

Part 4

6. DOUBTING CONSCIOUSNESSES, A.K.A. DOUBT (ཐེ་ཚོམ་/ the tshom)

Definition: A knower which by its own power has qualms in two directions.

- Doubt is always conceptual.
- It is distinguished by being uncertain, indecisive, or “two-pointed.” “Two-pointed” means that the mind wavers between two alternatives, e.g. “Maybe it’s this, maybe it’s that.”
- Therefore, it is **controvertible**, and does not realize its object.
- Doubt is actually a mental factor, but when it is present in the mind, the main mind (which would be a mental consciousness, from among the six types of consciousness), and the other mental factors that accompany it, all take on the indecisiveness of doubt. This is due to the influence of doubt; it is similar to what happens when we add a drop of red dye to a glass of water—all the water molecules become red.
- This is why the definition says “by its own power.” Doubt wavers between two alternatives **by its own power**; the main mind and other mental factors accompanying it also waver between two alternatives, but not by their own power—they waver by the power/influence of doubt.

Some Lorig texts have definitions of doubt that omit the phrase “by its own power,” and thus could include both main minds and mental factors, and Lati Rinpoche prefers such definitions (p. 107 of *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism*).

There are three types of doubt (from *The Mind and its Functions*):

- 1) Doubt tending towards the fact: e.g. thinking, “I wonder if my body is impermanent or permanent? It’s probably impermanent.”
- 2) Doubt not tending towards the fact: e.g. thinking, “I wonder if my body is impermanent or permanent? It’s probably permanent.”
- 3) Equal doubt, e.g. thinking, “I wonder if my body is impermanent or permanent? It could be either; I don’t know!”

Another way of dividing doubt is into virtuous, non-virtuous, and neutral.

- 1) an example of a virtuous doubt would be to think “I’m not sure if there is such a thing as enlightenment, but probably there is.” If one has such a state of mind and does not encounter any hindering conditions (e.g. a person who forcefully tells you there is no enlightenment), it will eventually become a correct assumption regarding the existence of enlightenment.
- 2) an example of a non-virtuous doubt would be to think “I’m not sure if there is such a thing as enlightenment, but probably there isn’t.” Such a state of mind could turn into a wrong consciousness that thinks, “there is no such thing as enlightenment,” unless one encounters positive conditions (e.g. someone who gives convincing arguments about the existence of

enlightenment; in this case, it could become a virtuous doubt, or a correct assumption.)

- 3) examples of neutral doubt would be wondering if it will rain today, wondering whether or not a particular person will come to class today, wondering if you put enough sugar in your tea, etc.

Doubt is included in a list of “six root afflictions”: ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, afflicted doubt, and wrong views. In this case, doubt is necessarily the non-virtuous type, e.g. thinking there’s probably no such thing as enlightenment, or thinking there are probably no effects of your actions. Doubt is also one of the five hindrances to concentration. It makes the mind shaky/wavering, rather than steady.

But in general, doubt is not negative; in fact, it can be positive/virtuous. The Dalai Lama often speaks of the importance of having doubt about teachings that we hear, rather than blindly accepting them. Aryadeva in his text *The Four Hundred* says that merely having doubt about the true nature of things (i.e. emptiness) tears cyclic existence to shreds. Also, Maitreya’s *Ornament of Clear Realizations* speaks of two types of followers: followers of faith and followers of reasoning. The latter are said to be of “sharper faculty.”

7. WRONG CONSCIOUSNESSES (མོག་ཤེས་/ log shes)

Definition: A knower which is mistaken with regard to its object of engagement.

The seventh of the seven types of awareness is wrong consciousness. This is a mind that is mistaken to its object of engagement, i.e. the actual object the mind is engaged in.

Wrong consciousnesses can be conceptual or non-conceptual:

- 1) Conceptual wrong consciousnesses are conceptions that engage their object erroneously. Some examples:
 - a conception thinking sound is permanent
 - a conception thinking there is a substantially-existent self
 - a conception thinking that you are someone you aren’t, e.g. thinking you are the Dalai Lama
 - a conception thinking the mirage on the surface of the desert is a lake
- 2) Non-conceptual wrong consciousnesses can be either sense or mental:
 - some examples of wrong consciousnesses that are **sense perceptions**: seeing a mirage as water, hearing an echo of your voice as another person’s voice, feeling sensations of a “phantom limb”
 - an example of a wrong consciousnesses that is a **mental perception**: a dream consciousness that sees a dream object (e.g. a tiger in your room) as a real tiger

A discussion with Geshema Kelsang Wangmo:

Q: Can a wrong consciousness be useful? E.g. we can learn from our dreams, in therapy or on our own. Also, people sometimes use creative visualization to cure physical and/or psychological problems.

A: Yes! Sometimes there's distinction between wrong consciousnesses you deliberately make arise (e.g. taking on the suffering of others) and those that arise involuntarily. Some say wrong consciousness is only the latter, not the former (see *Mind in Tibetan Buddhism* p. 113-114). Also, afflictive emotions like anger are wrong consciousnesses, but we can learn from them (e.g. by analyzing them, using them in lo-jong practice, etc.).

THE SEVEN TYPES OF AWARENESS

TYPE OF MIND	Non-conceptual	Conceptual	Non-mistaken	Mistaken	Incontrovertible	Controvertible	Prime/Valid	Non-prime/valid	Sense consciousness	Mental consciousness
1) Direct Perceivers	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
a. Sense	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	
b. Mental	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
c. Self-knowing	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
d. Yogic	X		X		X		X			X
2) Inferential Cognizers		X		X	X		X	X		X
3) Subsequent cognizers	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
4) Correctly Assuming Consciousnesses		X		X		X		X		X
5) Awarenesses to which the object appears but is not ascertained	X		X			X		X	X	X
6) Doubting consciousnesses		X		X		X		X		X
7) Wrong consciousnesses	X	X		X		X		X	X	X