

What is the Mind?

Understanding the nature, characteristics, and functioning of our mind forms the basis of Buddhist philosophy and practice. The Buddha says in the *Dhammapada*:

All things are preceded by the mind, led by the mind, created by the mind

According to Buddhism we consist of nothing but mind and body, and it is the mind that is responsible for all our happiness and our suffering. Our body may be healthy and all the external circumstances may work to our advantage, but it depends on our mind to translate this into happiness. Conversely, we may be sick and everything else may go wrong, but we need the mind to translate this into unhappiness and suffering. The mind has the power to determine pleasure and displeasure; it is the sole motivator of all our actions and the creator of our experiences and reality.

However, at present we do not have much control over our mind and thus over feeling happy and avoiding problems and difficulties. Hence in order to gain more control we need to transform the mind, an undertaking that must be preceded by the understanding that it can be transformed. Such an understanding in turn can only arise if we cultivate knowledge of the mind, if we gain knowledge that goes far beyond academic study. It is extremely important that learning about the mind, its definition, its divisions, and different functions does not lead to a mere intellectual understanding, but is taken deeper to an experiential level. Only if we obtain a firsthand knowledge of our habitual thought patterns, of the mental events that occur within specific mindsets, etc., can we begin to make changes. And even though these changes are extremely slow and gradual, they nonetheless drastically improve the quality of our present life and serve as the basis for overcoming all our shortcomings such as anger, attachment, and ignorance, and eventually for attaining liberation and Buddhahood.

From a Buddhist perspective, the mind is a non-physical entity and therefore different from the brain. It is indestructible, at all times present and has neither a beginning nor an end. Mind is a subjective experienter that always has content; that always has an object, for it always experiences something. It experiences being awake, being asleep, dreaming and even dying; it sees, hears, smells, tastes and experiences tangible objects. Mind includes the rational, intellectual aspects on one side and the emotional, intuitive aspects on the other; it both thinks and feels.

Even though the mind is different from the brain, there is no contradiction to scientific findings of the importance and the influence of the brain on the mind. From a Buddhist perspective the coarser mind and the brain, though different entities, have a close relationship in that one can alter and influence the other. Therefore, stimulating or altering parts of the brain has an effect on the mind and transforming the mind changes the chemical reactions and the neurons of the brain.

Furthermore, every living being has a mind that is different from other living beings' minds. There is no overarching universal type of mind; everyone's mind-stream is a different entity from everyone else's mind-stream, it is even different from the mind-stream of a Buddha.

However, even though all of us have a mind that is ever present and continues from moment to moment, we are so preoccupied with the perception of external phenomena, with perceiving shapes, colors, sounds, etc. that we are not aware and thus do not understand our own mind. Due to this lack of understanding the Buddha gave very sophisticated and detailed explanations of the mind, of its function, its different aspects, its objects, etc. which is why Buddhism is often described as a 'science of the mind'.

What follows is a presentation of the mind according to the Madhyamika Prasangika (Middle Way Consequentialist) philosophical tenet of Buddhism.

Definitions

In general, mind, consciousness, and awareness are synonymous; they are different terms that refer to the same phenomenon

English: Mind / Tibetan: *sems*, pronounced: *sem* (*sems* = mind / mental continuum / heart)

English: Consciousness / Tibetan: *shes-pa*, pronounced: *she-pa* (*shes-pa* = consciousness / cognition / knower)

English: Awareness / Tibetan: *blo*, pronounced: *Lo* (*blo* = awareness)

Minds/consciousnesses/awarenesses and their objects (the phenomena they are aware of) are mutually dependent. Whatever is a phenomenon, i.e. whatever exists, is an object of an awareness and there are no awarenesses that do not have an object.

The Buddhist scriptures on *Awareness and Knowledge* (*blo-rig / lo-rig*) give the following definitions:

The definition of awareness:

Knower

The definition of consciousness:

That which is luminous and knowing

Explanation of the different aspects of the definition of consciousness:

Luminous can also be translated as 'clear', and *knowing* can be translated as 'cognizing'.

1. "That which is luminous/clear": This part of the definition describes the nature of the mind. The mind is luminous because it is non-physical and because it illuminates its object. Also, it is like a mirror because anything can appear to it. Therefore, every mind has an *appearing object* – an object that appears to it.
2. "That which is knowing/cognizing": This part describes the function of the mind, for it describes the ability of the mind to know or cognize its object. Hence every mind has an *object of engagement* or *object of apprehension* that it apprehends, mentally "holds," and is conscious of.

An eye consciousness apprehending a pot, for instance, is luminous because the pot clearly appears to it. The pot is therefore the eye consciousness' *appearing object*. At the same time the eye consciousness also engages or apprehends the pot which is why the pot is also its *object of engagement* or its *object of apprehension*.

Therefore, all awarenesses must have an appearing object and an object of engagement. Even though the appearing object and the object of engagement may refer to the same phenomenon, they do not have to. In the case of the eye consciousness that apprehends the pot, even though the pot is both the appearing object and the object of engagement, that eye consciousness has an appearing object that is not the object of engagement and it has an object of engagement that is not the appearing object.

The appearing object that is not the object of engagement of the eye consciousness apprehending the pot is the subtle particles of the pot (that are in the sphere of vision of the eye consciousness). The subtle particles are the appearing object of the eye consciousness because they appear to it. They appear to it, for if the subtle particles of the pot did not appear, the pot could not appear. However, the subtle particles of the pot are not the object of engagement of the eye consciousness because the eye consciousness does not apprehend them, i.e. it is not aware of them.

The object of engagement that is not the appearing object of the eye consciousness is 'not not pot'. Since the eye consciousness is aware of pot it is also aware of 'not not pot', for pot and 'not not pot' are synonymous and if one apprehends one, one apprehends the other. However, 'not not pot' is permanent and does not appear to the eye consciousness.

Please note that from a Buddhist point of view, permanent does not refer to being eternal, but to changing moment by moment. Therefore, the definition of permanent is: **a phenomenon that is not momentary**. The definition of impermanent is: **that which is momentary**. To be momentary does not mean to merely exist for one moment, but to *change* moment by moment. Also, it does not mean that something that is impermanent changes every moment into something completely different, for momentary change can be extremely subtle. For instance, even though the molecules that constitute a table change momentarily (which is why we have to say that the table is momentary) the table does not cease to be a table from moment to moment. In fact, its change is so subtle that it is not directly obvious to us.

Thus, whatever is impermanent is necessarily a phenomenon that changes moment by moment whereas whatever is permanent is necessarily a phenomenon that does not change moment by moment.

Regarding the appearing object and the object of engagement of the eye consciousness apprehending pot:

<p>Both the <i>appearing object</i> and the <i>object of engagement</i> of the eye consciousness apprehending pot:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pot</p>	<p>The <i>appearing object</i> but <u>not</u> the <i>object of engagement</i> of the eye consciousness apprehending pot:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The subtle particles of pot</p>	<p>The <i>object of engagement</i> but <u>not</u> the <i>appearing object</i> of the eye consciousness apprehending pot:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Not not pot</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Understanding the difference between the appearing object and the object of engagement is important in the context of explaining the Buddhist concept of the ultimate nature of all phenomena, that is, phenomena's lack of inherent and objective existence.

Taking the example of the eye consciousness apprehending pot, although the eye consciousness is a valid cognizer in that it incontrovertibly understands its object of engagement (the pot), it is nonetheless mistaken with regard to its appearing object, the pot's inherent existence. The pot's inherent existence is the eye consciousness' appearing object because whenever the pot appears to it, the pot appears to exist inherently. The eye consciousness is mistaken with regard to the eye consciousness' appearing object because the appearing object (the pot's inherent existence) does not exist.

Another example for an awareness that is mistaken with regard to its appearing object, but incontrovertibly understands or realizes its object of engagement, is an eye consciousness apprehending the reflection of a face in a mirror. This eye consciousness is mistaken with regard to its appearing object because the reflection of the face in the mirror erroneously appears to be a face while the reflection of the face in the mirror being a face does not exist. At the same time, the eye consciousness is able to correctly cognize its object of engagement, the reflection of the face in the mirror.

There are different ways to categorize or divide the mind. Some of the most important categories are:

1. The category of correct and wrong consciousnesses
2. The category of sense and mental consciousnesses
3. The category of conceptual and non-conceptual consciousnesses
4. The category of valid cognizers and non-valid cognizers
5. The category of mind and mental factors
6. The category of coarse and subtle minds

1. The category of correct and wrong consciousnesses

This category is from the point of view of the object of engagement of an awareness. An awareness whose object of engagement exists is a correct consciousness whereas an awareness whose object of engagement does not exist is a wrong consciousness. An ear consciousness, for instance, that apprehends the sound of water is a correct consciousness because the sound of water exists and the consciousness therefore apprehends it correctly. If an ear consciousness, on the other hand, apprehends the sound of water to be the sound of wind, it is a wrong consciousness because the sound of water being the sound of wind does not exist.

Similarly, all delusions such as ignorance, anger, attachment, etc. are wrong consciousnesses because their objects of engagement are non-existent.

Ignorance

From a Buddhist perspective it is considered extremely important to comprehend the nature of ignorance, for the ignorance that misperceives reality on the deepest level is explained to lie at the root of all other delusions (anger, attachment, arrogance, etc.) and thereby of all problems and difficulties. Whatever sufferings, unhappiness, worry, and pain we experience can be traced back to this type of ignorance.

In general, ignorance is a mental consciousness that is diametrically opposed to the way phenomena exist. Examples of ignorance are the ignorance that apprehends that which is impermanent to be permanent, the

ignorance that apprehends that which is in the nature of suffering to be in the nature of happiness, the ignorance that apprehends that which does not exist inherently to exist inherently, and so forth. Therefore, all types of ignorance are necessarily wrong consciousnesses.

Attachment

One of the delusions that are induced by ignorance is attachment. It focuses on an object we consider to be a source of pleasure, such as another person, and either exaggerates the person's positive qualities or superimposes positive qualities the person does not possess. While apprehending those qualities, attachment craves for, and becomes attached to the person. Since the object of engagement of attachment is the exaggerated or superimposed qualities of the person, and since these positive qualities do not accord with reality, attachment is a wrong consciousness.

Anger

Anger is also induced by ignorance. It focuses on an object that we consider to be a source of displeasure. This source of displeasure can be another sentient being, an unpleasant situation, or a disease etc. In the case of being angry with another person, anger focuses on that person and exaggerates their negative qualities or superimposes negative qualities they do not possess. Thus, it apprehends those exaggerated or superimposed qualities while wanting to harm the person. Since the object of engagement of the anger is the exaggerated or superimposed qualities of the person, and since these negative qualities do not exist, anger is a wrong consciousness.

Other delusions, such as arrogance, jealousy, resentment, etc. (which will be explained below) are similar to attachment and anger in that they are induced by ignorance. Furthermore, they are also wrong consciousnesses since their objects of engagement do not accord with reality.

In general, any type of wrong consciousness is dangerous, for it has the potential to cause great harm. For instance, wrong sense consciousnesses (which will be explained below) such as wrong eye consciousnesses can be very harmful if they, for instance, misperceive a red traffic light to be green, or if they misperceive a floor that is covered with broken glass to be clean, etc. However, the greatest harm derives from wrong consciousnesses that are delusions, for not only can they cause great suffering in this life but also cause intense misery in future lives. Delusions disturb our peace of mind the moment they manifest in our mental continuum and subsequently induce harmful actions of body, speech, and mind (karma) that eventually ripen in the form of long-term problems and difficulties.

Please note that there is a difference between a mistaken consciousness and a wrong consciousness. A mistaken consciousness is an awareness that is mistaken with respect to its appearing object whereas a wrong consciousness is an awareness that is mistaken with respect to its object of engagement. Hence, whatever is a mistaken consciousness is not necessarily a wrong consciousness. For instance, an eye consciousness that apprehends a reflection of a face in a mirror is mistaken because its appearing object does not exist. Its appearing object is the reflection of a face being a face, for to this eye consciousness the reflection of a face appears to be a face. At the same time, it is not a wrong consciousness because its object of engagement, the reflection of a face, exists. Hence it is able to correctly function with regard to incontrovertibly cognizing the object of engagement, the reflection of a face in a mirror.

However, whatever is a wrong consciousness is necessarily also a mistaken consciousness. For instance, an eye consciousness that apprehends a reflection of a face in a mirror to be a face is mistaken with respect to *both*, the object of engagement and the appearing object. It is mistaken with respect to the object of engagement because it erroneously apprehends the reflection of a face in a mirror to be a face. It is also mistaken with respect to the appearing object since the reflection of a face appears to be a face. Hence it is unable to correctly perceive anything.

<p>An awareness that is <u>both</u> a mistaken consciousness and a wrong consciousness:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Ignorance that apprehends an inherently existent "I." Also anger, attachment, arrogance, etc.</p>	<p>An awareness that is a mistaken consciousness but <u>not</u> a wrong consciousness:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>An eye consciousness that apprehends a pot. Also love, compassion, Bodhicitta, etc.</p>	<p>An awareness that is a wrong consciousness but <u>not</u> a mistaken consciousness:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">----- (Non-existent)</p>	<p>An awareness that is <u>neither</u> a mistaken consciousness nor a wrong consciousness:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>A meditative equipoise that directly realizes the deepest level of reality, i.e. the emptiness of inherent existence of phenomena</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Thus, only the meditative equipoise that directly realizes the deepest level of reality, i.e. the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena, is a non-mistaken awareness. All other awarenesses are mistaken minds.

2. The category of sense and mental consciousnesses

This category is from the point of view of the object and the causes of an awareness.

Sense consciousnesses can be further divided into five sense consciousnesses:

- 1) eye consciousness
- 2) ear consciousness
- 3) nose consciousness
- 4) tongue consciousness
- 5) body consciousness

Therefore, there are six consciousnesses – the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness.

The six consciousnesses differ with respect to their objects because:

- a. The principal objects of engagement of **eye** consciousnesses are **shapes** and **colors**
- b. The principal objects of engagement of **ear** consciousnesses are **sounds**
- c. The principal objects of engagement of **nose** consciousnesses are **smells**
- d. The principal objects of engagement of **tongue** consciousnesses are **tastes**
- e. The principal objects of engagement of **body** consciousnesses are **tactile phenomena**
- f. The principal objects of engagement of **mental** consciousnesses are **all phenomena** (i.e. any phenomenon)

The six consciousnesses also differ with regard to the causes in dependence on which they manifest. The five sense consciousnesses manifest in dependence on three causes:

- (1) The observed object condition
- (2) The empowering condition
- (3) The immediately preceding condition

(1) The observed object condition

The observed object condition refers to the principal object of engagement of the sense consciousness. In the case of an eye consciousness apprehending a pot, the pot is the principal object of engagement. The pot is also the cause of the eye consciousness because it is in dependence on the pot that the eye consciousness is able to take on the aspect of the pot. Therefore, if there were no colors, shapes, sounds, etc. sense consciousnesses could not manifest.

(2) The empowering condition

The empowering condition refers to the sense power, which is traditionally described to be an inner subtle physical form, in dependence on which the sense consciousness is able to apprehend its object. The sense power and the observed object condition have to meet in order for the sense consciousness to

manifest. In the case of the eye consciousness apprehending the pot, a subtle inner form associated with the eye organ, etc., called the "eye sense power" is the *empowering condition* or the empowering cause that meets with the observed object condition, the pot, and is responsible for the eye consciousness' ability to perceive the pot. Hence if a person's physical eye organ, the optical nerve, or the part of the brain that facilitates visual perception, are not functioning properly, an eye consciousness cannot manifest.

(3) The immediately preceding condition

The immediately preceding condition refers to the awareness that precedes the sense consciousness; it refers to the consciousness that manifests a moment before the sense consciousness manifests. For instance, the eye consciousness that apprehends the pot is preceded by an awareness which serves as the cause of the eye consciousness since it is responsible for the eye consciousness manifesting as a luminous and knowing mind. If the eye consciousness was not preceded by a former moment of awareness it would not be able to manifest as an experiencing and aware entity able to cognize the pot.

Therefore, the three causes of the eye consciousness are:

- (i) The observed object condition is shape and color,
- (ii) The empowering condition is the eye sense power
- (iii) The immediately preceding condition is the awareness immediately preceding the eye consciousness

The three causes of the ear consciousness are:

- (i) The observed object condition is sound,
- (ii) The empowering condition is the ear sense power
- (iii) The immediately preceding condition is the awareness immediately preceding the ear consciousness

and so forth.

Sense consciousnesses are not always present; they lie dormant while sleeping and fainting, and absorb into subtler awarenesses (which will be explained below) at the time of death. However, since they are always present while we are awake, they have a monumental influence on our life. They provide us with the information of the objects around us and compose our entire sensory world. From the point of view of Dharma practice, sense consciousnesses are extremely useful because they enable us to read and listen to Dharma teachings, communicate with our teachers, and so forth. Nonetheless, due to our attachment and craving for sense objects they obstruct our concentration when engaging in meditation practice, and induce various different delusions. The perception of pleasant objects induces attachment, the perception of unpleasant objects induces anger, and the perception of neutral objects induces ignorance.

All sense consciousnesses are direct awarenesses, for they directly and nakedly experience their principal objects of engagement. However, even though sense consciousnesses have the advantage of being able to freshly and nakedly experience their objects, they are also limited in that they can only experience specific objects, such as shape, color, sound, etc., that are in relative close proximity and exist in the presence. Furthermore, sense consciousnesses are able to incontrovertibly know their objects of engagement but they are not able to analyze, interpret, classify, judge, or label these objects; they merely directly realize them and provide us with the raw data. It is the mental consciousness that is able to analyze objects, reflect on them and so forth.

The mental consciousness can apprehend any phenomenon of the past, present, and future; it can cognize phenomena other than the five sense objects (shape, color, sound, etc.) such as subtle impermanence, the mind, permanent phenomena, etc. Hence the mental consciousness does not depend on an observed object condition and a physical empowering condition, but only on an immediately preceding condition. Further, it is always present, even at the time of deep sleep, fainting, or death.

Many mental consciousnesses are induced by sense consciousnesses. The eye consciousness that apprehends the pot, for instance, incontrovertibly understands the pot and then induces a mental consciousness that labels the pot, reflects on it, judges, or classifies it.

Therefore, even though the eye consciousness and the mental consciousness that is induced by the eye consciousness are different awarenesses, they can affect each other; information can be passed between them in the sense that the understanding that the eye consciousness gained is passed on to the mental consciousness which then further elaborates on it.

Likewise, in the case of labeling a phenomenon, the mental consciousness affects the perception of the sense consciousnesses. For instance, a mental consciousness labels "pot" on the basis of a specific shape and color, i.e. on a flat-based, round-bellied object, able to perform the function of holding water. Subsequently the eye consciousness is able to realize that a phenomenon which has these specific characteristics (of being flat-based, round-bellied, and able to perform the function of holding water) *is* a pot.

In general there are two types of sense consciousnesses:

1. sense consciousnesses that are direct perceivers and
2. sense consciousnesses that are wrong consciousnesses

1. *Sense consciousnesses that are direct perceivers*

Sense consciousnesses that are direct perceivers can be further divided into

- a) sense consciousnesses that realize their objects of engagement and
- b) sense consciousnesses that are *awarenesses to which an object appears but it not ascertained*

Sense consciousnesses that realize their objects of engagement are awarenesses that incontrovertibly know their objects of engagement and induce mental consciousnesses ascertaining the same objects. The criterion for having realized an object is that one will not be swayed into believing anything that deflects from the fact one has incontrovertibly come to know, no matter what one is told. Examples for sense consciousnesses that realize their objects of engagement are an eye consciousness that realizes a pot, an ear consciousness that realizes the sound of water, a nose consciousness that realizes perfume, a tongue consciousness that realizes bread, and a body consciousness that realizes heat.

From the point of view of Dharma practice, sense consciousnesses that realize their objects are vital for listening to the Dharma, for without realizing at least the words of what we are taught it is impossible to engage in the practice of contemplation and meditation.

Awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained are necessarily sense consciousnesses.

Examples for such awarenesses are an eye consciousness that apprehends the pot at a time when the ear consciousness is strongly engrossed in listening to music, an ear consciousness that apprehends the sound of water at a time when the tongue consciousness is strongly engrossed in enjoying a delicious meal, and so forth.

These sense consciousnesses are *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained* because even though their respective objects of engagement clearly appear and are apprehended, the sense consciousnesses are not able to realize these objects and are unable to induce a mental consciousness that ascertains the same objects. Hence later on we are unable to recollect what we have seen, heard, smelled, etc. Therefore, even though while we are awake our sense consciousnesses are always present, many of them are *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained*, for we are unaware of what they apprehend. This is particularly the case when we are engrossed in, for instance, watching a beautiful scenery and are not aware of the sounds around us.

Furthermore, it is not possible for the six consciousnesses to function *simultaneously* in realizing their respective objects. Hence when the mental consciousness realizes a phenomenon, all five sense consciousnesses become *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained*, and when an eye consciousness realizes a shape and color, the remaining sense consciousnesses become *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained* while the mental consciousness becomes an awareness that does not realize its object. Please note that since *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained* are necessarily sense consciousnesses, the term does not apply to mental consciousnesses.

Actually, we have the sense that we can easily watch a movie and at the same time listen to it and enjoy a sandwich. Thus, it may seem that the different awarenesses function simultaneously in realizing their respective objects, but in fact they are switching from an eye consciousness that realizes its object to an ear

consciousness that realizes its object, etc. so rapidly that we experience the illusion that they are operating together.

From the point of view of Dharma practice, during the time of meditation we need to transform our sense consciousnesses into *awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained* by learning to ignore and shut out the stimuli they provide, in order for the mental consciousness to be able to meditate free from distractions.

2. Sense consciousnesses that are wrong consciousnesses

Sense consciousnesses that are wrong consciousnesses are awarenesses whose objects of engagement clearly appear but do not exist. For instance, to an eye consciousness that apprehends the horns of a rabbit, the horns of a rabbit clearly appear. However since such horns do not exist, the eye consciousness is a wrong consciousness.

Ignorance that apprehends inherent existence is the root cause of all wrong consciousnesses. As long as we have ignorance, numerous wrong awarenesses (sense and mental) shall manifest in our mental continuum. Even after having overcome ignorance we still have the imprints of ignorance which cause the generation of non-deluded wrong consciousnesses. Only a Buddha is free from all wrong awarenesses.

Regarding the temporary causes of wrong sense consciousnesses, there are four temporary causes of error:

1. The cause of error existing in the object
2. The cause of error existing in the situation
3. The cause of error existing in the basis
4. The cause of error existing in the immediately preceding condition

The first two causes are external causes whereas the latter two causes are internal causes. Regarding the first cause of error, some objects can act as causes of wrong consciousnesses when they closely resemble other objects. For instance, the reflection of a face in a mirror may be mistaken for an actual face, or a speckled, coiled rope may be mistaken for a real snake. Therefore, an eye consciousness that apprehends the reflection of a face in a mirror to be an actual face, or an eye consciousness that apprehends a speckled, coiled rope to be a real snake are wrong sense consciousnesses whose cause of error exist in the object.

Examples for causes of error existing in the situation are an eye consciousness that perceives a mirage of water to be water, an ear consciousness that perceives an echo of a person's voice to be the person's voice, and so forth. Here a certain external situation makes it difficult to identify the objects correctly. In the case of the mirage of water for instance, the light, moisture, and position of the observer cause the misperception.

Regarding the third cause of error, the basis refers to the empowering condition, the sense power. For instance, if a person suffers from an eye ailment such as floaters or cataracts, their visual perceptions may be impaired by the appearance of falling hair. Hence, an eye consciousness that apprehends falling hair due to floaters or cataracts is an example of a wrong sense consciousness whose cause of error exists in the basis.

Examples for the fourth cause of error are an eye consciousness that apprehends everything as red when one is overcome with strong anger, and an eye consciousness that apprehends everything as grey when one is overcome with great sadness. Here the immediately preceding conditions are mental consciousnesses of strong anger and great sadness that precede the sense consciousnesses and therefore, "color" or influence their perceptions.

From the point of view of Dharma practice, these wrong sense consciousnesses serve as analogies that are explained in order to get a better understanding of how we are controlled by wrong mental consciousnesses that are responsible for all our shortcomings and suffering.

Regarding the categories of mental consciousnesses, mental consciousnesses can be divided into conceptual and non-conceptual consciousnesses whereas sense consciousnesses are necessarily non-conceptual awarenesses.

3. The category of conceptual and non-conceptual consciousnesses

As mentioned above mental consciousnesses can be classified into:

1. Conceptual consciousnesses and
2. Non-conceptual consciousnesses

However, as ordinary sentient beings our mental consciousnesses are mostly conceptual minds.

1. Conceptual consciousnesses

The difference between conceptual and non-conceptual awarenesses is that conceptual awarenesses do not perceive their objects of engagement directly whereas non-conceptual awarenesses do.

Conceptual consciousnesses are necessarily mental consciousnesses that apprehend their object of engagement *indirectly* by way of a generic image (or meaning generality). When we think about a visual object, such as a car that is not nearby so that we cannot perceive it with any of our sense consciousnesses, we have to rely on a conceptual awareness. To that conceptual consciousness a generic or mental image of the car appears. Similarly, when we think about a song a generic image of the song appears, when we think about the smell of a perfume a generic image of the smell of the perfume appears, when we think about a chocolate a generic image of chocolate appears, and when we think about smoothness a generic image of smoothness appears.

The generic image of the car is only a representation of the car, not the car itself; it serves as an intermediary object that allows the conceptual consciousness to get at the car. The generic image is a subjective representation of the car in that it encompasses what we *mean* when we say "car." Our representation of the car is not directly connected to reality, for it is constructed by labels and concepts. On the basis of the parts of the car such as the tires, the windshield, the engine, the steering-wheel, etc., assembled in a specific way and able to perform a specific function we constructed a mental concept of the car that does not exist from the side of the car itself but is part of our conceptually labeling *car*.

This constructed representation or generic image of the car enables the conceptual awareness to apprehend the car. Without the appearance of the generic image of the car, the conceptual consciousness would not be able to think about the car, since it does not function like a sense consciousness to which an actual car nakedly appears.

Furthermore, even though the generic image of the car is a mental construct based on a process of generalizing and labeling, to the conceptual awareness the generic image appears to be the actual car. Therefore, conceptual consciousnesses are mistaken awarenesses because not only do their objects of engagement appear to exist inherently, their generic images also appear to be the actual objects. In other words, to a conceptual consciousness apprehending the car, the generic image of the car appears to be the actual car.

However, despite their mistaken aspect, conceptual consciousnesses are vital to our happiness and well-being. As explained above (during the category of sense and mental consciousnesses), sense consciousnesses merely cognize the raw data of the five sense objects whereas conceptual consciousnesses make sense of that data by labeling, reflecting, analyzing, classifying and thinking about it. As ordinary living beings there are merely two types of awareness that we can actively utilize in order to get an understanding of the world, sense consciousnesses and conceptual mental consciousnesses. And of these two only conceptual consciousnesses can apprehend permanent phenomena, phenomena of the past and future, and those geographically far away from the observer; only conceptual consciousnesses can remember, make plans and think ahead.

From the point of view of the Dharma, conceptual consciousnesses are furthermore essential in the process of overcoming our misperceptions of reality, for they enable us to develop an understanding of the phenomena that are presently hidden to us. In general, phenomena can be classified into:

- I) Manifest / obvious phenomena
- II) Slightly hidden phenomena
- III) Extremely hidden phenomena

Manifest or obvious phenomena are the phenomena that can be easily understood with ordinary awarenesses. Examples of manifest phenomena are the five sense objects. Slightly hidden phenomena refer to phenomena such as subtle impermanence, the emptiness of inherent existence, the lack of a permanent,

partless, independent person, and so forth. They are only slightly hidden because they can be realized in dependence on inferential reasoning.

An example of an extremely hidden phenomenon is the subtle features of the law of karma which is only accessible to the omniscient mind of a Buddha.

In order to progress on the spiritual path and to eventually attain liberation and Buddhahood it is vital to train in the "wisdom" aspect of the Buddhist path (there are two aspects of Buddhist practice: method and wisdom), that is, to develop realizations of slightly hidden phenomena such as the emptiness of inherent existence. However, the realization of emptiness can initially only be obtained in dependence on *inferential* conceptual awarenesses (which will be explained below). Without conceptual minds it is impossible to reach an inferential understanding of the ultimate nature of phenomena. Then through repeated and continuous meditation on emptiness, the conceptual realization of emptiness eventually becomes a direct realization. At that time the conceptual consciousness that realizes emptiness by means of a generic image of emptiness, transforms into a yogic direct perceiver (which will be explained below) that directly experiences and realizes the ultimate truth.

Another function of conceptual minds is to find the object of meditation. In the case of the practice of calm abiding (Samatha meditation), we first need to find the object of concentration, the object that the meditative conceptual awareness single-pointedly focuses on. This means that we have to conjure up the generic image of the object of meditation, such as the movement of the breath or the body of the Buddha, before we can settle on that object single-pointedly. Furthermore, the root of meditation is to maintain mindfulness, i.e. to hold the object without forgetting it, and for this we again need conceptual minds.

Regarding the practices of the "method" aspect of the Buddhist path, all awarenesses that pertain to the "method" aspect in the continua of sentient beings are also necessarily conceptual. Bodhicitta, love, compassion, generosity, morality, patience, etc. are all conceptual minds; they transform into non-conceptual direct perceivers only when achieving the state of a Buddha.

In brief, conceptual minds have a great potential and are vital in taking us closer to liberation and Buddhahood.

However, conceptual awarenesses can also serve as the cause of suffering and misery since all delusions such as ignorance, anger, attachment, arrogance, etc. are conceptual. Sense consciousnesses are always neutral; they cannot be virtuous or non-virtuous. Therefore, all non-virtuous consciousnesses are necessarily conceptual.

2. Non-conceptual consciousnesses

As explained above, all sense awarenesses are non-conceptual. However, there are also mental consciousnesses that are non-conceptual. Non-conceptual mental consciousnesses are two-fold:

- 1) Dream consciousnesses that are non-conceptual mental consciousnesses
- 2) Yogic direct perceivers

In the continua of ordinary beings some dream consciousnesses are non-conceptual mental awarenesses; all other mental consciousnesses are conceptual.

Yogic direct perceivers, on the other hand, only manifest in the continua of those who have entered the Hinayana or Mahayana paths. They are described as direct perceivers that directly realize a subtle (hidden) phenomenon in dependence on its empowering condition, a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight.

The meaning of *a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight* is the following: A meditative stabilization refers to the mental factor or mental function of concentration. We all possess the mental factor of concentration, which allows us to focus single-pointedly on, for instance, reading a book, watching a movie, or following a conversation. However, our concentration is usually short-lived, for we are easily distracted. Therefore, the Buddha described various meditational techniques that help us to enhance our concentration. Concentration that has been enhanced in dependence on such meditational techniques is known as 'meditative stabilization'. If we achieve a meditative stabilization that is able to focus effortlessly on an internal object without distraction for at least four hours, while obtaining a special pliancy (serviceability of body and mind), we attain calm abiding. Such calm abiding is newly obtained by settling

our mind one-pointedly on an internal object such as the image of the movement of the breath, the image of the body of the Buddha, etc. Hidden phenomena such as emptiness, subtle impermanence, etc. are not appropriate focal objects for the *initial* cultivation of calm abiding because they require intense analysis and are too distractive; they are rather taken mind for the first time by analytical awarenesses, and subsequently newly realized by an inferential cognizer that arises in dependence on such analytical meditation.

The next step is then to combine the stable mind of calm abiding with the analytical mind that realizes a hidden phenomenon (such as emptiness). During the initial part of this phase, stabilizing meditation (calm abiding) and analytical meditation are harmonized by alternating from one to the other, for too much concentration would disrupt the process of analysis, while too much analysis would reduce the factor of stability.

However, through repeated and prolonged alternation of calm abiding and analysis we are eventually able to combine the mental factor of calm abiding (concentration) with the mental factor of analytical wisdom. Thus, we attain a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, taking a hidden phenomenon as the object. This means that calm-abiding and the analytical wisdom now operate parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other. They are *concomitant* mental factors (the meaning of which will be explained below) and realize the same object. This enables the practitioner to gain a deep, clear and intense realization, free from mental distraction and mental sinking.

The function and significance of yogic direct perceivers becomes clear when presenting the gradual attainment of a yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness. Therefore, what follows is an extensive explanation of the Hinayana and Mahayana five paths.

Since yogic direct perceivers are paths, one first needs to enter the Hinayana or Mahayana path before one can cultivate yogic direct perceivers. Both, Hinayana and Mahayana paths are five-fold.

The five Hinayana paths are:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Hinayana path of accumulation | } | Mental consciousnesses in the continua of Hinayana trainees |
| 2. Hinayana path of preparation | | |
| 3. Hinayana path of seeing | } | Mental consciousnesses in the continua of Hinayana Arhats |
| 4. Hinayana path of meditation | | |
| 5. Hinayana path of no-more-learning | | |

The five Mahayana paths are:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Mahayana path of accumulation | } | Mental consciousnesses in the continua of Mahayana trainees/Bodhisattvas |
| 2. Mahayana path of preparation | | |
| 3. Mahayana path of seeing | } | Mental consciousnesses in the continua of Buddhas |
| 4. Mahayana path of meditation | | |
| 5. Mahayana path of no-more-learning | | |

The five Hinayana paths

1. *Hinayana path of accumulation*

The criterion for entering the Hinayana path, i.e. the Hinayana path of accumulation, is the generation of the sincere and spontaneous aspiration to overcome the afflictive obstructions (the obstructions to liberation), to overcome cyclic existence and become an Arhat. Such aspiration can only arise after intense and prolonged contemplation of the suffering nature of our existence.

Once Hinayana practitioners have cultivated the path of accumulation they need to accumulate sufficient merit and wisdom to be able to proceed. This is the reason for calling this path the path of *accumulation*.

Furthermore, they have to generate an inferential cognizer realizing the emptiness of inherent existence. In other words, unless practitioners realized emptiness *before* they entered the path of accumulation, they must now reflect on the various reasons that establish the ultimate nature of reality until they are able to infer the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, and thereby newly and conceptually realize emptiness, i.e. realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer (which will be explained below). On top of that, practitioners must develop *calm abiding*, a special concentration that is able to focus uninterruptedly on an internal object with calmness, clarity, and intensity for at least four hours.

Following that, calm abiding focusing on, for instance, the image of the body of the Buddha and the analytical meditation, that is a conceptual consciousness realizing emptiness, are harmonized by alternating from one to the other (since at this point they cannot arise simultaneously).

2. *Hinayana path of preparation*

The criterion for entering the Hinayana path of preparation is when practitioners newly attain a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, taking emptiness as the object. The union refers to two awarenesses, calm abiding and special insight, arising simultaneously in union as concomitant mental factors, both realizing emptiness. This means that calm-abiding, the one-pointed awareness realizing emptiness, and special insight, the thorough discrimination of emptiness, now operate parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other.

However, this meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight is a *conceptual* consciousness, and therefore unable to act as a direct antidote to any of the afflictive obstructions.

When practitioners arise from the realization of emptiness they also engage in the accumulation of merit by practicing love, compassion, generosity, and so forth.

Since it serves as a preparation for the path of seeing, i.e. for realizing emptiness directly, this path is called path of *preparation*.

3. *Hinayana path of seeing*

The criterion for entering the Hinayana path of seeing is the cultivation of a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, and that realizes emptiness *directly*. This meditative equipoise is a yogic direct perceiver. To such an awareness (since it directly realizes the ultimate nature of all phenomena) all appearances of subject and object become inseparable, like water being poured into water. The mind that realizes emptiness directly is a yogic direct perceiver that, when it manifests in practitioners' continua, completely removes – during one meditative session – the intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions, such as ignorance, anger, attachment, their seeds, etc. acquired from contact with false systems.

However, during the path of seeing practitioners are not merely absorbed in the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness but also accumulate merit by practicing love, generosity, patience, and so forth.

Since this path is obtained when practitioners are able to generate the wisdom that is able to *see* emptiness directly it is called path of *seeing*.

4. *Hinayana path of meditation*

The Hinayana path of meditation is obtained when practitioners start to familiarize with the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness and in that way strengthen its ability to now remove the *innate* afflictive obstructions. Therefore, whenever that yogic direct perceiver in the continua of practitioners on the path of meditation manifests, it eliminates one of the different layers of innate ignorance, other innate delusions, and their seeds. When practitioners arise from the yogic direct perceiver they continue to accumulate merit by deepening their love, compassion, and so forth. Since the Tibetan word for meditation (*sgom / gom*) has the connotation of familiarization and habituation, and since practitioners on this level meditate on or familiarize themselves with the direct perception of emptiness, this path is called path of *meditation*.

5. *Hinayana path of no-more-learning*

The Hinayana path of no more learning is obtained after the subtlest afflictive obstructions have been removed. Practitioners who reached this path have attained the truth of cessation of afflictive obstructions, liberation, and Nirvana, and have become Arhats. Since they have overcome all the obscurations that one must overcome in order to reach the state of an Arhat, this path is called the path of *no-more-learning*.

The five Mahayana paths

1. *Mahayana path of accumulation*

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path, i.e. the Mahayana path of accumulation, is the generation of Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta refers to the sincere and spontaneous aspiration to overcome the cognitive obstructions (the obstructions to omniscience) and become a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Such aspiration can only arise after intense and prolonged contemplation of the suffering existence of all sentient beings.

Once Mahayana practitioners, that is, Bodhisattvas have cultivated the path of accumulation they need to accumulate sufficient merit and wisdom to be able to proceed. This is the reason for calling this path the path of *accumulation*. Furthermore, Bodhisattvas need to generate an inferential cognizer realizing the emptiness of inherent existence.

In other words, unless Bodhisattvas realized emptiness *before* they entered the path of accumulation, they must now reflect on the various reasons that establish the ultimate nature of reality until they are able to infer the lack of inherent existence of phenomena and thereby newly and conceptually realize emptiness, i.e. realize emptiness with an inferential cognizer. On top of that, Bodhisattvas must develop *calm abiding*, a special concentration that is able to focus uninterruptedly on an internal object with calmness, clarity, and intensity for at least four hours.

Following that, calm abiding that focuses, for instance on the image of the body of the Buddha, and the analytical meditation, that is a conceptual consciousness realizing emptiness, are harmonized by alternating from one to the other.

2. Mahayana path of preparation

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path of preparation is when Bodhisattvas newly attain a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, taking emptiness as the object. The union refers to two awarenesses, calm abiding and special insight, arising simultaneously in union as concomitant mental factors, both realizing emptiness. That means that calm-abiding, the one-pointed awareness realizing emptiness, and special insight, the thorough discrimination of emptiness, now operate parallel at the same time, with equal power, one assisting the other.

However, this meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight is a *conceptual* consciousness, and therefore unable to act as a direct antidote to any of the afflictive obstructions.

When Bodhisattvas arise from the conceptual realization of emptiness, they engage in the accumulation of merit by strengthening their Bodhicitta, their great compassion, by practicing the six perfections, and so forth.

Since it serves as a preparation for the path of seeing, i.e. for realizing emptiness directly, this path is called path of *preparation*.

3. Mahayana path of seeing

The criterion for entering the Mahayana path of seeing is the cultivation of a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, and that realizes emptiness *directly*. This meditative stabilization is a yogic direct perceiver. To such an awareness (since it directly realizes the ultimate nature of all phenomena) all appearances of subject and object become inseparable, like water being poured into water. The mind that realizes emptiness directly is a yogic direct perceiver that, when it manifests in practitioners' continua, completely removes – during one meditative session – the intellectually acquired afflictive obstructions, such as ignorance, anger, attachment, their seeds, etc. acquired from contact with false systems. However, during the path of seeing Bodhisattvas are not merely absorbed in the wisdom that directly realizes emptiness but also accumulate merit by strengthening their Bodhicitta, their great compassion, by practicing the six perfections, and so forth. Furthermore, when Bodhisattvas reach the path of seeing they also achieve the first Bodhisattva bhumi or ground.

Since this path is obtained when Bodhisattvas are able to generate the wisdom that is able to *see* emptiness directly, it is called path of *seeing*.

4. Mahayana path of meditation

The Mahayana path of meditation is obtained when Bodhisattvas start to familiarize with the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness, and in that way strengthen its ability to now remove the *innate* afflictive obstructions. Therefore, whenever that yogic direct perceiver in the continua of practitioners on the path of meditation manifests, it eliminates one of the different layers of innate ignorance, other innate delusions, and their seeds. When Bodhisattvas arise from the yogic direct perceiver, they continue to accumulate merit by strengthening their Bodhicitta, their great compassion, by practicing the six perfections,

and so forth. With the attainment of the path of meditation Bodhisattvas also obtain the second Bodhisattva bhumi or ground. They then proceed through the different Bodhisattva bhumis until they reach the eighth bhumi on which they irreversibly eliminate the subtlest afflictive obstructions and become Arhats. From the eighth ground onwards Bodhisattvas then begin to eliminate the cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience), that is, the *imprints* of ignorance and the other delusions, by continuing to manifest the yogic direct perceiver that realizes emptiness directly.

Since the Tibetan word for meditation (*sgom*) has the connotation of familiarization and habituation, and since practitioners on this level meditate on or familiarize themselves with the direct perception of emptiness, this path is called path of *meditation*.

5. Mahayana path of no-more-learning

The Mahayana path of no more learning is obtained when the subtlest cognitive obstructions are eliminated. At this point a person attains the Mahayana path of no-more-learning (an omniscient yogic direct perceiver) and becomes a fully enlightened Buddha. Since Buddhas have overcome all the obscurations that one must overcome in order to reach the state of a Buddha, this path is called the path of *no-more-learning*.

Yogic direct perceivers also directly realize hidden phenomena such as the lack of a permanent, partless, independent self, the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, and so forth. In contrast to yogic direct perceivers that directly realize emptiness and only manifest from the path of seeing onwards, yogic direct perceivers that directly realize the lack of a permanent, partless, independent self, the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, etc. can newly manifest on the path of preparation.

4. The category of valid cognizers and non-valid cognizers

Valid cognizers

Valid cognizers are awarenesses that realize their objects of engagement.

From the point of view of the Madhyamika Prasangika tenet, all awarenesses realize their object because they realize the object that appears to them. In the case of conceptual consciousnesses, they realize their generic image. For instance, a conceptual consciousness that realizes emptiness also realizes the generic image of emptiness whereas a wrong conceptual consciousness that apprehends the existence of a permanent, partless, and independent self, realizes the generic image of that permanent, partless, and independent self.

Furthermore, sense consciousnesses realize the *appearance* of their object of engagement. Therefore, an eye consciousness that realizes blue also realizes the *appearance* of blue whereas a wrong sense consciousness that apprehends a coiled, speckled robe to be a snake, realizes the *appearance* of the coiled, speckled robe to be a snake. Please note that even though a coiled, speckled robe being a snake does not exist and therefore cannot be realized, the *appearance* of a coiled, speckled robe being a snake does exist.

In general, there are two types of valid cognizers:

- 1) Direct valid cognizers
- 2) Inferential valid cognizers

Examples of direct valid cognizers are yogic direct perceivers and sense consciousnesses that realize their objects of engagement.

Inferential cognizers are conceptual consciousnesses that realize their hidden objects of engagement (i.e. objects which *for them* are hidden) in dependence on correct reasons.

A common example for an inferential cognizer is a valid cognizer that realizes the presence of fire on a mountain in dependence on a correct reason, e.g. the presence of smoke (billowing over the mountain).

Therefore, in dependence on the correct reason or syllogism, 'on the mountain there is fire because there is smoke', the inferential cognizer realizes the presence of fire on the mountain.

Please note that even though the presence of fire on the mountain is not a hidden phenomenon, it is a hidden phenomenon *for* the inferential cognizer realizing the presence of fire on the mountain because it is a hidden phenomenon from the perspective of the observer in whose continuum the inferential cognizer arises. It is a

hidden phenomenon from the perspective of the observer because the observer may be standing at the foot of the mountain and therefore be unable to directly perceive the fire.

From the point of view of the Dharma, inferential cognizers are extremely important because the only way to initially realize a hidden phenomenon is by relying on an inferential cognizer.

In the case of initially realizing emptiness, before practitioners can cultivate an inferential cognizer that realizes, for instance, the car's emptiness of inherent existence, they need to reflect on a correct reason. They may, for instance, reflect on the following reason or syllogism: 'the car is empty of inherent existence because it is dependent arising.'

Being dependent arising is the correct reason in dependence on which practitioners eventually cultivate an inferential cognizer that incontrovertibly knows that the car lacks inherent existence.

Similarly, in dependence on the syllogism, 'sound is impermanent because it is a product', practitioners cultivate the inferential cognizer that realizes that sound is impermanent.

Even though valid cognizers are categorized into direct and inferential valid cognizers, there are valid cognizers that are neither of the two. For instance, the meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight and that realizes emptiness conceptually (on the path of preparation) is a valid cognizer, but neither a direct valid cognizer nor an inferential valid cognizer. It is not a direct valid cognizer because it is a conceptual consciousness, and it is not an inferential valid cognizer because it does not realize its object in dependence on a correct reason but in dependence on intense meditation.

Non-valid cognizers

Non-valid cognizers are awarenesses that do not realize their objects of engagement. Examples of such awarenesses are:

- 1) Awarenesses to which an object appears but is not ascertained
- 2) Wrong consciousnesses
- 3) Doubting consciousnesses
- 4) Correctly assuming consciousnesses

The first two were explained above.

Doubting consciousnesses

Doubting consciousnesses are conceptual awarenesses that are two-pointed and waver with respect to their objects of engagement.

Examples of doubting consciousnesses are a conceptual awareness that doubts Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, a conceptual awareness that doubts the law of karma, a conceptual awareness that doubts that Buddhas exist, and so forth.

Doubting consciousnesses can be categorized into three:

- a) Doubt that tends away from the fact
- b) Doubt that tends toward the fact
- c) Equal doubt

Taking the example of doubt toward the ultimate nature of phenomena, doubt that tends away from the fact is a two-pointed conceptual awareness that thinks that phenomena probably exist inherently. Doubt that tends toward the fact is a two-pointed conceptual consciousness that thinks that phenomena are probably empty of existing inherently. Equal doubt is a two-pointed conceptual consciousness that thinks that maybe phenomena exist inherently, maybe they do not.

Another category of doubt is:

- a) Afflictive doubt
- b) Non-afflictive doubt

Afflictive doubt is a wavering conceptual consciousness that arises in dependence on any of the three poisons (ignorance, anger, and attachment), or in dependence on an unsteady awareness that does not examine closely. It disturbs our mind, and may result in staying trapped in a wavering state. Furthermore, deluded doubt interferes with our worldly activities by rendering us incapable of making decisions, or of

staying with a particular course of actions. From the point of view of Dharma practice, it can shake our faith in the Dharma, discourage us from studying, and prevent us from engaging in effective meditation. In fact, it is one of the most common causes of abandoning Buddhist practice.

Non-afflictive doubt, on the other hand, does not disturb our mind. It is two-pointed and undecided about its object of engagement but leads to the wish to clear our doubts and come to a correct understanding. From the point of view of Dharma practice, this type of doubt may arise in the process of trying to understand a profound and subtle Dharma topic. It can often arouse a strong interest in the Dharma, induce detailed analysis, and lead to a thorough understanding of the topic. In fact, it is explained in the Buddhist scriptures that merely doubting inherent/objective existence damages cyclic existence.

Correctly assuming consciousnesses

Correctly assuming consciousnesses (also called 'correct belief') are conceptual minds that correctly apprehend their existent objects of engagement without incontrovertibly knowing, that is, realizing them. Examples for such non-valid cognizers are a conceptual awareness that correctly assumes that the planet earth is round, a conceptual awareness that correctly assumes that a produced phenomenon changes moment by moment (subtle impermanence), a conceptual awareness that correctly assumes the existence of past and future lives, and so forth.

These correctly assuming consciousnesses arise in dependence on someone explaining us something, in dependence on correct reasons, on incorrect reasons, on personal experience, and so forth.

Oftentimes we think we know something; we think we have realized it. However, in reality we merely draw a conclusion about a fact because we have heard or read about it, and it seems right. Even if we investigate it, we do not take this far enough to come to an incontrovertible knowledge or realization. Therefore, many things we say we know are actually the objects of our correctly assuming consciousnesses.

The process of cultivating a direct realization

The 'wisdom aspect' of Buddhism is mainly concerned with cultivating the direct antidote to the root of cyclic existence, the ignorance that apprehends phenomena to exist inherently. The only direct antidote to this ignorance (and all the other delusions that it induces, as well as their seeds, and imprints) is the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness. Therefore, every time it manifests in a practitioner's continuum it irreversibly eliminates one of the layers of afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

In general there are five different awarenesses a presentation of which elucidates the stages of the gradual process of cultivating a yogic direct perceiver:

- I. Wrong consciousness
- II. Doubting consciousness
- III. Correctly assuming consciousness
- IV. Inferential cognizer
- V. Direct perception

Before we meet the Dharma we do not have any correct consciousnesses with regard to emptiness, or even any doubt. We only have wrongs consciousnesses, that is, intellectually acquired or innate ignorance that apprehend inherent existence. Then when we listen to teachings on emptiness we begin to consider the possibility that phenomena do not exist the way they appear. At first we generate doubt that tends away from the fact, thinking that 'phenomena probably exist inherently'. By continuing to reflect on emptiness our initial doubt transforms into equal doubt, and eventually into doubt that tends toward the fact.

With further contemplation our doubt then gradually becomes a correctly assuming consciousness that correctly believes or is convinced of the emptiness of inherent existence. At this stage we do not realize emptiness and therefore have to depend on correct reasoning. By listening, contemplating, and meditating on the reasons that establish phenomena's emptiness we eventually generate an inferential cognizer that for the first time incontrovertibly knows that phenomena lack inherent existence. Nonetheless, this realization is not enough, for it is only an intellectual understanding. Hence we should engage in further intense and prolonged meditation on emptiness in order to deepen our experience. At the same time we also need to generate calm abiding, focusing on, for instance, the image of the body of a Buddha. As explained above, calm abiding is achieved when we are able to continuously focus on the image of the body of the Buddha for at

least four hours, while at the same time achieve a special mental and physical pliancy. However, initially we have to alternate calm abiding and the analytical meditation apprehending emptiness since we are unable to operate them simultaneously. But with longer practice we gradually cultivate a meditative stabilization that is a union of calm abiding and special insight, and that realizes emptiness conceptually. At this point we must strive to attain a direct perception of emptiness that actually has the power to irreversibly eliminate ignorance, etc. Hence we engage in even more meditation so that the generic image of the conceptual meditative stabilization that realizes emptiness eventually fades away and the conceptual mind transforms into a yogic direct perceiver. The yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness is the only awareness that can irreversibly eliminate all our shortcomings. Therefore, every time it manifests it eliminates one of the layers of the afflictive or cognitive obstructions.

This gradual process from a wrong consciousness to a yogic direct perceiver also applies to the realization of the lack of a permanent, partless, independent self, of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, etc.

Please note that with regard to the realization of manifest phenomena such as the five sense objects, they are first realized directly by the sense consciousnesses and then conceptually with the mental consciousness. In the case of hidden phenomena, the process is reversed, for hidden phenomena are first realized conceptually and then directly with a yogic direct perceiver.

5. The category of main mind and mental factors

One of the most important classifications of the mind is the category of main minds and mental factors. This category is concerned with the functions and abilities of a *single* awareness.

Every consciousness consists of one main mind and various mental factors. Main minds are traditionally divided into six types (the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness). Even though mental factors can also be divided into those six types, they are traditionally divided into fifty-one types. Mental factors can be divided into those six because there are mental factors that are eye consciousnesses, ear consciousnesses, and so forth. However, since mental factors refer to different mental functions, they are usually classified into fifty-one types of mental functions or mental factors.

Main minds are described as more passive and their mental factor as more active. The principal function of the main mind is to simply apprehend or be aware of the general entity of its object of engagement, while the principal function of the mental factors is to apprehend particular attributes of the same object. Since every object has only one general entity but many particular attributes, any one object has only one main mind but many mental factors perceiving it.

There are several analogies that help to illustrate the relationship between a main mind and its mental factors. One analogy is that of a cabinet with a passive prime minister, who is like the main mind, and his active ministers, who are like the concomitant mental factors. The prime minister merely performs the function of being there, whereas his ministers are very busy performing different tasks. Some of the ministers may be efficient, some sharp, some kind, some greedy, and so forth. And even though each minister performs a different function, the entire cabinet is influenced by every minister's unique activities.

Some liken the main mind to the flame of a candle and its mental factors to the rays of the candle. Just as the rays of the candle emanate from the flame and exist simultaneously with it, the mental factors come from the main mind and exist simultaneously with it; just as every flame has many rays of light, every main mind has many mental factors; and just as the flame of the candle depends on its rays to illuminate its objects, every main mind perceives its objects in dependence on its mental factors.

Another analogy is that of the palm of a hand and the fingers, where the palm is the base but the fingers are responsible for the hand to function.

Therefore, despite their different functions a main mind cannot function without mental factors and mental factors cannot function without a main mind. Furthermore, a main mind and its mental factor are of one nature since the mental factors are a part of the main mind. The Buddhist scriptures describe the main mind as being *concomitant* with its mental factor due to five similarities that they share. The five similarities are:

- 1) The similarity of basis

- 2) The similarity of the observed object
- 3) The similarity of the object of engagement
- 4) The similarity of time
- 5) The similarity of substantial entity

1) *The similarity of basis*

The similarity of basis refers to: the main mind and its concomitant mental factor having the same empowering condition. Therefore, both a main mind that is an eye consciousness and its mental factors (that are also eye consciousnesses) have arisen in dependence on the same eye sense power, both a main mind that is an ear consciousness and its mental factors (that are also ear consciousnesses) have arisen in dependence on the same ear sense power, and so forth. In the case of a mental consciousness, both the main mind that is a mental consciousness and its mental factors (that are also mental consciousnesses) have arisen from the same preceding mental consciousness.

2) *The similarity of the observed object*

The similarity of the observed object refers to: the main mind and its mental factors having the same observed object. Hence the main mind and its mental factors focus on the same object. In the case of a main mind that apprehends that the self is impermanent, and its concomitant mental factors (that also apprehend that the self is impermanent), they both focus on the same object – the self. Similarly, in the case of a main mind that apprehends the pot, and its concomitant mental factors (that also apprehends the pot), they both focus on the same object – the pot.

3) *The similarity of the object of engagement*

The similarity of the object of engagement refers to: the main mind and its mental factors having the same object of engagement. This means that the main mind and its mental factors apprehend the same object of engagement. In the case of a main mind that apprehends that the self is impermanent, and its concomitant mental factors (that also apprehend that the self is impermanent), they both apprehend the same object of engagement – the self being impermanent. Similarly, in the case of a main mind that apprehends the pot, and its concomitant mental factors (that also apprehends the pot), they both apprehend the same object – the pot.

4) *The similarity of time*

The similarity of time refers to: the main mind and its mental factors arising, abiding, and ceasing simultaneously. For instance, a main mind that is an ear consciousness apprehending the sound of water arises, abides, and ceases at the same time as its concomitant mental factors (that also apprehend the sound of water).

5) *The similarity of substantial entity*

The similarity of substantial entity refers to: one main mind having only one of each type of a mental factor. Therefore, a main mind that is a nose consciousness that apprehends perfume, for instance, is concomitant only with one type of the mental factor of feeling, one mental factor of discrimination, and so forth. Similarly, one particular mental factor can be concomitant with only one main mind.

As mentioned above, there are fifty-one mental factors that are divided into six categories:

1. The five omnipresent mental factors
2. The five object-ascertaining mental factors
3. The eleven virtuous mental factors
4. The six root delusions
5. The twenty secondary delusions
6. The four changeable mental factors

The five omnipresent mental factors

The five omnipresent mental factors are:

- 1) Contact
- 2) Discrimination/Discernment
- 3) Feeling/Volition
- 4) Intention
- 5) Attention/Mental Engagement

They are omnipresent because they are *always* concomitant with every main mind.

1) *Contact*

Contact is a mental factor that contacts or meets the object of the awareness. For instance, in order for an eye consciousness apprehending a pot to arise, the eye consciousness must make contact with the pot.

2) *Discrimination/Discernment*

Discrimination is a mental factor that discerns the object. It is aware of the object's specific characteristics and thereby able to distinguish it from other objects. Discrimination identifies the object and serves as the basis for memory. Discrimination concomitant with a conceptual main mind also functions to label and name objects.

3) *Feeling*

Feeling is a mental factor that experiences the object as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. It is impossible to apprehend an object without the presence of any of the three types of feeling (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral). In fact, feeling is the element that drives us; it is responsible for the majority of our physical, verbal, and mental actions. The reason for this is that pleasant feeling induces attachment, unpleasant feeling induces anger, and neutral feeling induces ignorance.

4) *Intention/Volition*

Intention is a mental factor that moves or directs the awareness to the object. When there is feeling toward the object, intention engages the concomitant main mind and the other mental factors with the object. Intention is the element of the mind that is mental karma, also known as 'karma of intention'. The other type of karma is known as 'intended karma' which refers to volitional verbal and physical actions.

5) *Attention/Mental Engagement*

Attention is a mental factor whose main function is to enable the concomitant main mind and the other mental factors to remain on the object. It prevents the awareness from moving away from the object and serves as a basis for concentration and mindfulness. Attention also focuses on a specific object or a specific aspect of the object, filtering out other objects.

The five object-ascertaining mental factors

The five object-ascertaining mental factors are:

- 1) Aspiration
- 2) Resolve
- 3) Mindfulness
- 4) Concentration
- 5) Wisdom

They are object-ascertaining because they realize their object or are induced by awarenesses that realize their object.

1) *Aspiration*

Aspiration is a mental factor that focuses on a desired object and takes a strong interest in it.

2) *Resolve*

Resolve is a mental factor that having ascertained the qualities of an object (either positive or negative) directs the awareness to the object.

3) *Mindfulness*

Mindfulness is a mental factor that does not forget a familiar object and repeatedly brings it to mind.

4) *Concentration*

Concentration is a mental factor that remains single-pointedly on its object.

5) *Intelligence*

Intelligence is a mental factor that thoroughly discerns the positive and negative qualities of an object.

The eleven virtuous mental factors

The eleven virtuous mental factors are:

- 1) Faith
- 2) Shame
- 3) Consideration (for others)
- 4) Non-attachment
- 5) Non-hatred
- 6) Non-ignorance
- 7) Diligence
- 8) Mental pliancy
- 9) Conscientiousness
- 10) Equanimity
- 11) Non-harmfulness

When any of the eleven mental factors manifest, their concomitant main mind and other mental factors also become virtuous.

1) *Faith*

Faith is a mental factor that serves as the antidote of non-faith and is one of the three types – faith of conviction, admiring faith, or aspirational faith

2) *Shame*

Shame is a mental factor that refrains from non-virtuous actions out of reasons concerning oneself (e.g. out of self-respect).

3) *Consideration*

Consideration is a mental factor that refrains from non-virtuous actions out of consideration for others.

4) *Non-attachment*

Non-attachment is a mental factor that is the opponent to the mental factor of attachment.

5) *Non-hatred*

Non-hatred is a mental factor that is the opponent to the mental factor of anger

6) *Non-ignorance*

Non-ignorance is a mental factor that is the opponent to the mental factor of ignorance

7) *Diligence*

Diligence is a mental factor that delights in engaging in virtuous actions

8) *Mental pliancy*

Mental pliancy is a mental factor that is a mental flexibility which enables the concomitant main mind and other mental factors to focus on an object for an extended period of time

9) *Conscientiousness*

Conscientiousness is a mental factor that in dependence on diligence familiarizes the concomitant main mind and other mental factors with virtue, and guards it from non-virtue

10) *Equanimity*

Equanimity is a mental factor that is the antidote to mental sinking and mental excitement

11) *Non-harmfulness*

Non-harmfulness is a mental factor that wishes that sentient beings are free from suffering

The six primary delusions

According to Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge* the definition of delusions is:

A delusion is defined as a phenomenon that, when it arises, arises with the characteristic of being disturbing, and that, through arising, disturbs the mental continuum.

Delusions are mental consciousnesses whose function is to disturb or unsettle the mind. Therefore, delusions (such as ignorance, anger, attachment, jealousy, arrogance, etc.) not only induce contaminated actions, i.e. karma, that lead to future sufferings, they also create problems the moment they manifest, for they immediately create mental agitation and destroy the mind's peace and tranquility.

Furthermore, the root cause of delusions is ignorance (which is a delusion itself). More specifically, the ignorance that misperceives the "I" and "mine" or other phenomena to exist inherently is the root of all other delusions and thus the main cause for their arising.

What follows is a brief presentation of ignorance.

Ignorance

Ignorance is a mental factor and mental consciousness. In general, ignorance can be defined on many levels and thus there are various types of ignorance. One type of ignorance is the awareness that is a mere *not-knowing*, a lack of understanding. An example of this is the ignorance that does not understand how the engine of a car works or the ignorance that does not know the alphabet. However, this type of ignorance is one of the most superficial or coarsest.

Another type of ignorance is the awareness that is not merely confused about reality but actively misapprehends it (which includes the above mentioned ignorance that apprehends inherent existence). It is a distorted perception of its object. In fact, it is a misconception that is diametrically opposed to what actually exists.

There are also various types of this kind of ignorance. Furthermore, there are numerous layers of ignorance in terms of coarseness and subtlety. Some of the subtlest types of ignorance are so subtle that we may not even be aware of them.

However, in general, ignorance that is a misperception or misconception is said to be of two types:

1. Superimposing misconception
2. Deprecating misconception

1. Superimposing misconception

An example of a superimposing misconception is the ignorance that misapprehends reality on the deepest level, that is, the ignorance that apprehends phenomena to exist inherently and from their own side. Another example is a coarser level of ignorance that apprehends that which is impermanent to be permanent, or the ignorance that apprehends that which is in the nature of suffering to be in the nature of happiness. They are *superimposing* misconceptions because they apprehend [the existence of] something that does not exist.

2. Deprecating misconception

An example of a deprecating misconception is the ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of the law of karma, or the ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of past and future lives.

They are *deprecating* misconceptions because they apprehend the non-existence of something that actually exists.

Another way to categorize ignorance is to categorize it into:

1. Innate (or instinctive) ignorance
2. Intellectually (or ideologically) acquired ignorance

1. Innate ignorance

Innate ignorance is a misperception that arises naturally for all sentient beings. It is inborn and not conditioned by the culture and environment we live in. Regarding, for instance, the innate ignorance apprehending the non-existence of the law of karma, we may have developed firm conviction in the working of karma and live in a community that holds that same conviction. However, when we encounter problems

and difficulties we instinctively blame other people or the environment for our problems; we spontaneously ascribe to them the main responsibility for all our trouble.

Similarly, even though we know rationally that our mind and body change moment by moment, we often have the sense that we ourselves and others do not change, and always remain the same. Also, though we understand that one day we are going to die, we plan and live our lives as if we were immortal.

Furthermore, even if we have realized the lack of an inherently existent "I" and "mine," until we overcome the *innate* ignorance apprehending inherent existence, there will always be the spontaneous and instinctive sense of an inherently existent self, etc., which in turn will induce attachment, aversion, and other delusions.

2. Intellectually acquired ignorance

Intellectually or ideologically acquired ignorance, though rooted in innate ignorance, is a misperception that is not innate but comes about due to the influence of philosophical, religious, scientific, or cultural views and beliefs.

For example, at the time of the Buddha there were a number of philosophical systems that postulated a *permanent, partless, independent self*. Likewise, many religions accept the existence of a soul, a permanent entity that exists independent of mind and body. And then there is the extremely influential Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's descriptions of the ego and the super-ego as well as cultural ideas that encourage us "to be someone in the world," "to be true to ourselves," and to "find ourselves." All these are the results of the intellectually acquired view of an inherently and objectively existent self.

Another intellectually acquired view is the acquired ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of past and future lives. This misconception comes about due to the current widely accepted scientific view that our mind is merely the product of chemical reactions within our brain and body which ceases to exist at the time of death when those chemical reactions come to an end.

From a Buddhist perspective, also religious beliefs in an omnipotent creator God, for example, are explained to arise from an acquired ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of the law of karma.

Ignorance that is the root of cyclic existence

Ignorance that is the root of all other delusions and thus the root of cyclic existence is the ignorance that apprehends inherent existence. Ignorance that apprehends inherent existence is the root of all other delusions because it induces all the other delusions; it induces the other types of ignorance (such as the ignorance that apprehends the non-existence of the law of cause and effect, the ignorance that apprehends the existence of a permanent, partless, independent self, etc.) - as well as anger, attachment, arrogance, jealousy, and so forth.

This root ignorance is also of two types:

1. Ignorance that apprehends the inherent existence of the **"I" and "mine"**
2. Ignorance that apprehends the inherent existence of **phenomena** (phenomena other than "I" and "mine")

Since both types of ignorance apprehend inherent existence, they are both the root of cyclic existence.

In brief, the ignorance that misperceives the nature of phenomena on the deepest level, that is, the ignorance that apprehends inherent existence is the root cause of the six primary delusions and the twenty secondary delusions.

The six primary delusions are:

1. Attachment
2. Anger
3. Arrogance
4. Ignorance
5. (Afflictive) doubt
6. Wrong view

The first five delusions are called the *five non-views*. The sixth delusion, wrong view, can be further divided into five distinct types of wrong view, called the *five views*. This way of subdividing wrong view into further five types leads to another way of categorizing delusions into ten (the *five views* and the *five non-views*):

The ten delusions are:

1. Attachment
2. Anger
3. Arrogance
4. Ignorance
5. (Afflictive) doubt

} *five non-views*

6. View of the transitory collection
7. View holding to extremes
8. Belief in the supremacy of wrong views
9. Belief in the supremacy of mistaken ethics and religious conduct
10. Wrong view

} *five views*

1. Attachment

Attachment is a mental factor that focuses on an object we consider to be a source of pleasure, such as a car, and either exaggerates the car's positive qualities or superimposes positive qualities the car does not possess. While apprehending those qualities, attachment craves for, and becomes attached to the car.

Regarding the generation of attachment, its root is ignorance apprehending the inherently existent "I," the inherently existent car, or the inherently existent positive qualities of the car. Those misperceptions then induce other wrong perceptions such as the awareness that perceives the car as being permanent, as being in the nature of happiness, or as being flawless, which in turn lead to the mind that exaggerates the car's positive qualities or superimposes positive qualities the car does not possess. The latter awareness is not attachment yet, for craving is still to arise.

The mental factor that craves for and becomes attached to the car, *while* exaggerating the car's positive qualities or *while* superimposing positive qualities the car does not possess, is attachment.

The arising of attachment is quite different to the arising of, for instance, anger. Anger is impulsive and explosive but usually ebbs away quickly. Attachment on the other hand, arises slowly; there is a gradual process of becoming attached to an object. Attachment craves its object, attaches to it and fuses with it, making it very difficult to separate from the object once the mind becomes attached. This is why attachment is compared to a piece of cloth that is stained with oil. The oil is absorbed by the cloth, spreads into it, and is therefore difficult to remove.

Furthermore, the stronger the attachment, the stronger is the sense that we cannot find happiness if we are separated from the object. This feeling is particularly strong regarding attachment to another person. Depending on the intensity of the attachment to the other person there is the fear that we may be separated from them, there is jealousy when they spend time with someone else, and anger when they leave us.

2. Anger

Anger is a mental factor that focuses on an object that we consider to be a source of displeasure. This source of displeasure can be another sentient being, an unpleasant situation, or a disease etc.

In the case of being angry with another person, anger focuses on that person and exaggerates their negative qualities or superimposes negative qualities they do not possess. While apprehending those qualities anger cannot bear the person and wants to harm them.

Regarding the generation of anger, its root is ignorance apprehending the inherently existent "I," the inherently existent person who is the object of anger, or the inherently existent negative qualities of that person. Those misperceptions induce the mind that exaggerates the person's negative qualities or superimposes negative qualities the person does not possess. The latter awareness is not anger, for the wish to get rid of them or to harm them has not arisen yet. Rather, anger is the mental factor that wants to get rid of the person or wants to harm them, *while* exaggerating the person's negative qualities or *while* superimposing negative qualities the person does not possess.

Anger is a delusion that leads to a wide range of different emotions such as resentment, ill-will, fury, irritation, rage, hatred, aggression, rancor, spite, etc. It is considered a particularly harmful affliction because it unsettles the mind more than other afflictions and has the power to destroy a lot of *root virtue* or positive karma we have accumulated over many lifetimes.

3. Arrogance

Arrogance is a mental factor that focuses on oneself and exaggerates one's good qualities or superimposes good qualities one does not possess. While apprehending those qualities one feels conceited and superior to others. Through superimposing superiority upon oneself while superimposing inferiority upon others, arrogance elevates oneself.

Arrogance is rooted in the ignorance that apprehends an inherently existent "I" and in the ignorance that apprehends the inherent existence of one's own good qualities.

It creates a lot of unhappiness especially when there is evidence that the image we have of ourselves and of our positive qualities is distorted and not in accordance with reality. Furthermore, it can be a great obstacle to deepening our understanding and to increasing our good qualities.

According to Vasubhandu's *Abhidharmakosha* there are seven types of arrogance:

- 1) Arrogance
- 2) Excessive arrogance
- 3) Arrogance beyond arrogance
- 4) Arrogance of thinking "I"
- 5) Arrogance of conceit
- 6) Arrogance of slight inferiority
- 7) Wrongful arrogance

1) *Arrogance*

An inflated mental factor that considers oneself to be superior to those who are inferior

2) *Excessive arrogance*

An inflated mental factor that considers oneself to be superior to those who are one's equal

3) *Arrogance beyond arrogance*

An inflated mental factor that considers oneself to be superior to those who are superior

4) *Arrogance of thinking "I"*

An inflated mental factor that thinks "I" by focusing on the aggregates

(Some explain the "I" here as referring to the non-existent self, while others explain it as referring to the conventionally existent "I." If it refers to the non-existent self, this arrogance apprehends an inherently existent self and feels inflated about it. If the "I" this arrogance takes to mind is the conventionally existent "I," then it merely feels inflated about the conventional "I" without apprehending its inherent existence. Either way, this type of arrogance is a deluded mind that feels inflated about one's identity. For instance, it may feel inflated about being European, American, etc.)

5) *Arrogance of conceit*

An inflated mental factor that thinks one has attained good qualities that one has not attained

6) *Arrogance of slight inferiority*

An inflated mental factor that thinks one is only slightly inferior to those that are greatly superior

7) *Wrongful arrogance*

An inflated mental factor that thinks that one has attained excellent qualities while one has not attained such excellent qualities but rather has attained faults

4. Ignorance

As explained before, ignorance refers to either a mental factor that is merely confused with regard to the nature of an object or it refers to a mental factor that actively apprehends the opposite of what is actually

there. Lama Tsongkhapa explains ignorance here to refer mainly to ignorance that is mistaken with regard to the four noble truths, the law of cause and effect, and the nature of the Three Jewels.

However, it can also refer to the ignorance that apprehends inherent existence, to ignorance that apprehends phenomena that are impermanent as being permanent, to ignorance that apprehends phenomena that are in the nature of suffering as being in the nature of happiness, and so forth.

5. (Afflictive) Doubt

As explained above, doubt is in general not considered to be a delusion, for it can be one of the stepping stones to gaining a correct understanding of reality.

However, here *afflictive* doubt is a mental factor that serves as an obstacle to spiritual development, for it is an awareness that despite correct reasoning does not transform into a correctly assuming consciousness and that continues to waver with respect to the four noble truths, the law of cause and effect, the Three Jewels, and so forth. It is two-pointed and undermines our ability to engage in any action with confidence and resolve. Furthermore, it hinders us from committing ourselves whole-heartedly to a particular practice or to remaining diligent in our effort in accomplishing a desired result. There is a Tibetan saying that just as we cannot sew with a two-pointed needle, we cannot accomplish our goal with a doubting two-pointed mind.

6. View of the transitory collection

The view of the transitory collection refers to a mental factor that apprehends an inherently existent "I" and "mine." It is an 'afflictive wisdom' because its function is similar to wisdom in the way it actively apprehends an object. However, it is an *afflictive* wisdom because its object, an inherently existent "I" or "mine," does not exist.

The reason for calling it "the view of the transitory collection" is that this view apprehends an inherently existent "I" or "mine" while focusing on the aggregates, which are a transitory collection. The aggregates are a transitory collection due to their impermanent and perishable nature.

7. View holding to extremes

The view of holding to extremes is an afflictive wisdom focusing on the self as apprehended by the view of the transitory collection, perceiving it either as being permanent and non-changing, or as subject to annihilation in such a way that it becomes non-existent at the time of death.

8. Belief in the supremacy of wrong views

Belief in the supremacy of wrong views is an afflictive wisdom that focuses on one of the three views – the view of the transitory collection, the view holding to extremes, or wrong view (which will be explained below) – and regards them as supreme.

9. Belief in the supremacy of mistaken ethics and religious conduct

Belief in the supremacy of mistaken ethics and religious conduct is an afflictive wisdom which asserts that various misguided religious practices are supreme and lead toward spiritual attainment. Examples of such practices can be found in many different religious systems. In certain Christian traditions, for instance, one finds the practice of 'corporal mortification' or 'mortification of the flesh' which in some of its more severe forms can mean causing self-inflicted pain and physical harm, such as beating, whipping, piercing, or cutting oneself. These practices are considered to help the practitioner to attain a union with god, obtain a higher place in heaven etc. Similarly, in some religious traditions one finds the practice of ritual animal sacrifices. Then there are various ascetic practices such standing on one leg or burning the body in the sun for a long time in order to purify negativities. Further, there are numerous cases of self-immolation and ritual suicide that are performed for the sake of spiritual salvation. The view that holds such practices as supreme and as a means of attaining spiritual emancipation is the fourth of the *five views*.

10. Wrong view

Even though the previous four views are all forms of wrong view, here wrong view refers specifically to an afflictive wisdom that apprehends the non-existence of the law of karma, the non-existence of past and future lives, etc. It also refers to the view that asserts the cause of sentient beings and cyclic existence to be a

divine creator, a primordial essence (as propounded by the non-Buddhist Indian philosophical system of the Samkyas), and so forth.

The twenty secondary delusions

- 1) *Aggression / belligerence*
Aggression is a mental factor that is an increase of the primary delusion of anger and that wishes to physically or verbally harm others
- 2) *Resentment*
Resentment is a mental factor that maintains the continuum of the primary delusion of anger without forgetting it, and wants to retaliate
- 3) *Concealment / denial*
Concealment is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance which wants to conceal one's faults from others when they are pointed out by someone with the motivation to benefit
- 4) *Spite*
Spite is a mental factor that is a type of anger which, motivated by the secondary delusions of aggression and resentment, wants to speak harshly
- 5) *Jealousy*
Jealousy is a mental factor that is a type of anger which, motivated by attachment to material possessions, status, etc., cannot bear and feels resentful towards others' accomplishments
- 6) *Miserliness*
Miserliness is a mental factor that is a type of attachment which, motivated by attachment to material possessions, status, etc., holds onto things tightly and does not want to separate from them
- 7) *Pretension / deceit*
Pretension is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance or attachment which, motivated by attachment to material possessions, status, etc., wants to pretend that one possesses qualities one does not possess
- 8) *Dissimulation*
Dissimulation is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance or attachment which, motivated by attachment to material possessions, status, etc., does not want others to know one's shortcomings
- 9) *Haughtiness*
Haughtiness is a mental factor that is type of attachment which, having taken to mind one's accomplishments and good qualities, generates an afflictive sense of self-confidence
- 10) *Harmfulness*
Harmfulness is a mental factor that is a type of anger which wants to inflict harm on other sentient beings
- 11) *Shamelessness / non-shame*
Shamelessness is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance, anger, or attachment which is devoid of a sense of shame with regard to one's negative actions
- 12) *Inconsideration / non-embarrassment*
Inconsideration is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance, anger, or attachment which is devoid of consideration for other sentient beings with regard to one's negative actions
- 13) *Dullness / lethargy*
Dullness is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance which makes the mind lethargic so that it is unable to comprehend its object clearly
- 14) *Excitement*
Excitement is a mental factor that is a type of attachment which scatters the mind so that it is unable to remain focused on one object
- 15) *Non-faith*

Non-faith is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance which does not believe in, does not have admiration for, and does not aspire to virtuous phenomena

16) *Laziness*

Laziness is a mental factor that is a type of ignorance which, due to attachment to sleep, etc. dislikes or feels sluggish about engaging in virtue

17) *Non-conscientiousness*

Non-conscientiousness is a mental factor that manifests together with one of the three poisons and with laziness, and that leaves the mind in a relaxed state without habituating it to virtue and protecting it from contaminated phenomena

18) *Forgetfulness*

Forgetfulness is a mental factor that is blurred with respect to virtuous objects due to remembering non-virtuous objects

19) *Non-alertness /non-introspection*

Non-alertness is a mental factor that is a type of afflicted wisdom which is not alert with respect to physical, verbal, and mental actions

20) *Distraction*

Distraction is a mental factor that is a type of anger, attachment, or ignorance which is distracted.

The four changeable mental factors

The four changeable mental factors are:

- 1) Sleep
- 2) Regret
- 3) (General) Investigation
- 4) (Detailed) Analysis

They are 'changeable' because they can be virtuous, non-virtuous, or neutral

1) *Sleep*

Sleep is a mental factor that is the result of mental heaviness or mental dullness and functions to dissolve the sense consciousnesses (into the subtler mind).

2) *Regret*

Regret is a mental factor that feels remorse for physical, verbal, or mental actions done in the past.

3) *(General) Investigation*

Investigation is a mental factor that roughly examines the general nature of an object.

4) *(Detailed) Analysis*

(Detailed) analysis is a mental factor that thoroughly examines the detailed nature of an object

This concludes the category of main minds and mental factors.

6. The category of coarse and subtle minds

The presentation of coarse and subtle minds is given in the Tantric scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism. In general, there are three levels of consciousness: gross, subtle, and very subtle. Our normal waking minds, such as the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness are gross consciousnesses. They are the awarenesses that are always present while we are awake; they perceive the five sense objects, and think, judge, reflect, etc. Our gross awarenesses rely heavily on our physical body, especially on the brain. Any alteration or even damage to the brain (e.g. when suffering from a stroke or brain injuries) has an inevitable effect on the coarse mind. Conversely, any change and transformation of the mind also affects the brain and possibly the entire body. The majority of our delusions, such as ignorance, anger, etc. are gross awarenesses.

The second category of subtle minds refers to the awarenesses that become active while we are asleep, fainting, during the initial stages of death, and for advanced practitioners on the completion stage of Highest

Yoga Tantra. These minds depend less on the physical body, and their objects are more subtle. Examples are dream consciousnesses.

The third category of the subtlest consciousness refers to the *clear light mind*. This is the awareness that in the case of ordinary living beings becomes active only at the time of death and exists without depending on the physical body. Advanced practitioners on the completion stage of Highest Yoga Tantra can manifest the subtle clear mind also through meditation.

According to the Tantric scriptures all awarenesses are mounted on energy winds, which in turn flow through the energy channels in our body. We have about 72,000 different energy channels that similar to our blood vessels are spread out over our entire body. Moreover, there are three main channels, the right, left, and central channel. The central channel begins at the point between the eye brows and ascends in an arch towards the top of the head. From there it descends in a straight line down to the end of the spine and then under the trunk of the body to the opening or tip of the sexual organ. Immediately to either side of the central channel are the right and left channels. At various places the right and left channels wrap around the central channel constricting the flow of the energy winds. There are explained to be seven places of constriction called channel-wheel or *chakra*. They are located at the forehead, the crown of the head, the throat, the heart (or better at the center of the chest), the navel, at the base of the spine and the opening or tip of the sexual organ.

The very subtle mind and its mounted energy wind are located within a tiny vacuole inside the central channel at the center of the heart *chakra*. This mind is also called the 'root mind' because all the other minds arise from it and dissolve back into it. Another name for the subtlest mind is the 'continually abiding mind' because it is the only mind that continues from one life to the next. The subtle clear light mind is non-conceptual and free from any kind of delusion.

As ordinary living beings we are not able to utilize or influence the subtle and very subtle awarenesses. This is why we say that while we are sleeping, fainting, etc. that we are 'unconscious', for even though there is always a mental consciousness that is aware or conscious, we are unable to utilize it and upon waking up are mostly unable to recollect what that consciousness apprehended.

The only exception to this may be when someone experiences lucid dreams, i.e. when one is aware that one is dreaming, and possibly able to actively participate in and manipulate the dream experiences.

The above presentation of the different categories of the mind is given from the point of view of manifest consciousnesses. However, it is important to understand that the different awarenesses are not always manifest or present. For instance, while we are sleeping our coarse consciousnesses are non-manifest and lie dormant. Similarly, even though we have not eliminated ignorance, anger, attachment, etc. yet, this does not mean that these delusions are always actively manifest.

If the external and internal circumstances that usually trigger, for instance, our anger, are temporarily absent, our anger will lie dormant or abide in the form of the *seed* of anger, until the circumstances once again assemble. Here the *seed* of anger refers to the potential for anger to arise again. Likewise, with prolonged meditation on patience we are temporarily able to lessen or even overcome our anger. However, since such meditation is unable to eliminate the *seed* of anger (only the yogic direct perceiver directly realizing emptiness can extinguish the *seed*), when we discontinue the meditation, our anger will slowly start to manifest again. Therefore, whenever our delusions are not manifest they lie dormant, that is, they exist in the form of a *seed* or the potential to arise again in our mental continuum.

The same also applies to positive minds, such as love, compassion, Bodhicitta, and so forth. Even if we have cultivated great love and compassion for others, this does not mean that those virtuous states of mind are always present. Unless they degenerate they merely lie dormant, i.e. we possess their *seeds* in our mental continuum, and they are able to manifest any time.

Depending on their intensity particular minds can also have a strong influence on other minds even while they lie dormant. This is especially important from the point of view of Dharma practice. For instance, Bodhisattvas have cultivated Bodhicitta, the intense aspiration to attain the state of a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings. This aspiration is so strong that even when it lies dormant it has a great influence on other minds in those Bodhisattvas' continua. It is the force that motivates Bodhisattvas to engage in practices

that gradually take them to enlightenment. Therefore, Mahayana paths are said to be *conjoined with Bodhicitta* which means that Mahayana paths, even when Bodhicitta lies dormant, are influenced and enhanced by Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta on the other hand, is also influenced and enhanced by these paths. One of the most important examples for this is the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness. When this yogic direct perceiver manifests in the mental continuum of a Bodhisattva, Bodhicitta cannot manifest, and when Bodhicitta manifests the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness cannot manifest. However, even though when one is manifest the other exists in the form of a seed, i.e. lies dormant, the two awarenesses are still conjoined. They are conjoined because Bodhicitta enhances the yogic direct perceiver that directly realizes emptiness, and the yogic direct perceiver that realizes emptiness enhances Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta enhances the yogic direct perceiver because it provides it with the strength to not merely eliminate the afflictive obstructions, but also the cognitive ones. The yogic direct perceiver enhances Bodhicitta because it strengthens the aspiration to become a Buddha for the benefit of all suffering sentient beings.

Therefore, the method aspect of Bodhicitta and the wisdom aspect of the mind that realizes emptiness are compared to two wings of a bird in flight that, even though they do not move synchronically (i.e. when one is up the other is down), assist and aid each other.

This completes the presentation of 'What is the Mind?'