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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONCEPTUAL PROLIFERATION
IN EARLY BUDDHIST THOUGHT
AND THE CONCEPTS OF PURE REASON IN
THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT**

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONCEPTUAL PROLIFERATION IN EARLY BUDDHIST THOUGHT AND THE CONCEPTS OF PURE REASON IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT

Kapila Abhayawansa¹

Abstract

The present paper is a comparative study of two parallel epistemological concepts from two different time periods. One was revealed by the Buddha in the 6th century B.C., and the other by Emmanuel Kant in the 18th century A.D. Though the two thoughts were presented with two different aims, the nature of the mental processes revealed by the two thinkers is surprisingly similar. The fact that conceptual proliferations (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) in Buddhist thought is analogous to the concepts of Pure Reason in Kant's thought is discussed in this paper paying attention to the mental activities of the perceptual process, as disclosed in a similar way by Buddhist and Kantian thought. Mental activities running through the faculties of sensibility, understanding and reason in the perceptual processes, as pointed out by Kant, have been examined from a Buddhist point of view. In showing how concepts characterized by the tendency to proliferation come to exist in the mind of people, the terms used by Buddhist thought, such as *viññāṇa*, *phassa*, *saññā*, *vitakka* and *papañca* are then defined in terms of Kantian epistemological terminology. The comparative study which is suggested in this paper attempts to refine the epistemological connotations to terms introduced by Buddhism denoting the different mental stages in the perceptual process, in the light of Kantian epistemology.

Keywords

Conceptual Proliferation, Concepts of Pure Reason, Sensory impingement, Perception, Sensibility, Understanding, Pure reason

Introduction

In the early Buddhist teachings¹ conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā/papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) looms large in the processes leading to the emergence of suffering of man, and also in the processes leading to the emergence of all sorts of conflicts which bring about different social miseries in society. Non-indulgence in that which makes one subject to concepts characterized by the tendency to proliferation is said to be the end of the proclivities to attachment, aversion, views, perplexity, pride, ignorance and attachment to becoming. That itself is the end of taking the stick, of taking the weapon, of quarreling,

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contending, disputing, accusation, slander and lying speech. Here it is that all evil unskilled states cease without residue.²

The emphasis given in Buddhism to the gravity of the danger of conceptual proliferation in relation to the spiritual progress of people is quite evident when we pay attention to the saying of the Buddha that the Dhamma is for one who likes and delights in non-proliferation and not for one who likes and delights in proliferation.³ This is clearly meant to preclude the one who indulges in *papañca* from the ambit of Buddhism, for one who indulges in and delights in prolific conceptualization is far removed from *Nibbāna* – the incomparable freedom from bondage.⁴ And-that one is correctly aligned with Buddhist doctrine who gives up conceptualization and delights in the path of non-proliferation, for he attains *Nibbāna*, the incomparable freedom from bandage.⁵

The concepts of Pure Reason discovered by Emmanuel Kant (1724 - 1804) in his theory of knowledge has arguably a similarity with the conceptual proliferation propounded by the Buddha, especially with regard to their origin, nature and function. Kant has made an attempt to investigate the nature of reality based on pure reason alone in which the rationalist thinkers of the day and prior to then had great trust. Hence, he was compelled to examine the capacity, scope and the limits of Reason. In his investigation Kant found mental activity of the perceptual process functioning through three mental faculties to which he gave the names respectively, sensibility, understanding and reason. Sensibility is the faculty which receives the representations from the objects, external or internal, through our senses.⁶ The faculty which enables us to think the object of sensible intuition (which is produced by the sensibility upon the sense representations) is the faculty of understanding.⁷ This faculty of understanding is also known as the faculty of knowledge.⁸ Reason is considered to be the faculty which secures the unity of the rules of understanding⁹ under principles.¹⁰ As it has two kinds of employment namely, logical and transcendental, it is also named as a faculty having those two divisions.¹¹

According to Kant, reason endeavors in its logical employment to reduce varied and manifold knowledge obtained through the understanding to the smallest number of principles and thereby to achieve in it the highest possible unity¹² which Kant calls the concept of pure reason. Knowledge-producing mental processes relating to sensible objects has been summarized by Kant as follows:

All our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from thence to understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is no higher faculty to be found in us for elaborating the nature of intuition and bringing it under the highest unity of thought.¹³

According to early Buddhist thought, conceptual proliferation is the end result of the perceptual process starting from the relation between sense objects which correspond to the sense faculties. Buddhist thought presents the mental activity which leads to generating conceptual proliferation in a way which is very similar to Kant's description of it. The *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* of the *Majjhimanikāya*

provides us with a brief but striking way in which conceptual proliferation comes into existence, as follows:

Visual consciousness, brethren, arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement; because of sensory impingement arises feeling; what one feels one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into '*papañca*' (*papañceti*); what one turns into '*papañca*', due to that '*papañca-saññāsankhā*' assail him in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye belonging to the past, the future and the present. And, brethren, auditory consciousness arises because of ear and sounds; ... olfactory consciousness arises because of nose and smell; ... gustatory consciousness arises because of tongue and tastes; ... bodily consciousness arises because of body and touches; ... mental consciousness arises because of mind and mental objects; ... belonging to the past, the future and the present.¹⁴

This *sutta* passage explains in a nutshell the entire cognitive mental process which makes one subject to concepts characterized by the tendency to proliferation. Kant describes the same mental process but with greater details using his own terminology. We can easily compare the mental activity shown in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* though it points to the stages without distinguishing the mental faculties of the process, with what Kant has presented with the stages of the process belonging to different mental faculties. Mental activity of the cognitive process as described in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* can be divided into mental stages as follows:

1. *Cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ, tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā*
Visual consciousness, brethren, arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement. Because of sensory impingement arises feeling.
2. *yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti*
What one feels one perceives.
3. *yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi.*
What one perceives, one reasons about;
4. *yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti.*
What one reasons about, one turns into '*papañca*' (*papañceti*);
5. *Tato nidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsankhā samudācaranti atītānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu.*
Due to that '*papañca-saññāsankhā*' assail him in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye belonging to the past, the future and the present.

Mental activities categorized under stage one can be ascribed to Kant's faculty of sensibility, the second to the faculty of understanding and third, fourth and fifth to the faculty of reason. Consciousness (*vīññāṇa*) and sensory impingement

(*phassa*) in the first stage represent the sensible intuition of the faculty of sensibility in Kant's thought. In this respect, we have to remember that 'sensibility is the faculty which enables to us to receive the sense representations from the objects, external or internal, through our senses'. In this context, it is clear that (visual) consciousness (*viññāṇa*) means sensation. According to Kant, "the effect of an object upon the faculty of representation, so far as we are affected by it, is sensation."¹⁵ This sensation alone cannot be the object of knowledge until it is arranged in a certain way in the faculty of sensibility. Kant says that the sensations received through the outer sense¹⁶ (the five external senses) should be synthesized under the form known as space, which is the form for outer objects which lies in the sensibility and lastly it should be synthesized under the form of inner sense known as time which is the form of inner sense.¹⁷ Sense representations from the inner sense (in Buddhist terminology, *manindriya* or *ajjhātika indriya*) has no synthesis under the form of space but, they are synthesized under the form of inner sense that is time.

Though the first stage of the cognitive process is given briefly in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*, the Theravāda Abhidhamma provides us with a detailed account of it. According to the Abhidhamma, sensation received through any one of the five external senses should be assimilated (*sampaṭicchana*) by the five-door advertent mind (*pañcadvārāvajjana-citta*). The assimilation given here is none other than a holding together of sense, object and sensation (contact – sense impingement). This reminds us that 'the meeting of the three is sensory impingement' (*tiṇṇaṃ saṅgati phasso*) in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta*.

This also tallies with Kant's saying that the sensations received through the outer sense (the five external senses) should be synthesized under the form known as space. In the Abhidhammic cognitive process, sensation received through the senses is finally determined (*voṭthapana*) by the mind-door advertent consciousness (*manodvārāvajjana-citta*). In this respect Kant says that, "All our knowledge is thus finally, subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relation."¹⁸ This means according to Kant, sensible intuition (sensory impression) that conformed to outer sense (space) should be synthesized by the inner sense (time). The Abhidhamma in a similar way to Kant says that objects of *manindriya* have no assimilation through *sampaṭicchana* but they directly get the assimilation through *voṭthapana* which is the activity of *manodvārāvajjana* (mind door advertent consciousness).

The statement "because of sensory impingement arises feeling (*phassapaccayā vedanā*)" in the first stage indicates the experience-of what is received through the senses by the mind. To this stage we cannot find a counterpart in Kant's theory of knowledge. Perhaps Kant included this function of the mind which experiences the flavor of the object mentioned in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* into the synthetic unity of the representations which takes place in the inner sense.

The second stage which indicates what is felt is perceived represents the perceptual knowledge proper. Here, it is worthwhile to emphasize that what is

perceived by the mind is only what is felt by the mind and not the external or internal object. According to the *sutta* passage mentioned above, perception (*sañjānāti*) has direct relation to what is felt (*yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti*). What is felt according to Kant is nothing but what is received first, through the outer sense and secondly, through the inner sense. For Kant perceiving what is received through the senses is a work of the faculty of understanding. Therefore, the second stage of the perceptual process represents the functions of the faculty of understanding in Kant's philosophy.

According to Kant, unity of the manifold of intuitions¹⁹ which are the products of both outer sense and inner sense provides the content of perceptual knowledge without which knowledge is impossible. But this content alone cannot yield knowledge without being united in a concept of the object. Providing a concept of the object for the manifold of sensible intuition and bringing the unity to the manifold of sensible intuition in a concept of object are the works of the understanding. The content of knowledge is provided by the faculty of sensibility while the form of knowledge is provided by the faculty of understanding. Knowledge is possible according to Kant, only when there are both content and form (concept). Content without concept is blind and concept without content is empty. Knowledge is nothing but the synthetic unity of content (sensation) and form (concept). In the Buddhist account, there is no doubt that the statement *yaṃ vedeti* refers to the sensible intuitions or sensations, for what is subjected to feeling is the sensation and *taṃ sañjānāti* refers to the unity of the sensible intuition through formal condition of the knowledge.

It is the view of Kant that there are *a priori* concepts or categories in the faculty of understanding to which sensible intuition must conform in order to have a determinate perceptual knowledge. Concept of understanding is the formal condition of knowledge for Kant. "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without contents are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."²⁰ writes Kant.

In the perceptual process mentioned in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* we cannot find any reference to a kind of concept which can be the formal condition of the sensation in order for that sensation to give rise to a definite knowledge. The process does not reveal the inner activity of the mind when the mind perceives what is felt. But, it seems that Kant explains in detail the function of the mind at this stage. According to him, perception is the unification of sensation into a mental form which is inherent in the mind. Though Kant's claim is that there are categories or concepts readily extant in the faculty of understanding to be the formal condition of knowledge, such understanding is not evident from the *sutta* passage. It seems that it can be justified through the implication of the Pali term *sañjānāti* used in the passage and also through some other discourses in the Pali canon which refer to the arising of knowledge.

When grammatically viewed *sañjānāti* is a verb which is related to the noun form *saññā* which means concept, percept, idea, sign and so on. This *saññā* or concept is considered to be the root of conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā-sankhā*).

The *Kaḷahavivāda-sutta*²¹ enumerates it as follows: *Saññānidānā hi papañcasāṅkhā*. This is quite consonant not only with the perceptual process which leads to conceptual proliferation shown in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* but also to Kant's exposition of the process of the arising of the concepts of pure reason. According to both, conceptual proliferation begins with the mental stage of perception. Therefore, we can conclude that perception (*sañjānana*) implied by the term *sañjānāti* (to be perceived) used in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* is a mental act conditioned by a mental form (*saññā*) which in Kant's terminology is a concept of the faculty of understanding. In addition to the perceptual knowledge (*sañjānāti*), Buddhism also accepts mental form in the name of percept (*saññā*) in the field of epistemology. The *Māgandiyasutta* says:

There are no ties for one who is detached from perception; There are no illusions for one released by knowledge. Those who grasp perception and view wander in the world conflicting (with each other).²²

Here there is no doubt that the term *saññā* denotes mental form or concept formed in the mind corresponding to sense impressions.

The *Poṭṭhapādasutta* of *Dīghanikāya*²³ confirms the above view and provides us with very important information which is not given in the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* regarding the emergence of knowledge. In this sutta the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda puts a question to the Buddha as to whether perception (concept) arises before knowledge, or knowledge before perception or both together. The answer of the Buddha was as follows:

Perception arises first, Poṭṭhapāda, then knowledge, and from the arising of perception comes the arising of knowledge. And one knows: "Thus conditioned, knowledge arises".^{24 25}

According to the commentary to the *Dīghanikāya* perception (*saññā*) refers to higher perception such as jhānic or insight perception and knowledge (*ñāṇa*) to insight knowledge. But, this procedure of the arising of knowledge would not be ruled out in the process of normal perceptual knowledge. The above statement of the *Poṭṭhapādasutta* has an immense relevance with regard to Kant's exposition of the function of the faculty of understanding in the perceptual process. The section of the statement "Thus conditioned, knowledge arises," implies exactly what is meant by Kant when he enumerates that "This knowledge consists in the determinate relation of given representations to an object".²⁶ This means that knowledge is conditioned by the concept by means of uniting all the manifold provided by the sensibility in a concept of the object, in other words, knowledge is a synthetic unity brought into the manifold of intuitions by the mind under one common representation (concept).

That the function of the faculty of understanding revealed by Kant is not different from the activity involved in perception (*sañjānāti*) in Buddhist thought can further be attested from the following statement given in the *Atthasālini*, the commentary to *Dhammasaṅgani*:

Because of its being the first incidence of consciousness on an object, and arises touching the object. Therefore, it is mentioned first. Touching by contact, consciousness experiences by feeling, perceives by perception, wills by volition. Hence, it has been said: Bhikkhus, touched one feels, touched one perceives, touched one wills.^{27 28}

The third stage of the perceptual process represents an activity of the mind directed towards what is perceived. This is the mental stage where the mind tries to initiate conceptual proliferation by means of *vitakka* which means initial application of mind to the object. This shows that the activity of mind does not stop by acquiring knowledge only. It needs to go further than knowledge (recognition of the object). After having the knowledge of the object as it is felt by feeling (*vedanāya vedeti*), the mind tries to reason out what is apprehended (*yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi*). *Vitakka* has no direct reference to the external object; it deals with the object as it is perceived by the mind. That is why it is said *yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi*. Mind's function of reasoning is developed further endlessly, through the proliferating activity (*yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti*) until it reaches conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*).

Even according to Kant, the tendency to proliferation lies in the faculty of reason and starts with what is perceived. In the perceptual process that one tends to conceptualize what is perceived is shown in early Buddhist thought, but the nature of the function of *vitakka* is not explicitly detailed. We know as mentioned earlier, that the function of *vitakka* is the initial application of mind to the mental object. But we do not know the purpose of applying mind on to the object. In this respect, Kant sheds much light to understand the proper function of *vitakka*.

According to Kant, reason is the faculty of logical reasoning. It seems that the Buddhist term *vitakka* has an analogy with logical reasoning. It has two kinds of employment namely, logical and transcendental or pure. Therefore, Kant sometimes calls it the logical and sometimes the transcendental faculty.²⁹ These two employments of reason can be compared to *vitakka* (*vitakketi*) and *papañca* (*papañceti*) respectively when we examine their activities in Buddhist and Kantian thought.

The logical employment of reason “endeavors to reduce the varied and manifold knowledge obtained through the understanding to the smallest number of principles (universal conditions) and thereby to achieve in it the highest possible unity.”³⁰ Reason pays attention directly to what is known or perceived through the understanding; and it tries to compare modes of knowledge of the understanding in order to bring them into a unity. It is the mental activity which takes place in inference. That is why it is called the logical employment of reason.

Knowledge (perception) is a unity of the manifold of sensible intuitions received through sensibility. Just like the faculty of understanding subsumes the manifold of intuition under a concept (rule), the faculty of reason tries to subsume the manifold of knowledge of the understanding into a smallest number of concepts

(principles) lying in the faculty of reason. Therefore, according to Kant, the logical employment of reason (*vitakka*) endeavors in the process of producing the smallest number of unities (concepts of reason or principles) by means of perceptions (*yaṃ vedeti taṃ vitakketi*).

The stage 'What one perceives one reason about,' clearly points to the fact that the mind has a certain logical activity regarding what is perceived. Reasoning is a kind of logical investigation. The two terms *takkī* and *vimamsi* which are used together in Buddhist discourses³¹ would shed light on understanding the function of the mind at this stage. The *Brahmajālasutta*³² reminds us that some thinkers who are logicians (*takkī*) and reasoners (*vimamsī*) present a metaphysical theory based on logic (*takka-pariyāhatam*) and reasoning (*vīmaṃsānucaritam*) according to their own conviction (*sayam-paṭibhānam*).³³ Regarding this theory K.N. Jayatilleke is of the view that: "This theory is a conclusion reached by evidently *a priori* reasoning from an *a priori* premise."³⁴ It seems that he came to such an opinion taking attributes of that theory namely, *takka-pariyāhatam*, *vīmaṃsānucaritam* and *sayam-paṭibhānam* used in the discourse into account. According to the commentary, these thinkers can be considered as pure reasoners (*suddha-takkikā*).³⁵ Further, commenting upon the term *takkī* K.N. Jayatilleke observes:

Whatever the meaning of *takkika-* in the above context, the term *takki* is quite clearly used of a 'rationalist' in the sense of a 'pure reasoner' (*suddha-takkika*) who constructed a metaphysical theory on the basis of reasoning. In this sense *takki* and *vimamsi* (investigator, speculator) go together.³⁶

From the foregoing accounts of the *takkī* and *vimamsi*, it is not difficult to get a clear idea about the stage of the mental process represented by '*yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi* (What one perceives, one reasons about)'. Kant recognizes a twofold employment of reason, namely logical employment and transcendental employment. In the logical employment of reason, mind makes an attempt to make a unity of the manifold of experiences provided by the faculty of understanding. Kant says that the logical employment of reason has a direct relation to the rules of understanding. This description of Kant on the faculty of reason appears to be coupled with the activity of mind in the third stage suggested by the discourse. According to the discourse, mind makes use of logical employment on what is received from the earlier stage. Hence, it seems that the activity of mind in this stage is quite similar to that of the logical employment of reason mentioned by Kant.

The fourth stage in our classification represents the mind's function on what is reasoned about. In Buddhist terminology this function of mind is known as *papañca* which means proliferation. In other words, proliferation of what is reasoned about. To understand this situation more precisely, it might be useful to consider an oft-recurrent usage in the Buddhist discourses. That is to say the two terms *vitakka* (reasoning) and *vicāra* (investigating). We find these two terms mostly, together as one compound word because of their mutual relation.

The terms have a variety of meanings pertaining to their contexts. In the Buddhist meditation system *vitakka* is defined as the initial application of the mind on to the object while *vicāra* as the sustained application of mind on the object. Their functions are respectively, uplifting the mind on to its object and maintaining of mind on the object. We have already identified *vitakka* with the logical employment of mind in the context of the cognitive process, in the same way *vicāra* can be identified with the transcendental employment of mind in the same context, for it sustains the mind on what is reasoned about (*vitakka*). The result of what is reasoned about is a logical conclusion. The logical conclusion is drawn depending on the premises without paying attention to its contents. Therefore, the logical conclusion does not have a direct contact with the content; it directly relates to the form of the content. Therefore, sustained application of mind (*vicāra*) can be called pure or transcendental as it depends on the form of the object. Though the term *vicāra* does not appear in the mental stage that reflects what one reasons about one turns into *papañca*. When we consider the meaning of *vicāra*, there is no doubt that *papañca* is used in the cognitive process to convey the function of *vicāra*. Venerable Katukurunde Ñāṇananda who made a thorough investigation into the nature of *papañca* suggested the suitability of the term *papañca* rather than the term *vicāra* in this context, and nicely delineates the etymological meaning of it as follows:

‘*Papañca*’ on the other hand, a more comprehensive term hinting at the tendency of the worldling’s imagination to break loose and run riot. If ‘*vicāra*’, at least relatively, denotes cosmos in the mental realm, ‘*papañca*’ seems to signify chaos. This of course does not preclude the possibility that what often passes for ‘*vicāra*’ might turn out to be ‘*papañca*’ when viewed from a higher stand-point. In any case, the ‘expansion’ or ‘diffusion’ of thought as envisaged by ‘*papañca*’ is one that tends to obscure the true state of affairs inasmuch as it is an unwarranted deviation giving rise to obsession.³⁷

However, as *papañca* is a more comprehensive term, there is no doubt that it includes what is conveyed by the term *vicāra*. It is quite obvious that if the sustained application (*vicāra*) on what is reasoned about (*vitakka*), which means continuous activity of mind on what is reasoned about, is the same as that of *papañca*, there is not very much difference between maintaining or more precisely, the continuation of mental activity and spreading out or expansion of the activity of mind on what is thought about. Therefore, it can be said that the cognitive stage of ‘what one reasons about, one turns into *papañca*’ (*papañceti*) has similar characteristics with that of the transcendental employment of reason pointed out by Kant. The result of the mental activity of proliferation, according to the discourse is called conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*). In the last stage of the cognitive process the discourse identifies what is turned into *papañca* with *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*. It is quite clear that the proliferated concepts are different from the empirical concepts known as *saññā* through which sensory impingements receive a definite knowledge of the object. We

came to know that reasoning (*vitakka*) has no direct relation to sensation but to the form given by the mind to the sensations. If it is so, conceptual proliferation is related to the pure forms of reasoning which have no contents. Therefore, proliferated concepts are also empty concepts without contents. In Kant's terminology these concepts are the pure concepts of reason received through the transcendental employment of reason based on concepts through the objective employment of reason. Hence, there is no doubt that the credit of finding conceptual proliferation (*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*) or pure forms of reason, for the first time, in the history of epistemology goes to the Buddhist teaching on the cognitive process.

The last stage of the cognitive process suggested by the discourse is expressed in the following formula: "What one turns into '*papañca*', due to that '*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*' assail him in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye belonging to the past, the future and the present", This is evidently the end result of the mental activity of the cognitive process. As mentioned above '*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*' is the conceptual proliferation produced through the transcendental application of the mind. We called it transcendental application as it has no direct contact whatsoever with the objective field. They are only the imaginary concepts which have no application with the object. The imaginary nature of *papañca-saññā* is attested in a discourse in the *Samyuttanikāya*.

Being endowed with sense-perception, human beings whose consciousness is characterized by the prolific tendency, approach sense-objects (mentally) by proliferating conceptually. Giving up all that is mind-made and is appertaining to household life; he (the recluse) resorts to that which is connected with renunciation.^{38 39}

The concepts known as *papañca-saññā-saṅkhā* mentioned in the discourse are not different from the pure concepts of reason introduced by Kant, in their nature. Pure concepts or *a priori* concepts of reason, according to Kant, are produced by pure reason through its transcendental employment on the rules of the faculty of understanding. The function of the transcendental employment of reason is to find out the unconditioned principles under which each of the wider rules of understanding can be subsumed as a regressive infinite series. In this attempt of pure reason, it finds threefold unity which is known as pure concepts which cannot have a corresponding reality in the objective field. Therefore, they are incapable of producing objective knowledge. But the nature of reason is to make an endless attempt to investigate the objects from the objective field corresponding to those pure concepts.

What Kant describes as the nature of concepts of pure reason as pointed out above, seems to be confirmed by the *Madhupiṇḍikasutta* when it says that "due to that '*papañca-saññā-saṅkhā*' assail him in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye belonging to the past, the future and the present".

Endnotes

- ¹ Verse 874 Sn: p. 167
- ² “*Yatonidānaṃ bhikkhu purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti, ettha ce natthi abhinanditabbaṃ abhivaditabbaṃ ajjhositabbaṃ esevanto rāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto paṭighānusayānaṃ esevanto diṭṭhānusayānaṃ, esevanto vicikicchānusayānaṃ, esevanto mānānusayānaṃ, esevanto bhavarāgānusayānaṃ, esevanto avijjānusayānaṃ, esevanto daṇḍādāna-satthādāna-kalaha-viggaha-vivāda-tuvantuva-pesuñña musāvādānaṃ, etthete pāpakā akusalā dhammā aparisesā nirujjhantī ti.*”
MN I : p. 109
Ñānananda 1997: p. 9
- ³ “*nippapañcārāmassāyaṃ dhammo nippapañcaratino nāyaṃ dhammo papañcārāmassa papañcaratino.*”
AN IV: p. 228
- ⁴ “*Yo papañcamanuyutto - papañcābhirato mago virādhayī so Nibbānaṃ - yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ.*”
Verse.989 Thag.: p. 89
- ⁵ “*Yo ca papañcaṃ hitvāna - nippapañcapathe rato ārādhayī so Nibbānaṃ - yogakkhemaṃ anuttaraṃ.*”
Ibid.: p. 990
- ⁶ The capacity (receptivity) for receiving representations through the mode which we are affected by objects, is entitled sensibility.
Kant, 1978
- ⁷ C. P. R. B75/A51
- ⁸ Ibid. B 137
- ⁹ Kant uses the term rule of understanding to mean a mode of knowledge to which the manifold of representations (sense data) can be unified [C. P. R. A126-127]. The term principle is used to denote a mode of knowledge to which the unity of rules can be subsumed [C.P.R. A301 / B358].
- ¹⁰ Ibid. A302 / B 359
- ¹¹ Ibid. A299 / B358
- ¹² Ibid. A305
- ¹³ C. P. R. B335 / A299
- ¹⁴ “*Cakkhuñcāvuso paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānaṃ, tinnaṃ saṅgati phasso. Phassapaccayā vedanā, yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vitakketi, yaṃ vitakketi taṃ papañceti. Tatonidānaṃ purisaṃ papañcasaññāsaṅkhā samudācaranti atitānāgatapaccuppannesu cakkhuvīññeyyesu rūpesu. Sotañcāvuso paṭicca sadde ca... ghāṇañcāvuso paṭicca gandhe ca ... jivhañcāvuso paṭicca rase ca ... kāyañcāvuso paṭicca phoṭṭhabbe ca ... manañcāvuso paṭicca dhamme ca ... manoviññeyyesu dhammesu*”
M.L.S. I: p. 145
- ¹⁵ C. P. R. B34 / A20
- ¹⁶ Outer sense is the name given to five external senses by Kant.
- ¹⁷ Inner sense is the name given by Kant to the *mano indriya* or *ajjhattika indriya* in Buddhist terminology.
- ¹⁸ C. P. R. A99
- ¹⁹ Manifold of intuition according to Kant, is sense representations enter the faculty of sensibility. “In whatever manner or by whatever means a mode of knowledge may relate to objects, intuition is that through which it is in immediate relation to them, and to which all thought as a means is directed.” C. P. R.B34/A20.
- ²⁰ C. P. R.B 75/A51
- ²¹ Verse 874 Sn. p: 167no
- ²² “*Saññāvirattassa na santi ganthā – paññāvimuttassa na santi mohā, Saññāna diṭṭhiṇa ye aggahesuṃ - te ghaṭṭayantā vicaranti loke.*”
Verse 853 Sn.: p. 165
- ²³ DN I: p. 178

- ²⁴ “*Saññā kho Poṭṭhapāda paṭhamam uppajjati, pacchā ñāṇam; saññuppādā ca pana ñāṇuppādo hoti. So evam pajānāti, idappaccayā kira me ñāṇam udapādī ti.*
DN I: p. 185
- ²⁵ Walshe 1987: p. 163
- ²⁶ C.P.R. B 137bhiniṭā
- ²⁷ “*Ārammaṇasmim hi cittassa paṭhamābhiniṭāto hutvā phasso ārammaṇam phusamāno uppajjati Tasmā paṭhamam vutto phasso. Na pana phusitvā vedanāya vedayati. Saññāya sañjānāti, cetanāya ceteti. Tena vuttam phuṭṭho bhikkhave vedeti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti, phuṭṭho ceteti.*
Atthasālini: p. 107
- ²⁸ The Expositor (*Atthasālini*): p. 142 -143
- ²⁹ “... We are here presented with a division of reason into a logical and transcendental faculty.” C. P. R. A299/ B356
- ³⁰ C.P.R. A305
- ³¹ SN V: p. 121
- ³² DN I: p. 1
- ³³ *Idha . . . ekacco samaṇo vā brāhmaṇo vā takkī hoti vimamsī. So takkapariyāhataṃ vimamsānucaritaṃ sayam-paṭibhāṇam evam āha: Sassato attā ca loko ca vañjho kūṭṭho esikaṭṭhāyitṭhito.*
DN I: p. 16
- ³⁴ Jayatilleke, 1963: p. 268
- ³⁵ *Evam sati idaṃ hoti, evam sati idaṃ na hotī ti takkamatten’ eva pana gaṇhanto suddha- takkiko nāma,*
DA. I: p. 107
- ³⁶ Jayatilleke, 1963: p. 264
- ³⁷ Ñāṇananda, 1997: p. 4
- ³⁸ *Papañcasaññā itaritarā narā - papañcayantā upayanti saññino manomayaṃ gehasitañca sabbam - panujja te nekkhammasitaṃ iriyati.*
SN I: p. 22
- ³⁹ Ñāṇananda, 1997: p. 22

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
C. P. R.	Critique of Pure Reason
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
DA	<i>Dīgha-nikāya Atṭhakathā</i>
MLS	Middle Length Sayings. (P. T. S. Tr)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
SN	<i>Saṃyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn.	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
Thag.	<i>Theragāthā-pāḷi</i>

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