



A Critical Comparison between *Nāma-Rūpa* and Cartesian Dualism: Theravāda Buddhist *Anattā* as a Critique of Descartes' *Cogito Ergo Sum*

Galuh Nur Fattah^{a,1}, Tri Saputra Medhacitto^{b,2}, Gonalagoda Nanda^{c,3}

^a Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

^b Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

^c Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

¹ galuh.nur.f@mail.ugm.ac.id

² trisaputramedhacitto@gmail.com

³ gnanda@busl.ac.lk

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted: 30 Juni, 2024

Revised: 16 September, 2024

Accepted: 17 September, 2024

Keywords:

Anattā, Cartesian Dualism, *Cogito Ergo Sum*, *Nāma-Rūpa*, Theravāda.

Kata-kata Kunci:

Anattā, Dualisme Cartesian, *Cogito Ergo Sum*, *Nāma-Rūpa*, Theravāda.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.53396/media.v5i2.409>

ABSTRACT:

This research article aims to present a critical study on the comparison between the concepts of *nāma-rūpa* and Cartesian dualism. *Nāma-rūpa* is a human metaphysical and epistemological concept in Theravāda Buddhism that divides the human self into non-material (*nāma*) and material (*rūpa*) aspects. Cartesian dualism, on the other hand, is a human metaphysical concept proposed by René Descartes that also separates the aspects of human self-formation into non-material (*res cogitans*) and material (*res extensa*) components. This research article was conducted using the critical comparison method. Despite the same dualistic perspective, this study found that there are significant differences between these two metaphysical concepts. In the context of *nāma-rūpa*, it is found that the material and non-material aspects of human substance are in a constant state of change due to the influence of *Tiṭṭhakkhaṇa* (Three Universal Characteristics or Laws) in Theravāda Buddhism. These characteristics or laws encompass *Anicca* (Impermanence), *Dukkha* (Suffering), and *Anattā* (Not Self). Therefore, it is impossible to locate the "I" or "self" as understood in Cartesian dualism, which posits the *cogito* (the "I who thinks") as something that truly exists. The analysis of *Anattā* reveals that Descartes' understanding of human reality is wrong views due to his state of consciousness being heavily influenced by greed, known as *lobha mula citta* in Theravāda Buddhism.

ABSTRAK:

Artikel penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan studi kritis mengenai perbandingan antara konsep *nāma-rūpa* dan dualisme Cartesian. *Nāma-rūpa* adalah konsep metafisika dan epistemologi manusia dalam Buddhisme Theravāda yang

membagi dimensi keberadaan manusia ke dalam aspek non-materi (*nāma*) dan materi (*rūpa*). Di sisi lain, dualisme Cartesian, adalah konsep metafisika manusia yang diusulkan oleh René Descartes yang juga memisahkan aspek-aspek pembentukan diri manusia ke dalam komponen non-materi (*res cogitans*) dan materi (*res extensa*). Artikel penelitian ini dikerjakan menggunakan metode komparasi kritis. Terlepas dari perspektif dualistik yang sama, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perbedaan yang signifikan antara kedua konsep metafisika ini. Dalam konteks *nāma-rūpa*, ditemukan bahwa aspek materi dan non-materi dari substansi manusia berada dalam kondisi yang selalu berubah secara konstan karena pengaruh dari *Tiṭṭhakkhaṇa* (Tiga Karakteristik Universal) yang dijelaskan dalam Buddhisme Theravāda. Tiga karakteristik ini meliputi *Anicca* (Ketidakekalan), *Dukkha* (Penderitaan), dan *Anattā* (Bukan Diri). Oleh karena itu, mustahil untuk menemukan "aku" atau "diri" seperti yang dipahami dalam dualisme Cartesian, yang menyatakan *cogito* (aku yang berpikir) sebagai sesuatu yang benar-benar ada. Analisis *Anattā* mengungkapkan bahwa pemahaman Descartes tentang realitas manusia merupakan pandangan yang salah karena kondisi kesadaran Descartes sangat dipengaruhi oleh keserakahan, yang dalam Buddhisme Theravāda dikenal sebagai *lobha mula citta*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

Cogito ergo sum, a fundamental principle of human metaphysics and the epistemological foundation for the pursuit of truth as elucidated by Descartes, ultimately served as the catalyst for the emergence of subjectivism in modern philosophy. In essence, subjectivism posits the individual as a subjective entity with self-awareness. This self-awareness encompasses an understanding of one's inner self. Subjectivism entails considering knowledge derived from the thoughts of others or from external objects as long as these truths originate from the mind and subjective consciousness of the self. Should the self remain unknowable, these truths would consequently cease to exist.¹

The self or "I" who engages in thought, as presented in Descartes' *cogito*, holds significant implications for ontological perspectives, particularly in relation to the ontology of human existence. The ontological assertion of "I think, therefore I am" posits that the true self exists and it is characterized by constantly thinking. Consequently, Descartes' *cogito* can be viewed as a manifestation of idealism, suggesting that the essence of human existence resides within the realm of the mind. In his work, *Les Passions de l'Âme* (The Passions of the Soul), Descartes elucidates that genuine human fulfillment can only be attained when individuals exert control over their emotional experiences, including both sadness and joy. By mastering these emotions, individuals can enhance their cognitive processes, enabling a more objective self-perception.²

The mind, which becomes aware of itself as a thinking entity or thinking being in Descartes' *cogito*, provides clarity that the mind is the fundamental essence of self-existence. Therefore, it can be inferred that Descartes explicitly posits that the essence of humans is their thoughts. Thought is a certainty; when the *cogito* is questioned, it is immediately validated as true. The *cogito* is always connected to the truth that ensues. If "I" think, then "I" exist; conversely, if "I" exist, then "I" think. The *cogito* pertains to the "I" that thinks, as an entity that exists in the world, as an entity that engages in thinking.³

¹ Krisna Sukma Yogiswari, "Keraguan Kritis: Descartes," *Jurnal Sanjivani* 10, no. 1 (2019): 49, <https://doi.org/10.25078/sjf.v10i1.1631>.

² Friska Riani et al., "Philosophy of Idealism and Its Contribution to Christian Counseling and Leadership: A Meaningful Process," *Indonesia Journal of Christian Education and Theology* 1, no. 2 (2022): 94–95, <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijcet.v1i2.2268>.

³ Thelma Z Lavine, *Descartes: Masa Transisi Bersejarah Menuju Dunia Modern* (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003), 53.

Cartesian dualism is a philosophical concept introduced by Descartes in order to categorize human beings into two distinct dimensions: the mental dimension (*res cogitans*) and the physical dimension (*res extensa*). According to Descartes' perspective, humans possess the ability to think and are also endowed with material bodies. These two dimensions cannot be reduced to one another. It could be argued that the mind and the material body exist as separate entities, although Descartes maintained that the essence of humans lies within their souls. The soul tends to utilize the body for specific actions. There is no overlap between the mental and physical dimensions, yet both function simultaneously.⁴

Descartes postulated that the soul is localized within the pineal gland, which is situated beneath the cerebellum. This gland is responsible for regulating bodily movements and the functioning of internal organs. Additionally, the crucial process of respiration provides sensory stimuli to the small gland located beneath the brain, making it a dwelling place for the soul. From this perspective, the soul itself is the sole subject of investigation, as these observations solely relate to the realm of the soul, which is intricately interconnected with the physical body.⁵

On the other hand, Buddhism, particularly the Theravāda school, which is an Eastern religious and philosophical tradition, holds a viewpoint contrasting with that of Descartes. In Buddhist philosophy, the concept of "self" does not exist. The self-theory is described as *etaṃ mama* (this is mine), *esohamasmi* (this I am), *eso me attā* (this is my self). The teaching of *Anattā* in Buddhism is presented to reject that theory. The self is considered as an illusion created by the mind, and this concept is referred to as *Anattā*. *Anattā* is one of the three philosophical teachings in Theravāda Buddhism, collectively known as the *Tiḷakkeḥaṇa* or Three Universal Characteristics that permeates all forms of existence in this reality. Buddhism argues the self theory with the teaching of characteristic of existence such as impermanence (*aniccā*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). When it is understood that all conditioned things are impermanent, therefore it is fraught by suffering. If it is suffering, therefore self can't be found. Therefore it is not proper to say: "This is mine, this am I, this is not my self." In short, whatever is impermanent, it is suffering and whatever is suffering it is no-self (*yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ taṃ anattā*).

⁴ Luh Putu Cita Ardiyani, Kadek Suciani, and Krisna Sukma Yogiswari, "Tubuh Dan Jiwa Manusia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat René Descartes," *Vidya Darsan* 2, no. 2 (2021): 139, <https://doi.org/10.55115/vidyadarsan.v2i2.1399>.

⁵ Ardiyani, Suciani, and Yogiswari, "Tubuh Dan Jiwa Manusia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat René Descartes," 139-140.

Nguyen Quy Hoang explains that the term *Anattā* (Skt: *Anātman*) can be accurately translated as "no self" or the absence of essence or substance. This concept encompasses all forms of existence, including human existence. Therefore, to grasp how Buddhism perceives the nature of the human self, it is essential to gain a clear understanding of what Buddha intended as *Anattā*. The concept of *Anattā* essentially forms the core of the teachings of early Buddhism, which is now known as Theravāda Buddhism.⁶

The term *Anattā*, it is understood as "no self" or "not self." Within Buddhism, this term conveys the idea of rejecting the existence of a true self or soul. In English, the appropriate term to describe *Anattā* is "not self," although some individuals still erroneously employ the term "no-self." It should be noted that the term "no-self" lacks grammatical and syntactical justification, as it functions as an adjective rather than a possessive word.⁷

The foundation of Buddhism, concerning *Anattā* as human nature, is that the "self" will cease to exist when the psychophysical factors or *khandhas* dissolve. Even if the self can be reconstructed, all that remains are memories or impressions. When one of the *khandhas* or psychophysical factors changes, it results in a "self" that is different from the previous "self". In Buddhism, the "self" is simply a concept that refers to a unified *khandha* that transcends multiple deaths and births. This perspective can be understood as self-reductionism because the self that undergoes a series of experiences in different periods is neither a different self nor the same self. When one dies, *kamma* gives rise to another union within the other five *khandhas*, and this process continues until someone achieves *Nibbāna*. Therefore, it is stated that the true self is *Anattā* or "not self."⁸

In Buddhism, human existence is understood in a dualistic way, similar to Descartes' philosophical construction, but with a distinction from Cartesian dualism. In Buddhism, the non-material aspect that constitutes the human self is referred to as *nāma*. This aspect encompasses all cognitive and mental qualities possessed by humans. On the other hand, the material aspect that constitutes the human self is known as *rūpa*. This aspect includes all the physical materials that compose the body. In the *Sutta* analysis, the four non-material aggregates, namely *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental formation), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness), are classified as *nāma*.⁹ In the *Abhidhamma* analysis,

⁶ Nguyen Quy Hoang, "The Doctrine of Not-Self (*Anattā*) in Early Buddhism," *International Review of Social Research* 9, no. 1 (2019): 18, <https://doi.org/10.2478/irsr-2019-0003>.

⁷ Hoang, "The Doctrine of Not-Self (*Anattā*) in Early Buddhism," 18-19.

⁸ Pujarini Das and Vineet Sahu, "Freedom of the Will and No-Self in Buddhism," *Springer Journal* 35, no. 1 (2017): 129–130, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40961-017-0125-7>.

⁹ Bhikkhu Thanissaro (Translator), "Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta: Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 22.59)," DhammaCitta, 2009, <https://dhammaditta.org/teks/sn/sn22/sn22.059-id-than.html>.

it also includes *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (mental factors). As for *rūpa*, both the *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma* analyses classify it in the same name.¹⁰

It can be stated that *nāma-rūpa* is a dualistic phenomenon involving the mind and body. Understanding this relationship is important in Buddhism. By comprehending mental and physical phenomena in accordance with reality (*yathabbūta*), therefore wrong views can be avoided. By analyzing and deconstructing individuals into their constituent components, namely the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandā*), the illusion of a "self" or spirit dissipates. From this explanation, it can be understood that humans and their emergence exhibit distinct intrinsic characteristics, which can be categorized into two types: individual characteristics or innate traits (*sabhāva*) and universal characteristics or general traits that are shared by all phenomena (*sāmañña*). Ontologically, individual characteristics are typically determined by *kamma*, whereas ontologically, universal characteristics arise are consequences of birth.¹¹ This article aims to conduct a critical comparison between the concept of *nāma-rūpa* and Cartesian dualism. Subsequently, it will critique *cogito ergo sum*, which constitutes the core of Cartesian dualism, by employing *Anattā* analysis, which constitutes the core of *nāma-rūpa*.

In terms of the researcher's investigation, multiple studies have been conducted on *Anattā*, or the concept of *nāma-rūpa*, which is a metaphysical and epistemological concept in Theravāda Buddhism. Over the past decade, only two studies have been found on the concept of *nāma-rūpa*. One study, titled *The Chomskyan Paradigm Shift of Growing Language in the Mind/Brain: A Validation of the 'Nama (Mind)-Rupa Hypothesis'* conducted by Pattama Yimsakul,¹² aims to prove the *nāma-rūpa* hypothesis in Buddhism using the Chomskyan paradigm. Another study, compiled by Pattama Yimsakul, Punwalai Kewara, and Chalong Tubsree, titled *The Testing of Nama (Mind)-Rupa (Body) Hypothesis in Second Acquisition*,¹³ seeks to validate whether meditation practices focusing on *nāma-rūpa* as its object can facilitate foreign language learning. Both of these researches on the concept of *nāma-rūpa* included

¹⁰ Chaidir Thamrin (Translator), *Abhidhamma-Piṭaka: Dhammasaṅgāṇī*, ed. Chaidir Thamrin, Bahasa Indonesia (Medan: Indonesia Tipitaka Center (ITC), 2018), https://itc-tipitaka.org/assets/tipitaka/Dhammasangani_Full.pdf.

¹¹ Ashin Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 2: Faktor-Faktor Mental*, ed. Feronica Laksana and Magdalena Wartono, 2nd ed. (Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihāri Buddhist Studies, 2019), 14-15.

¹² Pattama Yimsakul, "The Chomskyan Paradigm Shift of Growing Language in the Mind/Brain: A Validation of the 'Nama (Mind)-Rupa (Body) Hypothesis,'" *Journal of Thai Interdisciplinary Research* 14, no. 3 (2019): 27-34, [https://dept.npru.ac.th/rdi/data/files/205141-Article Text-633588-1-10-20190724.pdf](https://dept.npru.ac.th/rdi/data/files/205141-Article%20Text-633588-1-10-20190724.pdf).

¹³ Pattama Yimsakul, Punwalai Kewara, and Chalong Tubsree, "The Testing of Nama (Mind) – Rupa (Body) Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition," *Dhonburi Rajabhat University Journal* 14, no. 1 (2019): 228-35, <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/journaldru/article/view/253557>.

in the study of philosophy of language and linguistic studies. Neither of them discusses is related to Cartesian dualism or the philosophy of René Descartes.

Conversely, there have been two comprehensive studies on *Anattā* in the past decade. These studies, titled *An Observation on the Doctrine of Anatta and its Relation to the Concept of Punabbhava* by Kapila Abhayawansa¹⁴ and *The Doctrine of Not-self (anattā) in Early Buddhism* by Nguyen Quy Hoang,¹⁵ extensively discuss the nature of the *Anattā* concept and its connection to the process of rebirth (*punabbhava*). Conversely, no specific research on Cartesian dualism has been found by researchers in the past decade, except in introductory philosophy texts or general discussions of René Descartes. Thus, based on the current investigations, no research with a similar title or theme to that of the present study has been discovered, therefore, this research and its findings are innovative and original. The objective of this research is to determine whether Cartesian dualism can be compared with the concept of *nāma-rūpa* after being examined through the *Anattā* approach.

METHOD

The research methodology utilized in this study is critical comparison, which juxtaposes two concepts - *nāma-rūpa* in Theravāda Buddhism and Descartes' Cartesian dualism - to determine similarities, differences, and interconnectedness. This approach places emphasis on comparative elucidation and also examines the assumptions, fundamental perspectives, and theoretical implications of these two concepts.¹⁶ This critical comparative method is conducted through the following systematic steps: 1) Selection of the objects of study for comparison, namely determining the concept of *nāma-rūpa* in Theravāda Buddhism and Descartes' Cartesian dualism; 2) Establishment of the theoretical framework by describing the fundamental concepts of *nāma-rūpa* and Cartesian dualism as the initial data to be compared; 3) Data collection by gathering relevant information from various sources, particularly the canonical texts of Theravāda Buddhism discussing the concept of *nāma-rūpa* and Descartes' main works addressing Cartesian dualism; 4) Comparative analysis involving an examination of the concepts of *nāma-rūpa* and Cartesian dualism, followed by the identification of their similarities and differences; 5) Critique,

¹⁴ Kapila Abhayawansa, "An Observation on the Doctrine of Anatta and Its Relation to the Concept of Punabbhava," *Journal of Nāṇasaṃvara Centre for Buddhist Studies (JNCBS)* 1, 1, no. Buddhist Studiest (2018): 1–30, [https://ibc-library.thanhsiang.org/files/public/Journal of Nāṇasaṃvara Centre \(JNCBS\) - 2018.pdf#page=11](https://ibc-library.thanhsiang.org/files/public/Journal%20of%20Nāṇasaṃvara%20Centre%20(JNCBS)%202018.pdf#page=11).

¹⁵ Hoang, "The Doctrine of Not-Self (Anattā) in Early Buddhism," 18-27.

¹⁶ Linda Hantrais, *Comparative Research Methods: An Introduction for Students and Researchers* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 73.

involving the scrutiny of the assumptions, values, and contexts surrounding the two objects under consideration; 6) Interpretation and synthesis, which entails interpreting the results of the comparative analysis and critique, and then formulating a synthesis or other findings that contribute to novelty in the field of study, particularly in Eastern philosophy, orientalism, and occidentalism; 7) Hermeneutics, for making the conclusions more logics and systematics; 8) Conclusion, which involves summarizing the results and findings obtained from the critical comparative study on the concept of *nāma-rūpa* and Cartesian dualism as the two objects of study.¹⁷

DISCUSSION

Nāma-rūpa and the Cartesian Dualism

The concept of human metaphysics in the philosophy of René Descartes and Theravāda Buddhism shares similarities, particularly in their dualistic view of humans. René Descartes refers to this as Cartesian dualism, whereas Theravāda Buddhism refers to it as the *nāma-rūpa* concept. Despite their dualistic nature, there are differences between both dualistic views. Cartesian dualism posits that the soul or spirit is an immutable essence, with the body serving as its fundamental nature and extension.¹⁸ In contrast, the concept of *nāma-rūpa* in Theravāda Buddhism posits that mental aspects (*nāma*) are fundamentally dependent on material aspects (*rūpa*). Nevertheless, these two dimensions exert reciprocal influence and are essential for discerning human existence.¹⁹

Starting with an explanation of the concept of *nāma-rūpa* in Theravāda Buddhism, according to Buddhist metaphysics, the "I," "self," or even the soul does not exist ontologically. If it does exist, it is only considered so from the perspective of *sammuti sacca* (conventional truth), and it is merely a result of the *nāma-rūpa* phenomenon. *Nāma* essentially refers to the non-material aspects that constitute mental aggregates encompassing *vedanā* (feelings), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental formations), and *viññāna* (consciousness) from the *Sutta* perspective. From the *Abhidhamma* perspective, *nāma* includes *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (mental factors). In simpler terms, *nāma* can be understood as the mental aspect of human beings. On the other hand, *rūpa* is the material aspect of human aggregates. According to the *Sutta* and *Abhidhamma*, both *nāma* (mental

¹⁷ Hantrais, *Comparative Research Methods: An Introduction for Students and Researchers*, 74.

¹⁸ Ngismatul Choiriyah, "Rasionalisme René Descartes," *Anterior Jurnal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 242, <https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v13i2.284>.

¹⁹ John J. Holder, "A Survey of Early Buddhist Epistemology," in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 232.

aspect) and *rūpa* (material aspect) are included within the broader category of *rūpa* (matter). Put simply, *rūpa* can be comprehended as a constituent of the human physical form.²⁰

Nāmā is a psychological phenomenon that is related to the mind. Inherent in the mind is the ability to perceive objects, in other words, the mind has the capacity to be aware of objects. This capacity contrasts greatly with the ability possessed by matter or *rūpa*. Essentially, matter or *rūpa* cannot comprehend objects. Therefore, when the body experiences pain, it is actually the mind that reacts to the pain, not the body. Although *nāmā* can be translated as psychological phenomena, the term does not exclusively refer to psychological phenomena that arise in the mind, but also to psychological phenomena that manifest in the five senses, such as those that appear when someone smells, sees, hears, tastes, and touches.²¹

Rūpa, as the material aspect that serves as the foundation for mental existence, is primarily composed of the fundamental elements that exist in the universe. In the *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*,²² a discourse delivered by the Buddha to a monk named Pukkusāti, the six elements comprising the human self are elucidated. These six elements include the earth element, water element, fire element, air element, space element, and consciousness element. Although these six elements do not constitute one's "self," the Buddha expounded that the earth element encompasses the solid constituents within the body, such as bones, hair, teeth, organs, flesh, and skin. Whether internal or external, the solid constituents of the body originate from the earth element. One must perceive them as "this is not mine, this is not myself, this is not what I am." The same principle holds true for the other five elements. The following table has been provided to enhance the clarity of the explanation:

NO.	ELEMENT	ENTITY	CHARACTERISTICS	ESSENCE
1	Earth Element	Bones, Hair, Teeth, Flesh, Body Organs, Etc.	Solid, Hard, and Attached.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.
2	Water Element	Bile, Pus, Blood, Sweat, Fat, Tears, Joint Fluid, Urine, Etc.	Liquid, Wet, and Attached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.

²⁰ Peter Harvey, "The Conditioned Co-Arising of Mental and Bodily Processes within Life and Between Lives," in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 53.

²¹ Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 2: Faktor-Faktor Mental*, 11-12.

²² Bhikkhu Nānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translator), "Majjhima Nikāya 140: Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta," DhammaCitta, 2013, <https://dhammacitta.org/teks/mn/mn140-id-bodhi.html>.

3	Fire Element	Warm Temperature, Aging, Depleted	Heat and Attached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.
4	Wind Element	Breathing Up, Breathing Down, Air in the Stomach, and Air in the Organs	Windy and Attached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.
5	Space Element	Ear Holes, Nostrils, Mouth Doors, All Holes and Cavities in the Body.	Hollow and Attached	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.
6	Consciousness Element	Pleasure, Pain, and Tranquility.	Identifier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen as it is. • Not I/self.

Table 1
Elements Forming *Rūpa* (Matter) from the *Sutta Pitaka* Point of View
Source: Personal Documents

The *nāma-rūpa* relationship is elucidated by the Buddha in the *Mahānidāna Sutta*:²³ According to the third verse, the reciprocal connection between *nāma-rūpa* and consciousness is explicated. When there is *nāma-rūpa*, consciousness can arise, and vice versa. The quality of consciousness also impacts the existence of *nāma-rūpa*. Contact with the object serves as the intermediary between conscious existence and *nāma-rūpa*. Consciousness can be perceived as existing when *nāma-rūpa* is engaged with both material and non-material objects. In the twenty-second verse, the Buddha emphasized that consciousness (*citta/viññāna*) is fundamentally conditioned by *nāma-rūpa*. If consciousness does not find a foundation in *nāma-rūpa*, then ontologically, birth, death, and suffering will never come to pass. In Buddhist philosophy, *nāma-rūpa* is regarded as a manifestation of ignorance or inner darkness (*avijjā*) and volition (*vetana*), ultimately conditioning the cycle of continuous birth and death. The existence of *nāma-rūpa* is inseparable from the cause and effect of its subsequent manifestation (*nidāna*). Hence, a comprehensive understanding

²³ Maurice Walshe (Translator), “Mahānidāna Sutta: Dīgha Nikāya 15 (DN 15:29),” DhammaCitta, 2015, <https://dhammadhamma.org/teks/dn/dn15-id-walshe.html>.

of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* (Law of Cause and Effect of Origination) is necessary to grasp *nāma-rūpa*. Here are the twelve *nidānas* of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*:

Past	Present	Future
Ignorance/inner darkness (<i>Avijjā</i>)	Consciousness (<i>Vīññāṇa</i>)	Birth (<i>Jāti</i>)
Karmic formations and constructions (<i>Saṅkhārā</i>)	Mind and Body (<i>Nāma-Rūpa</i>)	Aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, and despair (<i>Jarāmaraṇa</i>)
	Six sense bases (<i>Salāyatana</i>)	
	Contact, impression, and connectedness (<i>Phassa</i>)	
	Feelings/sensations (<i>Vedana</i>)	
	Desire, desire, and lust (<i>Taṇhā</i>)	
	Attachment (<i>Upādāna</i>)	
	Emergence, existence and process of rebirth (<i>Bhava</i>)	

Table 2
The Twelve *Nidanas* of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*
Source: Personal Documents

The twelve *nidānas* mentioned above are interconnected in terms of ontology and form a sequence of emergence. The following explanation illustrates this relationship: Because of ignorance (*avijjā*) are exist, karmic formations (*saṅkhārā*) to be arises; because of karmic formations are exist, consciousness (*vīññāṇa*) to be arises; because of the presence of consciousness are exist, mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) to be arises; because of the mind and physical form/body are exist, the six sense bases (*salāyatana*) to be arises; because of six sense bases are exist, contact (*phassa*) to be arises; because of contact are exist, feelings/sensations (*vedana*) to be arises; because of feelings/sensations are exist, desire and craving (*taṇhā*) to be arises; because of desire and craving are exist, attachment (*upādāna*) to be arises; because of attachment are exist, existence and the process of rebirth (*bhava*) to be arises; because of existence and the process of rebirth are exist, the birth (*jāti*) to be arises; because of birth are exist, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, and despair (*jarāmaraṇa*) to be arises. From the interconnectedness of the twelve *nidānas* in the

Paṭiccasamuppāda mentioned earlier, it can be understood that all forms of self-identification created by humans are merely a series of processes that constitute a self or "I".²⁴

The *Visuddhimagga*, a book composed by a Theravāda commentator monk named Buddhaghosa, provides an explanation that *nāma-rūpa* arises only when both mutually supported. To simplify, *nāma* emerges when supported by *rūpa*, and vice versa. When *nāma* has desires for eating, sleeping, drinking, and speaking, these desires are represented by the corresponding *rūpa*. Conversely, when *rūpa* is damaged or destroyed, *nāma* appears in response. The destruction of *nāma-rūpa* entails the destruction of consciousness towards the object. This realization reveals that *atta* (the perceived self) which tends to attach itself to objects, is actually non-existent. Consequently, there is nothing substantial to attach permanently. Thus, impermanence, dissatisfaction, and not-self are discovered. This represents one aspect of right view, which forms the fundamental doctrine of Theravāda Buddhism's metaphysics.²⁵

Nāma-rūpa encompasses all aspects of *Pañcakkhandā*, its ontological existence cannot be dissociated from the Three Universal Characteristics or Laws in Buddhism, namely *Aniccā*, *Dukkā*, and *Anattā*. *Nāma-rūpa* is intrinsically tied to impermanence (*Aniccā*). Consequently, *nāma-rūpa*, as the embodiment of the human self, inevitably undergoes emergence, alteration, and cessation. This dynamic nature was succinctly expounded by the Buddha as *Anattā* (not self/I/soul). From the perspective of *sammūti sacca*, the combination of *nāma-rūpa* can be designated as a living being, including humans. Essentially, *nāma-rūpa* is metaphysical and epistemological conception of non-duality, or alternatively referred to as monodualism, as it posits that an entity cannot exist if its counterpart does not also exist.²⁶

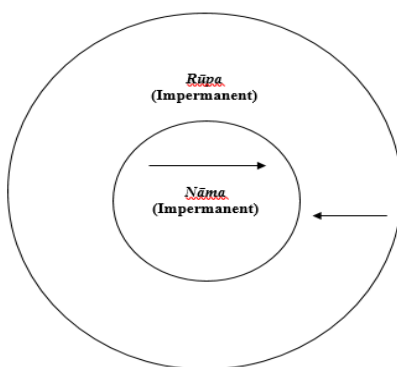
Humans are living beings consisting of five aggregates, which can be categorized into two aspects: *nāma* and *rūpa*. In Buddhist ethics, the understanding of the true nature of the "self" or "I" as something devoid of a fixed essence has significant implications for liberation from the affliction of suffering. This includes suffering stemming from attachment to the concept of "I", the physical body, or erroneous beliefs regarding the existence of an absolute "I". Such attachments are manifestations of the craving for existence, known as *bhavaṭṭhā* in Pāli, and serve as the foundation for the ceaseless cycle

²⁴ Ashin Kusaladhamma, *Kronologi Hidup Buddha*, ed. Hendra Widjaja, Bahasa Indonesia (Jakarta Barat: Ehipassiko Foundation, 2015), 153-155.

²⁵ Mahāsi Sayādaw, *Khotbah Utama Tentang Pemutaran Roda Dhamma: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, ed. Suwendah Su, Karuna Adi Sasmita, and Shela Octavia, Bahasa Indonesia (Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihāri Buddhist Studies, 2020), 242-244.

²⁶ Harvey, "The Conditioned Co-Arising of Mental and Bodily Processes within Life and Between Lives," 63.

of birth and death.²⁷ To facilitate a clearer comprehension of *nāma-rūpa*, consider the following illustration:



***Notes:** The identical color and two arrows signify the interconnection and interdependence between the two entities.

Figure 1
Scheme of Relationship between *Nāma* and *Rūpa*
Source: Personal Documents

On the other hand, an explanation of Cartesian Dualism can be initiated from the fourth part of the book *Discourse on Method*. In this section of the book, Descartes has substantiated that the mind is an absolute entity whose existence cannot be negated. The absolute mind serves as evidence for the existence of an immortal soul. However, the affirmation of the eternal and absolute existence of the soul does not entail the existence of physical reality, which in this case refers to the cessation and abandonment of the body. In the *Sixth Meditation*, found in the book *Meditation on First Philosophy*, Descartes openly acknowledges the presence of the body. This recognition is based on the faculty of material imagination bestowed by God, thereby preventing Descartes from denying the existence of the body. Descartes asserts that individuals, like himself, who diligently attend to imagination and possess intimate knowledge of the body would undoubtedly be unable to deny the existence of the body.²⁸ To explain this, here is a schematic table regarding the differences between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*:

²⁷ Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasāṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 2: Faktor-Faktor Mental*, 12.

²⁸ René Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy: Meditasi Filsafat Pertama*, ed. Herlianto A (Bantul: Indoliterasi, 2023), 75.

Type of Existence	Essence	Function	Nature
<i>Res Cogitans</i>	Pure Consciousness or Soul	Thinkings and Feelings	Permanent
<i>Res Extanssa</i>	Material Aspect or Body	The extension of the mind within the dimensions	Impermanent

Table 3
The Explanation of the *Res Cogitans* and *Res Extanssa*
Source: Personal Documents

The cognitive entity characterized by its capacity for thinking is referred to as *res cogitans*, whereas the physical entity characterized by its expansive nature is referred to as *res extensa*. Within Cartesian dualism, the body possesses the same properties as other material entities and operates based on its own mechanical causes. A fundamental and irreconcilable conflict exists between the body and the soul. According to Descartes, the unity of the soul and body is merely external, as both entities exist independently and are ontologically distinct. In Descartes' perspective, the essence of human resides in the soul, which coexists within the body and utilizes it to perform various actions. Despite the absence of a point of convergence between the mind and physicality, the soul and body exert mutual influence on each other.²⁹

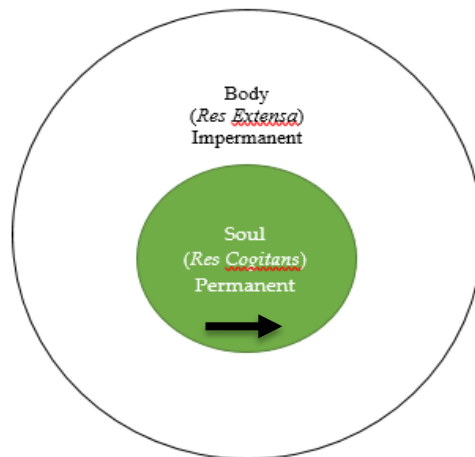
In the *Second Meditation* of the book *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes employs an analogy involving a candle to discuss the human body. Descartes elucidates that a candle composed of honey and beeswax may liquefy and emit a fragrance reminiscent of honey when ignited. Once ignited, the candle undergoes a transformation and loses its original shape, assuming a liquid state. Descartes labels this malleable wax substance as "extension." Despite its altered texture, scent, and form, the rational faculty of the mind still acknowledges it as "wax." Consequently, what is perceived by the senses endures eternally within the mind. Similarly, this principle can be applied to the body. Although the physical body may perish and undergo metamorphosis, the essence perceived as "I" persists within the mind, representing the nature of the soul. Hence, the soul possesses greater certainty and eternal existence.³⁰

²⁹ Ardiyani, Suciani, and Yogiswari, "Tubuh Dan Jiwa Manusia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat René Descartes," 139.

³⁰ Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy: Meditasi Filsafat Pertama*, 18-21.

Descartes emphasized that the mind or reason is the instrument or tool needed to prove the existence of the soul or even God. Usually, people encounter difficulties when attempting to prove the existence of the soul through sensory perception. However, the soul can never be perceived with sensory perception. For Descartes, it was akin to someone desiring to hear sounds with their eyes. Essentially, sensory perception cannot verify the existence of non-material entities like the soul and God. Both imagination and senses can persuade humans of things, but only reason or thought can truly convince them.³¹

Based on Descartes' explanation, the true subject or deepest essence of human is the soul, as all forms of observation take place in the soul only because the soul is connected to the body. From the body's perspective, all sensory actions are governed by the principles of physics. Thoughts are actions of the soul that are essence in themselves and are not tied to the body. Freedom is the main characteristic of consciousness, which is always thinking, whereas the body is essentially not free because it is bound by natural rules. Human freedom is neither more nor less than the freedom that also exists in God. Descartes' view of the eternal nature of the human soul significantly influenced various philosophical schools, including idealism and positivism. Descartes' view is a persistent issue that has endured for centuries and continues to be relevant today.³² To make Cartesian dualism easier to understand, researcher have created the following Illustration:



³¹ René Descartes, *Diskursus & Metode: Mencari Kebenaran Dalam Ilmu-Ilmu Pengetahuan*, ed. Ahmad Farid Ma'ruf (Bantul: IRCiSoD, 2015), 74.

³² Ardiyani, Suciani, and Yogiswari, "Tubuh Dan Jiwa Manusia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat René Descartes," 139-140.

***Notes:** The different colors and one arrow indicate the separation and non-connection between the two entities.

Figure 2
Res Cogitans and *Res Extensa* Relationship Scheme
Source: Personal Documents

From all the explanations provided in this sub, a conclusion can be drawn that ontologically or metaphysically, Buddhism posits that humans do not possess essence (*Anattā*). This is because *nāma-rūpa*, which is the basis of human consciousness, is always changing and will one day be destroyed. Ontologically, Buddhism does not recognize the existence of the soul because what has been understood as the absolute self or soul is only consciousness (*citta/viññāna*) that arises from the *nāma-rūpa* interaction. If one or both of them is damaged or lost, then consciousness as a phenomenon of the connection between the both will disappear. On the other hand, Descartes views humans ontologically as having an absolute and eternal subjectivity or self, which is called *res cogitans*. For Descartes, *res cogitans* is a manifestation of the existence of the soul. The function of the *res cogitans* is to guide the body and make the body as a tool of the soul. Descartes viewed the soul as completely unaffected by the body. Even though one day the body will be destroyed, the soul and its ever-thinking nature will remain.

Cogito Ergo Sum in Review of the Anattā

Descartes believed that *cogito ergo sum* is an absolute truth in philosophy. It also suggests that humans possess a fixed and unchangeable nature of existence. In the *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes explains that the *cogito* is the main principle. In reality, one may believe in the existence of God, heaven, body, and self. However, when contemplating all these concepts, there is a fundamental truth that simultaneously "I am thinking." Therefore, the existence of "I" as a thinking subject must be true. From that point, "I" must exist, even the body destroyed, the soul still exist.³³

Historically, Descartes formulated the *cogito* based on his reading of St. Augustine, who stated that the existence of the self serves as proof and validation of the truth of the teachings of the Christian Trinity. Descartes stated that everyone must love existence and all the knowledge that exists within humans. From this, it is very clear that Descartes asserted that the existence of the self must be true, which was based on his profound appreciation for existence. In his metaphysics of human, Descartes uses the *cogito* to

³³ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, ed. John Veitch, Stave Harris, and Charles Franks, 10th ed. (Oxford: University Ave, 2003), 15.

demonstrate that the "I" or "self" who is thinking is an intangible substance and lacks physical elements. Between the mind, which is the essence of the soul, and the body, lies a vast difference. This is actually concluded through a specific method, namely the method of skepticism.³⁴

In a reply to a letter from Mersenne, Descartes explained in detail the function of the soul in the body's organs. The spirit is said to reside between the pineal gland and the pituitary gland in the brain. Both glands receive life force from the heart. Through the pituitary gland, the soul influences the body, providing evidence that the soul does not operate by physical movement. This is evidenced by the stationary position of the pituitary gland in the body. The soul performs all operations through the pineal gland and pituitary gland. Therefore, it is not surprising that the pituitary gland is located between the heart and the conarium, as it is where it encounters several small arteries that form the plexus mirabilis, which is entirely distinct from the brain. The soul can be connected to the body through all the blood vessels that are linked to the brain. The soul and body are two completely different entities. Descartes himself did not know how God destroys the soul, but due to the complete distinction between the two substances of human existence, it is impossible for the soul to perish with the body.³⁵

From Descartes' arguments about the existence of the eternal soul and its relationship with the body, it differs fundamentally from the Buddhist perspective, particularly in the Theravāda school. Almost all schools or sects in Buddhism, including Theravāda, reject the existence of souls or spirits. In Buddhism, what is generally referred to as "I", "self", or soul basically refers to consciousness, which in Descartes' terminology is called *cogito* or *res cogitans*, while in Theravāda Buddhism it is called *citta/viññāna*. Peter Harvey explain that consciousness basically will never arise without the physical body (*rūpa*) and mental aspect (*nāma*) as its basis. In Buddhism, consciousness will not arise if other aspects of the mind do not also arise, such as feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*). In other words, the aggregate of consciousness would never have arisen without the existence of the other four aggregates. The four aggregates, other than consciousness, serve as "homes" for consciousness but are limited in nature. Consciousness will arise in the four new self-forming aggregates if the connecting consciousness is still filled with lust (*taṇhā*) and attachment (*upādāna*) towards the objects of which it is aware. However, this

³⁴ René Descartes, *René Descartes Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 90-91.

³⁵ Descartes, *René Descartes Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, 91-92.

consciousness is not identical to the previous consciousness. Therefore, there is no self or soul (*Anattā*) in human existence.³⁶

It had previously been explained in a reply letter to Mersenne that Descartes did not know how God destroys the soul. This statement certainly has implications for Descartes' lack of knowledge about how God created the human soul. Descartes had a weakness when he concluded that the *cogito* was the ontological basis for human existence, as there was no speculative explanation of how humans exist. What can be concluded is that Descartes believed that humans must have been created by God, based on his speculation on how God destroys the soul. This idea was reinforced by Descartes in the *Fifth Meditation* of his book *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Descartes explains that existence may be separate from God, as God can be conceived as something that does not exist. Even so, existence cannot be separated from God's essence. Descartes only explains the relationship of all existence, including humans, with the essence of God, which can be contemplated, but he does not elaborate on the process of creating that existence.³⁷ On the other hand, Theravāda Buddhism explains in detail how humans exist. Buddhism posits that all existence, including humans are interdependent. This means that all creatures, including humans, create themselves through *kamma*.³⁸

In Buddhist philosophy, it is explained that *Punabbava* (Pāli: *Paṭisandhī*), understood as rebirth, is completely determined by *kamma*. Every birth in any realm, including birth in the human realm, is determined by *kamma*. There is no supernatural or divine being that causes birth; instead, it is *kamma* that designs and determines birth. In other words, every individual are the creators or designers of their next birth through the *kamma* they created. Basing on accumulated merits or his karma, one can be born in these five destinies, such as: the purgatory (*niraya*), the animal species (*tiracchānayoṇi*), the sphere of the departed ancestors (*pettivisaya*), the human world (*manussaloka*) and the world of gods (*devaloka*).³⁹ In the Buddhist cosmology of the Theravāda tradition, there are thirty-one realms of birth. The seeds of birth from twenty-six realms can be analyzed in this present life, but the five realms above them cannot be analyzed due to their supernatural nature. The analysis of the seeds includes the *kamma* of unwholesome actions and thoughts (*akusala*), which are the conditions and causes of birth in the lower or suffering realms, the *kamma* of virtuous

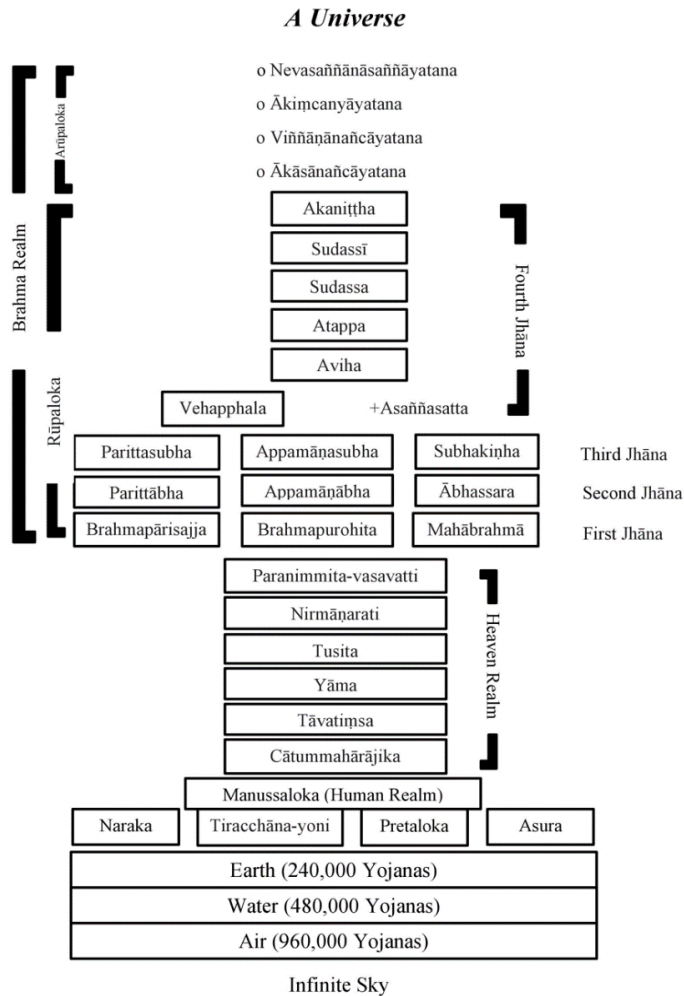
³⁶ Harvey, "The Conditioned Co-Arising of Mental and Bodily Processes within Life and Between Lives," 54.

³⁷ Descartes, *Meditation on First Philosophy: Meditasi Filsafat Pertama*, 66-67.

³⁸ Ashin Kheminda, *Kamma: Pusaran Kelahiran & Kematian Tanpa Awal*, ed. Feronica Laksana and Magdalena Wartono, 2nd ed. (Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihāri Buddhist Studies, 2020), 22.

³⁹ Tri Saputra Medhācitto, "A Critical Response to The Question 'Did the Buddha Teach Rebirth?'" *Jurnal Pencerahan* 15, no. 1 (2022): 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.58762/jupen.v15i1.66>.

actions and thoughts (*kusala*), which are the conditions and causes of birth in the human realm, and the very or great virtuous actions and thoughts (*mahākusala*), which are the conditions and causes of birth in the realm of gods/heaven. Birth in the high realm, namely the *Brahma* realm, can only be achieved through concentration, letting go of attachment, and efforts to transcend the good-bad dichotomy through meditation (*bhavana*).⁴⁰ The following is a brief illustration of the thirty realms of birth in the cosmology of Theravāda Buddhism:⁴¹



⁴⁰ Kheminda, *Kamma: Pnsaran Kelahiran & Kematian Tanpa Awal*, 25.

⁴¹ Albert Poliakoff, 1 Planes of existence as per Burmese interpretation (Myanmar: Religion, issued 2019), 1, <https://creativecommons.org>.

Figure 3
Description of the 31 Realms in Theravāda Buddhism
Source: Albert Poliakoff 2019

In fact, the exact beginning of birth cannot be determined, but the conditions leading up to it can be ascertained. An explanation of this condition can be found in the *Mahānidāna Sutta*,⁴² which is related to the *Patīccasamuppāda* (Law of Dependent Origination) whose details have been explained in the previous subsection. The Buddha explained that *avijjā* (inner darkness/ignorance) is the initial condition for emergence to arise. If the analogy is to entities that exist in reality, this is similar to water binding soil particles. Even without consciousness, both unite and form a new entity. In the *Patīccasamuppāda*, that formation is referred to as *saṅkhāra*, and consciousness (*viññāna*) arises from it. This is in line with Richard Dawkins' explanation in his book *The Selfish Gene*, which posits that atoms and chemical compounds that react with each other were the initial components that initiated the universe and all the elements of life within it.⁴³ In *Patīccasamuppāda*, the process continues indefinitely. The processes of birth, death, aging, suffering, and decay continue to appear repeatedly until the realization of *Nibbāna* can be achieved.

The explanation of self-creation through *kamma*, as elucidated by the Buddha in the *Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta*,⁴⁴ is that all beings (including humans) are the owners of their own *kamma* (*kammasakā*), heirs of their own *kamma* (*kammadāyādā*), born from their own *kamma* (*kammayoni*), related to their own *kamma* (*kammabandhu*), and protected by their own *kamma* (*kammapaṭisaṇṇā*). Essentially, *kamma* is what determines the evolution of all beings, including humans. This is what makes humans different from one another. *Kamma* differentiates each person's form, way of thinking, and other tendencies. That is the basis of why each person is different; both in character, form, and even fate. It is all determined by *kamma* and not by a supernatural being.⁴⁵ That is the difference in the way humans exist in the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism which contrasts with the way humans exist in perspective of René Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*.

René Descartes' *cogito* was grounded in profound idealism and rooted in a deep appreciation for existence, as expounded upon in Descartes' correspondence with Colvius. It is evident from the letter that Descartes found significant inspiration from St. Augustine

⁴² Walshe (Translator), "Mahānidāna Sutta: Dīgha Nikāya 15 (DN 15:29)."

⁴³ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene: Gen Egois*, ed. K. El-Kazhiem (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017), 42.

⁴⁴ Nānamoli Thera (Translator), "Majjhima Nikāya 135: Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta," Access to Insight, 1994, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.135.nymo.html>.

⁴⁵ Kheminda, *Kamma: Puseran Kelahiran & Kematian Tanpa Awal*, 32-33.

in developing his *cogito*. In his correspondence, Descartes explicitly asserted that the fundamental premise of his *cogito* was a passionate love for existence.⁴⁶ From the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism, particularly from the viewpoint of the *Abhidhamma*, the fundamental *cogito*, which relies on attachment to existence, can be classified as the phenomenon of consciousness in the sensory sphere (*kāmāvacara citta*). This refers to a group of consciousness rooted in greed (*lobha mūla citta*), with variations in consciousness. The second category is described as "Consciousness accompanied by joy, associated with wrong views, and with compulsions" (*Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta saṁkhārika citta*). The reason why Descartes' tendencies are categorized within consciousness rooted in greed is because Descartes tends to construct a self based on thoughts (*cogito*) to which he becomes attached as the absolute self. If we analyze Descartes' thought in detail using the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*, we find that his awareness accompanied by joy (his love of existence) is associated with wrong views (regarding the mind or *cogito* as a fixed and unchanging self), and with compulsions (a radical skepticism as a catalyst).⁴⁷

This type of *citta*, or consciousness, is influenced by mental factors, or *cetasikas*, from the group of greed (*lobha*), namely: *lobha cetasika* (mental factor of greed), *dīṭṭhi cetasika* (mental factor of wrong view), and *māna cetasika* (mental factor of vanity). The basis of the *Abhidhamma* analysis used to analyze Descartes' thoughts and views is rooted in the human metaphysics of Theravāda Buddhism, which posits that humans are essentially *Anattā* (without self/not self/no soul). This is because the nature of the *citta* and *cetasika* is fundamentally bound by *Aniccā* or impermanence.⁴⁸

From the perspective of the *Abhidhamma*, the categorization comprises four groups: sensory consciousness (*kāmāvacara citta*), consciousness of the subtle material sphere (*rūpāvacara citta*), non-material consciousness (*arūpāvacara citta*), and supramundane consciousness (*lokuttara citta*). Consciousness rooted in greed (*lobha mūla citta*) represents one variation. The second type of consciousness falls under the category of sensory sphere awareness (*kāmāvacara citta*). Although Descartes himself referred to the *cogito* as an immaterial substance, Theravāda Buddhism considers the mind as part of the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), which have access to material objects and are influenced by them. To

⁴⁶ Descartes, *René Descartes Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, 90.

⁴⁷ Ashin Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 1: Kesadaran*, ed. Laksana Feronica and Magdalena Wartono, 3rd ed. (Jakarta Barat: Dhammahāri Buddhist Studies, 2021), 203.

⁴⁸ Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 2: Faktor-Faktor Mental*, 87-94.

briefly elucidate the consciousness rooted in greed (*lobha mūla citta*), there exist eight variations of *lobha mūla citta*:⁴⁹

- *Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta asaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by joy, associated with wrong views, and without compulsions).
- *Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta sasaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by joy, associated with wrong views, and with compulsions).
- *Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatavipayutta asaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by joy, not associated with wrong views, and without compulsions).
- *Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatavipayutta sasaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by joy, not associated with wrong views, and with compulsions).
- *Upekkhāsahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta asaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by calm, associated with wrong views, and without compulsions).
- *Upekkhāsahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta sasaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by calm, associated with wrong views, and with compulsions).
- *Upekkhāsahagata dīṭṭhigatavipayutta asaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by calm, not associated with wrong views, and without compulsions).
- *Upekkhāsahagata dīṭṭhigatavipayutta sasaṅkhārika citta* (Consciousness accompanied by calm, not associated with wrong views, and with compulsions).

From the perspective of the *Sutta*, Descartes' *cogito* tendencies can be categorized as a form of craving (*taṇhā*), specifically *bhavataṇhā*, which can be understood as the desire for existence. According to Theravāda Buddhism, as stated in the fourth verse of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*,⁵⁰ apart from craving for sensual pleasure (*kāmatāṇhā*) and craving for annihilation (*viḅhavataṇhā*), craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*) is considered a misconceived view that leads to suffering. This suffering (*Dukkha*) arises when the perception of a fixed "I" or self-clashes with the metaphysical realities of impermanence (*Aniccā*) and not-self (*Anattā*). As all things, including humans, are subject to change (*Aniccā*), they inherently lack a fixed nature or essence (*Anattā*). Attachment to things without a fixed nature or essence gives rise to suffering (*Dukkha*).⁵¹

⁴⁹ Kheminda, *Abhidhammatthasāṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 1: Kesadaran*, 202-203.

⁵⁰ Bhikkhu Thanissaro (Translator), "Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 56:11)," [dhammadalks.org](https://www.dhammadalks.org/suttas/SN/SN56_11.html#container), accessed July 11, 2023, https://www.dhammadalks.org/suttas/SN/SN56_11.html#container.

⁵¹ Sayādaw, *Khoṭṭabāh Utama Tentang Pemutaran Roda Dhamma: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, 218.

In Buddhist cosmology, particularly in the Theravāda tradition, the arise of desire (*taṇhā*) rooted in sensory experiences establishes a condition or propensity for future rebirth. This phenomenon is referred to as *ponobhavikā* or the causal factor that engenders new existence.⁵² Birth, in the context of attachment, is a fundamental cause of suffering. While birth itself is not the primary source of suffering, it is the result of attachment to existence. The attachment to existence serves as the foundation and origin of suffering. In terms of human metaphysics within Theravāda Buddhism, Descartes' perspective of absolutizing the mind as the nature of the soul is an erroneous belief that has implications for suffering (*Dukkha*). This is because human existence, encompassing both the physical (*body*) and non-physical (*mind*) aspects, is entirely subject to one of the Three Universal Characteristics or Laws, namely change (*Anicca*). The fact that human ontology is encompassed by this constant state of flux affirms that humans fundamentally lack a self or essence (*Anattā*). According to Buddhism, all conditioned things are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*).⁵³ If they are impermanent and subject to change, the soul or self cannot be found. All conditioned things are suffering (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha*). Since they are impermanent, they are fraught by suffering. Everyone does not like to suffer, but one still suffers because one cannot control his body to not change, get sick, or old. As unable to control or to stop to the changing, the soul or self cannot be found. All phenomena are non-self (*sabbe dhammā anattā*). It directly rejects the theory of soul for all phenomena are non-self. In short, because the things are impermanent, therefore they are suffering (*yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ*). Because they are impermanent and suffering, therefore they are to be seen as non-self. Whatever suffering, it is also non-self (*yam dukkhaṃ taṃ anattā*).⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

The *Anattā* analysis of René Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*, conducted by Theravāda Buddhism, led to the conclusion that Cartesian dualism has several gaps and is incompatible when examined *aposteriori* (through facticity check) using the *Anattā* concept approach in Theravāda Buddhism. According to René Descartes's philosophy, the reality of self is the unity of mind and body (*res cogitans* and *res extensa*). The soul is entirely immaterial and encompasses all mental aspects such as thoughts, perceptions, and other cognitive factors. On the other hand, the body is purely material and encompasses the entire physical being.

⁵² Sayādaw, *Khotbah Utama Tentang Pemutaran Roda Dhamma: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, 219.

⁵³ Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2012), 363.

⁵⁴ Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 1466.

The soul is eternal and serves as the instrument of the body. It influences the body, but the body does not influence the soul. However, Theravāda Buddhism's analysis challenges Descartes' view on the eternity of the soul and mind. According to this perspective, the existence of all mental-cognitive factors depends on the presence of material aspects. This is explained through the concept of *nāma-rūpa*, which represents the human metaphysics in Theravāda Buddhism. In fact, the existence of a mind or a thinking subject can only be known when the material and non-material aspects that constitute the human self are united. How can humans comprehend the existence of an independent mind without being connected to the accompanying material aspects? Therefore, from the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism, Descartes' cogito is unacceptable. The existence of *nāma-rūpa* is heavily influenced by impermanence (*Anicca*). Consequently, it is impossible for humans to possess a permanent essence (*Anattā*). Attachment to a self without essence will result in suffering (*Dukkha*).

The weakness of cogito ergo sum is exacerbated by several metaphysical flaws when compared to the supporting aspects of the human metaphysics argument in Theravāda Buddhism. For instance, Descartes fails to provide an explicit division of the basic elements of human material reality, while Theravāda Buddhism explicitly mentions the basic elements that constitute human material reality, namely earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. Another drawback of Descartes' philosophy or human metaphysics is the absence of an explanation of how humans exist, whereas Theravāda Buddhism thoroughly explains the nature of human existence, particularly through concepts such as *saṃsāra*, *paṭisandhi/punarbhava*, *kamma*, and *Paticcasamuppāda*. From the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism, Descartes' *cogito*, which emerges from a love of existence, can be categorized as a type of consciousness phenomenon within the sensory sphere (*kāmaṇvacara citta*), specifically rooted in greed (*lobha mūla citta*). This can be further specified as the second variation of consciousness, namely: "Consciousness accompanied by joy, associated with wrong views, and with compulsions" (*Somanassasahagata dīṭṭhigatasampayutta asaṅkhārika citta*). The reason why Descartes' tendency is attributed to consciousness rooted in greed is because Descartes tends to construct a self-based on thoughts (*cogito*) that can be attached to as an absolute self. Analyzing Descartes' thought in detail using the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* reveals that consciousness accompanied the joy (love of existence) is associated with wrong views (treating the mind or *cogito* as a fixed and unchanging self) and with compulsions (radical skepticism as encouragement). In the *Sutta*, this view is considered an attempt driven by the desire to create a seemingly eternal self (*bhavaṇhā*), whereas in reality, the body, mind, and consciousness are impermanent

(*Aniccā*) and devoid of essence (*Anattā*). Adhering to this view leads to the consequence that humans will be trapped in suffering (*Dukkha*) of which they are not directly aware. In the cosmology of Theravāda Buddhism, the inclination to conceive of an eternal self only prolongs the cycle of births and extends the suffering one experiences.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abhayawansa, Kapila. "An Observation on the Doctrine of Anatta and Its Relation to the Concept of Punabbhava." *Journal of Nāṇasaṃvara Centre for Buddhist Studies (JNCBS)* 1, 1, no. Buddhist Studiast (2018): 1–30. [https://ibc-library.thanhsiang.org/files/public/Journal of Nāṇasaṃvara Centre \(JNCBS\) - 2018.pdf#page=11](https://ibc-library.thanhsiang.org/files/public/Journal%20of%20Nāṇasaṃvara%20Centre%20(JNCBS)%202018.pdf#page=11).
- Ardiyani, Luh Putu Cita, Kadek Suciani, and Krisna Sukma Yogiswari. "Tubuh Dan Jiwa Manusia Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Rene Descartes." *Vidya Darsan* 2, no. 2 (2021): 136–42. <https://doi.org/10.55115/vidyadarsan.v2i2.1399>.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2012.
- Choiriyah, Ngismatul. "Rasionalisme Rene Descartes." *Anterior Jurnal* 13, no. 2 (2014): 237–43. <https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v13i2.284>.
- Das, Pujarini, and Vineet Sahu. "Freedom of the Will and No-Self in Buddhism." *Springer Journal* 35, no. 1 (2017): 121–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40961-017-0125-7>.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The Selfish Gene: Gen Egois*. Edited by K. El-Kazhiem. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017.
- Descartes, Rene. *Diskursus & Metode: Mencari Kebenaran Dalam Ilmu-Ilmu Pengetahuan*. Edited by Ahmad Faridl Ma'ruf. Bantul: IRCiSoD, 2015.
- . *Meditation on First Philosophy: Meditasi Filsafat Pertama*. Edited by Herlianto A. Bantul: Indoliterasi, 2023.
- . *Principles of Philosophy*. Edited by John Veitch, Stave Harris, and Charles Franks. 10th ed. Oxford: University Ave, 2003.
- . *Rene Descartes Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*. Edited by Roger Ariew. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000.
- Hantrais, Linda. *Comparative Research Methods: An Introduction for Students and Researchers*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021.
- Harvey, Peter. "The Conditioned Co-Arising of Mental and Bodily Processes within Life and Between Lives." In *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, 46–68. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

- Hoang, Nguyen Quy. "The Doctrine of Not-Self (Anattā) in Early Buddhism." *International Review of Social Research* 9, no. 1 (2019): 18–27.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/irsr-2019-0003>.
- Holder, John J. "A Survey of Early Buddhist Epistemology." In *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, 223–40. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Kheminda, Ashin. *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 1: Kesadaran*. Edited by Laksana Feronica and Magdalena Wartono. 3rd ed. Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihārī Buddhist Studies, 2021.
- . *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha: Manual Abhidhamma (Ajaran Tentang Realitas Tertinggi) Bab 2: Faktor-Faktor Mental*. Edited by Feronica Laksana and Magdalena Wartono. 2nd ed. Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihārī Buddhist Studies, 2019.
- . *Kamma: Pusaran Kelahiran & Kematian Tanpa Awal*. Edited by Feronica Laksana and Magdalena Wartono. 2nd ed. Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihārī Buddhist Studies, 2020.
- Kusaladhamma, Ashin. *Kronologi Hidup Buddha*. Edited by Hendra Widjaja. Bahasa Ind. Jakarta Barat: Ehipassiko Foundation, 2015.
- Lavine, Thelma Z. *Descartes: Masa Transisi Bersejarah Menuju Dunia Modern*. Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003.
- Medhācitto, Tri Saputra. "A Critical Response to The Question 'Did the Buddha Teach Rebirth?'" *Jurnal Pencerahan* 15, no. 1 (2022): 1–6.
<https://doi.org/10.58762/jupen.v15i1.66>.
- Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu, and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Translator). "Majjhima Nikāya 140: Dhātuvibhanga Sutta." DhammaCitta, 2013.
<https://dhammacitta.org/teks/mn/mn140-id-bodhi.html>.
- Poliakoff, Albert. 1 Planes of existence as per Burmese interpretation. Myanmar: Religion, issued 2019. <https://creativecommons.org>.
- Riani, Friska, Tira Watie, Ruth Elisabeth, Beta Selvina, Amisa Bella, and Yokomina Waromi. "Philosophy of Idealism and Its Contribution to Christian Counseling and Leadership: A Meaningful Process." *Indonesia Journal of Christian Education and Theology* 1, no. 2 (2022): 90–97. <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijcet.v1i2.2268>.
- Sayādaw, Mahāsi. *Khotbah Utama Tentang Pemutaran Roda Dhamma: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Edited by Suwendah Su, Karuna Adi Sasmita, and Shela Octavia. Bahasa Ind. Jakarta Barat: Dhammavihārī Buddhist Studies, 2020.
- Thamrin, Chaidir (Translator). *Abhidhamma-Piṭaka: Dhammasaṅgāṇī*. Edited by Chaidir Thamrin. Bahasa Ind. Medan: Indonesia Tipitaka Center (ITC), 2018. <https://itc->

tipitaka.org/assets/tipitaka/Dhammasangani Full.pdf.

Thanissaro, Bhikkhu (Translator). “Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta: Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 22.59).”

DhammaCitta, 2009. <https://dhammadcitta.org/teks/sn/sn22/sn22.059-id-than.html>.

———. “Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN 56:11).”

dhammadatalks.org. Accessed July 11, 2023.

https://www.dhammadatalks.org/suttas/SN/SN56_11.html#container.

Thera, Ñāṇamoli (Translator). “Majjhima Nikāya 135: Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta.”

Access to Insight, 1994.

Walshe, Maurice (Translator). “Mahānidāna Sutta: Dīgha Nikāya 15 (DN 15:29).”

DhammaCitta, 2015. <https://dhammadcitta.org/teks/dn/dn15-id-walshe.html>.

Yimsakul, Pattama. “The Chomskyan Paradigm Shift of Growing Language in the Mind/Brain: A Validation of the 'Nama (Mind)-Rupa (Body) Hypothesis.” *Journal of Thai Interdisciplinary Research* 14, no. 3 (2019): 27–34.

[https://dept.npru.ac.th/rdi/data/files/205141-Article Text-633588-1-10-20190724.pdf](https://dept.npru.ac.th/rdi/data/files/205141-Article%20Text-633588-1-10-20190724.pdf).

Yimsakul, Pattama, Punwalai Kewara, and Chalong Tubsree. “The Testing of Nama

(Mind) – Rupa (Body) Hypothesis in Second Language Acquisition.” *Dhonburi*

Rajabhat University Journal 14, no. 1 (2019): 228–35. <https://so02.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/journaldru/article/view/253557>.

Yogiswari, Krisna Sukma. “Keraguan Kritis: Descartes.” *Jurnal Sanjivani* 10, no. 1 (2019):

45–52. <https://doi.org/10.25078/sjf.v10i1.1631..>