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\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

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1. [Introduction](#) \n \t
2. [Hume's Self Ideology](#) \n \t
3. [Difference between Hume's Self Ideology and Descartes Cogito](#) \n \t
4. [Application of Hume Self Ideology Concepts](#) \n \t
5. [Works Cited](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Introduction

The ideology of self in philosophy is a term that is used to describe various essential characteristics that combine together to form a unique personality different from other individuals.

The concept of self is described as central to human development and is responsible for two very important functions i. e. self which is regarded as the point from which the unconscious thoughts emanate and also the point from which purposeful thought are processed (Myers). As such the concept of self in a person is best exhibited through observation of other people's actions, behaviors and characters which are determined by the brain from where they originate. Incidentally this is the concept from which the science of psychology is based which is best exemplified by the theory of behaviorism: The purpose of this paper is to analyze the concepts of self ideology as advanced by Hume and their relevance in context of other theories on the same subject of self.

Hume's Self Ideology

Hume's conception of self ideology is based on a broad theory that is referred as bundle theory which he was the original founder; according to bundle theory all objects are described to consist of "collection of properties" that make up the whole object, these properties are what Hume is referring as "bundles" (Hume). It is from this principle that Hume advances the self ideology which he asserts is made up of collections of perceptions that a person has on oneself which are shaped by various experiences of that particular individual. These human experiences that Hume's refers as bundles of perceptions are described to be constantly changing with time which also ultimately changes the self identity of the person (Hume).

The underlying concept behind David Hume self ideology is the belief that all knowledge that are gained through the mind is entirely through the experience alone (Bastick). What Hume means by this assertion is that three critical aspects are required in observation of objects by a person that involve sensation, perception and experience; perception is attained by the senses and previous experience is necessary for the brain to complete the complex pieces of the object (Bastick). Perception is by far one of the core areas of cognition, it is a process that involves psychophysics, attention, pattern recognition, object recognition and time sensation. It is the process that the mind undergoes to decipher and make sense of objects in very systematic way in order to analyze them (Bastick). General perception refers to the routine brain process of analyzing everyday mundane occurrences and is very broad in the way that it seeks to understand and define this thought process. The implication is that all thought processes as well as

observed objects can be traced back to their specific elements that the brain relied upon in order to construct them. This raises fundamental difficulties when the same concept is applied to thought process which is found to be very different from object perception. Because perception, ideas and feelings are abstract forms that cannot be broken further for purposes of their simplification Hume advances the concept of self to explain this.

The idea of self according to Hume is described as “ bundle or collection of different perceptions” (Hume). To understand what Hume meant by “ bundle of perception” we need to look at how Hume describes the mind in the way it process images of object (Hume). Before perception can occur the brains must first go through a process referred as sensation; sensation and perception are two sides of the same coin, it’s a process that tries to investigate and explain the observed association between stimulation and perception as it occurs in a person brain. Sensation refers to the process that occurs in person’s brains which involve stimulating the different senses in the brains in order to elicit desired outcomes (Murphy). Sensation is the part of the thought process that occurs before recognition and understanding takes place, it’s the preliminary stage that enables perception to take place. The combination of this process leads to understanding which is what Hume describes as “ experience” that also determines the self of the person (Hume).

Hume determines that self is observed in similar way just like the process of observing an abject as described above but in this case no reconstruction can be retraced since the elements of self and perceptions are inherently different from each other (Murphy). In fact what Hume claims is that humans

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do not exist but are products of combination of various perceptions that are observable by the self which is itself stripped of all form of perceptions. It is this premise that makes Hume to conclude in Treatise that he is not even fully satisfied by his idea of self after observing that “ we are never intimately conscious of anything but a particular perception; man is a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity and are in perpetual flux and movement” (Hume). To fully understand Hume’s self ideology it is worth comparing it with another notable form of self ideology that has been advanced by another authority on the subject Rene Descartes.

Difference between Hume’s Self Ideology and Descartes Cogito

This ideology of self as advanced by Hume is very different from Descartes model of self; according to Descartes the self ideology concept has its roots from four themes that summarizes his contributions to the branch of psychology; human development, model of the mind, method of inquiry and self and society from which he develops the renown “ Cogito, ergo sum” (Moskowitz). The self ideology described by Descartes infers that Cogito is the only aspect that could not be doubted; “ I think, therefore I am” summarizes Cogito, ergo sum as envisioned by Descartes (Moskowitz).

The model of the mind theme that Descartes describes has two aspects; innate ideas and dualism of mind and body (Moskowitz). The dualism of mind and body referred by Descartes meant that the human thought process and the physical element are separate distinct elements that only coexist together while innate ideas are inherently found to be present in some

thinking processes of the mind (Newman 1997). Some of the examples that exhibit Descartes concept of innate ideas are Cogito, belief of omnipotence God, mathematical ideas and ideas on substances. On the other hand Hume's self ideology contests the existence of innate ideas in human minds and asserts that human experience is the single factor that makes up the mind and therefore the self (Hume).

The major difference between Hume's ideology on self and Descartes ideology therefore are in the areas of belief and causation & effect.

According to Hume all mind processes including beliefs are shaped by previous experiences; analysis of Descartes self ideology shows that belief is attributed to innate ideas which he describes as ideas that are natural which any person is probably born with (Moskowitz). The concept of mind as described by Descartes was a point of contention that Hume sought to discredit through the application of modus ponens and modus tollens logics which appeared to fault the premises that Descartes advanced in his self ideology.

Application of Hume Self Ideology Concepts

This observation that Hume described concerning the mind provided the first groundwork for empiricism which is the branch of science that is concerned with the study of how the mind learns through experience (Myers). It is from this early principles of empiricism that Hume had advanced that would later contribute to the modern day behaviorism psychology. The self ideology concept as advanced by Hume was significant in influencing current theories in the field of behavioral psychology. However Hume contribution to the

behaviorism emphasized experience as the only function of knowledge in mind. It is probably this concept that provided the foundation of B.

F Skinner experiments on behaviorism theory that relied on the concept of “reinforcement” as a crucial element in the equation of human behavior science in psychology (Myers). This element in the context of behaviorism theory states that “the consequences of a behavior determine whether it will be more or less likely to occur again” which would imply an element of experience which is central to Hume self ideology (Myer). It was a conclusion that B. F Skinner arrived after years of many experiments on animal behaviors that was also found to be true to humans which formed his foundation for his work titled “The Behavior of Organisms” (Myers). Today this behaviorism theory is one of the most developed and reliable theories of psychology because of its methodology and approach that is evident in human behavior as well as in animals. The relevant of behaviorism theory with empiricism principles as advanced by Hume is that it provides evidence of the role of experience in learning and indeed confirms that brain largely learns through experience as well.

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