

gustav / September 30, 2009 10:48PM

[汪純瑩 \(第二週 \) : The disenchantment of ontological commitment to svabhāva and salvation](#)

[Material: Chapter 2, Westerhoff (2009)]

This chapter on svabhāva is quite worrying, for the topic itself and the traditions (in India alone) involved with it are too tremendously complicated for us to conveniently buy these paragraphs, which nevertheless has done a good job to throw us in the midst of the pool where the fine lines dividing things, essence and knowledge are indeterminately blurred again. Westerhoff attempts to reconstruct the Mādhyamika (Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's mainly) position thereof as one that "right understanding (jñāna)" is the genuine realization of the absence of substance-svabhāva, i.e., the penetration into the falsity of the ontological commitment to our conventional realization of objectness, and such an understanding constitutes a shift of cognition which brings about the cessation of all suffering (Interpretations of svabhāva 47). If this were not the haunting of the author's own philosophical stand, such a Mādhyamika shift is certainly echoed with Kant's therapeutical Copernican turn. When time and space become the mere forms of our awareness, and relations that look externally set actually require, perhaps sufficiently, the valid inner determination of our mind, ontology is only committalbe in so far as it is restricted to the result of our cognition for we lose the necessary links within and among objects that we used to take for granted. On the one side, it seems the realm of sensible world is assured; on the other side, ontology turns out to be set upon one tilting assumption. The penetration into the unnecessary of the objectness we used to realize frees us from the web of rules, the way by which we used to conceive, the result of which is that things become appreciable and in turn the destined become dare to determine. The shift makes the conventional empirical world solid and at once limits its validity as well, yielding the space of appreciation and reflection to us. Moreover, appreciating and reflecting, the determining feels the feeling of life which is different from any kind of sensible experience via cognition (determination).

An epistemologist's deduction of the above stand is to focus on the means of cognition and to persuade the sufferer of the means' conditioning and making possible all possible experiences as such and of the identification of the means and the result (cognition as well as experience). The critical point is that means of cognition include perception (intuitive component) and inference (conceptual component) – so that cognition necessarily consists of the aspect of perception and the aspect of inference. Via the act of cognition, all at once, objectness is given for perception and inference cooperate as providing manifold sensible elements (via perception) determined/determinable as such (via inference), and, on the other side, the independence of the links are to be realized as untrue for the links are actually originated from the correspondence/unity of perception and inference. That is to say, putting into the Indian traditional debates on svabhāva, svabhāva comes in the unity of both perception and inference; hence, svabhāva as essence is somehow acceptable in experience for the origination of our cognition gives valid ground for recognizing objects as objects with objectness, but svabhāva as substance, as something independently of our cognition, becomes improbable, for the assumption of our own that the way our cognition rises indicates the status of the things the cognition is about, is itself too overstepping and hence improbable. Afterwards, the external causality from the hypothetical thing-in-itself to our sensibility becomes something we come to commit to or against. To, the conventional experience is solid; against, glimpse of life glitters, so that we gradually gain finer and finer position in the conventional experience.

And how Madhyamika's deduction be, or better, how Madhyamika's position regarding the issue be, is quite inviting!

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gustav / October 01, 2009 10:59AM

[Re: 汪純瑩 \(第二週 \) : The disenchantment of ontological commitment to svabhāva and salvation \(clarification\)](#)

Here is something to clarify regarding the previous message.

When I wrote about the "unnecessity" of the objective links or the objectness, I mean that the commitment to the status of the object as how we used to believe is not necessary. I do not mean that there's no ground for necessity

for objectness in experience. On the opposite, due to the origination of cognition, i.e., due to the unity of perception and inference, experience obtains certain necessary forms, based upon which sciences as well as intentional communications are possible at all. But the scientific necessary should not be postulated to be cognitively independent -- that is, the scientific necessary are only valid within the scope of sensible experience in space and time.

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