

Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

Lesson No: 11

Date: 24th July 2012

Questions related to discussion class on 22nd July 2012

Question: Is the sense consciousness and a sense direct perceiver the same?

Answer: A sense consciousness is *not* necessarily a sense direct perceiver. This will become apparent when we look at the different kinds of mistaken consciousnesses today. From its definition, it is clear that a sense direct perceiver is necessarily non-mistaken. That being the case, to say that all sense consciousnesses are non-mistaken is not tenable because there are sense consciousnesses that are mistaken. Therefore if it is a sense consciousness, it is *not* necessarily non-mistaken.

Student: I thought a sense consciousness that is a non-conceptual consciousness is necessarily non-mistaken.

Answer: There is something that is both a sense consciousness and is mistaken. There are many instances of this. This will be explained soon.

Question: With regard to the sequence of the generation of the sense direct perceiver followed by the mental direct perceiver and the conceptual consciousness, does the sense direct perceiver directly become the mental direct perceiver? Do the three conditions (observed object condition, uncommon empowering condition, and the immediately preceding condition) also apply for the production of a mental direct perceiver?

Answer: A mental direct perceiver is produced in dependence upon the three conditions. Depending on which mental direct perceiver it is, e.g., a mental direct perceiver apprehending form:

- the observed object condition is form
- the uncommon empowering condition is the mental sense power
- the immediately preceding condition is also the mental sense power

The mental direct perceiver following an eye consciousness apprehending form would be a mental direct perceiver apprehending form. The observed object condition is form. The uncommon empowering condition is mental sense power.

Question: For the eye consciousness apprehending blue, in the sequence of a sense direct perceiver, followed by a mental direct perceiver, and the conceptual consciousness, the observed object condition for the mental direct perceiver should not be blue because it cannot be a sense object. Is that correct?

Answer: Conceptual consciousnesses are necessarily mental consciousnesses. For example, there is a conceptual consciousness apprehending vase. The conceptual consciousness apprehending vase realises vase and not something else. It is the actual vase, i.e., a form which is realised by this conceptual consciousness, so it is a mental consciousness realising form.

Student: If it is a conceptual consciousness, it realises its object necessarily through a generic image which is not a form.

Answer: A conceptual thought apprehending form realises form but not directly. It realises form via a generic image or a meaning generality.

If you were asked, “Does the thought apprehending vase realise vase?” the answer is yes, it realises vase. From this, you can posit that there is a mental consciousness that can realise form. The conceptual consciousness apprehending vase realises vase. A vase appears to this conceptual consciousness.

A conceptual consciousness is necessarily a mental consciousness. It follows then that the mental consciousness can realise form. It follows then that form can also appear to a mental consciousness. So there is no problem there.

The consciousness to which form appears is not necessarily a sense consciousness. Form can appear to a mental consciousness. A phenomenon source form is a form that can *only* appear to the mental consciousness and not to the sense consciousness.

Khen Rinpoche: Your questions should only be related to the questions given for last Sunday’s discussion. You can only ask about those questions you found difficult and unable to resolve, where no firm answer was arrived at. If you already have the answer, then you don’t have to ask again.

Question: Regarding the question: If it is a consciousness that arises in dependence on a mental sense power, is it necessarily a mental direct perceiver, the answer is no, because the mental sense power can also act as the empowering condition for the production of a sense consciousness in which case it becomes a common empowering condition? Can a physical sense power act as a common empowering condition for the production of a mental consciousness?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Regarding the question: If it is an established base, is it necessarily all three of the following: (1) appearing object, (2) determined object, and (3) object of engagement, how should this question be approached?

Khen Rinpoche: There is no problem. First you must understand the question.

Khen Rinpoche: The question is: If it is an established base, is it necessarily all three of the following: (1) appearing object, (2) determined object, and (3) object of engagement?

Student: No.

Khen Rinpoche: Give me an example.

Khen Rinpoche: Is there is something that you can point to that is an existent but is not one of these objects?

A human being must necessarily have life. If you say no, you must give me an example of what is a human being that does not have life.

If it is an established base, is it necessarily an object of engagement, is it necessarily an appearing object, and is it necessarily a determined object? You go one by one.

If it is an established base, is it necessarily an appearing object?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: If it is an established base, is it necessarily an object of engagement?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: If it is an established base, is it necessarily a determined object?

Student: No.

Khen Rinpoche: Give me an example of an established base that is not a determined object.

Student: An example would be a cup apprehended by a conceptual consciousness because a determined object only appears to the conceptual consciousness. That was what threw me off the question!

Khen Rinpoche: Is the consciousness your determined object? If it is, then this consciousness is necessarily a determined object because a consciousness necessarily has a thought apprehending it.

Student: Sorry. I am not getting it...

Khen Rinpoche: Why do you say that if it is an established base it is

necessarily an appearing object? Why do you say that if it is an established base it is necessarily an object of engagement?

Student: An object of engagement is necessarily a functioning thing. I approached this question on the basis of whether the object is a permanent or an impermanent phenomenon.

Khen Rinpoche: If it is an object of engagement, it is not necessarily a functioning thing. If you say that an object of engagement is necessarily a functioning thing, it follows that emptiness cannot be an object of engagement and that uncomposed space cannot be realised.

Are you able to find anything that is an established base but that is not an appearing object, not an object of engagement, and not a determined object? If you can find one object, of course the answer would be no. If you cannot, then the answer is yes.

Student: So the way to approach this question is to check on the possibilities of established base with these three objects?

Khen Rinpoche: When you compare an established base and an appearing object, are there any possibilities between them?

Student: An established base is necessarily an appearing object.

Khen Rinpoche: So there are no possibilities. If you know they are mutually inclusive, then an established base is necessarily the three objects mentioned.

Question: Does a wrong consciousness have an object of engagement?

Answer: Based on the position of Sera Je Monastery, there is no object of object of engagement for a wrong consciousness. In our system, the definition is this: a wrong consciousness is a knower that engages its object erroneously.

There are colleges that assert that a wrong consciousness has an object of engagement. The definition of a wrong consciousness as stated in textbooks from some schools is this: a wrong consciousness is a knower that is mistaken with regard to its object of engagement.

We will be covering this topic soon.

Question: Because a self-knowing direct perceiver has three divisions, how do I relate this to the fact that *all* consciousnesses have self-knowers?

Answer: The three divisions for self-knowing direct perceivers are:

1. valid cognisers that are self-knowing direct perceivers
2. subsequent cognisers that are self-knowing direct perceivers

3. awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained (AAAs) that are self-knowing direct perceivers

If this is the case, how is it that, for example, a wrong consciousness has a self-knower?

The first thing to note is that all consciousnesses *necessarily* have a self-knower experiencing it. We are talking about valid cognisers here. A valid cogniser has a self-knower experiencing it but the self-knower experiencing a valid cogniser is *not* necessarily a valid cogniser.

Likewise with regard to a wrong consciousness, since it is a consciousness, it necessarily has a self-knower experiencing it. That self-knower experiencing the wrong consciousness is *not* a wrong consciousness. So there is no problem with a wrong consciousness having a self-knower experiencing it.

Yogic direct perceiver

Definition of a **yogic direct perceiver** is:

- 1) that which is generated in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, and
- 2) is an other-knowing exalted knower in the continuum of a Superior that is free from conceptuality and non-mistaken.

When divided there are two which are yogic direct perceivers:

- valid cogniser
- subsequent cogniser

There are no awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained that are yogic direct perceivers because whatever is a yogic direct perceiver necessarily ascertains its object of comprehension (Page 5, Handout No. 5 on Direct Perceivers dated 10th July 2012).

- A yogic direct perceiver is not simply generated in dependence on a mental sense power. Its uncommon empowering condition is more exalted than that, i.e., it is a meditative stabilisation that is a union of calm-abiding and special insight.
- A yogic direct perceiver has to be free from conceptuality and non-mistaken.
- A yogic direct perceiver has to be included in the continuum of a Superior
- A yogic direct perceiver has to be an other-knower.

A self-knower experiencing a yogic direct perceiver is *not* a yogic direct perceiver although it is generated in dependence upon a meditative stabilisation that is a union of calm-abiding and special insight. It is also included in the continuum of a Superior, is free from conceptuality and is non-mistaken. This is because it is not an other-knower. Therefore the fallacy with regard to that self-knower experiencing a yogic direct perceiver being a yogic direct perceiver cannot arise.

In the divisions of the sense direct perceiver, the mental direct perceiver and the self-knowing direct perceiver, there are instances of all these three beings: (1) a valid cogniser, (2) a subsequent cogniser, and (3) an AAA.

However when yogic direct perceivers are divided, there are only yogic direct perceivers that are (1) valid cognisers and (2) subsequent cognisers. There are no yogic direct perceivers that are AAAs. Why is this so? This is because if it is a yogic direct perceiver, it necessarily ascertains its object. Because a yogic direct perceiver is necessarily a knower that ascertains its object, therefore there isn't a yogic direct perceiver that is an AAA.

For sense direct perceivers, mental direct perceivers and self-knowing direct perceivers, there are instances of them being an AAA because they are not necessarily minds that ascertain their objects.

When you look at the divisions of these four types of direct perceivers, the yogic direct perceiver has only two divisions whereas the others have three divisions - valid cogniser, subsequent cogniser, and AAA - out of the seven-fold divisions of consciousness.

- Why are there no sense direct perceivers that are doubting consciousnesses?
Because a doubting consciousness is a conceptual consciousness.
- Why are there no sense direct perceivers that are correctly assuming consciousnesses?
Because a correctly assuming consciousness is a conceptual consciousness.
- Why there are no sense direct perceivers that are wrong consciousnesses?
Because a wrong consciousness is necessarily a mistaken consciousness. A sense direct perceiver is necessarily non-mistaken. Therefore there cannot be any sense direct perceiver that is a wrong consciousness.

You must not forget the definitions. The definitions must always be at your fingertips.

Question: Due to some eye defect, an eye consciousness apprehends a white snow mountain to be a blue snow mountain. Is that a wrong consciousness?

Answer: That is a wrong consciousness. You have some doubt regarding this?

Student: I thought it is a mistaken and a wrong consciousness.

Khen Rinpoche: Yes, that is 100% confirmed.

Student: Isn't that direct perceiver, i.e., the eye consciousness seeing a white snow mountain as a blue snow mountain, wrong and mistaken? Did you not say that all the sense consciousnesses are correct?

Khen Rinpoche: Is that a valid direct perceiver? Are you trying to prove that there are direct perceivers that are wrong consciousness? Is the eye consciousness apprehending a white snow mountain as blue a direct perceiver?

Student: Yes.

Khen Rinpoche: What is the definition of a direct perceiver?

Khen Rinpoche: The consciousness to which the white snow mountain appears as blue is a consciousness that is mistaken. A direct perceiver is a knower that is necessarily non-mistaken and free of conceptuality. If this is what defines a direct perceiver, can the eye consciousness apprehending blue snow mountain be a sense direct perceiver?

If it is a sense consciousness, it is not necessarily a sense direct perceiver. Of course, if it is a sense direct perceiver it is not necessarily a valid cogniser. Why is it not necessarily a valid cogniser?

When sense direct perceivers are divided, there are:

1. valid cognisers that are sense direct perceivers
2. subsequent cognisers that are sense direct perceivers
3. AAAs that are sense direct perceivers

When you memorise these divisions you will know immediately that, if it is a sense direct perceiver, it is *not* necessarily a valid cogniser.

Give an illustration of a sense direct perceiver that is not a valid cogniser.

Student: The illustration is the second moment of an eye consciousness apprehending blue.

The definition of a sense direct perceiver and the definition of a sense direct valid cogniser is about the same. The definition of a sense direct valid cogniser is built upon the definition of a sense direct perceiver. You simply add in "new, incontrovertible." ¹

Facsimile of a Direct Perceiver

The definition of a **facsimile of a direct perceiver** is: a knower that is mistaken with regard to its

¹ The definition of a **sense direct valid cogniser** is **a new incontrovertible knower, free from conceptuality, that arises in dependence upon a physical sense power that is its uncommon empowering condition** (Page 1, Handout No. 7 dated 24th July 2012)

appearing object.

Facsimile of a direct perceiver and mistaken consciousness are synonyms. (Page 1, Handout No. 6 on Facsimile of a Direct Perceiver dated 19th July 2012).

- There are facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are conceptual or non-conceptual.
- There are facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are sense consciousnesses or mental consciousnesses

Conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver

- A mistaken conception, a thought apprehending sound as permanent, is a *wrong consciousness*.
- A conventional conception, an inferential cogniser that realises sound to be impermanent, is a *valid cogniser*.

These two consciousnesses are the *same* in that both are mistaken consciousnesses.

Understanding that a wrong consciousness is a mistaken consciousness is straightforward. However an inferential cogniser that realises sound is impermanent is a valid cogniser; yet it is a mistaken consciousness. Why is this so? To understand why an inferential cogniser that realises sound is impermanent is a mistaken consciousness, you need to refer to the definition of a mistaken consciousness, i.e., it is a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

If a mistaken consciousness is a knower that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object, an inferential cogniser that realises sound to be impermanent is a mistaken consciousness because this inferential cogniser is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.

What then is the appearing object of an inferential cogniser that realises sound to be impermanent? The appearing object of this inferential cogniser that realises sound to be impermanent would be the appearance of impermanent sound or the appearance of opposite from non-impermanent sound. How is this inferential cogniser mistaken with regard to this appearing object? These two appearances, while they are not impermanent sound, appear as impermanent sound. For this reason, it is mistaken.

If you find that the illustration using impermanent sound is a bit confusing, you can change the object to an iPhone if you think this makes it easier for you.

- An inferential cogniser realising an iPhone is a valid cogniser.
- It is a mistaken consciousness. Why is this so?
- Because this inferential cogniser realising an iPhone is mistaken with regard to its appearing object.
- What is the appearing object of this consciousness? The appearing object of the inferential cogniser realising an iPhone is:
 - the appearance of an iPhone

- appearance of opposite of non-iPhone
- How is the inferential cogniser realising an iPhone mistaken with regard to this appearing object? The inferential cogniser realising an iPhone is mistaken with regard to its appearing object because the appearance of opposite of non-iPhone appears to be the actual iPhone although it is not the actual iPhone. Therefore it is mistaken.

Khen Rinpoche: This is the final destination.

This is the process by which you arrive at the conclusion determining that this consciousness is mistaken. There is nothing else to query beyond this.

Question: Is this the same reason as saying that the conceptual thought is mistaken because the appearing object is the meaning generality of the iPhone? Is this the same explanation?

Answer: It is mistaken because while the meaning generality of an iPhone is not the actual iPhone, it appears as if it is the actual iPhone. It is all right to say this in such a way but we have to think about whether it is all right to say that it is *exactly the same* reason.

Khen Rinpoche: It is not a problem if you say that.

In the above illustrations, one is a conceptual consciousness and the other is a valid cogniser, but both are mistaken consciousnesses. You can say that a conceptual consciousness is necessarily a facsimile of a direct perceiver but is a facsimile of a direct perceiver necessarily conceptual?

Non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver

There are many non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver.

From among the two,

- (1) Non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are mental consciousnesses
- (2) Non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are sense consciousnesses (Page 1 of Handout No. 6)

According to the Sutra School, a non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver is a mistaken consciousness but it is mistaken due to temporary conditions, i.e., it is a temporary error and not a long-lasting or permanent error.

There are two types of causes of errors:

1. causes of error that are internal
2. causes of error that are external

Illustrations of internal causes of error

- An eye impaired by an obscuring disease is a cause of error for a sense

consciousness that is a non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver. In this case the cause of error is internal. In dependence on internal causes and conditions, one has an eye impaired by an obscuring disease. Due to that, one sees one moon as two moons. The appearance of one moon as two moons is not due to there being two moons but is due to this impaired eye condition.

- Another illustration is this: seeing your surroundings as unpleasant when your mind is upset. This appearance is also due to an internal condition.

Illustrations of external causes of error

- An illustration of an external cause of error is a whirling firebrand that appears to be a wheel of fire. This appearance of a fire-wheel is due to an external, not internal, condition.
- Another illustration is this: seeing trees moving while you are travelling in a car. The appearance of moving trees is due to an external condition. This is the cause of error existing in the abode.

By understanding how you can have a mistaken appearance in dependence on external conditions, one can also come to understand how mistaken appearance can arise due to internal conditions.

This discussion regarding the non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver is according to the SS. You have to understand that, according to the SS, such causes of error are *temporary*. The mistaken appearances described here are *not* due to some long-lasting faults or causes. Here the explanation of the mistaken consciousness is not done from the perspective of a long-lasting cause of error. This is not what is being taught here. Let's say you have a damaged eye for your whole life. That may not seem to be a temporary problem as it lasts for a long time. But, in this context, this is still considered temporary.

In order for the cause of error to be the ultimate long-lasting cause of error, it has to relate to the grasping of a self of persons.

- A non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver that is a sense consciousness can be generated in dependence on either an external or an internal condition. They are both posited to be temporary conditions. Therefore they can be averted. One simply identifies the cause of error and seeks to avert it.
- When one seeks out and tries to understand the ultimate cause of error, one is led to the presentation of grasping at the self of persons, i.e., the ignorance that apprehends a self of persons. That is the ultimate cause of error. When you avert and destroy that, all mistaken conceptions are removed.

By depending on this presentation, the presentation of the path is also laid out.

Non-conceptual wrong consciousness, non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver, and consciousness that has a clear appearance of a non-existent are synonymous (Page 2 of Handout No. 6).

The consciousness to which there is the appearance of a fire-wheel due to a quickly whirling firebrand is:

- a non-conceptual wrong consciousness
- a non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver
- a consciousness that has a clear appearance of a non-existent.

In reality there is no fire-wheel but you have a clear appearance of a non-existent fire-wheel. Therefore the eye consciousness that sees the fire-wheel due to a quickly whirling firebrand is a consciousness that has a clear appearance of a non-existent.

Other illustrations of the clear appearance of a non-existent

- You see trees moving while you are travelling in a car.
- You see things falling in front of your eyes due to your defective vision.
- Your eye consciousness sees the ground as red due to a very strong anger arising in the mind.

Question: What is the meaning of facsimile and why must we talk about a facsimile of a direct perceiver? Is a facsimile of a direct perceiver an other-knower?

Answer: There are direct perceivers and there are “counterfeit” direct perceivers.

Khen Rinpoche: A facsimile of a direct perceiver is not a real direct perceiver.

The fire-wheel that appears due to a quickly whirling firebrand is seen very clearly by this consciousness. This consciousness is non-conceptual. It seems as if it is a direct perceiver but it is *not* a direct perceiver. This consciousness is generated in dependence upon a physical sense power and it is free from conceptuality but it is mistaken. Since it is mistaken, it cannot be an actual direct perceiver. While it is *like* a direct perceiver, it is *not* a direct perceiver.

Why do we need to know about this? Because there are many mistaken consciousnesses. There are mistaken consciousnesses that are sense consciousnesses and there are mistaken consciousnesses that are mental consciousnesses. The point here is to examine what are mistaken consciousnesses, their causes, and whether these causes can be averted and gradually eliminated. What we want are correct minds, i.e., the valid cognisers and so forth.

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme

Transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Patricia Lee

Edited by Cecilia Tsong