Epistemology through Buddhist Poetry: A Real Challenge to Western Thought

PRESENTED BY SARAH LITTMAN
Episteme - ology

- Greek for knowledge
- The study of...

So epistemology is the study of knowledge
Based on neurological studies

Thought processed by subconscious = we’re stuck with OUR understanding

Our understanding is based on our physical experiences

Three major claims:

- Unconscious cognitive operations
- Embodied reason
- Metaphor-embedded perceptions
Our minds don’t work this way

≠

Our minds can’t work this way
Tries to slow down their thoughts
Understands the embodiment of thought and tries consciously to escape it
Concentrates day and night on this one goal

Eliminates distractions:
- No job
- No bills
- No hunting
- No loud noises
- No conveniences
- No excess of any kind
The Buddhist perception

Buddhists believe:

- The mind can be controlled through discipline
- The physical body/world is an illusion
- Words do not convey true meaning

- Removing stimulus
- Meditation
- Achieved over a LIFETIME
- Little to no embodied conceptions
- Metaphor-based thought avoided
Subject and object from the start are no different,
The myriad of things is nothing but images in a mirror.
Bright and resplendent, transcending both guest and host...
Layer after layer there is no point at which it all ends,
Whether in motion or still, all is fully interpenetrating.
She’ll only say that the world is empty,
Although it sometimes manifests as form.
But its emptiness is not inherently empty,
Nor is its form inherently form.
Emptiness and form are inherently nonexistent,
Lacking existence, what is there to preserve?
## Doctrine of Two Truths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Truth</th>
<th>Ultimate Truth</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>◇ The truth that can be conveyed with words</td>
<td>◇ The truth that can only be experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ <strong>Meaning from:</strong></td>
<td>◇ Meditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>◇ Oral instruction</td>
<td>◇ Koans</td>
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<td>◇ Sacred texts</td>
<td>◇ Like the body, or the physical world in general, the meaning behind words are an illusion</td>
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<td>◇ Discussion</td>
<td>◇ Instruction can only take you so far, even from a master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ <strong>Poetry</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The truth that can be conveyed with words: Oral instruction, Sacred texts, Discussion, Poetry.

The truth that can only be experienced: Meditation, Koans.

Like the body, or the physical world in general, the meaning behind words are an illusion.

Instruction can only take you so far, even from a master.
Who wins here?

JOHNSON  VS  LAKOFF  VS  BUDDHIST MONK
Philosophy is about seeking TRUTH!
## A Real Challenge to Western Thought

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lakoff and Johnson</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denies transcendence of the body</td>
<td>Actively attempts to transcend the body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes universality</td>
<td>Assumes truth</td>
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Neither side remains without debatable claims

Remember TRUTH is our ultimate goal so:

It serves no one if these guys ignore observations from these guys
Western philosophy needs to take into consideration the observations of EVERYONE if the goal is to seek truth.

This is by far our greatest chance for us to achieve anything close to objectivity.

The cultural differences are immense, but the challenge is worth it, don’t you think?