

## Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

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Lightly edited and some footnotes added by Joan Nicell, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, October 2005.

All page references refer to this root text unless otherwise stated.

### Lesson No: 12

**Date: 9<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

The Proponent of Mind Only is someone who propounds that everything is in the nature of the mind. Having said that, when we look at how things appear to our mind, they appear to exist separately or as different entities from the mind, as something outside. They appear to us as external objects.

According to the MOS, external objects do not exist in reality although there is the appearance of external objects. Although external objects that are different entities or of a different nature from the mind do not exist, nevertheless they appear. Why do they appear? Because the mind is completely habituated by ignorance. Due to the force of ignorance, latencies of ignorance are placed on the mind. Because of these latencies of ignorance, there is the projection of external objects. External objects appear due to the latencies of ignorance.

According to the Proponent of Sutra, in the case of the eye consciousness apprehending form, to that eye consciousness apprehending form, there is an appearance of external form. This appearance of external form is valid. Just as there is the appearance of an external form to the eye consciousness apprehending form, in reality, that is how form exists, i.e., as external form. According to the Proponent of Sutra, that appearance of external form is valid.

According to the MOS, an appearance of an external form is *not* a representation of how form actually exists. An external form does *not* exist although it appears as an external form. Why then is there an appearance of an external form? According to the MOS, the appearance of an external form is due to the latencies or imprints of ignorance in the mind. This is due to the thorough involvement of the mind with ignorance for a very, very long time.

Back to the Proponent of Sutra and the example of an eye consciousness apprehending form:

- There is an eye consciousness apprehending form.
- The eye consciousness then induces the conceptual thought, thinking, “This is form.” It labels, “This is form,” not something else.
- Through the conceptual consciousness thinking, “This is form,” there is the appearance of an external form.
- That form appears as a natural base of engagement or referent of the term “form.”
- Not only is there an appearance of an external form that exists as a natural base of engagement or referent of the term “form.” In fact, this is how form

exists. It exists, from its own side, as a natural base of engagement or referent of the term “form.”

The MOS refutes this. Although form appears from its own side as a natural base of engagement or referent of the term “form,” in reality, that is incorrect and invalid. Form does not exist from its own side as the natural base of engagement of the term “form.” Rather it is merely imputed that form exists as the natural referent of the term “form.”

We will attempt to clarify this in the near future, perhaps in the next class.

- The SS asserts external objects. These objects are not in the nature of the mind.
- The MOS differs greatly in that they assert everything is in the nature of the mind. How do phenomena exist? To this school, phenomena arise due to the awakening of karmic propensities that were infused in the mind.

| <b>ASSERTIONS OF EXTERNAL OBJECT</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Sutra School</b>  | <b>Mind Only School</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are external objects and these objects are not in the nature of mind.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everything is in the nature of the mind.</li> <li>• Phenomena arise due to the awakening of karmic propensities or seeds of karma that were infused in the mind</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appearance of an external form to the eye consciousness apprehending it is valid and, in reality, that is how form exists.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An external form does not exist although it appears, i.e., the appearance of an external form is <i>not</i> the representation of how form actually exists.</li> <li>• The appearance of an external form is due to the latencies of ignorance that have been in the mind for a very long time.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For an eye consciousness apprehending form, an eye consciousness apprehending form induces the conceptual thought, thinking, “This is form.”</li> <li>• There is an appearance of form that exists from its own side as a natural base of engagement or referent of the term “form.”</li> <li>• This is how form exists.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form does not exist from its own side as the natural base of engagement of the term “form.” Rather it is merely imputed that form exists as the natural referent of the term “form.”</li> </ul>  |

### **The aspected consciousness**

Now we go back to the GES. According to the Proponents of the GES, they say that the sense consciousness engages its object nakedly *without* something intervening between the object and the consciousness perceiving it. That something is called an aspect. The GES does *not* assert that consciousnesses are generated in the aspect of the objects. According to the GES, the sense consciousness, for example, apprehends its object nakedly without such an intervening aspect, so consciousnesses are *not* generated in the aspect of the object. The object and the subject perceiving it exist simultaneously but these two are of different substances. The Proponents of the GES do assert simultaneous cause and effect.

With the exception of GES, the SS and the tenets above it assert that consciousnesses are generated in the aspect of the object they apprehend. In short, with the exception of GES, all the other Buddhist tenets assert that consciousnesses are aspected. We had discussed this in the previous module on lo-rig. For example, an eye consciousness apprehending blue: An eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated in the aspect of blue.

According to the SS, this aspect is cast from the side of the object. In the case of blue, the aspect of blue is cast from side of the object, blue. The consciousness apprehending blue is then generated in the aspect of blue. The eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated in dependence on blue. So blue has to exist *prior* to the production of the eye consciousness apprehending blue.

- In dependence on blue, from the side of blue, an aspect of blue is cast.
- Then the eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated.

You can see that the object must exist prior to the subject apprehending it. We said that blue appears clearly to the eye consciousness apprehending it. The reason why we say the blue appears clearly to the eye consciousness apprehending it is because the aspect of blue is appearing clearly to the eye consciousness apprehending it.

I wonder, in the SS, whether the eye consciousness apprehending blue and the *aspect* of blue are one substance or not. I am not 100% sure about this. But it is clear that blue and the eye consciousness apprehending blue are different substances. They do *not* exist simultaneously. Blue exists *prior* to the eye consciousness apprehending it.

- Consciousnesses are not aspected in the GES.
- According to the SS, consciousnesses are aspected. The aspect of the object that is apprehended is cast from the side of the object.
- The MOS also asserts that consciousnesses are aspected. In the case of an eye consciousness apprehending blue, this eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated in the aspect of blue. Unlike the SS, however, the MOS do not assert that this aspect is cast from the side of the object. Rather the aspect of blue is generated in dependence on the awakening of karmic imprints because to the MOS, everything is in the nature of the mind.

| <b>THE ASPECTED CONSCIOUSNESS</b>   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Position of the GES</b>  | <b>Position of the other tenets</b>   |   |
| The GES does <i>not</i> assert that consciousnesses are generated in the aspect of the objects, i.e., consciousnesses are not aspected.   | With the exception of the GES, all the other Buddhist tenets assert that consciousnesses are aspected.  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sense consciousness engages its object nakedly without an intervening aspect.</li> <li>• The object and the subject perceiving it exist <i>simultaneously</i>, but the object and the subject are different substances.</li> <li>• The GES asserts simultaneous cause and effect.</li> </ul> | <b>SS</b>   | <b>MOS</b>  |
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the SS, the aspect of blue is cast from the side of the object, blue.</li> <li>• The eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated in dependence on blue.</li> <li>• Therefore blue has to exist <i>prior</i> to the production of the eye consciousness apprehending blue.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to the MOS, the aspect of blue is <i>not</i> cast from the side of the object blue. Rather this aspect of blue is generated in dependence upon the awakening of karmic imprints.</li> <li>• The subject (the eye consciousness apprehending blue) and the object (blue) are produced simultaneously, in dependence on the awakening of karmic imprints that are the substantial cause for the production of the object and subject.</li> <li>• Both the object and subject are empty of being different or separate entities.</li> </ul> |

When you think about this, putting together the assertions of the MOS and what we discussed about the aspect of blue not coming from the side of the object but arising due to the awakening of karmic imprints, can we say that the aspect of blue *is* blue? In the MOS, are (1) the aspect of blue and (2) blue different? Is the MOS saying that the aspect of blue *is* blue? This is something for you to think about.

### **Mind Only True Aspectarians vs. Mind Only False Aspectarians**

You will recall that the MOS can be divided into (1) the Mind Only True Aspectarians and (2) the Mind Only False Aspectarians. Whether a person is a True Aspectarian or a False Aspectarian, both agree that the sense consciousness in the continuum of an ordinary being possesses the appearance of external objects.

Both the Mind Only True Aspectarians and the Mind Only False Aspectarians accept that to the eye consciousness apprehending blue<sup>1</sup> in the continuum of an ordinary being, there is an appearance of external blue.

The Mind Only True Aspectarians assert that to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue, the appearance of blue as blue to this consciousness is *not* mistaken because blue exists in the way it appears.

However, for the Mind Only False Aspectarians, the appearance of blue as blue to the eye consciousness apprehending blue *is* mistaken because blue does not exist in the way it appears.

As explained in the previous lesson, for the Mind Only False Aspectarians, (1) the appearance of blue as blue and (2) the appearance of blue as a gross object are mistaken.

What exactly do we mean when we say “gross object”? This is not so clear. There is an explanation that says, as an example, when you see three different colours such as white, yellow, and blue, they appear vividly.

Let’s say blue appears vividly to the eye consciousness apprehending blue. This vivid appearance of blue constitutes the appearance of blue as a gross object. This appearance is not something that is different or separate from the appearance of blue as blue.

This is difficult to understand. We say that there is (1) an appearance of blue as blue and (2) the appearance of blue as a gross object. But if we were to say, “No, the appearance of blue as a gross object and its manner of appearance is none other than the appearance of blue as blue,” then that may be difficult to understand. So for the present, set that aside and let us just focus on the appearance of blue as blue.

- To the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the appearance of blue as blue to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is unmistakable.
  - To the Mind Only False Aspectarians, the appearance of blue as blue to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue is mistaken,
- This is the difference.

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<sup>1</sup> The eye consciousness apprehending blue is a sense direct perceiver.

According to the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the eye consciousness apprehending blue is not mistaken with regard to the factor of appearance of blue as blue. For the Mind Only True Aspectarians, in general, when blue appears, blue appears as an external object. But to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue, the appearance of blue as blue does *not* appear as an external blue. Therefore for them the appearance of blue as blue is *not* mistaken.

According to the Mind Only False Aspectarians, the eye consciousness apprehending blue is mistaken with regard to the factor of appearance of blue as blue. Why is this so? Because this factor of appearance of blue as blue is blue appearing as an external blue. When you understand this, perhaps you can see why, according to the Mind Only False Aspectarians, the appearance of blue as blue is considered to be mistaken.

| <b>THE EYE CONSCIOUSNESS APPREHENDING BLUE</b>   |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Mind Only True Aspectarians</b>   | <b>Mind Only False Aspectarians</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an appearance of blue as blue.</li> <li>• That is not mistaken.</li> <li>• The factor of appearance of blue as blue is not mistaken because blue exists in the way it appears. In general, blue appears as an external object, but to the sense direct perceiver apprehending blue, the appearance of blue as blue does not appear as an external blue.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an appearance of blue as blue.</li> <li>• That is mistaken.</li> <li>• The factor of appearance of blue as blue is mistaken because blue does not exist in the way it appears, i.e., blue appears as an external blue.</li> </ul> |

You have to get:

- why the Mind Only True Aspectarians say that the factor of appearance of blue as blue is unmistaken
- whereas the Mind Only False Aspectarians say that the factor of appearance of blue as blue *is* mistaken.

For example, we can say that the eye consciousness apprehending blue is a mistaken consciousness because there is an appearance of external blue to this consciousness.

However, according to the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the factor of appearance of blue as blue to this consciousness is *not* mistaken. To the Mind Only True Aspectarians, the factor of appearance of blue as blue does *not* appear as an external blue. Therefore the factor of appearance of blue as blue is *not* mistaken.

For the Mind Only False Aspectarians, there is an appearance of an external blue and that is mistaken. For them, even the appearance of blue as blue *is* mistaken because the appearance of blue as blue appears as an external blue.

This completes the section on the Mind Only True Aspectarians and Mind Only False Aspectarians. The definitions of these two are in the texts.

*Ven Gyurme*: I stand by the definitions that I mentioned in the previous class. I don't really agree with the translation in the root text<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of a Mind Only True Aspectarian is: a Proponent of Mind Only who asserts that the factor of appearance as a gross form to a direct perceiver apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being is *not* polluted by the latencies of ignorance.

There are three types of True Aspectarians:

1. Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders,<sup>3</sup>
2. Half-Eggists, and
3. Non-Pluralists.

Each has their own individual assertions.

It is said that the Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders assert that when an eye consciousness apprehending the mottled colors on the wing of a butterfly apprehends the mottle, from the object's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is delivered, and also from the subject's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is produced in its true aspect.

It is said that the Half-Eggists assert that when such is apprehended, from the object's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is delivered, however from the subject's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is produced in an aspectless manner.

It is said that the Non-Pluralists assert that when such is apprehended, from the object's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is not delivered, but rather the aspect of the mere conglomeration is delivered; and from the subject's side the aspect of each different color – blue, yellow, and so on – is not produced in an aspectless manner, but rather the aspect of the mere conglomeration is produced in an aspectless manner (Pages 14 – 15).

### **Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders**

As the name suggests, the Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders (or Proponents of an Equal Number of Subjects and Objects) assert that the number of consciousnesses generated is equal to the number of aspects cast. This is the same as the assertion of the Proponents of the SS, the only difference being whether external objects are asserted or not.

In the case of a consciousness generated in an aspected manner, from the side of the object, an aspect is cast. To the SS, from the side of the object, there may be different aspects such as blue, yellow, and so forth. These aspects are cast to the eye consciousness apprehending them. However many aspects of the object are cast to the eye consciousness apprehending them, the same number of consciousnesses apprehending those aspects is produced.

Of course, according to the SS, these aspects are cast from the side of the object. But, according to the MOS, this is not so.

The example given here is a mottle, an irregular pattern of different designs or colours like what is seen on the wing of a butterfly with its different colours and

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The definition of a Mind Only False Aspectarian is: a Proponent of Mind Only who asserts that the factor of appearance as a gross form to a direct perceiver apprehending form in the continuum of an ordinary being *is* polluted by the latencies of ignorance (Page, 8, Lesson 11).

<sup>3</sup> JN: 'Apprehended-objects' and 'apprehending-subjects' have been respectively changed throughout the text to 'apprehendeds' and 'apprehenders' (*gzung 'dzin*).

patterns. Just as a certain numbers of colours form the mottle on the wing of a butterfly, there are an equal number of consciousnesses being generated apprehending those different colours.

Among those who assert that there is an equal number of subjects apprehending an equal number of the aspects cast:

- there are some who assert that the consciousnesses apprehending the aspects are generated serially and
- there are some who assert that the consciousnesses apprehending the aspects are generated simultaneously.

### **Half-Eggists**

With regard to the Half-Eggists (or Split-Eggists), this may be a little different from what is presented in the root text.

One explanation is this:

- The aspects of the various colours are not cast but rather an aspect of the general mottle is cast.
- From the side of the subject, the consciousness is generated in the aspect of apprehending the general mottle, not the aspects of the various colours that make up the mottle.

In that sense, it is half-half. When you look at the butterfly, you see the mottled colours on its wings. So the aspect of the mere mottle is cast. Then the consciousness apprehending the mere mottle is generated.

This is one of the rare occasions where we differ from the root text. What I have just said is different from what you see in the root text but in another commentary, this is the explanation of the assertions of the Half-Eggists.

### **Non-Pluralists**

For the Non-Pluralists, from the side of the object, there are different aspects but only *one* consciousness is generated into those aspects.

From the side of the object, there is the mottle on the wing of the butterfly with its different colours and so forth. Different aspects are cast but what is generated is one consciousness apprehending the mere mottle, the overall design of the entire thing.

Generally most people favour the positions of the Non-Pluralists.

If you remember our discussion from the previous module on lo-rig, to the eye consciousness apprehending blue, it is said that all phenomena are established and abiding with blue—blue’s factor of being impermanent, blue’s factor of being a product, and so forth—all these appear to the eye consciousness apprehending blue. But the eye consciousness is only generated in the aspect of blue, not all those factors that come along with blue. The eye consciousness apprehending blue is only generated in the aspect of blue.

| <b>Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders</b> | <b>Half-Eggists</b>   | <b>Non-Pluralists</b>                                  |
|---|---|--|
| • They assert that the number of consciousnesses that are             | • They assert that there is only one consciousness and only | • They assert that only one consciousness is generated |

| <b>Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders</b>  | <b>Half-Eggists</b>   | <b>Non-Pluralists</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>generated is equal to the number of aspects that are cast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just as there is a certain number of colours that form the mottle on the wing of a butterfly, there are an equal number of consciousnesses generated apprehending those different colours.</li> </ul> | <p>one aspect is cast. For the mottled colours on the wing of a butterfly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The aspects of the various colours are <i>not</i> cast. Rather, only the aspect of the general mottle is cast.</li> <li>From the side of the subject, the conscious-ness is generated in the aspect of apprehending the general mottle, not apprehending the aspects of the various colours that make up the mottle.</li> </ul> | <p>even though there are many aspects that are cast towards that consciousness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E.g., the mottle on the wing of a butterfly, different aspects are cast but only one consciousness is being generated into those aspects.</li> </ul> |

**Summary:**

- The Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders, as their name implies, assert that the number of consciousnesses that are generated is equal to the number of aspects that are cast. As to whether these consciousnesses apprehending the different aspects are generated serially or simultaneously, there are different opinions on this.
- The Half-Eggists assert that there is only one consciousness and there is only one aspect cast.
- The Non-Pluralists assert that there is just one consciousness generated even though there are many aspects cast towards that consciousness.

*Question:* With regard to the Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehendeds and Apprehenders of the True Aspectarians, there are two types:

- those who assert consciousnesses and the aspects arise serially.
- those who assert consciousnesses and the aspects arise simultaneously.

For those who assert that the consciousness and the aspects arise simultaneously, let's say there are ten aspects casting onto ten consciousnesses, how could ten consciousnesses arise simultaneously?

*Answer:* No problem. There are many consciousnesses that can arise simultaneously. Consciousnesses can arise serially or simultaneously.

*Question:* For an eye consciousness apprehending the mottle of a butterfly, there may be 1,000 aspects. So there are 1,000 eye consciousnesses simultaneously arising?

*Answer :* Take the example of this gompa. There are maybe 50 people in it. Do I see everybody or not? Do I see the whole group or do I see only 0 people? If I do see 10 people, can 10 consciousnesses arise at the same time or not? This is the same thing. I don't see 10 people. I just see a collection of 10 people.

*Question:* For the one that arises serially, is one aspect simultaneously arising with one consciousness? Then sets of these are then generated serially?

*Answer:* An awakening of certain latencies produces both the aspect and the consciousness apprehending it. Then the next aspect and consciousness apprehending it are produced. Then the third and fourth are produced, however



many there may be.

*Question:* How does the MOS explain the continua of the superiors whose sense consciousnesses are not mistaken. Their understanding is that the sense consciousnesses of the Buddha are unmistakable. But the sense consciousnesses of superiors are also unmistakable. How does the MOS explain that?

*Answer:* There is disagreement among scholars as to whether the sense consciousnesses in the continua of superior beings are mistaken or not. Some assert that all sense consciousnesses in the continua of sentient beings are necessarily mistaken. This would include the superior beings.

*Question:* It seems that the present explanations for the Half-Eggists and the Non-Pluralists are reverse from that given in the previous Basic Program. It was explained then that:

- for the Half-Eggists, from side of the mottle, all the different colours are cast individually but only one consciousness is generated and
- for the Non-Pluralists, the mottle is cast as one object and one consciousness apprehending the mottle is generated.

The explanations given now are reversed.

*Answer:* The explanations given in the previous Basic Program was according to the root text. The present explanation is according to a different commentary.

*Question:* What is the meaning of “aspectless manner” mentioned in the root text?

*Answer:* I don’t know why that term is used.

*Question:* To the Non-Pluralists, for the awareness to which an object appears and is not ascertained, would it be correct to say that whether the awareness ascertains the object or not will depend on whether it is generated in the aspect of the object?

*Answer:* If the consciousness is not generated in the aspect of the object, then it cannot realise the object in question.

*Question:* Is it correct to say that whether the object is ascertained or not depends on whether the consciousness is generated in the aspect of the object?

*Answer:* Yes.

*Question:* In Lesson 3 relating to the GES, can a sense power alone actually know its object. If yes, that means that a clear form knows its object. Does that mean that form is clear and knowing?

*Answer:* According to the GES, *both* the sense consciousness and sense power see the object together. The logic behind this assertion is that the sense consciousness *alone* cannot perceive the object. The sense consciousness perceives its object together with its respective sense power.

The reasoning is this: If a sense consciousness alone can perceive the object, why can it not perceive the form behind a wall? The fact that we cannot see the form behind a wall shows that a sense consciousness *together with* its sense power, which is a form, can be obstructed. That is the reasoning.

It is said that the sense power sees clear forms.

Let us go back to MOS. Imagine that there is a vase on the table. All of us are looking at the vase. We all see the vase.

- Do we all see the same vase? Is there a common vase that is appearing to all of us?
- Is it possible to have a mind that can directly perceive the mind of another person?
- Does the Buddha see the specifically characterised hell fire?

These are three questions for you to think about but you have to think about them from the position of the MOS.

What is the central tenet of the MOS? It is that everything you experience and see is the result of the awakening of karmic imprints in your mind, i.e., it is one substance with your mind. Based on that, then think about these three questions.

According to the MOS, there is an eye consciousness apprehending blue:

- The subject → the eye consciousness
- The object → blue

Both are produced in dependence on the ripening or awakening of karmic imprints that are the substantial causes for the production of the object *and* the subject.

When we see blue, there is an experiencer of blue. *Both* the eye consciousness apprehending blue and the object blue arise from the awakening of *one* karmic imprint. The substantial cause is one karmic imprint or latency. One part of this imprint produces the eye consciousness apprehending blue and another part produces the object blue.

This is what is meant in the MOS when it says that everything is produced in dependence on the awakening of the karmic imprints:

- For this reason, for the MOS, both object and subject are empty of being different or separate entities.
- This means that the object and the subject, in this case, blue and the eye consciousness apprehending blue, are produced simultaneously.
- Therefore, according to the MOS, the emptiness of object and subject as different entities is the selflessness of phenomena.

Based on this fundamental tenet of the position of the MOS, think of these three questions:

1. Is there one common vase appearing to all of us when we look at the vase?
2. Is it possible to have a mind that can directly perceive the mind of another person?
3. Does the Buddha see hell fire or the suffering of the hells?

Hell fire definitely exists. Whatever exists is necessarily realised or apprehended by the Buddha. In order for the Buddha to realise it, it has to appear to the Buddha. Then what is the problem? What is hell fire? Hell fire is essentially an appearance of the mind. Such an appearance is produced from a particular karmic seed.

Referring to our earlier discussion of how the gods do not see a cup of liquid as water unlike what we human beings see, going along those lines, according to the MOS, does the Buddha see hell fire?

It is not easy when we say, “mind only” or “everything is in the nature of mind.” Everything is established *in the nature* of mind but that is *not* saying that everything *is* mind. There is a difference between saying that everything is mind and that everything is in the nature of mind. We are *not* saying that blue is consciousness, people are consciousnesses, and that everything is consciousness.

During the previous Basic Program, there was an exam question: Is the table mind? There were quite a few people who said yes!

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