

Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

Lesson No: 14

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There are the concepts of generalities and instances. An illustration of a generality will be an object of knowledge. An object of knowledge is a generality. Why is it called a generality? Because an object of knowledge pervades many types of phenomena. For example, a horse is an instance of and is pervaded by an object of knowledge. An object of knowledge pervades a horse.

What makes something an instance of a particular generality? In this instance, a horse is an object of knowledge not only because it is an existent. There are three criteria for something to be established as an instance of a generality. How do we determine that a horse is an instance of an object of knowledge?

1. The horse has to be an object of knowledge.
2. The horse has to be related to an object of knowledge by reason of being of one nature or one entity with it.
3. One should be able to posit that there is something that is not a horse but is an object of knowledge

When these three conditions are fulfilled, then a horse can be an instance of an object of knowledge.

For the time being, keep these concepts of generalities and instances in mind based on this example of a horse being an instance of an object of knowledge due to the presence of these three conditions.

As for explaining the relationship between the two, i.e., a generality and an instance, there are two kinds of relationship: either (1) they are related causally or (2) they are related because they have the same nature and are of one nature or one entity. If you have the interest, we can talk about these two types of relationships in the future but not now.

There seems to be some confusion between a generality and a meaning generality. They are not the same. If someone were to ask you, “Is a horse a generality?” what would you say? We saw how a horse is an instance of an object of knowledge. Is a horse itself also a generality?

(Students answer: “Yes.”)

If a horse is a generality, what would be an instance of horse?

(Students answer: “A white horse.”)

A horse is a generality and a white horse is an instance of this generality.

Some students were asking about generalities and instances so this is something for you to think about.

We were talking about inferential cognisers. How is an inferential cogniser produced? An inferential cogniser is produced in dependence upon a correct sign. If an inferential cogniser is generated in dependence upon a correct sign, what is a correct sign?

Correct signs

A correct sign is that which is the three modes. If the three modes are present, you have a correct sign or reason.

When we state a syllogism, there are three elements:

1. the subject
2. the predicate to be proven
3. the sign

When a syllogism is stated, you have a subject and a predicate to be proven. You are trying to prove that the subject is the predicate to be proven in dependence upon stating a sign.

How do you determine whether it is a correct sign or not? You do so by analysing whether the three modes are fulfilled. The three modes have to be established in order for the sign to be a correct sign.

Property of the subject

Of the three modes, the first mode is the property of the subject. How is the property of the subject established? To establish the property of the subject, there are three things to look out for:

1. The subject and the sign that are stated in a particular syllogism must be different.
2. The sign stated in the syllogism must exist on the subject, i.e., the subject is the sign.
3. The person to whom you are stating the syllogism has to be:
 - someone who has ascertained through a valid cognition that the subject is the sign and
 - someone who wishes to know whether the subject is the predicate to be proven.

If these three criteria are fulfilled, you can say that the first mode, the property of the subject, is established.

An illustration of a syllogism: *The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.*

- the subject is sound

- the sign or reason is product
- the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon.

This syllogism contains a correct sign. Therefore the three modes are established. Let us use this illustration to see how the three modes are established.

From this you can see that you will not be able to analyse this syllogism if you do not have some rough understanding of what is an impermanent phenomenon, what is a product, and their definitions.

How is the property of the subject established in this syllogism? In order for the property of the subject to be established, three criteria have to be fulfilled:

1. Are the subject and the sign different? The subject is sound. The sign is product. Sound and product are different.
2. Does the sign exist on the subject, i.e., is the subject the sign? The subject, sound, is the sign, product.
3. It is possible that there exists a person who has ascertained with valid cognition that sound is a product and who now wishes to know whether sound is an impermanent phenomenon or not.

When these three criteria are present, the property of the subject is established.

Forward pervasion

The second mode is forward pervasion. The easiest way to see whether the forward pervasion is established or not is to see whether the sign exists *exclusively* in the similar class or not.

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

Does product exist exclusively in the class of impermanent phenomena? The “similar class” refers to the predicate to be proven. Here, the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon. We have to establish whether the sign, product, accords with impermanent phenomenon or not.

Counter pervasion

The third mode is counter pervasion. In the syllogism, the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon. The class of impermanent phenomena is the similar class. The opposite of impermanent phenomena, non-impermanent phenomena, is the dissimilar class.

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

- the subject is sound
- the sign or reason is product
- the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon

The similar class and the dissimilar class are related to the predicate to be proven:

- The similar class is impermanent phenomena. All impermanent phenomena belong to the similar class.
- The dissimilar class has to be something that does not accord with impermanent phenomena. The dissimilar class is the opposite of impermanent phenomena, i.e., permanent phenomena.

When you know what the dissimilar class is, does the sign exist in the dissimilar class or not? One of the easiest way to see whether the counter pervasion is established or not is to see whether the sign is *universally absent* from the dissimilar class or not.

Is product absent from the dissimilar class? Does a product exist among permanent phenomena? To see whether it exists or not in the dissimilar class is to see whether there is a common locus between product and permanent phenomena. There is nothing that is both a product and a permanent phenomenon.

Using the example of the above syllogism as the basis, you should think about it over and over again until you are very clear about the three modes. When we try to prove something, whatever we are trying to prove, we will use different reasons. But first you have to understand the concept of the three modes before you can apply them in practice and check whether they are correct reasons or incorrect reasons.

The subject, sound, is a permanent phenomenon because of being a product.

- the subject is sound
- the sign or reason is product
- the predicate to be proven is permanent phenomenon

A person is trying to prove that sound is permanent by using the reason that sound is a product. Here, the sign, product, is a **contradictory reason** because whatever is a product is necessarily impermanent. So how can he use this reason to establish that sound is permanent?

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

- the subject is sound
- the sign or reason is product
- the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon

In this syllogism, the sign, product, is a valid or correct reason because product is definitely an impermanent phenomenon.

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because it is an existent.

- the subject is sound

- the sign or reason is existent
- the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon

In this syllogism, the sign, existent, is an ***indefinite reason*** because you cannot establish with complete certainty that sound is an impermanent phenomenon simply through the fact that it is an existent. This is because whatever is an existent is not necessarily impermanent. It can be impermanent but it is not necessarily impermanent.

The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.

- the subject is sound
- the sign or reason is product
- the predicate to be proven is impermanent phenomenon

The sign, product, is a definite reason because the pervasion is definite. Product as a reason is not a contradictory reason. It is a definite reason because whatever is a product is necessarily impermanent.

The way to learn syllogisms is to hold on to a chosen correct syllogism, e.g., *the subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.*

- Using this particular syllogism, you try to understand the three modes. But just understanding them based on this syllogism does not mean that you have understood everything. That is only the beginning.
- Once you know what the three modes are, on the basis of the same syllogism, you can then change the sign to a contradictory reason, e.g., permanent phenomenon. You then try to understand why the three modes are not established.
- Next you change the sign to an indefinite reason, e.g. an existent. You then try to understand why the three modes are also not established here.

If you have memorised the seven-fold divisions of consciousness and their respective definitions, you can use this information to state a syllogism.

For example:

The subject, the sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons, is a wrong consciousness because it is a knower that engages its object erroneously.

- the subject is the sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons
- the sign or reason is a knower that engages its object erroneously
- the predicate to be proven is wrong consciousness

If we state a knower that engages in its object erroneously as the sign to establish that the sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons is a wrong consciousness, this is a correct sign.

Someone then tries to prove to you:

The sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons is a direct perceiver because it is a sense consciousness.

The sign, a sense consciousness, is an incorrect sign. If sense consciousness is posited to be the sign that proves that the sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons is a direct perceiver, this sign is an indefinite reason because whatever is a sense consciousness is not necessarily a direct perceiver. There is no pervasion here.

When it comes to stating a reason, one can state any reason but it does not necessarily mean that it is a correct reason.

The sense consciousness to which one moon appears as two moons is a direct valid cogniser because it is a wrong consciousness.

In this case, the sign is completely wrong because a wrong consciousness cannot be a valid cogniser.

As long as you have a rough idea of what a correct sign is, it is sufficient for the time being. A correct sign has to be that which is the three modes. You should be able to differentiate between something being a correct sign or an incorrect sign and have some understanding of what the three modes are. You need to know this because an inferential valid cogniser is generated in dependence upon a correct sign that is its basis. In order to have some idea of how such an inference is generated, it is important to have some idea of what constitutes a correct reason.

Here we are trying to understand the concept and in order to understand the concept, we have this example: *The subject, sound, is an impermanent phenomenon because of being a product.* But is that what really matters? Are you so interested to find out whether sound is impermanent or not? It is good to know this but the main purpose is to understand the concept and apply it to our own mind and our own existence, whether we are impermanent or whether we are product. But first we have to understand the concept and know what a correct reason is.

Once we know the concept, we can apply it in our lam-rim meditation such as the meditation on death and impermanence. You change the subject to yourself and prove to yourself that you are definitely going to die because of the reasons stated in the nine-point meditation on death and impermanence presented the lam-rim.

For example:

I am definitely going to die because there is nothing that can stop death.

Is that reason a correct sign?

You can change the reason to another reason since there are three reasons that prove that death is definite such as, *I am definitely going to die because my lifespan is being constantly depleted and it cannot be extended* or you can say, *The time of my death is uncertain, because the lifespan of beings in this world is not fixed.* Is this a definite reason?

During the course of your studies, in order to understand the concepts, there will be a lot of analysis and debate. The classic example that is always used is this: “Sound is impermanent because of such and such...” Much debate then follows to establish this. There is a saying that despite being able to establish that sound is impermanent because of the many reasons used, yet, at the same time, that person establishing it feels that he will never die, thinking, “I am permanent.” When that happens, that is the most amazing thing.

Khen Rinpoche: It is the most surprising thing. That means that it is not good.

When we talk about past and future lives and reincarnation, for most people, it is not something that can be directly perceived. The first step in realising reincarnation is through inference, i.e., you realise it through inferential cognition. That being the case, you have to posit a correct reason to establish in your own mind that reincarnation definitely exists.

We can state a syllogism like this:

The subject, the mind of an infant at the time of conception, was preceded by a mind of a similar type because it is mind.

This is posited to be a correct sign. This is what is mentioned in the treatises. This is how one establishes past lives.

In order to prove future lives:

The subject, the last moment of the mind of an ordinary person at the time of death, will lead on to a mind in the future that is its effect because it is a continuum of an awareness that is accompanied by attachment.

- The subject is the last moment of the mind of an ordinary person at the time of death.
- The sign or reason is because it is a continuum of an awareness that is accompanied by attachment
- The predicate to be proven is: there is an effect mind or consciousness. It is the effect of which mind? It is the effect of the subject. The effect has to exist after the cause, i.e., in the future.

If we were to state this simply but not in a fully technically correct way:
The mind at the time of death, i.e., the last moment of the mind of an ordinary person, will continue because it is mind.

Although it is similar to the previous proof of past lives, why don't we simply state it in such a way? This is because certain words are included

to eliminate counter arguments.

Question: Please explain the meaning of the illustration of the inferential cogniser through renown. Why is an inferential cogniser through renown necessarily an inferential cogniser by power of the fact (page 2, Handout No. 7 dated 24 July 2012)?

Answer: There are these different signs as well, such as a correct sign by power of the fact. With regard to an inferential cogniser by power of the fact, power of the fact means that in reality, it exists. You are stating a fact as the reason. Therefore it is termed, “by power of fact.”

With regard to an inferential cogniser through renown, the syllogism can be stated like this: *The subject, the rabbit-possessor, is suitable to be expressed by the term moon because it exists among objects of thought.* In the Tibetan tradition, a rabbit-possessor refers to the moon. Here “rabbit-possessor” is suitable to be expressed by the term moon because it is widely known and accepted as that, i.e., it is a correct sign through renown.

The illustration for an inferential cogniser through belief is, “an inferential cogniser that realises that the scripture, ‘From giving, resources, from ethics, a happy migration,’ is incontrovertible with respect to the meaning indicated by it by the sign of its being a scripture free from the three contradictions.”

We will leave it at that for now. Otherwise it gets complicated.

What we have been discussing so far is more related to an inferential cogniser by power of the fact. First try to understand that well and, in the future, if there is interest, perhaps we can look at the inferential cogniser through renown and the inferential cogniser through belief.

As to what is “a scripture that is free from the three contradictions,” that can be complicated. We will leave that for now.

That is it for the seven-fold divisions of consciousness. We will move on to the mind and mental factors. Please register with the office if you are interested to have a copy of the root text.

Khen Rinpoche: If you need to know more about the seven minds, we can do some question and answer in the next class. Otherwise, we will start on the 51 mental factors.

We have only finished the divisions of the first two of the seven-fold consciousnesses, the direct valid cogniser and the inferential valid cogniser. If you are interested in the divisions of the remaining consciousnesses, starting from the subsequent cogniser onwards, we can look at them.

Khen Rinpoche: Do you want to know the divisions or not?

Student: Yes because we want to be fully enlightened!

Khen Rinpoche: We will have one or two classes to look at the divisions. If you know the divisions, I think that will make your understanding of the different minds a little clearer.

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