

Let's talk about the attributes for a moment. The attributes of the subject as subject and those of the attributes of the object as object. The chief attribute of the subject viewed as subject is consciousness otherwise there would not be an object; the two being linked together conceptually. There is more to be said on this but as we are strictly adhering to the development of the argument in the text we will restrict our remarks to that alone. An object has location, weight, dimension etc. What is the weight of a thought? Does it have extent? Their attributes are incommensurable. Some philosophers have been led by this consideration to psycho-physical dualism. This is "the view that human beings are made up of two radically distinct constituents (body, constituted by matter like other natural objects, and an immaterial mind or soul)" (Penguin Dic. Of Phil)

From the Adhyasa bhasya:

"Accordingly, the superimposition of the object"

Here the concept of superimposition is introduced. There would have to be an assumption that most students that have come to read the B.S.B. have a notion of what 'superimposition' is in the technical sense of a transfer of attributes.

Text:

"referable through the concept "you", and its attributes on the subject that is conscious by nature and is referable through the concept "we" (should be impossible), and contrariwise the superimposition of the subject and its attributes on the object should be impossible".

The idea here is that the thing that is inert and of material dimensions somehow comes to be in the consciousness of the subject which is immaterial in nature. Inert in the advaitic philosophy carries the connotation that even though it is of the nature of pure consciousness the witness element is missing in it and therefore it is not conscious unto itself. Consciousness has to be applied to it for it to reveal itself as an upadhi/limiting adjunct.

Perception is such a common thing that it strange to enter into a sense of its fundamental oddness. At the level of the psychology of perception there is much that can be learned about it but this learning does not dissipate the paradox at the ontological level. We cannot say that the activity in the brain is consciousness and claim that we understand what this might mean. The physical and consciousness are incommensurable. Therefore it is the case that subject/object awareness ought to be impossible.

Clearly this is not so. This brings Sankara on to his next point:

"Nevertheless, owing to an absence of discrimination between these attributes, as also between substances, which are absolutely disparate,"

'Absence of discrimination' has the tone of blame about it because we generally think of discrimination as a good thing. Here I think it is a neutral description of the ontological/epistemological basis of perception. For it to take place there must be an ignoring of the patent difference between the conscious and the inert. That ignoring

applies also to the substances or the free standing entities at issue viz.the subject and the object. The object somehow comes to be in the subject.

Sankara : “there continues a natural human behaviour based on self-identification in the form of “I am this” or “this is mine”.

Before the individual has begun to reflect on the nature of perception and the puzzle at the heart of it, he will be stuck at the level of the everyday acceptance of the disjunction between the subject and the object. Without philosophical analysis this may seem a fixed and final condition. Even with philosophical analysis one may end up with a view of self-luminous cognition that approximates to the Buddhist sunyavada .

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