

# The personalist vs. the naturalist viewpoint

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The Personalist vs. the Naturalist Viewpoint Addie Todal Northcentral University RENE DESCARTES (1595-1650) " I am thinking therefore I exist" From the Discourse on Method The " Father of Modern Philosophy," certainly left me thinking about these six profound words from the quote above, " I am thinking therefore I exist " I am thinking how Descartes existed in the Zeitgeist of France, Holland, (Dutch Republic) Germany and sadly Sweden. I found interesting how such a versatile man has influenced our educational world with strong meditations of first philosophy that continue to be a standard text at most universities with in the philosophy departments. What is striking to me after doing this research for this assignment, how he is known for his philosophical ways of thinking and yet this is a psychology course? I now understand that his internal nature and external drive led him down a path of various fields. As I define the differences between personalistic versus naturalistic in reference to Descartes scientific historical contributions and the cultural times of his day. This seems to inspire a new zeitgeist such as empiricism, which clearly requires knowledge from the past and through observation that could give insight that would reflect the changing nature of the scientific inquiry. In considering the historical development of scientific psychology two main views of the historical progress the field of science have emerged: personalistic theory and naturalistic theory. The personalistic theory often times called the " great man" theory holds that a chosen few individuals are unique in that they are endowed with an extraordinary inner quality giving them the ability to do extraordinary things. When applied to scientific history it is believed that this quality allows them to shape the course of that history with nothing more than their own ideas. This internal power is most commonly referred to as "

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genius". It is the belief that man himself is a free agent who chooses his behaviors to not only shape his own life but also the lives of those whom his behavior affect (E. G. Boring, 1950). Personalistic views are still widely held even today. 1. Personalistic theory— The view that progress and change in scientific history are attributable to the ideas of unique individuals. This definition which is indeed the key component to the works of Descartes and his fundamental upbringing clearly indicates how education and his free thinking scientific ideas can cease the old fashion ideas of rigid ways. By thinking this advanced way and certainly ahead of his time, the transitions Descartes used and applied to the modern era of science. He was able to apply the idea or concept of the clock work mechanisms to the human body. As stated in the book, " he inaugurated the era of modern psychology. " The naturalistic theory, on the other hand, holds that history is shaped and is not changed not by individuals, however, but by the times in which those individuals lived. It is called or referred to as the notion that " the times", this is what makes it possible for the ideas of individuals to be accepted or rejected, heard or stifled. The focus, then, of naturalistic theory is on the social conditions prevalent at the time an individual puts forth an idea or ideas that influence the flow of history and can change the course as well for future generations to come. 2. Naturalistic theory- The view that progress and change in scientific history are attributable to the Zeitgeist, which makes a culture receptive to some ideas but not others. The concept of Zeitgeist relates to these two words as a means to end for this era that Descartes lived in. The achievements and especially the contributions of Descartes had progressed with a different viewpoint than his counterparts. He had charisma as well a mystical being that reflected his personality and his work as well as <https://assignbuster.com/the-personalist-vs-the-naturalist-viewpoint/>

his private life. Descartes dramatic discoveries and theories altered the course of history and for this reason his Zeitgeist changes the naturalistic viewpoint as well. The Naturalistic theory that the times makes the person who they are and what they become are valid, yet sometimes this idea can clash or even be an excellent combination. I think Descartes was a man of combinable talents. There is a time and a place for everything and if it is unorthodox and not completely at peace with one another, then the viewpoint are at odds and change is slow and the Zeitgeist will cease to exist for the moment. It will resurface at some point in the next generations to come, as for Descartes; he never saw it in his own time. Descartes was able to change the ideas in his head, he changed the conditions as his work was progressing, however the surroundings of his cultural climate did not change as fast as he did and for this I think he suffered greatly. He responded to the internal changes in his own body, because he was a genius in his own right mind; however the cultural times could not see his rapid responses to scientific change and this lead him down a path of silent motivation. As I explain about Descartes life with and without too much detail, I can see how his life had influenced him in his personal Zeitgeist. Rene Descartes was born into a French family who felt education was the only form of expanding the mind and soul. His education was influenced by the Jesuits, the Jesuits work in education, they are noted for their intellectual research, and cultural pursuits. Jesuits, also promote social justice and ecumenical dialogue. With this said, since Descartes was well educated from 1606-1614, by the Jesuits, The theories and values certainly impacted the Zeitgeist notions of Descartes formal reasoning. Descartes also received a Doctor of Law degree in 1616; I think having this law degree may not be important to some extent, <https://assignbuster.com/the-personalist-vs-the-naturalist-viewpoint/>

but I mention this because I think his use of this law education had some impact on his motivational thinking which inspired and led him to a number of significant contributions, where his creative thinking was pursued with great intellect. The analysis that his personalistic theory viewpoint gave him the opportunity to enrich his mind at such a young age while traveling throughout Europe. This opportunity gave him the chance to study the three most important fields that were a testament to him was to become a world renowned Mathematician, a scientist and most important, a philosopher. It certainly was non debatable, that Descartes was the first major philosopher in the modern era to make an earnest effort to defeat skepticism. His views about knowledge and certainty, as well as his views about the relationship between mind and body have been very influential over the last three centuries. The irony of his education he later states is that Descartes claims that his education gave him little substance and that only mathematics had given him certain knowledge. In this lament he joins a chorus of seventeenth century philosophers including Bacon, Hobbes and Locke. Math gave him a sense of achievement, because the math he liked was geometry which has structure and value which can be interpreted and used into a culture which man is thinking on how to use both the personalistic and naturalistic way of life. When I see the word philosophy, I see it as exercising one's mind which no one can visual see with their own eyes. I only think they can feel with their soul. With this in mind, I think the personalistic theory along with the scientific theory has Descartes using his achievements and contribution's changed the viewpoint, the progress and redirected the course of philosophy that we still hold in high standard today. If Rene Descartes would have not written some of his famous doctrines in the various fields, such as

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mathematics and psychology, which would no doubt prove his intelligence, his creative talents and his energetic quietness. The naturalistic theory reflects the person who makes the times change in the outer circle around him, but keeps the inner circle his personalistic theory or viewpoint. I see how Rene Descartes took both theories and possibly this is where he came up with this new psychological concept of the mind —body problem. One cannot work without the other. If Descartes inner circle grew faster than the outside circle — all of the society on the outside would be effected by the intellectual radical changes in the fields of math, philosophy or even psychology, the outer circle or naturalistic society would certainly punish him or shun his theories as fast as the words came out. Descartes personal life played a dramatic and drastic role simultaneously, he lived a very secret and dark world within himself, he was not in strong health and preferred to sleep late in the morning, and while having these attributes which he kept all his life, the gift of his creative thinking (mind) impacted his thought process the rest of his days. Descartes life was that of pure and simple pleasures. He had lost the love of life, his daughter Francine at the age of 5, which caused him to be inconsolable and would have a profound toll on his mind and body. He became a recluse by moving so many times to have a strong desire for solitude. Descartes sank into a world of dreams and experiments in dogs (poor Pavlov). The concept of knowledge was so powerful in his mind that devotion to work and humanities was far greater than women, society, and wealth. But, the most important virtue to Descartes was no matter where he was, he had to be in close proximity to a roman catholic church and a university. Prayer and intellectual advancement seemed to be the core values of Descartes. He put his faith into his work to produce famous ideas, <https://assignbuster.com/the-personalist-vs-the-naturalist-viewpoint/>

research topics. Descartes contemporaries felt their support was of no value to him and his ideas they could not fathom or employ. Again, it seems that the personalistic and naturalistic theories are a new wave of the times. The wave is coming too fast to the shore and it seems everyone will drown with all these new thoughts and ideas. The mechanism and the mind-body problem was one of Descartes most important work for he felt he had to attempt to re-resolve this theory. Descartes knew that this mind-body problem has been around for centuries, Descartes just enhanced the theories that the mechanisms of the body and mind must flow in one direction. Descartes creative mind did not like to wake up at 5 am to tutor the Queen of Sweden, she insisted on this and because of this early hour, he caught pneumonia and died. He knew before he left it was not a wise decision; however the obligation he felt to the Royal family outweighed the consequences. I feel that this also could be interpreted as a reflex action theory, the precursor to the behavior stimulus theory. Ironically, the behavior was that he left the country to go tutor the Queen, the stimulus was he caught pneumonia and died. Every action has a reaction. Descartes quiet solitude showed the universe his talent and his persistence and to promote the nature of the body as a whole piece and not as an individual object. The mind is related to the body and all the physical surroundings matter to the body. One cannot function without the other. Descartes described this theory as a machine that can be governed or observed as a whole operation of movement, since he excelled in physics, the laws of gravity and movement gave way to the ultimate extension of the mind and its own function. That one person cannot exist without the other. As his theories continue to grow, his zeitgeist also continues to grow their own roots and developed into a world of

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physiological evolution. The other contemporary theories felt that challenging the human body in ways it has not done before could be tested on functions and movement. Descartes saw this as a different approach; He began to assess the brain, not as a living organ, but as a mind that has a thought process which is considered as non-material. The mind does lack and physical substance or space, no being, no soul — it is considered automata. Descartes idea certainly did affect the zeitgeist of his times; the doctrine of ideas had a philosophical influence on the expansion of contemporary psychology. His new ideas certainly looked at two key concepts such as: derived and innate, he took these ideas and extended the schemes to the next level. His work was a catalyst for further empirical works in psychology. Descartes five notable systematic contributions would leave an indelible lifelong zeitgeist in his era as well as the centuries ahead of him. 1.) The mechanic conception of the body. 2.) The theory of reflex action. 3.) The mind —body interaction. 4.) The localization of mental functions in the brain. 5.) The doctrine of innate ideas. A man so brilliant in his own times (Zeitgeist), gave the world so much knowledge and courage to see the change in the way a man thinks, and rose to the highest level of academic intelligence for his time, sank to the lowest form of death by default. The tools that I will use throughout this course that will benefit me is a spreadsheet from Microsoft Office, I will use the spreadsheet to make a comparison of each person that I will write about and apply their Zeitgeist to my signature assignment. I feel this will be a benefit to me because I like simple and concise. References 1. . Boring, E. G. (1950). History of experimental psychology. 2. Schultz, S. E., & Schultz, D. P. (2011). A history of modern psychology (10th ed.).

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