
Mind and Awareness

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Please establish a virtuous motivation by thinking, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all mother sentient beings. In order to do so, I have to eliminate ignorance from my mental continuum, and for that purpose I am going to listen to this teaching tonight'.

As you all know, this course is going to be taught for six weeks on Friday nights. Everybody is required to attend all of those six sessions, apart from one or two people who personally asked me for an exemption because they could only come for two weeks or four weeks. Apart from those few exceptions, which I granted personally, everybody has to attend all six weeks.

There are two major divisions in the text, which is called *Mind and Awareness*. They are objects and object possessors.

1. Objects

The definition of *an object is to be known by awareness*.

In general, object and objects of knowledge are synonymous. However when we distinguish object possessors from objects, then object refers to all objects of knowledge apart from mind, and object possessor refers only to mind.

We have already mentioned the many divisions of objects before, but now we particularly have what is called the determined object, the appearing object and the object of engagement. The appearing object is synonymous with the held object, and every consciousness has an appearing or held object. Determined objects are found only with conceptual consciousnesses.

To explain the various objects in relation to a direct perception apprehending blue: blue is the object of engagement; it is the apprehended object and it is also the appearing object of the eye consciousness apprehending blue.

That direct perception apprehending blue induces a conceptual thought apprehending blue. Here the objects vary slightly. Blue is the determined object of the conceptual thought apprehending blue, as well as the object of engagement. However it is not the appearing object, which is the meaning generality of blue.

That completes the explanation of objects. We have already been through all of that when we explained the tenets. We have defined the determined object, the object of engagement, and the appearing object. As this is completely clear, we will now go on to object possessors. (*Laughter*)

2. Object Possessors

The definition of *an object possessor is that which is endowed with a variety of its own objects*. It is divided into three: person, awareness, and (expressive) sound.

These three divisions of object possessors relate to the threefold division of impermanent phenomena into non-associated compounded phenomena, awareness, and form.

The first kind of object possessor, the person, is a non-associated compounded phenomenon; awareness is awareness and sound is form¹.

2.1 Person

The first object possessor, person, is that which circles within cyclic existence, and which is liberated from cyclic existence.

It is important that we identify what a person is. *The being that is labelled on any of its five aggregates is the definition of person*. The synonyms for a person are self and being.

The five aggregates are the form aggregate, the aggregate of feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness. The person, or the 'I', is imputed on any of those five aggregates, where 'any' means either four or five of the aggregates. This is because in the formless realm the aggregate for form is non-existing, and there are only four aggregates.

Even though we say the person is circling within cyclic existence, one important point to consider is that cyclic existence in relation to human beings is actually the base of imputation of the person, which are the five aggregates. In relation to human beings the aggregates of form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and consciousness (sometimes called the contaminated or afflicted aggregates), are actually what we refer to as cyclic existence.

If we generate the thought of renunciation truly then it should be a thought wishing to be free from those five aggregates, and not wanting to take those five aggregates again in the future. We can generate the wish of wanting to be free from one's friends or other outside conditions very easily, but that is not what renunciation actually means. Renunciation is the wish of wanting to be free from those five contaminated aggregates.

When explaining the phenomena of the afflicted side, the aggregate of form is explained first. Although I have done that before, we can go through it again.

Because we are so attached to form, then in our continuum the view of form is first developed. Once we have started to look at form, we then develop various kinds of feelings with regard to that form. These feelings are either pleasurable or unpleasurable feelings, which is the second of the five aggregates. After we have generated a feeling towards the perceived form, then mistaken recognition, which is the third aggregate, will be generated in our continuum. Then, in dependence upon that mistaken recognition, attachment and anger, or like and dislike are generated. This is the fourth of the five aggregates. From that, the contaminated consciousness is generated once again.

These five aggregates are called the base of imputation because they are the base on which the mistaken perception of self of a person arises. At a time when our various sense or mental consciousnesses are engaging the six kinds of objects, such as form, smell and so forth, we generate the apprehension of a person existing substantially in terms of being self-supporting engaging in those six objects. If our sense consciousnesses are engaging nice smells or tastes and so forth, then at that time, the apprehension of a person existing substantially in terms of being self-supporting engaging those smells and tastes and so forth appears within the mind on the basis of the five aggregates. The text says that the mistaken apprehension of the self of a person arises in dependence on the community of form, which refers to form and the other four aggregates.

The five aggregates are the basis for the mistaken perception apprehending a self existing substantially in terms of being self-supporting. That self of a person generated by our mind then engages the various aggregates. How it engages the form aggregate has already been explained. In relation to the aggregate of feeling, through the ripening of karma we experience the ripening results, which are the various feelings of suffering and happiness. At that time there is also the appearance of a self existing substantially, in terms of being self-supporting, which is experiencing those feelings.

In dependence upon the five aggregates the view of the transitory collections is then generated. Because they are changing moment by moment the five aggregates are transitory. In dependence upon the five aggregates there is the

¹ Form is synonymous with matter and not to be confused with the entry of form, which applies only to the object's eye consciousness.

apprehension of the self of a person. The mind, which apprehends that self of a person, is called the view of the transitory collections.

We have to understand that this appearance of self is a mistaken appearance, and generate the wisdom realising the absence of such a self existing substantially in terms of being self-supporting. This wisdom becomes the wisdom realising the selflessness of a person. This wisdom realising the selflessness of a person, and the grasping at the self of person are completely opposite in the way they apprehend their object. They cancel each other out. Once we have generated that wisdom realising the selflessness of a person we will recognise that the grasping at the self of a person is a wrong mind, and that the wisdom realising the selflessness of a person is a valid cogniser.

Just briefly, with regard to the first kind of object possessor or person, it is very useful to understand the way the various wisdoms act as antidotes to oppose the various delusions. Then one can apply them, and use them within one's own mind.

With regard to the base of imputation, the five aggregates are sometimes called the afflicted aggregates. Afflicted refers to the delusions. There are two reasons why these five aggregates are called the afflicted aggregates. One is from the point of view of the cause, and the other is from the point of view of the result.

From the point of view of the cause, they are called afflicted aggregates because these five aggregates are caused by delusions. They can also be called afflicted aggregates because they act as the cause for further delusions in the future. So they are called afflicted aggregates from the point of view of the cause as well as the result.

Because we have afflicted aggregates, at the time of our death a kind of craving is generated within our mind, which focuses on the kind of rebirth we will take in the future life. Then through the force of that craving, a stronger wish is generated within the mind. This wish grasps for this particular future life already focussed upon by the earlier craving. This particular wish, induced by the craving of wanting to obtain this future life, is called grasping. Then through the force of craving and grasping a particular karma will be ripened within the mind. When all these three come together, they will cause us to take rebirth, and so take another aggregate of form.

Here we can see the sequence of how future aggregates are generated from the delusions of this life. If you follow it further back, the afflicted aggregates are generated from karma and delusions, and the root of the delusions is ignorance. So the final cause of everything is ignorance.

2.2 Awareness

The next object possessor is awareness. **Knower** is the definition of awareness and **clear and knowing** is the definition of consciousness. Consciousness, awareness and knower are synonymous.

Here, the 'clear' in 'clear and knowing' refers to the fact that consciousness is free from any kind of form. Because of that clarity within the mind, various outer objects can appear within the mind just like reflections. So outer objects are reflected within the consciousness, because of the clarity of consciousness. We have already explained some of this before.

Awareness is divided into valid cognisers and awarenesses that are not valid cognisers. We have already been through these definitions before. Actually, I want to get to mind and mental factors.

2.2.1 Valid Cognisers

The definition of a *valid cogniser*² is a **newly incontrovertible knower**. The Sautrantikas, Mind-Only and Svatantrika-Madhyamikas assert this definition of a valid cogniser.

Why does the definition of valid cogniser include the word 'newly'? The reason is to eliminate subsequent cognisers from being considered as being prime cognisers.

The second part in the definition of a valid cogniser, 'incontrovertible', is mentioned to eliminate correct assumptions as being valid cognisers.

Correct assumptions are a type of mind that apprehends an existing object. For example, as beginners we start to meditate on impermanence, and then through our meditation we generate a certain understanding of impermanence without actually having realised impermanence. Such a mind is called correct assumption. As this correct assumption becomes stronger and stronger it becomes a valid cogniser. This inclusion of 'incontrovertible' in the definition makes it clear that as a valid cogniser one has to realise one's object, and to have eliminated all super-impositions with regard to the object. A correct assumption has not yet done this.

Even though the object that is understood by a correct assumption is an existing object (such as the correct assumption understanding impermanence), it hasn't actually realised impermanence. Therefore a correct assumption is actually a controvertible knower, which then later becomes the valid cogniser realising impermanence. So in order to eliminate correct assumptions as valid cognisers, the definition of valid cognisers includes 'incontrovertible'. This shows that to be a valid cogniser one has to actually realise the object.

The third part in the definition of valid cogniser is 'knower', which is synonymous with consciousness and awareness. It is mentioned in order to eliminate the physical sense powers from being valid cognisers.

Valid cognisers can be divided into direct valid cognisers and inferential valid cognisers.

2.2.1.1 Direct Valid Cogniser

The definition of a *direct valid cogniser* is **being newly incontrovertible and free from conceptions**. There are four divisions: direct sense cogniser, direct mental cogniser, direct self-knowing cogniser and direct yogic cogniser.

2.2.1.1.a. Direct Sense Perception

The definition of a *direct sense perception* is **an un-mistaken knower free from conception, which is generated in dependence upon its uncommon empowering condition of a physical sense power**.

In relation to the eye consciousness, the uncommon empowering condition is the eye sense power. The eye sense power is a certain type of subtle clear form. I have had it explained to me that medical science asserts that there is a similar subtle clear form, which is somewhere here in the head behind the ear. I am not sure whether that is actually the eye sense power which is asserted in Buddhism. The eye sense power is a kind of clear form in which the outer form to be seen is reflected.

In relation to the ear consciousness we have a subtle physical sense power of the ear. Here we have this very thin skin within the ear, which is which is said by medical science to be responsible for us being able to hear sounds. Again, I am not sure whether that is the physical sense power of the ear that is explained in Buddhism. This remains to be analysed, but there is something similar asserted by medical science.

² A more literal translation at this time is prime cogniser. So valid cogniser is the equivalent of prime cogniser.

It is explained that the various sense consciousnesses arise in dependence upon those physical sense powers, and when those physical sense powers degenerate, then the various consciousnesses that are dependent upon those sense powers become weaker, and also degenerate. This is something we can observe very clearly. If the power of our eye lessens, then also the eye consciousness generated in conjunction with the eye sense power gets weaker, or completely disappears.

Because the strength of the various consciousnesses depends upon the strength of the sense powers, I always say that it is very important to take good care of one's physical body. When our physical body degenerates the physical sense powers also degenerate, and then the various sense consciousnesses, which are associated or depend upon those sense powers, also degenerate. So it is important to become very familiar with one's physical form, and to know all its various aspects. This is because knowing the various aspects of our physical form acts as an antidote to the delusion of desire. In relation to lay people it will prevent adultery and sexual misconduct. To go further, in relation to ordained people it prevents the breaking of one of the root vows and so forth. So knowing the generality of our physical form is very important, because it seems one is not allowed to do just anything. (*Laughter*)

The cause for the physical body is the blood of the mother and the sperm of the father, the red drop and the white drop. It is very important to know the cause for the physical body because of the reasons already explained. There is a certain power in the red and white drop, which sustains the physical form, yet there are various kinds of substances that harm that sustaining power of the red and white drop. Then the power of our physical form degenerates, and also the coarse consciousnesses, which depend upon the physical form as their base, also degenerate. For example diabetes is a sickness that harms the sustaining power of the white and red drops. In order to stop the negative influence of diabetes, one has to take a certain type of medicine.

Having a healthy body is very important for the success of one's Dharma practice. For that reason I always advice everybody to take good care of his or her physical health. It is also very important that we take personal responsibility for our physical health. Of course in general we will follow the advice of our doctor, but having that advice doesn't mean that we can abandon our own sense of judgement. For example, when I went to hospital the doctor gave me some pills to take, but because those pills caused me constipation I stopped taking them. When I went back the next day and the doctor asked me if I took my medicine, I said 'no', and explained to him the reasons why I hadn't taken it. Then the doctor said, 'It was actually very correct for you not to take the medicine if it causes you those problems'.

Even though we might have the advice of our doctor, that doesn't mean that we can just give up our personal responsibility for ourselves. As was explained before, the strength of the coarse consciousnesses depends upon the strength of the physical sense powers. So we have to take good care of our physical sense powers. Translated this means that we have to take care of our physical form, because otherwise it will create obstacles for our Dharma practice.

Direct sense perception has three divisions: valid cogniser, subsequent cogniser and awareness to which the object appears but is not ascertained.

In the context of an eye consciousness that apprehends form, the first moment of the eye consciousness apprehending form is a **valid sense cogniser**. The second moment of the eye consciousness apprehending form is a **subsequent sense cogniser** realising form. The third category is the eye consciousness **apprehending form to which form appears but**

is not ascertained. This is the situation where even though form appears to the eye consciousness mentally, we are distracted by some beautiful melodious sound. At the time when our mental consciousness is distracted, then the eye consciousness cannot ascertain its object of form.

So mental consciousness becomes very important. For example, at the time of meditation when we focus inwards on our mental consciousness, then even though our eyes are open and gazing over the tip of our nose that shouldn't actually disturb one. Some people say they are distracted when their eyes are open, but actually when one engages one's mental consciousness, the eye consciousness will not be distracted by any kind of form.

Further there are five groups of sense direct perceptions; sense direct perception apprehending form, sound, smell, taste and tactile objects.

Where is the taste consciousness apprehending taste?³

The tongue.

The taste consciousness is most likely situated more towards the inner end of the tongue. For example we will not be able to identify a sweet taste with the tip of our tongue. Only when it gets further into the mouth towards the back of the tongue can we identify the sweet taste. That is an indication that the taste consciousness is situated more towards the root of the tongue.

Maybe some of you can get the tea? Sweet tea!

What is the difference between conceptual awareness and non-conceptual awareness?

Conceptual awareness is purely mental.

That is correct. The five sense perceptions are non-conceptual. All sense perceptions are non-conceptual.

As we mentioned before, at first our eye consciousness (or other sense direct perception) apprehends outer objects, and after that in our mental space we generate craving for that object. First we see a certain object, and then later we start to think about it, and then we generate a mental image and craving for that object. To a direct perception the object appears in the raw, while to a conceptual mind the object doesn't appear in the raw, but through the help of the meaning generality.

What is the difference between realising an object directly and realising an object explicitly?

We explicitly realise it via a generic image

One part of your answer was correct. To realise an object directly means to realise the object without the help of the meaning generality. The mind realises its object explicitly if it realises it by arising in the aspect of the object. If the mind realises its object without arising in the aspect of that object, then the mind has realised the object implicitly. So there are two modes of realisation, explicit realisation and implicit realisation. The difference lies in whether or not the mind arises in the aspect of that object. Both conceptual awarenesses and non-conceptual awarenesses have those modes of realisation.

If a mind realises its object without the help a meaning generality then it realises its object clearly.

What is the meaning of consciousness?

Clear and knowing.

Is there a pervasion that if it is consciousness then it has to be clear and knowing?

Yes.

So there is a pervasion that if it is consciousness then it has to be clear and knowing?

Is there a pervasion that if it is consciousness then it realises its

³ In the discussions that follow, student responses are in italics, and Geshe-la's questions and responses are in normal typeface. Sometimes the audience response is inaudible.

object?

Yes.

We can posit the wrong mind. If you were to say 'yes' to that then you would posit the wrong mind, which doesn't realise its object but is consciousness.

If you assert that all consciousnesses have realised their objects then you are saying that wrong minds realise the object. So what is realised by self-grasping?

[Inaudible]

The definition of a wrong awareness is a knower that mistakenly engages its object. Since it mistakenly engages its object, how can you say that it realises its object?

[Inaudible]

What does it mistakenly realise?

[Inaudible]

It engages its object mistakenly.

Self-grasping apprehends the self of a person. Then if we meditate on selflessness we clearly understand that the self of a person is non-existent. If self-grasping realises its object, that would mean that the self of a person would exist. In the same way if grasping at permanence of a vase realises its object, then that would mean that a vase was permanent. However we clearly understand that a vase is impermanent, therefore if we were grasping at the permanence of a vase we would be mistakenly engaging the object.

The cogniser understanding impermanent vase, having taken vase as its object, then realises the impermanence of vase. The grasping at permanent vase, after having taken vase as its object apprehends vase as being permanent. However this apprehension of permanent vase is a mistaken apprehension, which is confirmed by the correct apprehension of impermanent vase by the realiser understanding impermanent vase.

How many kinds of awareness are there?

Seven

What are those seven?

Direct, inferential, subsequent, wrong consciousness, doubt, correct assumptions, and a consciousness to which an object appears without being ascertained.

In that enumeration of seven kinds of awareness, how many awareness's are classified as being realisers?

Two

What about subsequent cognisers? Since you posit only two realisers, aren't subsequent cognisers realisers?

As a definition of a subsequent cogniser, the awareness realising the realised is posited. So how can you say that a subsequent cogniser is not a realiser?

What is the definition of a subsequent cogniser?

[Inaudible]

Is there a pervasion that, if it is a direct perception, it is a direct valid cogniser?

[Inaudible]

The eye consciousness apprehending a blue snow mountain is not a direct perception, because the definition of a direct perception is **an un-mistaken knower free from conception**. So a direct perception has to be an un-mistaken mind. The eye consciousness to which the blue snow mountain appears is not an un-mistaken mind.

We have already mentioned that in the Sautrantika tenet all direct perceptions are non-mistaken consciousnesses, and in the Mind-Only tenet there is no pervasion.

Which common locus do the Mind-Only assert between the

direct perception and the mistaken consciousness? Now we have gone to the Mind-Only tenet. As was mentioned the other day in the Mind-Only tenet, all sense direct perceptions in the continuum of an ordinary being are mistaken consciousnesses. That is because they are contaminated by the karmic potentials of ignorance, because of which they have the appearance of outer existence.

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Note on authentication

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