

I have been looking again at V.P. on the subject of the counterpositive and the matter of error. The treatment of error in VP is focused on the fact of error itself and not on error as an analogy for superimposition. Sometimes error is just error. In the chapter on perception during a discussion of the status of false silver the concept of the counterpositive (pratiyogin) is introduced.

Pg.62: the remarks on counterpositiveness seem to be incomprehensible. I do not reproduce them as it would only confuse so I proceed directly to my understanding of what a counterpositive is. A counterpositive is that state i.e. the existence of silver, upon which the phenomenon of illusory silver is based. That illusory silver being contradicted (badhita) does not affect real silver. But they are linked to each other. It is the positive (silver) that makes the negative (illusory silver) possible. The positive is the counter to the negative.

This fascination with the illusory arises out of an unwarranted extension of the confusion analogy. Because in a naïve understanding the illusory is a superimposition and the real is also a superimposition there is a tendency to be led towards questions such as ‘how can we tell true from false perception’. As VP points out it is the fact of the counterpositive that allows the illusory to be illusory. There is no illusion without the reality. Without true currency there is no counterfeit possible. This is a distinctly realist position. Is it a form of naïve realism? No, because that would be saying ‘that’s the why’ which is not the case in the Advaitic system. Here the holding of a realist position brings a comprehensive metaphysical system in its train.

Nevertheless the probing goes on and DA continues to patiently allow the objections because their refutation is instructive. The objections are now more and more of the nature of ‘what do we know when we suffer from an illusion’. Fundamentally there is a simplistic view of what knowledge is. Each perception is an isolated event. The concept of the counterpositive brings to the fore the notion of the particular perception as being part of a web that is interconnected like the event in a game. An event in a game gets its comprehensibility from the rules of the game. The counterpositive is the background against which the individual perception takes place.

“Similarly, in other cases of erroneous perception also it may be shown that the general definition of perception is applicable, and that of a valid perception is inapplicable”. Pg. 65.

When inference is treated pg. 77: “After inference has thus been set forth, it will prove the unreality of the entire universe, which is other than Brahman.”

“Unreality consists in something being the counterpositive of the absolute non-existence that abides in whatever is supposed to be its substratum.”

That last sentence is very difficult. My understanding of it is as follows. The counterpositive of illusory silver is actual silver. Without there being this counterpositive there cannot be something unreal. The silver does not exist in its

substratum i.e. nacre, but somewhere there is real silver. 'supposed to be' covers this eventuality.

All the means of valid knowledge have to deal with the fact of error. It is the fundamental fact of existence that allows non-existence to be a fact of existence. Total unreality is therefore an impossibility.

It could also be said that we may infer absolute being as the counterpositive to relative being. Relative being can only come into consideration if there is absolute being as its counterpositive.

Pg.82: "And the counterpositiveness relating to which (the relative) is characterised by absoluteness".

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