

MIND & ITS WORLD 1

sourcebook

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PROCESS OF PERCEPTION IN THE VAIBHĀṢHIKA SCHOOL

ĀCHĀRYA SHERAB GYALTSEN

PERCEIVING SUBJECTS OF COARSE MATTER

The text says:

1.4.1.3. Explanation of consciousness, the perceiving subject

There are many ways of classifying consciousness, such as:

- the classification as primary minds and mental events
- the classification as conceptual and nonconceptual [consciousnesses]
- the classification as mistaken consciousnesses and nonmistaken consciousnesses
- the classification as valid cognitions and nonvalid cognitions
- the classifications as coarse consciousnesses and subtle consciousnesses

These should be known from the *Classifications of Mind*.

This system [of the Vaibhāṣhikas] asserts only six collections of consciousness as primary minds—the five sense consciousnesses and the mental consciousness—but not the afflictive mind and the all-base [consciousness]. Furthermore, it asserts only three direct valid cognitions—sense direct valid cognition, mental direct valid cognition, and yogic direct valid cognition—but not self-aware direct valid cognition.



Definition of Conceptual Consciousness:

A consciousness that apprehends in a way that the term and referent are mixed.

Now we will discuss the perceiving subjects of coarse matter. The text says that there are many ways to classify consciousness, such as the classification of the primary mind and mental events, the classification of conceptual consciousnesses and nonconceptual consciousnesses, the classification of mistaken consciousnesses and nonmistaken consciousnesses, the classification of valid cognitions and nonvalid cognitions, the classification of coarse consciousnesses and subtle consciousnesses, and so on. These are from the *Classifications of Mind*, or the *Lorik*. For the most part, the *Lorik* presentation concords with the Vaibhāṣhika assertions. However, there are some types of mind that the Vaibhāṣhikas assert that are not explained in the *Lorik*, and I will go through these here.

Classifications of Consciousness (in pairs)

primary minds & mental events
conceptual & nonconceptual consciousnesses
mistaken consciousnesses & nonmistaken consciousnesses
valid cognitions & nonvalid cognitions
coarse consciousnesses & subtle consciousnesses

Conceptual Consciousness & Nonconceptual Consciousness

The main definitions of mind and mental states are the same for the Vaibhāṣhikas and the Sautrāntikas for conceptual consciousness and nonconceptual consciousness, mistaken consciousness and nonmistaken consciousness, and so on. They both explain conceptual consciousness to be a consciousness that apprehends in a way that the term and referent are mixed, and they explain nonconceptual consciousness to be a consciousness that apprehends in a way that the term is not mixed with its referent or object.



Definition of Nonconceptual Consciousness:

A consciousness that apprehends in a way that the term is not mixed with its referent.

Mistaken Consciousness & Nonmistaken Consciousness

As for mistaken consciousness and nonmistaken consciousness, they say that a consciousness that apprehends the way of appearing of an object in a way that concords with the way of abiding of that object is a nonmistaken consciousness, and a consciousness that apprehends the way of appearing of an object that does not accord with the way of abiding of that object is a mistaken consciousness. In brief, a mistaken consciousness apprehends an object to be what it is not.

Coarse Consciousness & Subtle Consciousness

They also put forth the category of coarse consciousnesses and subtle consciousnesses. Coarse consciousnesses are conceptual consciousnesses, and subtle consciousnesses are nonconceptual consciousnesses. If you explain these classifications in the way that accords with the Sautrāntika and Chittamātra traditions, then you would say that coarse consciousness is a consciousness that is other-aware, and subtle consciousness is a consciousness that is self-aware, or reflexively aware. In the Vaibhāṣhika tradition, they only accept three types of direct valid cognition: sense direct, mental direct, and yogic direct. They do not accept self-aware direct valid cognition.

THE WAY IN WHICH CONSCIOUSNESS APPREHENDS OBJECTS

The text says:

This system's way that consciousness apprehends objects is as follows: They assert that the sense consciousnesses evaluate their objects in an immediate way without any aspects, and that also the physical eye faculty sees form. They say, "If it were only consciousness that sees [form], it would follow that it also sees form that is obstructed by walls and such." They continue, "Each minutest particle on its own is beyond being an object for the senses, but it is a different case, when many of a concordant type come together. This is just as one does not see individual single hairs from far away, but sees them when many [of them] are in one place."

There is a difference between what the Vaibhāṣhikas say about the way consciousness apprehends objects and what the Sautrāntikas say about the way consciousness apprehends objects.

Vaibhāṣhika Explanation of How Consciousness Apprehends Objects

The Vaibhāṣhikas say that consciousness directly or nakedly apprehends the object itself. For example, given an eye consciousness and form, they say that the eye consciousness directly apprehends the form, and they say that the eye faculty directly perceives the form. They say that the consciousness apprehends the form and the faculty sees the form, and they both do so in a direct manner.

The Vaibhāṣhikas say that the reason the eye consciousness is not the only thing that sees form is because the eye consciousness is intangible. It is not matter. It is not physical, so it cannot be touched. If it were only the eye consciousness that perceived forms, it would follow that you would be able to see the people in the house next door through the walls. The eye consciousness is not physical, and so if it were not connected to anything physical, it would be able to see the people in the house next door. The Vaibhāṣhikas, however, say that is not the case because it is connected with the eye faculty, which is physical and tangible, and so it does not see things like people on the other side of the wall. In this way, they are very much in accordance with worldly terminology. In a mundane way, we say, "I saw a form. I heard a sound," and so on. The Vaibhāṣhikas also say that the eye sees form, the ear hears sounds, the nose smells, and so on.



Definition of a Nonmistaken Consciousness:

A consciousness that apprehends the way of appearing of an object in a way that concords with the way of abiding of that object is a nonmistaken consciousness.



Definition of a Mistaken Consciousness:

A consciousness that apprehends the way of appearing of an object that does not accord with the way of abiding of that object is a mistaken consciousness.



Definition of a Coarse Consciousness:

A conceptual consciousness..



Definition of a Subtle Consciousness:

A nonconceptual consciousness.



Key Fact:

The Vaibhāṣhikas say that the consciousness and faculty directly apprehend the object.


Key Fact:

The Sautrāntikas say that consciousness apprehends an aspect of the object reflected in consciousness— the object remains hidden.

The Vaibhāṣhikas say that the subtle partless particles are not objects for an eye consciousness because they are so small. They are beyond the realm of experience for an eye consciousness. They give the example of a single strand of hair. They say if you take a single strand of hair and put it at a distance you will not be able to see it. However, if you take many strands of hair and put them together, you will be able to see this form from a distance. It is just like in that example.

Sautrāntika Explanation of How Consciousness Apprehends Objects

The Sautrāntikas, on the other hand, say that a consciousness does not directly apprehend an object itself. They say that sense consciousnesses do not perceive the specifically characterized forms at all. They say that the specifically characterized form is not perceived by the eye consciousness because the specifically characterized form is a hidden phenomenon.

They say that the specifically characterized form is a hidden phenomenon that acts as a cause for the perception of its reflection or aspect in the consciousness. They say that the consciousness is like a clear, well-polished crystal that is of the nature of clarity. What happens is that the hidden specifically characterized phenomenon of the object acts as a cause for its aspect to be reflected in the pure crystal of the consciousness. When that happens, in a worldly way, you can say that form was seen or “I saw form.” But in strict terms, that is not actually what happens. The consciousness does not see the form at all.

Furthermore the Sautrāntikas say that the nature of consciousness is clarity, not form. Specifically characterized form is matter, and so these two things cannot meet. They say that is the further explanation for why consciousness does not directly perceive the specifically characterized form. In the same way, they say that the sense faculties do not perceive form because they are of the nature of matter, and thus cannot cognize because matter and consciousness are two completely different things. The only thing that the sense faculties do is to act as a dominant condition for the arising of their specific consciousness. Thus they also do not perceive forms.

This has been a brief explanation of the Vaibhāṣhika and Sautrāntika assertions of the way in which consciousness apprehends objects.

Student: What two things do not meet?

ASG: Matter and consciousness. 📌

PROCESS OF PERCEPTION IN THE SAUTRĀNTIKA SCHOOL

ĀCHĀRYA SHERAB GYALTSEN

PERCEIVING SUBJECT

The text says:

2.4.1.2. *Explanation of the presentation of the subjects*

In general, mind, awareness, and consciousness are equivalent.

The definition of a mind: That which is clear and aware.

The definition of consciousness: That which is aware of objects.

The definition of awareness: That which experiences objects of comprehension.

These are classified as the following sets of two:

Valid cognitions and nonvalid cognitions
Conceptual and nonconceptual [minds]
[Primary] minds and mental events
Self-awarenesses and other-awarenesses

The details should be understood from the *Classifications of Mind*.

Mind, Consciousness & Awareness

We start off with the statement that mind, awareness, and consciousness, are equivalent. Then the text posits the definitions. First, mind is “that which is clear and aware.” Second, consciousness is “that which is aware of objects.” Third, awareness is “that which experiences objects of comprehension.”

Self-Awareness

In the presentation of subjects, all the definitions are the same, but again, there are some slight differences. The Vaibhāṣhikas do not accept self-aware direct valid cognition, whereas the Sautrāntikas do accept self-aware direct valid cognition. Basically the Sautrāntikas added this one extra thing on. The Vaibhāṣhikas accept three types of direct valid cognition, and the Sautrāntikas accept four types. This is the main difference in terms of the presentation of subjects.

THE WAY CONSCIOUSNESS APPREHENDS OBJECTS

The text says:

2.4.1.3. *Explanation of the way that consciousness apprehends objects*

When consciousness apprehends objects, it is not without an aspect. Rather, [consciousness] involves an aspect, because it would follow that the object itself is of the entity of clarity, if [consciousness] were aware of the object itself in the mode of clarity without [involving] an aspect.

Hence, they say that consciousness is aware of objects in the following way: When an individual looks at a pure crystal whose hue is changed by some color [underneath], the crystal and the color are both apprehended by the eyes. At this point, the crystal is something that is directly apprehended, and the color is something that is apprehended through [its] reflection. Thus, the individual apprehends two objects of apprehension. In the same way, direct appearances are aspects of nothing but consciousness. Nevertheless, the bases [due to] which consciousness appears as colors and shapes are outer referents—collections of minutest

particles that are different in entity from consciousness. It is not the case—as the Vaibhāṣhikas [say]—that the eye sense faculty which possesses form sees [shapes and forms]. Rather, only consciousness is that which sees and so forth. But what is obstructed by walls and such is not seen, since it is prevented from appearing to consciousness.

Consciousness & Objects

As was explained earlier, the Vaibhāṣhikas say that the consciousness directly apprehends objects in a very immediate way. The Sautrāntikas say, however, that it is impossible for consciousness to apprehend objects in an immediate way. Consciousness is mind, objects are form, and between the two there is no connection.

Object Aspect

Since this is the case, what the Sautrāntikas do accept is that between consciousness and matter, there are things called “aspects” that perform the function of making a connection between mind and matter. They assert that if there were not such aspects that perform the function of forging a connection between consciousness and form, there would be the fault that perceived objects would be endowed with the characteristics of clarity and awareness.

The Sautrāntikas say that consciousness is like a very pure and clear crystal. Any form that is reflected in the crystal, whatever object that appears before this crystal, will have all its colors reflected in the crystal in a very accurate and pure way. When the aspects of an object are reflected in the crystal, when they appear in the crystal, they are of the same nature of the crystal. However, when someone looks at the image reflected in the crystal, they say, “I saw” or “I perceived this form” of the object reflected in it. The Sautrāntikas say that in a conventional way it is fine to say “I saw a form,” but really, this person is not looking at the object but is merely looking at the object’s reflection in the crystal. Just as in this case, they say that consciousness apprehends the image or reflection of objects. Objects have their aspects reflected in consciousness, and this is what is perceived.

Outer Objects Are Hidden

Aside from that, form is of the nature of being composed of particles, and mind is of the nature of being clear and aware. Between them, it is impossible for any real or direct connection to be made. For this reason, they say that all outer referents or objects are hidden phenomena. They say that outer objects exist in the manner of being hidden. Why are they hidden? Because they are never directly perceived by consciousness. Only their aspect that is reflected in consciousness is perceived. When we perceive forms or hear sounds, the aspects of the hidden specifically characterized objects are reflected in the consciousness that is like a pure crystal. When you view objects reflected in a crystal, you say things like “I saw form” and “I heard sound,” and so on. But the actual specifically characterized object has not been perceived at all.

If Unhindered, Objects Direct Their Aspects Toward Consciousness

As was said before, the Vaibhāṣhikas say that the eye consciousness and the eye faculty directly apprehend form. The Vaibhāṣhikas say that if the eye consciousness and eye faculty did not directly perceive forms, if it was only consciousness that apprehended forms, then it would follow that you would be able to see, for example, the people in the house next door because the wall would not get in the way. Consciousness is formless, and thus would be unobstructed and unhindered by forms. So it would follow that you could see the people on the other side of the wall.

The Sautrāntikas responded by saying, “That fault does not affect our assertion. It does not apply to us, because for a consciousness to apprehend an object there has to be an object directing its aspect at the consciousness.” They say in the case of perceiving people on the other side of the wall that the wall serves as a barrier for what is on the



Key Term:

Hidden Object:

The outer object is hidden because it is not directly perceived by consciousness.

other side of the wall to direct its aspect at the consciousness. Therefore for the hidden phenomenon on the other side of the wall to be perceived, it must direct its aspect towards the consciousness. If there is a wall in between the hidden phenomenon and the consciousness, the aspect will not be able to reach the consciousness. They say that the wall serves as a blocking factor for the aspect of the specifically characterized hidden phenomenon to direct its aspect towards the consciousness. For any consciousness to apprehend a form, its aspect has to be directed in an unhindered way towards the consciousness. In that way, they refute the fault that was ascribed to their assertion by the Vaibhāṣhikas.

You can give a very simple example of a crystal ball and a glass beside it. If something comes in between them and blocks the crystal ball from the glass, then the image of the glass will not be reflected in the crystal ball. However, if you take out what is in the middle, and there is nothing in between them, then the image of the glass will be reflected by the crystal ball. If it is unhindered, if there is nothing between the glass and the crystal ball, and if we look in the crystal ball, then we will be able to clearly see the image of the glass reflected in it. It is just like this.

CONSCIOUSNESS IS ENDOWED WITH ASPECTS

The text says:

Those who assert consciousness as something that entails an aspect are classified as three:

- 1) the Proponents of Nondual Variety
- 2) the Half-Eggists
- 3) the Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehender and Apprehended

For the previous reasons, the Sautrāntikas also assert consciousness to be endowed with aspects. Although consciousness does not directly perceive form, it is endowed with its aspect. In terms of the actual way that the consciousness apprehends aspects, there are three different schools within the Sautrāntika system that have their own views about how this happens. They are the Proponents of Nondual Variety, the Half-Eggists, and the Proponents of an Equal Number of Apprehender and Apprehended.

Proponents of Nondual Variety

The text says:

1) The entirety of the aspects that are one in substantial establishment and abiding¹ with the object blue—such as [its] being produced and impermanent—appear. However, [the corresponding] subjective consciousness arises as something that takes on the aspect of just blue. This is like in the following example: Many aspects of a multicolored object—such as blue and yellow—are cast towards an eye consciousness that apprehends something multicolored. Nevertheless, the eye consciousness does not arise as something that takes on the same number as these [aspects]. Rather, a single eye consciousness that apprehends just something multicolored arises.

First the word “variety” in the name “Proponents of Nondual Variety” refers to the side of the object.

To explain their system, you can take the example of a blue object. This blue object is endowed with many aspects, such as being blue, being impermanent, being produced, and whatever other aspects it may have. All of these aspects are cast toward the

¹ Tib. grub bde rdzas gcig. This is actually a unique terminological device used in the Gelukpa presentation of the Sautrāntika system in order to introduce a distinction between ‘one in substantial establishment and abiding’ and ‘one in substance’ (Tib. rdzas gcig).