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## **The Concept of Reality and Its Relation to Real Knowledge in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy**

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### Abstract

The problem in this paper is how to apprehend the concept of reality and its relation to real knowledge. It is necessary to search for the relationship between reality and real knowledge. Only when this problem is solved, can the essential problem» the problem of human suffering (dukkha)-also be solved. In this paper, the literary evidences from Theravada are found to be capable of solving the above problem.

### Introduction

Philosophy literally means “Love of wisdom”. Hence it is a careful thought about the fundamental nature of the world, the grounds for human knowledge and the evaluation of human conduct. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy concerned with providing a comprehensive account of the most general feature of reality as a whole or it is the study of being as such. In the field of metaphysics, it can be found that different philosophers have described different meanings of reality. It is believed that metaphysics plays an important role in philosophy because many philosophers have tried to determine what kinds of things exist.

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that investigates the possibility, origins, nature and extent of human knowledge. It is the study of theory of knowledge. In the field of epistemology one finds that different philosophers have expressed different sources of knowledge. It is generally believed that epistemology plays a very important role in philosophy because it can serve as a bridge to other philosophical issues. With this end in view philosophers of East and West have searched for the most reliable source of knowledge or method that can help one to gain real knowledge. So knowledge and reality take the important roles in philosophy.

If one traced back in the history of Western philosophy, it can be seen that there are so many trends in searching for reality. In an ancient Greek philosophy, philosopher Thales said that reality is water; Anaximander had seen reality as boundless something; and according to Anaximenes, reality is air. Numbers had been accepted as reality by the Pythagoreans. The atomists regarded reality as atom. In medieval philosophy, some generally accepted that reality is the only God. In modern philosophy, different answers were given as to what is real. The idealists and spiritualists considered reality as spiritual in nature. The materialists also considered reality as material in nature. This discussion on the nature of reality is to present the development of theory of knowledge.

In searching for reality there are two main trends. The first trend accepts that reality is permanent, being and it is never changing elements or substance. The second accepts that reality is impermanence, ever changing processes and it is flux, becoming. Out of these two

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trends, the second is similar to that of Theravada Buddhist concept of reality. It can be said that, in the West, there is no clear connection between reality and knowledge.

But in Theravada Buddhist philosophy, they are related to each other. In fact, if one does not understand the concept of reality both in the West and in the East, one will not realize the concept of real knowledge. In this paper, the relationship between reality and real knowledge is proved, with the help of Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

### **The Concept of Reality in Western Philosophy**

In Western Philosophy, reality has been defined as “the totality of what is, as opposed to what merely seem to be”.

"In order to understand the concept of reality, this paper will discuss about the field of Philosophical inquiry which is concerned with metaphysics, because it is the systematic study of the fundamental problems relating to the nature of ultimate reality. Philosophy itself began with metaphysics. It referred to a definite attitude of human mind distinct from moral, religious and aesthetics attitudes. Metaphysics implies a belief that there is more in the world than what appears in our sense perceptions. Metaphysical speculations arise out of two basic impulses, that is to know the real and the desire to construct a comprehensive view of nature, origin and future of the world including man. Before man started exploring the natural world, he was faced with some basic issues or problems about the origin of the world, the nature of the universe, the nature of reality etc. Thus, metaphysical conception was directed to the solution of the problem of reality.

According to Aristotle, Metaphysics which he starts was considered as the study of Being, or reality as such. Here Being is used to denote essence and ultimate reality as understood in terms of essence.

Metaphysics deals with three issues. In the first issue, it makes a distinction between reality and appearances. In the second issue, metaphysics provides a more comprehensive understanding of the world than that which is provided by common sense and science. Lastly, metaphysics refers to man's earliest attempt to understand the mystery of nature, its origin and future possibilities. Really all issues are concerned with the first cause. So, metaphysics is concerned with knowledge of reality which implies the essence of the objective world of things. It tries to investigate the basis of this world or the first cause of the cosmos. The purpose of metaphysics is to understand reality. The words reality means the ultimate reality. Aristotle used the term first cause or primary cause of things in place of ultimate reality.

The scope of metaphysics is very wide because it is concerned with primary or the first cause of everything. In order to discover the first cause it needs to deal with all aspects of human experiences and the world of objects.

In the plan of knowledge, metaphysics constitutes the highest wisdom directed to the understanding of the reality of things.

In metaphysics, philosophy aims to know the real. It tries to establish a comprehensive view of the universe. For this purpose, metaphysics offers a various kinds of views and approaches. In the history of philosophy, there is a record of different points of

view about reality from time to time. Broadly, these points of views are categorized as materialism, idealism, evolutionism, pragmatism, naturalism, and realism.

### **Matter as Reality**

The concept of reality in Western philosophy has been studied from different angles. Materialism is one of the philosophical systems.

Materialists accept that physical stuff, whatever has size and shape, is solid and tangible, takes up space, and can move. Therefore, according to many philosophers of the Western tradition, material objects are substances that have the attribute of extension. Materialism is a metaphysical theory concerning the nature of the ultimate principles in terms of which the universe can be explained. According to this doctrine matter is the ultimate constituent of universe. It is extended, impenetrable, eternally self-existent and susceptible of motion. Mind or consciousness is a mode or property of matter and psychical processes are reducible to physical processes. Materialism regards all the facts of the universe as explainable in terms of matter and motion. It explains psychical processes by means of physical and chemical changes. So Materialism accepts the world of objects as fundamentally physical.

The physical science uncovers the world of objects constituted of matter as an interconnected system. It is said that mind can be known only in connection with bodies or material organism. According to the materialist view of reality, there is no knowledge of mind as independent of body while one perceives material things existing without mind. Materialism asserts that consciousness is only a property, a product or an effect of matter.

Therefore, it can be concluded that materialism is the first philosophy of the West. Concerning materialism, every materialist believed that only matter and its physical properties are real, While mind, thoughts and the like are simply manifestations of matter.

### **Mental Entities as Reality**

There are various kinds of “ism” which is concerned with searching for reality in Western philosophy. Some accept reality as matter only and they all are called materialists. But some are not, and they regard reality as all mental entities which are concerned with thoughts, reasons, perceive, will and feel, idea, mind, and spirit. Philosophy of mind is concerned with explaining the characteristics features of mental events, the proper analysis of conscious experience, the relation between mind and ‘matter, and the moral status of persons. These mental entities are delved as reality by some philosophers.

The word mind which is sometimes called mental entities is used in two principal senses in Western ways of thinking. In one sense, is used as the individual mind is the self or subject which perceives, remembers, imagines, feels, conceive, reasons, wills, etc and which is functionally related to an individual bodily organism. In the other sense, it is used that mind is generically considered as a metaphysical substance which pervades all individual minds and which is contrasted with matter or material substance.

In the West, something which is contrasted with matter or material substance is accepted as mind, idea, spirit, thought, feelings etc. It is taken into account as mental entities.

They are accepted as reality by some philosophers. So they all are called Idealists. According to their reasons, mental entities as reality can be understood. Idealism is metaphysical point of view based on the belief that reality is of the nature of mind as against materialism which holds reality to be characterized by matter and motion. Thus Idealism and materialism stand opposed to each other. The mind and its ideas constitute reality. The idealistic point of view emphasizes the importance of mind as the ground of the universe. According to it, mind is prior to matter. The world of nature cannot be properly explained in terms of matter but it is only with reference to mental entities which involves reason, values, ideals and purposes. Matter and physical stuff are external to mind and they are not ultimately real.

For Idealism, matter is known to as only as an idea in the thought and through the mediation of the senses. Mental dispositions or entities such as feeling, remembering, recognizing can not be attributed to matter. Idealism as a metaphysical tendency is opposed to the view that mind and its contents represent empirical reality. Ideas or mental entities are independent of the limitations and imperfections of empirical reality. So Idealism asserted that apart from the self or mind there can be no world of objects. An object which is not object of some consciousness is not comprehensible.

The history of philosophy is the record of different points of views of philosophers from time to time. Theories which are based on different points of view become different philosophical systems in Western ways of thinking.

In the West, there are many doctrines of philosophy such as materialism, idealism, evolutionism, pragmatism, naturalism and realism and so on. In this sense, materialism and idealism have been especially studied because reality has been studied deeply as matter by materialists. And reality has been also accepted as mental entities by idealists.

Mind and matter are the basic concepts for searching reality or ultimate reality. But the view that matter is the only ultimate reality is very extreme. On the other hand, the view that mind only is reality is also extreme one. If one wants to know the true nature of reality, it is necessary to know the real knowledge or true knowledge. In order to escape those extreme views, one must realize matter as matter what it is and mind is mind as it is. In Theravada Buddhist philosophy, the concepts of mind and matter have been analysed deeply as they truly are.

### **Real Knowledge and Western Way of Thinking**

The basic theories of knowledge in Western way of thinking are Rationalism, Empiricism and Critical Idealism or Kantianism. In this part, Real-knowledge and Rationalism, Real-knowledge and Empiricism and Real-knowledge and Critical Idealism have been especially expressed as Western Way of Thinking.

### **Real Knowledge and Rationalism**

In theory of knowledge, rationalism is the view that knowledge of reality is possible through the use of reasoning. The rationalists accept that the criterion for knowing lies in reason alone. Generally rationalists believe in the doctrine of innate ideas. So they said that human mind is adequate with certain principles of reasoning, and if one can reason in

accordance with these principles, one can obtain real-knowledge or true-knowledge. According to rationalists, knowledge is a priori. Among the leading rationalist philosophers are Plato (427-347 B.C.), Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677), and Leibnitz (1646-1716).

In rationalism, it is found that reason has precedence over other ways of acquiring knowledge of facts. And it is said that reason alone precedes other ways of acquiring knowledge. Knowledge of reality is impossible by the rationalistic way of thinking because one can acquire only real-knowledge plus inferred elements.

Descartes accepts that the sources of genuine or real knowledge are not the sense but it is reason. The main aim of Descartes' philosophy is to show that this principle of reason is trustworthy and that sense, on the one hand, is generally deceptive, leading us to mistake sensory qualities for real qualities of extended bodies. In this way, Descartes accepts the sources of genuine or real or true knowledge is not the senses but reason alone.

Spinoza and Leibnitz are the followers of Descartes. So their philosophy agree Descartes' one. Spinoza says senses are imperfect and Leibnitz emphasizes reason over the senses. Rationalistic way of thinking can be found in Ancient Greek age, and then it can also be found in continental Europe. Although rationalistic way of thinking is systematic, it is different from the practical life. Without reference to matters of sense experience, or the power of reason alone, real-knowledge cannot be obtained. For the precedence of reason, whatever facts one perceives might be only facts moulded or structured by reason.

### **Real Knowledge and Empiricism**

Empiricism in theory of knowledge is the view that knowledge of reality reliance on experience as the source of ideas and knowledge. Empiricism is the epistemological theory that genuine or real or true information about the world must be acquired by a posteriori means. It is said that nothing can be thought without first being sensed. So, according to empiricists, there is no knowledge before experience, and only after the sense experience one can gain knowledge or ideas. Prominent modern empiricists are Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), Bishop Berkeley (1685-1753) and David Hume (1711-1776) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). In the twentieth century, empiric principles were extended and applied by the pragmatists and the logical positivists. Among them, Locke, Berkeley and Hume are especially expressed in searching for real knowledge in their philosophies because they are the most influential modern empiricist philosophers.

Both rationalists and empiricists by proceeding on their assumption come to different conclusions. Descartes' reasoning led him to dualism, Spinoza's to monism and Leibnitz's to pluralism. Their respective faculties of reason have not led their thinking to the same knowledge of realities. And empiricism has been proud of its attachment to sense experience, but none of the major empiricists could give an intelligible account of the way to know reality. According to Locke, the mind is a blank when one is born. He relates it to a piece of white.

According to Locke, experience gives us two sources of ideas; ideas of sensation and ideas of reflection. From the senses one receives into the mind several distinct perceptions

and thereby become conversant about objects external to oneself. So, he or she comes to have the ideas of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, sweet, bitter and all other sensible qualities. Sensation is the great source of most of the ideas one has.

The other aspect of experience is reflection. It is an activity of the mind that produces ideas by taking notice of previous ideas furnished by the senses. Reflection involves perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing and all those activities of the mind that produce ideas as distinct as those we receive from external bodies affecting the senses. All these ideas one has can be traced either to sensation or to reflection, and these ideas are either simple or complex.

It is clear that Locke believes that ideas are formed in the mind by abstraction from experience. Although Locke's theory of knowledge should not be underestimated, his empirical way of knowing is not enough in searching for true-knowledge or real-knowledge. Because his empirical knowledge which is derived from two ways of approach (sensation and reflection) it cannot be the actual knowledge of objects which are external to the percipient.

Berkeley, who was talking about empirical knowledge all the time, became an idealist. His central dictum is "esse est percipi" which means to exist is to be perceived. As he is relying on perception, he believed that nothing exists apart from perception. He holds that nothing in external world exists unless it is perceived. External objects are perceived by the mind, and whatever is perceived are ideas of the mind. They have no existence apart from the mind that knows them. If it is so, true-knowledge or real-knowledge also would have a mind-dependent existence. If the real-knowledge is a mind-dependent knowledge then it would never be real-knowledge or true-knowledge. Though Berkeley is talking about 'esse est percipi', he believes in God because he says that "the all-seeing mind of God produces possible the continued apparent existence of things."

In this case, Berkeley forgets that the mental substance (self, soul, God) can not be known by perception but by reasoning and faith. In fact, knowledge of reality that is moulded or constructed by reasoning and faith cannot be true or genuine or real-knowledge.

Hume's empirical theory of knowledge also had concluded in a skeptical way. Although he is an empiricist, he searches for real knowledge from impression and ideas which make up the total content of the mind. For him, impression is the original stuff of thought and an idea is merely a copy of an impression. The difference between impressions and ideas is only the degree of their vividness. The objects of all the knowledge are impressions and ideas derived from these impressions. In this case, there is no evidence that impressions and ideas are caused by external objects.

According to Hume, the role of material world and mind (self or soul) has not been described in searching for true-knowledge, but a succession of impression has been described. If Hume held that one can perceive the impressions actually as they are, these impressions might be considered as real-knowledge or true-knowledge. Sometimes the ordinary perception can apprehend the impressions as real-knowledge or true-knowledge. An impression is a kind of mental properties or elements. In the ordinary life, whatever the objects one perceives are in one way or another, moulded or structured by our mental

elements such as personal interests, decisions, like and dislike etc. . . Then the objects or facts known cannot be actual or true-knowledge or real-knowledge.

### **Real Knowledge and Kantian Criticism**

Kant (1724-1804) criticizes both Rationalism and Empiricism and shows that real knowledge can be obtained only by means of a priori and a posteriori elements. According to Kant, there are two kinds of a priori elements. They are (1) a priori form of intuition and (2) “twelve categories of the understanding”. Time and space are a priori form of intuition and they are the way of looking at things or phenomena of the world. Kant maintains that experience gives us a manifold of sensations like color, sound, taste, etc.. These sensations are scattered, unorganized and unsystematic, these sensations are arranged and ordered by arranging and ordering the sensation is not real knowledge. In order to gain real knowledge, one needs to apply to this knowledge the categories of the understanding.

In this case, one of the consequences of Kant’s view is to show that man can never know what reality is (independently of the mind’s way of shaping or molding it). He describes that one can not know the thing-in-itself or things-in-themselves (noumena); what one can know is phenomena 7 things-as-they-appear? to the perceiver. It is clearly to show that one cannot know or apprehend things-as-they-actually-are or real knowledge of things or facts. For what one immediately perceives are already given to him or her arranged in space and ordered in time. The known fact which is structured by respective categories cannot be the real one. It must be a distorted one or an unreal fact. Actually mental and physical phenomena are rapidly ever changing. The moment one points out “This one”; immediately it changes to “That one”. “That one” is also not the real one. Therefore, as soon as one comes to know a phenomenon which has been structured by some categories, it is no longer the actual, original phenomena. It might be the duplicate or a distortion.

### **The Concept of Real Knowledge in Connection With Reality in Theravāda Buddhist philosophy**

Ancient and modern Indian philosophers are interested in epistemological problems. They have solved these problems by their different purposes. But there is a common purpose of their solving; it is the realization of truth that can release an individual from the Samsāra. It is wheel of life which is full of suffering. So, their problem is how to obtain liberation from wheel of suffering. In order to release from this suffering, one must have tried to realize the concept of real-knowledge that can lead to liberation of wheel of suffering.

This paper also has a similar purpose. Human beings have a long list of wants. But their desire is never fulfilled. In all things dear and delightful, there is element of change, of separation, of otherness. Every mental or physical thing is always changing. So, one does not want to get old, one has to encounter old age and decay. Our human bodies are impermanent and subject to constant change. So, everyone grows old and gray. But all are accepting this growing old and gray as an old aged. In practical life, although some knows this concept,

most people do not want to encounter with such experience. This concept is not really known or real knowledge. In fact everyone has to encounter.

Why do one faces such suffering and discontentment? Such suffering and dissatisfaction happen to human being because of their ignorance which is direct opposed to real knowledge. It can see each and every event that occurs at the five aggregates. One usually sees each and every event or touch that happens to the mind and body. If there is no real knowledge or true knowledge, though one sees a thing, one does not see it as it is. But one usually sees it through the categories or through the “paññatti. So, if one sees a thing as it is, one must primarily have to apprehend the concept of real-knowledge which transcends the categories or the “paññatti. Only if one realize each and every event of touch that happens to our mind and body, one can gain real knowledge. So the problem in this paper has been expressed as how to apprehend the concept of real-knowledge in connection with reality.

### **The Concept of Reality in Theravāda Buddhism**

Philosophers and scientists in Western way of thinking have been searching for the ultimate realities that really exist in the universe. But philosophers could not agree on any ultimate reality which is proposed by a famous philosopher and then disputed by another. Scientists first regarded matter and energy as the ultimate realities. Matter has been divided into some natural elements, in turn, which have been divided into some kinds of natural atoms and their various isotopes. Today atoms are generally believed to be composed of protons, neutrons and electrons? The protons and the neutrons form the nucleus with the electrons revolving in orbits around the nucleus.

Although protons, neutrons and electrons may be regarded as the basic building blocks of atoms, they are not particles with definite forms and shapes because they can be emitted from atoms as rays. It is more appropriate to regard them as bundles of energy. For example sun light is composed of photons? The basic bundles of light energy. Scientists have detected more than 80 sub-atomic particles from the break up of atomic nuclei. All these particles may also be regarded as bundles of energy as matter and energy are inter — convertible. This can be proved by Albert Einstein’s equation:  $E = mc^2$ . In it, (E) refers to energy, (m) refers to the mass of matter and (c) refers to the velocity of light.

Therefore, according to the above scientific point of view, man, dog, table, house, all living and non-living things are not ultimate realities because they are composed of electrons, protons, neutrons and energy. It is said that only energy may be taken as the ultimate reality in science because all the sub-atomic particles may be regarded as bundles of energy. It can be concluded that science realized the concept of (only) matter and energy as an ultimate reality. In Theravāda Buddhist Abhidhamma philosophy, one can study that there are four ultimate realities; Consciousness (Citta) or awareness of senses, mental factors or mental states (Cesatika), Matter and energy (Rupa) and Nirvana or Nibbdna.

In Theravāda Buddhist philosophy, according to Abhidhamma philosophy there are two kinds of reality; relative reality and ultimate reality. Relative reality is the ordinary conventional truth or the commonly accepted truth (Sammuti-Sacca). It is called (paññatti) in Abhidhamma. Ultimate reality is the ultimate truth which is truth in the ultimate sense, It is

also called (paramattha) in Abhidhamma. So, in order to express or apprehend the concept of relative reality and ultimate reality the Abhidhamma Pitaka from Theravāda must be referred to.

What is Abhidhamma? It is the teachings of Lord Buddha. In the course of 45 years of His Buddha-hood have been divided into three collections called Tipitaka in pali which means 'Three Baskets' Literally. The first collection is known as 'Sutta Pitaka' which deals with the conventional teaching (Vohara desana). The second collection is known as 'Vinaya Pitaka' which is concerned with the authoritative teaching (Ana desana) and the third collection is Abhidhamma pitaka. It is the higher teaching of the Buddha. Here the Buddha employed abstract terms to describe the ultimate realities (Paramatthas) in the universe. So, it may be regarded as the ultimate teaching (Paramarattha desana) of the Buddha.

Abhidhamma analyses mind and matter in a minute detail into ultimate realities and indicates the way to eternal peace called Nibbana. Although these ultimate realities have been searched by many philosophers and scientists, fortunately science has searched deeply only matter and energy as the ultimate reality. In fact, there are four ultimate realities (the four Paramatthas) in the Buddha Abhidhamma. They are;

- i. Citta
- ii. Cetasika
- iii. Rūpa, and
- iv. Nibbana.

The important point is that by paramattha or ultimate reality we mean something which cannot be changed into another thing or divided up into other things. It can neither be created nor destroyed by men. It really exists in nature and it holds on its characteristics till it perishes. But the names of living and non-living things such as man, dog, table, house etc... are conventional truth in which things are dealt with in an ordinary sense. It is known as pannatli. This is an apprehension of these two realities, or paññatti and paramattha.

If one can apprehend these above two realities one will not be "sakkaya ditthi". It is "explained as the belief that in one or other of the khandhas that is a permanent entity, an arid." In fact if sakkaya ditthi has been entirely abandoned, relative reality and ultimate reality has been entirely apprehended. It is said that one attained or realizes the concept of real knowledge of things which really exists in nature. Or it is real-knowledge as realizing reality as it is.

### **Real Knowledge in Relation to Reality as It Is**

It is necessary for one to apprehend the knowledge of the distinction between two kinds of realities. They are relative and ultimate reality or (paññatti and paramattha). Otherwise, all the time spent in cultivation will be futile because the most superior result (or the ultimate truth) will not be attained. Therefore, the author would like to briefly explain the real nature of paññatti reality and paramattha reality. According to the Abhidhamma philosophy, there are two kinds of realities; Relative Reality and Ultimate Reality.

Because of knowledge of knowing on only this mere perception or named (paññatti), although one sees a thing, one does not see it as it is. So long as one cannot see or apprehend

the events and touches that happen to the mind and body as real knowledge, one thinks, that one feels satisfied or dissatisfied. So the problem in this case as has been stated is how to apprehend the concept of real knowledge.

There are so many stages in searching for real knowledge in Theravada Buddhist philosophy. Theravada Buddhist philosophy has never been underestimated the sources of knowledge in searching truths in the scope of human affairs. But in the case of realizing the 'Real-knowledge', for Theravada philosophy, these sources of knowledge alone are not enough. It needs to be complemented with the "Abhidhamma-Philosophy taught by the Buddha". In it, Buddha taught that there are two kinds of realities, it must be distinguished as their actually nature of existence. (as they exist are). After getting the distinction between these two realities, one will not believe that in one or other of the khandhas that there is a permanent entity, an *atta*. On the other hand, *Sakkaya ditthi* has been (abandoned) given up. After this abandonment (*pahāna*), one will apprehend the knowledge of the distinction between mind (*citta*) and body (*Rūpa*). If this knowledge is attained, it is generally considered that a person or a meditator begins to apprehend the vanishing away of his designations of things and find only their true intrinsic nature. It is the bare act of knowing or seeing with no more names attached to them and there-by see the real nature of mental and physical phenomena. On the one hands, one becomes to see that "Citta" (mind) has just knowing as its function and that "Rūpa" (matter) is just something of the nature of being in a state of flux. This realization is known as *Nāma-Rūpa pariccheda Nāna*, the knowledge that mind and matter are two distinct things, each being a separate entity and knowledge of the cause of arising of mind in body (*Paccayapriggaha nana*) This realization gave him labels for them such as 'I', 'he', 'woman', 'man' etc... are only the nature of mind and matter. It is real-knowledge on ultimate reality (*paramarthas*).

Hence, instead of saying that knowledge is *apriori* or *aposteriori*, one can say that knowledge is the reconciliation of *Nāma-Rūpa pariccheda Nāna* and *Paccayapriggaha Nāna*. It is the teaching of the Buddha, in *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, *Maha Vagga*, *Diga Nikaya*. One, who has realized the "nama-rupa paraccheda nana" and *Paccayapriggaha Nāna*, abandoned *Sakkāya Ditthi*. (wrong view of personality) And when he comes to have *Ditthi Visuddhi* he achieves or realizes real-knowledge.

## Conclusion

In this paper, a search has been made of different kinds of reality in Eastern and Western philosophies with the aim of being able to apprehend the concept of real-knowledge. Some scholars who study the ways of thinking of rationalist philosophers of the West would say that apprehension of real knowledge through reasoning is quite impossible in their scope of epistemology. We have studied that rationalism is the theory that knowledge of reality is possible through the use of reason without reference to matters of sense experience. In rationalism there is only one unique path to real knowledge. This is reason which has precedence over other ways of acquiring knowledge. So, it may be said that real knowledge does not found in the domain of rationalism.

Empiricism is the theory that accepts experience as the source of all knowledge and empiricists talk about sense experience (perception) as the criterion of truth. It seems that empiricists search for truth within the sphere of experience, but, in fact, reason or inference is always preceding their experience. In searching for real knowledge, it is not enough to have experience alone. So, it may be said that concerning with real knowledge, the way of thinking in empiricism is not complete.

And, again, there is no room for real knowledge in the scope of Kantian philosophy. According to Kantian philosophy, a certain fact is known only after it has been structured by the respective categories. As Kantian philosophy depends heavily on the twelve categories, it is difficult to say that real knowledge exists in it. In Theravada Buddhist philosophy, real knowledge has been realized by connection with two kinds of reality. In this paper, it has been searched with reference to Buddha Abhidhamma and Salipatthana Sutta. So, it is found that there is such a thing as real knowledge.

The aim of this paper is to study Buddhism from the stand point of philosophy, particularly, epistemology- a method of studying the direct experience of the phenomena of consciousness. The research question is how to apprehend the concept of reality and its relation to real knowledge, and, to answer it, the researcher assumes that Buddhist epistemology can be used to construct a relation to reality and real knowledge. The descriptive and evaluative method will be used to prove this assumption.

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