii), Brick (2015, p. 44) states the following with respect to the Brahmins’ virtuousness: “it serves the purpose of policing the Brahmin community by encouraging its members to aspire to the high standards of an ideal Brahmin lest they be deemed unfit to receive patronage.”

832 VaDh 6.23

833 Olivelle (2000)

834 Brick (2015, p. 41)

835 Brick (2015, p. 40)

836 LDK 3.1

837 Brick (2015)

(3) Functional theory of the (fee-)gift

To the current author, the often-encountered stress placed on the Brahmins' greed is overdone. Of course, material interests are important for Brahmins. However, the "rest" of the society, Vedic or classical, also pursued its own interests. The *yajamānas* sought this- and otherworldly benefits. Society at large may well have even profited from the Brahmins' activities. See section XVIII.A for the model assuming "productive" receivers and reread <233> by Hubert & Mauss. In connection to this, one might refer to the anti-caste arguments forcefully brought forward by Ambedkar and other social reformers.⁸³⁸ A discussion of these arguments lies well beyond the range of this book.

In the current context, I argue that giving (whether by kings, merchants, or others) has been instrumental in allowing Indian religion, science, etc. to be transmitted from generation to generation. After all, human traditions usually depend on granting some elite group the possibility to pursue scientific and religious work. Of course, people other than Brahmin males have contributed to innovation and the conservation of traditions.⁸³⁹ Nevertheless, the Brahmin social class has surely contributed the lion's share of that work. The very first verse in Yājñavalkya's treatment of *dāna* is relevant here:

<250> *tapas taptvāsṛjad brahmā brāhmaṇān vedagūptaye |*
*trptyartham pitṛdevānām dharmasamrakṣaṇāya ca ||*⁸⁴⁰

Brahma, after performing ascetic toil, created Brahmans to protect the Veda, to bring satisfaction to ancestors and gods, and to safeguard dharma.⁸⁴¹

It seems that the Brahmins understood the importance of giving in the context of its transmittal function. However, as we have argued before in subsection XVI.F(2), a functional theory does not generally rely on humans' understanding. Giving may just embody an "intelligent" solution to the transmittal problem.

D A secularisation process?

(1) Comparing sacrificing and gifting

The close connection between offering to gods and gifting has often been observed, as in <30>, <32>, and <33>. However, some dissimilarities need to be mentioned:

838 A copy of Ambedkar's famous "speech" (which was never held) entitled "Annihilation of Caste" is found in many places, among them in Kundu (2018, chapter 10).

839 Garbe (1897, pp. 68–85) convincingly argues that Upaniṣadic and Buddhist innovations were the fruits of the *kṣatriya*, rather than the Brahmin social class.

840 YSm 1.197

841 Olivelle (2019b)

XX Conclusion: leftovers and wrapping up

- (worldly or otherworldly) purpose:
Sacrifices for worldly purposes are of a lower type than *dharmadāna* and on par with the special kind of gifting called *kāmyadāna*.
- reciprocity:
While humans expect the gods to reciprocate, reciprocation is irreconcilable with dharmic gifts. Thus, the third of the “three obligations” mentioned by Mauss⁸⁴² clearly does not apply.

Similarities include

- impurity:
None of the gifts or sacrifices covered in this book come under the heading of pure altruism. One may even doubt whether pure altruism is psychologically possible in the first place.
- beliefs:
Sacrifices to gods for some worldly purpose and giving to Brahmins in order to obtain merit both require belief (*śraddhā*).
- constraints:
Sacrifices and giving are subject to constraints. In some circumstances, all of a sacrificer’s wealth (*sarvavedasadakṣiṇā* in <21>) or all of a donor’s wealth (*sarvasva* in <92>) might be donated. However, the general rule seems to be that sacrificing and giving are to be done “according to one’s means” (*śaktitah*)
 - in <21> and <23> for sacrifices,
 - in <90> and <92> for dharmic gifts, and
 - in <108> for a marriage according to the Demonic Law.Compare the Buddhist six quarters in <180>. They do not, however, directly refer to gifting (see ĀUJA 4.71, Agostini (2015), where the five ways in which a pupil should “minister to his teachers” are listed). Compare also MNS 6.7.1–2, which warns against extreme interpretations of “giving everything”.

(2) Definition of secularisation

It is the thesis of this section that the substitution of *yajña/dakṣiṇā* by *dāna* can be considered a secularisation process. Thus, referring to Freiburger’s scope of comparison, I perform a genealogical comparison of the above-mentioned practices on the background of a modern concept, secularisation. Here, a definition of secularity is surely needed.⁸⁴³ For the current purposes, I propose the following definition:

842 Mauss (2012, pp. 82–86, 142–153) or Mauss and Maurer (2016, pp. 73–75, 121–130)

843 The very concept of secularisation seems to be elusive. See Martin (2005), who attempts a “Revised General Theory” of secularisation, while the same author questions the scientific usefulness of this very term in Martin (2010). Consider also the attempt by Bruce (2011) to describe, explain, and clarify secularisation in the first three chapters of his book. The current section could not have been written if I were to subscribe

- ⟨251⟩ Secularisation entails the decline of beliefs, practices, and institutions that concern
- (a) otherworldly beings (“gods”),
 - (b) worshipping or honouring them,
 - (c) catering to those beings’ needs (see ⟨228⟩ (c)),
 - (d) privileging (c) over (b),
 - (e) the considerable scale of material consumption during “religious” ceremonies (such as sacrifices or *mahādānas*) and of material investment for housing these ceremonies (such as temples),
 - (f) the material wellbeing of (officiating) priests and the respect owed to them (see ⟨228⟩(b)),
 - (g) life after death (in “heaven”) (see ⟨228⟩(d)),
 - (h) future lives to come (brought about by “rebirth”),
 - (i) intervention of otherworldly beings on this earth, particularly in response to sacrifices, prayers, and the like (see ⟨228⟩(a) and (c)),
 - (j) prioritising (i) over (g) or (h).

The Vedic (and later) sacrifices (offered to gods) are substituted by classical dharmic gifts or great gifts offered to worthy Brahmins—or so one might argue. This shift can be interpreted as a secular one in line with (a), (b), and (c) in ⟨251⟩. Most evidently, sacrificing means “giving to gods”, whereas donating means “giving to humans”.

With respect to aspect (b), consider Heim (2004, p. 117): “The principles of the Vedic sacrifice rested on reciprocity [...] between the Vedic gods and humans [...]. But the *mahādāna* [...] did not appeal to reciprocity or bargaining with the gods, but rather entailed worship or honoring them. [G]ifts and *pūjās* [...] were made out of respect and honor, rather than because [the god] needed or desired them.” Arguably, worship is a more “enlightened” activity than the belief that the gods need to be looked after by humans (aspect (d) in ⟨251⟩).

Concerning (e) in ⟨251⟩, it seems plausible that sacrificing (with the involvement of fire) consumes more material than *mahādāna*. See section XVII.A and, in particular, the “victim” within the definition of the sacrificial system provided by Hubert and Mauss (1964). Following Krick (1975, p. 31), Oberlies (1998, p. 274) thinks that the slaughter of animals could occur only in the context of sacrifices. Thus, the sacrifice need not entail huge economic costs. In particular, the non-edible parts tended to be sacrificed, while the edible ones were partly sacrificed and partly eaten.⁸⁴⁴ However, sacrificing ghee into the fire surely implies the destruction of that precious substance.⁸⁴⁵

Roughly speaking, the patron of a sacrifice hopes for thisworldly fruit, while the giver of a dharmic gift believes in obtaining an otherworldly fruit. See the bold entries

to Bruce (2011, p. 4): “The secularisation paradigm is an attempt to provide an overarching sociological explanation of the history of religion since the [European, HW] Middle Ages.”

844 See Oberlies (1998, pp. 288–289).

845 See Oberlies (1998, p. 280).

Table 15: Secularisation?

	gift to gods (sacrifice)	gift to humans (no sacrifice)
aspiring to thisworldly fruit	Vedic sacrifice ((106))	<i>kāmyadāna</i> ((106))
aspiring to otherworldly fruit	Vedic sacrifice ((8))	<i>dharmadāna</i> ((94))

in Table 15. At first sight, one might think that we see an anti-secular development here. I would like to argue in a different manner. Aspect (i) stands for the unrealistic (“religious”) expectation of obtaining offspring, victory, etc. from sacrificing or believing. Remember that Cartesian Deism categorically denies these expectations.⁸⁴⁶ If the obtainable fruit is shifted to the otherworldly realm (according to (g) and (h)), no direct contradiction of science or experience ensues. In that sense, this shift (see (j)) should be considered a secular one.

For the final remark on this subject, reconsider <12>. The shift from sacrificing (typical for the *Dvāpara* age) to gift-giving (typical for the later *Kali* age) fits nicely with a process of increasing secularisation.

E The perfect gift

Building on Mauss’ celebrated essay and on Noonan’s book on bribes, Carrier (1990) develops a theory of the “perfect gift”. Consider Mauss’ speculations:

We live in societies that strongly distinguish (this contrast is now criticized by jurists themselves) real rights and personal rights, persons and things. This separation is fundamental; it constitutes the condition itself for part of our system of property, alienation and exchange. [...] our civilizations, dating back to the Semitic, Greek, and Roman civilizations, strongly distinguish between obligation and nonvoluntary prestation, on the one hand, and the gift (*don*) on the other. But are these distinctions not rather recent in the law of the great civilizations? Did they, too, not pass through an earlier phase, during which they were less characterized by such a cold and calculating mentality?⁸⁴⁷

From the Old Indian point of view, there is no contradiction between pursuing *artha* on the one hand and performing *dānadharma* on the other. Whether, indeed, any parts of humankind ever went through a phase without “a cold and calculating mentality” is a topic not taken up here.

⁸⁴⁶ See Gay (1968).

⁸⁴⁷ Mauss (2012, p. 174) or Mauss & Maurer (2016, p. 146)

Carrier (1990) discusses “the ideology of the perfect gift in American society”. In that paper, he cites the following characterisation, provided by Noonan, Jr. (1984, p. 695):

A gift [...] is meant as an expression of personal affection, of some degree of love. It is given in a context created by **personal relations** [bold here and below by HW] to convey a **personal feeling**. The more it reflects the donee’s interests and the donor’s tastes the better. The more completely it is a gift the more completely it declares an **identification of the giver with the recipient** [...]. The **size** of what is given is irrelevant. [...] The donor [...] does not give by way of compensation or by way of purchase. **No equivalence** exists between what the donee has done and what is given. **No obligation** is imposed which the donee must fulfill. The donee’s **thanks** are but the ghost of a reciprocal bond. That the gift should operate coercively is indeed repugnant and painful to the donor, destructive of the liberality that is intended. Freely given, the gift leaves the donee free. When the love that gift conveys is total, donor and donee are one, so the donee has no one to whom to respond. Every gift tries to approximate this ideal case.

In some sense, both a *dharmadāna* and a perfect gift are ideal cases. Neither of them is given out of pure altruism. A *dharmadāna* is given in order to earn merit. A perfect gift is made in order to “to convey a personal feeling”. On the other hand, *dharmadāna* and a perfect gift differ significantly:

- While a *dharmadāna* is to be given with a friendly face (see <91>), a **personal relation** or even **identification** between donor and receiver is not involved.
- A *dharmadāna* has to be given according to the donor’s means (see <92>) and may be just a handful of vegetables⁸⁴⁸. Nevertheless, the **size** of what is given clearly matters, as can be seen from the three different types of gift (see <107>). Furthermore, consider the request to donate something rare (*durlabha*).⁸⁴⁹
- The virtuous receiver (*pātra*) is central to the Brahmanical *dānadharma* (see <94>). Thus, **equivalence** between the receiver’s learnedness, virtue, etc. and what is given clearly exists.
- Relatedly, while the gift does not impose a specific **obligation** to be fulfilled by the *pātra*, the clear expectation exists that the latter continue in his learned and good ways. Indeed, gift-giving “serves the purpose of policing the Brahmin community by encouraging its members to aspire to the high standards of an ideal Brahmin lest they be deemed unfit to receive patronage.”⁸⁵⁰
- In the case of the perfect gift, thankfulness is rather unimportant. For *dharmadānas*, thankfulness is unthinkable. This stands in contrast to Seneca’s theory of benefits (chapter IX).

848 *śākamuṣṭi* in LDK 1.38, Brick (2015)

849 LDK 1.16, Brick (2015)

850 Brick (2015, p. 44)

Carrier (1990, p. 19) proposes to structure gift-giving along two dimensions:

- “objects as anonymous commodities” versus “objects as personal tokens”
- “people as free and independent individuals” versus “people enmeshed in relations of mutual obligation”.

With respect to the first bullet point, Carrier (1990, p. 24) cites Mauss’ dictum that “objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them”. Here, the Maori concept of “spirit of the gift”, *hau*, comes into play. See section XIX.D on the transference of sin and the discussion by Sahlins (1997). In Table 16, the two dimensions are used to build a two-times-two matrix. A perfect gift is diametrically opposed to a *dharmadāna*. Furthermore, the latter is similar to impersonal market transaction!

Table 16: Carrier’s dimensions of a gift

	objects as anonymous commodities	objects as personal tokens
people as free and independent individuals	impersonal market transaction / <i>dharmadāna</i>	
people enmeshed in relations of mutual obligation, without imposing any specific obligation	<i>beneficium</i> (Seneca)	perfect gift

F Monetisation and the development of monism

While lying somewhat outside of this book’s main thrust, I would like to draw attention to a recent book by Seaford (2020). He advances the bold thesis that one important driving force behind the development of philosophy in ancient India (and somewhat similarly in ancient Greece) was “monetisation”, i.e., the “development towards a single entity (money) whose only or main function is to be a general means of payment and exchange and a general measure and store of value” (p. 17). Seaford (p. 319) explains that monetisation may be “*endogenous* (i.e. developed within a society with little or no external influence)”. In contrast, *exogenous* monetisation refers to “traders, settlers, literature and art [...]”. Importantly, however, Seaford restricts himself to the period between the Ṛgveda and Alexander’s crossing the Indus (p. 7).

Now, money being the only entity with these functions amounts to a kind of “monism”: the functions formerly fulfilled by different items, such as cows, gold, or clothes, are now performed by only one entity, perhaps by stamped gold or silver coins (“money”). Seaford provides many quotations attesting to different forms of monism. For example, “abstract monism” is seen in one of the early Upaniṣads:

<252> *Brahman* is OM. This whole world is OM.⁸⁵¹

851 TU 1.8, Olivelle (1998)

I find Seaford's theses intriguing.⁸⁵² Among other things, he elaborates on the similarities between money and merit. I find the following aspects relevant for this book:

- Action:
Money can be earned by virtuous means, in line with *svadharma*, according to <15>, <17>, and <19>. Merit is earned by virtuous actions, for example *dharmadāna*, as in <90> and <101>.
- Consequences:
"Money and merit acquired (and accumulated) by an individual influence her or his future well-being. The consequences of the action are deferred."⁸⁵³
- Anonymous commodities:
Money seems to be the quintessential "anonymous commodity" (see the previous section). The same anonymity seems to be true for transferable merit, see <175>.
- Impersonality:
"The power of money and merit is impersonal. They generally influence the well-being of their owner without the intervention of any other agent, human or divine."⁸⁵⁴
- Two sides of the same coin:
The tax-collecting king also collects otherworldly merit, simultaneously, see <58>.

G Revisiting Freiburger's classifications

The current author was made aware of Freiburger's classifications (see subsection II.D(2)) only after the book's structure was more or less completed. Interestingly, the classifications did not influence the major decisions on how to structure the book and on which comparisons to carry out. One may opine that this attests to the uselessness of Freiburger's work. However, neither that author nor the current one would subscribe to such a negative view. As Freiburger (2018, p. 2) himself argues,

[T]he elements discussed here [in his article, HW] are largely familiar to practicing comparativists, even if the terms may be partly new. My primary goal is to provide analytical categories, that is, a vocabulary that enables us to speak about the methodical components of comparison that most comparativists more or less intuitively exert in their scholarly practice.

852 See Tinguely & Wiese (2021) for a book review from which I have borrowed.

853 After Seaford (2004, p. 203). I have replaced "karma" with "merit".

854 After Seaford (2004, p. 203). I have replaced "karma" with "merit". However, see Bronkhorst (2011, pp. 86–88), who shows how Praśastapāda, the most influential commentator within the Vaiśeṣika school (one of the six orthodox systems) "postulated the existence of a creator God who would arrange things in accordance with the past deeds of living beings."

XX Conclusion: leftovers and wrapping up

It seems to me that the twofold classifications “fit”. In this sense, the classifications have passed the “test” mentioned in the introduction (p. 16). More importantly, I find (and the readers might also have found) the sharpened awareness of

- the two modes of comparison,
- the different scopes with which to work,
- the several *tertia comparationis* (in my complex study), and
- the emic-etic distinction

to be helpful and disciplining.