

# Study Group - "Buddhist Tenets"

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Please establish a good motivation.

## 4.5.2 Non-valid Cognisers

We begin with the consciousnesses that are non-valid cognisers.

There are various divisions of mind into valid cognisers, and minds which are non-valid cognisers. It is very important to know the differences between these various types of minds and to be able to identify each. For example to know what mind is a valid cogniser and what mind is not; to know the difference between a mistaken mind and a wrong mind. Many of our consciousnesses are actually mistaken consciousnesses, or wrong consciousnesses. So it becomes very important to know exactly what they are. Otherwise it will be very difficult for us to identify true grasping within our mind.

The definition of a mind which is *a non-valid cogniser is a knower which is not newly incontrovertible*. There are five divisions of minds which are not valid cognisers. They are: subsequent cogniser; wrong minds; doubt; correct assumption; and minds to which the object appears but is not determined.

### 4.5.2.1 Subsequent cogniser

Last time we defined a *subsequent cognition as a knower which realises the realised*. Within subsequent cognisers there are conceptual subsequent cognisers, and non-conceptual subsequent cognisers.

1. An example of a **conceptual subsequent cogniser** is the memory remembering blue, induced by a direct perception apprehending blue. Another example is the second moment of the inferential cogniser realising impermanent sound.

2. An example of a **non-conceptual subsequent cogniser** is the second moment of the direct perception apprehending form.

What is important to remember here is that the difference between a valid cogniser and a subsequent cogniser is whether it is the first moment of the mind realising the object, or any of the subsequent moments. The first moment of a mind realising its object is a valid cogniser. From the second moment onwards it is always a subsequent cogniser.

For example the first moment of a direct perception apprehending form, is a valid cognition and the second and third moments and so forth will be subsequent cognisers.

### 4.5.2.2 Wrong Mind

The second mind which is not a valid cognition is a wrong mind. The definition of *a wrong mind is a knower which incorrectly engages its object* or just *an incorrectly engaging knower*. There are two divisions: conceptual wrong minds, and non-conceptual wrong minds.

1. An example for a **conceptual wrong mind** is the conceptual thought holding sound to be permanent. The conceptual thought holding sound to be permanent is an incorrectly engaging knower. It engages sound incorrectly, because even though sound is actually impermanent this

conceptual thought holds sound to be permanent. So it holds sound as something which it is actually not, and that is the way in which it incorrectly engages its object.

We say that a conceptual thought holding sound to be permanent is both a wrong mind as well as a mistaken mind. If it is a wrong mind then there is a pervasion that it has to always be a mistaken mind. Whereas there is no pervasion that if it is a mistaken mind it necessarily has to be a wrong mind.

The conceptual thought holding sound to be permanent is a wrong mind as well as a mistaken mind, while its opposite - the conceptual thought holding sound to be impermanent - is a correct mind while still being a mistaken mind.

What makes a mind a wrong mind, and what makes a mind a mistaken mind? The conceptual thought holding sound to be impermanent is not wrong because it holds sound as that which it actually is. Sound is impermanent, and so the thought holding sound to be impermanent is not wrong. However it is still mistaken, because it is mistaken in regard to its appearing object. The appearance of impermanent sound to this thought is permanent, but it is held by that mind as impermanent sound. Therefore the thought holding sound to be impermanent is a mistaken mind.

2. The example the text gives a **non-conceptual wrong mind** is the sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two. The Sautrantika school of tenets holds that if it is a sense consciousness there is no pervasion that it has to be mistaken. There are sense consciousnesses which are non-mistaken, but there are also the sense consciousnesses which are mistaken. Here in this example, sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two is a mistaken non-conceptual sense consciousness.

In the Mind-Only school there are no non-mistaken sense consciousnesses posited. This Sautrantika school has two - a mistaken sense consciousnesses and non-mistaken sense consciousnesses.

### 4.5.2.3 Doubt

The third category of consciousnesses which are non-valid cognisers is doubt. The definition of *doubt is a mental factor which by its own power has qualms in two directions*. Doubt is an undecided, mind wavering between two directions, or two objects. These qualms exist through the power of the doubt. The mental consciousness which is concomitant with that doubt also has qualms in two directions, but not through its own power. Rather these qualms arise through the power of the doubt. The other mental factors concomitant with the mental consciousness and the mental factor doubt, also have qualms in two directions. Again, this is not through the power of the mental factors but through the power of the mental factor doubt.

If we have doubt with regard to the object we are trying to understand we cannot at the same time generate a mind which determines or realises its object. Realising or determining our object means that we completely decide, 'That's how it is'. Not only this, but we completely eliminate all kinds of superimpositions that we might have in regard to that object. This kind of mind is completely contrary to doubt.

The purpose of our meditation is to determine the object of our meditation, by eliminating any mental superimpositions and elaborations of doubt. While we have doubt and while we meditate in an undecided manner, then we will not be able to realise the object of our meditation. That is because

having doubt about the object of one's meditation, and realising the object of the meditation are completely mutually exclusive. When we realise the object of our meditation, we eliminate the mental superimpositions and elaborations of doubt about the object.

There are three kinds of doubt: doubt tending towards reality, doubt tending away from reality; and even doubt.

1. An example of **doubt tending towards reality** would be the thought, 'Sound is probably impermanent.' This thought hasn't eliminated superimpositions with regard to impermanent sound, but it is tending to the right direction.
2. The thought, 'Sound is probably permanent.' is an example of a **doubt tending away from reality**.
3. Thinking, 'Sound may be either permanent or impermanent.' is **even doubt**.

None of these three examples has eliminated the superimpositions with regard to the object, nor have any of them realised the object. Even though the doubt tending toward reality does tend toward reality, it has still not eliminated superimpositions.

Understanding doubt is very important. For example if we generate in our mind the doubt that maybe the law of cause and effect exists, then this thought causes us to engage in virtuous actions. Even though we might not be completely convinced that the law of cause and effect exists, because we doubt in the right direction it causes us to generate positive states of mind. If, on the other hand, we think, 'maybe the law of cause and effect doesn't exist', then that would cause us to generate non-virtuous actions and negative states of mind. If we are in an even state of doubt we think about whether or not the law of cause and effect exists, and we do not tend in either direction. It is an open state of mind where at least we have gone away from the extreme of saying that the law of cause and effect definitely does not exist. Then from that stance of even doubt we can move on to doubt tending to reality, thinking that maybe the law of cause and effect does exist.

#### 4.5.2.4 Correct Assumption

The fourth category is correct assumption, which is a **controvertible determinative knower concordant with reality determining its object**. There are five types of correct assumption:

1. correct assumption without reason;
2. correct assumption contrary to reason;
3. correct assumption with inconclusive reason;
4. correct assumption with unestablished reason;
5. correct assumption having reason, but not ascertaining it.

1. An example of **correct assumption without reason** is the mind thinking, 'Sound is impermanent', which is generated upon hearing someone make that statement. Through listening, for example to the teaching saying that sound is impermanent then the assumption that sound is impermanent is generated in one's mind. It is generated solely on the basis of having heard somebody else making the statement. While the assumption is completely correct and very positive, it has not come about through actually having thought about it, or analysed and reasoned it out for oneself. Because the assumption has come about through having heard it from somebody else, it is called correct assumption without reason.

2. An example of **correct assumption contrary to reason** is the mind holding sound to be impermanent, which is

generated upon the reason of being empty of being able to perform a function. Through thinking about the syllogism, 'Take sound, it is impermanent because it is empty of performing a function', one realises that the reason 'being empty of being able to perform a function' is a reasoning contrary to reality. It is contrary reasoning, and a completely wrong reasoning. Yet in dependence upon that contrary reasoning we can still generate the mind that sound is impermanent. Hearing the proof statement, 'Take sound, it is impermanent because it is empty of being able to perform a function', we can still generate the mind thinking, 'There is a possibility that sound is impermanent', even though the reason is completely wrong. The mind thinking that sound is impermanent, although generated upon such a contrary reason, is a correct assumption contrary to reason.

If you are asked the question, 'Why is sound impermanent?' then what reason would you posit? If you say, 'Sound is impermanent because it is a functioning phenomena' then that is a valid reason. This is because there is a pervasion that if something is a functioning phenomena then it has to be impermanent. Saying 'Sound has to be impermanent, because it is empty of being able to perform a function.' is a wrong reason.

3. The third correct assumption is **correct assumption with inconclusive reason**. Here again, the example would be the mind which holds sound to be impermanent. In this example it is generated on the reasoning of sound being an object of knowledge. Here the object of knowledge is not contrary to, or mutually exclusive with sound, because sound is obviously an object of knowledge. This kind of reasoning is called an inconclusive reason because there is no pervasion that if something is an object of knowledge, then it has to be impermanent. The mind holding sound to be impermanent, which is generated in dependence upon an inconclusive reason, is called a correct assumption with inconclusive reason, because we have objects of knowledge which are impermanent but we also have objects of knowledge which are permanent. Are there just those two? (*Geshe-la asks the students*)

Saying that sound is impermanent because it is an object of knowledge is an inconclusive reasoning. That is because you have many objects which are permanent, so from that kind of reasoning you cannot conclude that sound is impermanent.

4. The fourth kind of correct assumption is the **correct assumption with unestablished reasoning**. The example is the mind holding sound to be impermanent, which is generated upon the reasoning of sound being that which is being held by eye consciousness. Here the reason being given is that sound has to be impermanent, because it is that which is being held by eye consciousness. Is that an established reason or a non-established reason?

(*On the basis of audience response*) Why is it a non-established reason? Isn't sound a thing which is held by eye consciousness? Isn't sound being held by the eye consciousness of the Buddha? We say that the eye consciousness of the Buddha holds sound. Also the eye consciousness of a snake can see sound because the snake doesn't have an ear consciousness. Yet we say the snake is still able to apprehend sound through its eye consciousness. So the eye consciousness of the snake holds sound. In the case of an ant, which doesn't have eye consciousness, it apprehends forms through the ear consciousness.

There is a verse in one text which says that the ant is

actually the fastest among all animals, relative to its size. If you look at its size, an ant can go very, very fast. If we would go as fast, relative to our body size, as the ant relative to its body size, then we too would be very, very fast. If you measure the distance of the width of the table then for an ant is quite a long distance, as it is many hundreds of times the ant's body length. If we had to walk as many hundreds of times our body length, it would take us quite a long time. Yet but the ant covers that distance very, very quickly.

An example of a **correct assumption with unestablished reason** is the mind thinking that sound is impermanent, which is generated in dependence upon the reasoning that sound is an object being held by eye consciousness, when that reason is not established. Sound is not an object being held by eye consciousness, even though sound is held by the eye consciousness of a Buddha. We say there is no pervasion then. Even though sound is being held by the eye consciousness of a Buddha, that doesn't make it an object which is being held by eye consciousness. Therefore the reason given here is not established. The (correct) assumption, which is generated upon that reason, is a correct assumption with an unestablished reason.

5. The fifth type of correct assumption is the **correct assumption having reason but not ascertaining it**. Here the example would be the mind holding sound to be impermanent, which is **generated upon the correct reason** that sound is a product, but without having actually understood the reason. If we hear the proof statement, 'Take sound, it is impermanent because it is a product', then upon hearing that reason (which is a correct one), we think, 'Sound is impermanent'. However we haven't actually understood the reasoning. So this mind is an example for the fifth kind of correct assumption.

Generating a mind holding sound to be impermanent in dependence upon the correct reason of sound being a product, without understanding the implications of the reason is a correct assumption based on a reason you have not understood. This would be the case for most of us. Most of us think that sound is impermanent, and we also use the correct reasoning that it is a product. However to our mind, being a product hasn't become a perfect reason establishing sound as impermanent. Even though we hear, 'It is a product', we haven't actually understood either the reason, or the implications of the reason. Because we haven't understood all the implications of the reason, it hasn't become a perfect reason proving that sound is impermanent to our mind. Even though this reason hasn't proved to our mind that sound is impermanent, we still think sound is impermanent in dependence upon that reason, and this is a correct assumption. In the case where a product becomes a valid reason to our mind proving that sound is impermanent, then we generate the inferential cogniser realising that sound is impermanent. However for as long as a product doesn't become a perfect reasoning proving that sound is impermanent to our mind, we won't generate a valid inferential cogniser. We will only generate the correct assumption holding sound to be impermanent.

#### 4.5.2.5 Awareness To Which The Object Appears But Is Not Determined

The definition of *an awareness to which the object appears but is not determined is an unmistakable knower which has clear appearance of, but does not determine, its object*. It has three divisions: sense consciousness; mental consciousness; and self-knower

1. An example for a **sense consciousness** that is an awareness to which the object appears but is not determined, is the ear consciousness apprehending sound at a time when our mind is distracted by the eye consciousness apprehending a beautiful form. We see something very beautiful and attractive and concentrate on that. Then, even though our ear consciousness apprehends sounds, our mind is distracted and more focussed more on what we see than what we hear. So sounds will appear to our ear consciousness but they are not ascertained.

2. An example for **mental consciousnesses** that are awarenesses to which the object appears but is not determined, are the mental direct perceptions apprehending forms, smells, tastes, tangibles and sounds that are in the continuum of an ordinary person. Here 'ordinary person' refers to a person who has not realised emptiness directly. To the ordinary person (one who has not realised emptiness directly) mental consciousnesses apprehending any of the five sense objects are awarenesses to which the object appears, but is not determined.

Those mental direct perceptions apprehending any of the five sense objects in the continuum of an ordinary person would occur for one instant, between a sense direct perception apprehending form, and the conceptual thought remembering form. At first we have a sense direct perception apprehending form. That sense direct perception apprehending form induces a conceptual thought apprehending form. Then for one instant in between that sense direct perception and the conceptual thought, we have a mental direct perception apprehending that form. That mental direct perception apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being is a very, very subtle phenomena and only occurs instantaneously, and therefore it cannot ascertain the object. Even though form appears to that mental direct perception, it cannot ascertain the object and it cannot induce a determinative knower remembering what that mental direct perception has realised.

3. An example of the third kind of awareness in this category is a **self-knower** to which the object appears but is not determined. Those self-knowers are posited as the self-knowers that occur together with mental direct perceptions in the continuum of an ordinary person. We said that because they are so subtle and short, form appears to that mind, but the object cannot be ascertained, nor the form determined. Because they exist only for one instant then also the self-knowers occurring together with them are also non-determinative knowers. So those self-knowers are also awarenesses to which the object appears but is not determined.

It is as Gyalsten Thamma Rinchen said in his commentary on the *Pramanavartika*. In the continuum of an ordinary person there is mental direct perception, but there is no valid mental direct cogniser.

The text goes on to say that in general, object possessors have three categories: person; sound; and valid cognisers. There are also three divisions of valid object possessors - valid person, valid sound and valid consciousness.

1. An example of a **valid person** is the Buddha. The Buddha is posited as a valid being or a valid person because he explains the four noble truths in an incontrovertible manner, just as he understands the four noble truths incontrovertibly. We said that a valid cognition has to be an incontrovertible knower. In the same way a valid person has to be an incontrovertible person.

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2. An example of the second valid object possessor, **valid sound**, is the speech of the Buddha explaining the four noble truths: the noble truth of suffering, the noble truth of the origin of suffering and that which has to be abandoned, the noble truth of cessation, and the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation - that which has to be generated within one's mind. This teaching is a true teaching. It expresses an exact description of reality. So it is a valid sound.

Here you have just to remember what we said when we defined valid cognisers as being incontrovertible. Then we said that certain scriptures are incontrovertible with regard to their meaning. We went through that when discussed the way an inferential cogniser is generated through belief. That was where it was said that such and such a quote it is incontrovertible with regard to its meaning, because it is free from the three contradictions. It is the same here; a scripture which is incontrovertible with regard to its meaning is regarded as valid speech. So you just have to remember what was explained earlier.

3. The example for **valid consciousness** is a valid direct perception or a valid inferential cogniser.

#### **4.6 Method of Asserting Selflessness**

The sixth division of this school of tenets is the ways of positing selflessness. Actually all of this has already been mentioned. The absence of a permanent, single, independent self is coarse selflessness. The absence of a self being self-supporting and a substantially existent is subtle selflessness. This school of tenets is concomitant with the Vaibashikas in not positing the selflessness of phenomena.

#### **4.7 Principles of Paths and Grounds**

The seventh division posits the grounds and paths. It says in the text that beings belonging to the three lineages accumulate merit at the time of the learner's path. Because of this the Sautrantika school of tenets posits that the form aggregate of a buddha is actually a buddha.

Here there is a difference with regard to the Vaibashika school, which says that the form aggregate of a buddha is not a buddha. The reason given by the Vaibashikas is that a bodhisattva only accumulates merit at the path of accumulation and before. Once he has accumulated three countless aeons of merit during the path of accumulation, he progresses from the path of preparation up to the path of no-more learning in one meditative equipoise session. For that reason the Vaibashikas say that a form body of a buddha cannot be a buddha

The Sautrantika school of tenets asserts that the bodhisattva accumulates merit all the way through the four learner paths. Thus the bodhisattva accumulates merit at the time of path of accumulation, at the time of path of preparation, at the time of path of seeing, and the time of path of meditation. For that reason this school of tenets asserts that the form body of a buddha, which is attained when one progresses to the path of no-more learning, is also a buddha.

Then the text mentions that the way the obscurations are posited, and the way one progresses through the different paths, are posited in the same way as the Vaibashikas do.

This completes the tenets of the Sautrantikas.