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[Epistemology of the Observer: Two Forms of Illusions and their Consequences (Part 1, Eirene)] 📖 🔍

Buddhist epistemology describes not one, but at least two forms of illusion.

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The first, classical, consists in perceiving something that is not there. This is our usual way of understanding an “illusion”. A classic example is the mirage in the desert: a thirsty man sees a lake in the distance while there is only an optical illusion generated by

the reverberation of heat on the sand. This is what classical science destroys thanks to its combination of experimental tests and collective critical thinking: distinguishing the true from the false.

But there is another form of illusion, more subtle and cognitive, from which classical Cartesian and cognitivist science is not exempt, due to its symbolic elimination of the observer-actor (the connoisseur) and its normative "view from nowhere":

that of being mistaken about the nature of the object of cognitive engagement. The classic example here is the optical illusion or the traditional one of the rope on the ground taken in the darkness of the evening for a snake.

There is indeed "something", and not nothing as in the first example, but the perception that we have of it is **erroneous** (and not simply "false").

And what if what we perceive in the world on a daily basis, but also our scientific description of "reality", due to its socio-historical epistemological positioning, was of this nature?!

And what if the very source of scientific power, this simulation of a "point of view from nowhere/"in third person only" was also precisely its Achilles heel?!

Besides, doesn't this *artificial* mode of consciousness remind you, in mirror, of the machine simulating the mind: the AI project?! If we define capitalism generally as that which functions by extraction and accumulation, then the epistemological capitalist project of modern

science (extraction and accumulation of knowledge by mechanistic explanation) goes hand in hand with the economic capitalist in which it is integrated via technological progress which "objectifies" this formal mechanical knowledge and "operationalizes" it in simulating machines.

The current disruption of AI is far from being a coincidence: it is the logical result of the mechanical scientific conception of the mind at work since the beginning of the "information age" and of cybernetic modeling (cf. Dupuy).

But there is also good news: these illusions, including the last one, are only operational and active to the extent that we do not question them with expertise.

But the expertise needed to combat this second mode of illusion, contrary to a superficial impression, is unfortunately not natural and requires learning (like science).

After all, Cartesian doubt, at the foundation of modern natural sciences, is appropriate, especially when they think they can explore, as recently, the domain of mind and consciousness

with more or less inadequate functionalist methodologies, i.e. adapted to objects, which mind and consciousness are not.

This is without mentioning the inevitable epistemological self-referential recursion induced by such an approach: a (simulated) consciousness mode explaining consciousness. For the sciences, and technologies (too often "forgotten"), of cognition to become truly "cognitive",

beyond linguistic simplifications and marketing, they will have to go through these Caudine Forks, otherwise it will remain, as today, simply rhetorical.

Buddhists have a simple phrase to summarize this:

"Does reality exist in the way we perceive it?".

{ end of the first part }

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