DAVID HUME'S CONCEPTION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY AND SELF: IMPLICATIONS FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract.
The concept of identity is inherently relational and contextual, implying a shared sense of sameness or oneness with others within a specific context or domain. Identity encompasses the distinctive characteristics that define an individual or are shared among members of a particular society or group. David Hume, an English empiricist, argues that there is no enduring self, and consequently, no subsisting identity. However, an examination of human nature reveals that individuals are shaped by their cultural context. The environment and culture play a significant role in molding an individual's identity. This study challenges Hume's position by exploring the concept of cultural identity. It posits that dismissing the notion of a subsisting self or personal identity undermines the significance of culture, socialization, and the establishment of rules and principles that govern human behavior. If there is no enduring self, it is illogical to establish rules, laws, and principles for individuals to follow. Using a hermeneutical approach, this study aims to demonstrate that the existence of rules, laws, and principles implies the presence of a subsisting self. The work concludes that these guidelines as established and followed suggests that there is an enduring self that can comprehend and adhere to them.

Keywords: Personal identity, culture, collective identity, self.

Introduction.
The concept of identity is complex and multifaceted, holding different meanings for individuals depending on the context. According to Rumens, "identity refers to the distinctive characteristics that define an individual or are shared among members of a particular social group."[1] In psychology and sociology, identity encompasses a person's conception and expression of their individuality or group affiliations such as social identity, collective identity and or cultural identity. Identity is inherently comparative in nature as it emphasizes the shared degree of sameness or oneness with others in a particular area or on a given point. It is also understood as being both relational and contextual in its various ramifications, such as social groups, culture and experiences.
Social identity as defined by Turner and oaks is the aspect of an individual self-concept derived from perceived members in a relevant social group.[2] Collective identity on its own depicts a person's perceived membership in a social group. The term identity is also aligned to the concept of cultural identity which can be expressed through certain styles of clothing or other aesthetic markers, while cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture.

[1] Rummens, Joanna. 1993. *Personal Identity and Social Structure in Sint Maartin/Saint Martin: A Plural Identities Approach. Amsterdam: Thela Thesis*
[2] Dunignam, B. n.d. *Bundle Theory.*

Recent studies have explored the complexities of cultural and group identity revealing the diverse ways in which individual's identify themselves. The understanding of individual identity has evolved, recognizing that individuals comprise multiple identities shaped by factors such as location, gender, race, rationality, language, sexuality, religious beliefs, ethnicity, aesthetics, and body marks. There is a norm now that every individual has one form of identity or the other. However, the Scottish Empiricist philosopher David Hume challenges this notion of identity. In his perception there is no subsisting self; he posits instead that, there is only a bundle, that "the mind is merely a bundle of perceptions without deeper unity or cohesion, related only by resemblance, succession and causation."[3]

The Self and Personal Identity in Hume

David Hume was a Scottish philosopher and essayist whose radical philosophical empiricism, skepticism and naturalism left an indelible mark on modern philosophy with his empiricist, skeptical and naturalistic views. Hume sought to establish as evident in his seminal work, a treatise of Human nature (1739) alongside John Locke, George Berkeley, Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes.[4] Hume held in his philosophical framework that passion, rather than reason governs human behavior, he rejects the existence of innate ideas. He argued against the existence of inmate ideas, postulating that humans can only know the objects of their experience and the relations of ideas: he further challenges the notion of inductive reasoning and causality contending that they cannot ultimately be rationally justified. Prominent among Hume's key several tenets is his conception of the self. He denies the existence of a unified, coherent self, instead, that humans only experience a bundle of sensations and that the self is nothing more than this bundle of causally-created perceptions.

Hume's thoughts on human freedom is also noteworthy. He holds that causal determinism is fully compatible with human freedom. Drawing extensively from the thought of Locke,[5] Hume names the basic contents of the mind and that which the human being is immediately and directly aware of as "perceptions". Hume's empiricist ideology emphasizes that simple impression, such as colors, shapes and smells, serves as a fundamental building blocks of thought and experience. Corresponding to each simple impression is a simple idea. Humans can also form complex ideas by combining simple ones. These perceptions are what John Locke described as "whatsoever the mind perceives in itself or is the immediate objects of perception, thought or understanding". These perceptions, Hume went on to divide into two, namely impressions and ideas.

While impressions relate directly to the senses, ideas relate to thinking, Impressions are further divided into two, namely sensation and reflection. Impressions of sensations derive from the senses, while impressions of reflection derive from the experiences of the mind, such as feeling emotion. The difference between impressions and ideas is simply a matter of forcefulness and vivacity. Lacewing observes that for Hume, ideas are "faint copies of impressions and therefore less forceful and lovely than impression"[6]. Hume further states that ideas are copies of impressions, claiming that just as there are ideas by claiming that disease and madness can make ideas of reflection (like the idea of emotion). Hume attempts to qualify his claim that

[3]Turner, John, and Penelope Oaks, 1986. *"The Significance of the Social Identity Concept for Social Psychology with Reference to Individualism, Interactionism and Social Influence," British Journal of Social Psychology 25 (3): 237-252,*

[4] Atherton, Margaret, ed. 1999. *The Empiricists: Critical Essays on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.*

[5] Locke, John. 1974. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Edited by P.H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press.*

[6]Lacewing, Michael. n.d. *Hume on the Relation between Impressions and Ideas. Royal Holloway, University of London.*

impressions are livelier than ideas by claiming that disease and madness can make ideas as lively as impressions, stating "we are liable to confuse and make mistakes about ideas, but this is more difficult with impressions.[7]

Hume, expounding his empiricist ideology, maintains that the basic building blocks off all thought and experience are simple impression such as single colours, single shapes, single smells and the like. To each of the simple impression, there is a corresponding idea. Complex ideas here can be seen as those ideas that seem to correspond to nothing in sense experience. For Hume, only simple ideas are copies of impressions, but complex ideas are composed of simple ideas. An example here is the unicorn. One has different experiences of horses and horns and so they can be combined.

There is a common connection between different thoughts or ideas of the mind and their appearance in memory or imagination. Even in fleeting thoughts and loose conversation, their connections can be observed. No matter the language that is used, the case is that different ideas are connected.
Hume identifies three principles of connection among ideas; resemblance, contiguity (relationship in time and space) and cause and effect. These connections govern the associations between different thoughts and conversations, Hume notes;

> *In our more serious thinking or discourse this is so observable that any particular thought, which breaks in upon the regular tract or chain of ideas, is immediately remarked and rejected. And even in our wildest and most wandering reveries, nay in our very dreams, we shall find, if we reflect, that the imagination ran not altogether, at adventures, but that there was still a connection upheld among the different ideas which succeed each other. Were the loosest and freest conversation to be transcribed, there would immediately be observed something which connected it in all its transitions.[8]*

In this connection through resemblance, a picture would naturally lead the thoughts to its original: contiguity implies that the mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry concerning others: and cause and effect would be exemplified in that if one thinks of a wound, it will sure lead to a reflection on the pain which follows it: Mill writes that "Some ideas are by frequency and strength of association so closely combined that they cannot be separated; if one exists, the other exists along with it in spite of whatever, effort we make to disjoin them"[9]. This thought of idea and their connections runs through most of Hume's work and other ramifications of it are subsequently examined.

Questioning the self and personal identity, Hume argues that some philosophers imagine that one is every moment intimately conscious of what one calls the self, that its existences and continuation in existence is strongly and directly felt: and that one is simplicity. However, Hume avers that all these positive assertions are contrary to the very experience which is pleaded for them and that no one has any idea of the self in the way it has been explained above.

Hume maintains that it is impossible to answer this question without an absurdity.[10] For Hume, if the idea of the self must pass as clear and intelligible, it must come from a particular

[7] Hume, D (1975). *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.*
[8] .Hume, D (1975). *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.*

[9] .Hume, D 1975 *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.*
[10] Mill, James S. 1869. *Analysis of the Human Mind*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer.

impression. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. Hume continues that:

> *If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole cause of our lives: since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is not impression constant and invariable pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions or from any other, that the idea of the self is derived: and consequently there is no such idea.*[11]

David Hume advocates the bundle theory of personal identity; Maurier states that the bundle theory is the position that "the mind itself far from being an independent power is simply a bundle of perceptions, linked by the relations of causation and resemblance. Succinctly put, the empirically warranted idea of the self is just the idea of such a bundle.[12] This position has been defended by positivist interpreters who see Hume as suggesting that term such as "self", "person" or "mind" referred to collections of "sense-contents" [13]

David Hume, in his skepticism, rejects the notion of identity overtime. There are no underlying objects, there are no "persons" that continue to exist over time. Hume's argument can be syllogistically represented thus:

i. All ideas are ultimately derived from impressions.
ii. So, the idea of a persisting "self" is ultimately derived from impressions.
iii. But, no impression is a persisting thing.
iv. Therefore, there cannot be any persisting idea of "self"

For Hume, Locke was correct when he says that memory has something to do with identity, because we would never be able to infer causation if we had no memories. Summarily, all that one perceives are distinct, separate, successive impression.

However, when the mind receives a series of uninterrupted impressions that are similar, it assumes that the only thing that is changing is time, and not the impressions themselves. The mind then mistakenly infers that this is underlying series of impressions is itself a persisting individual thing, such that what is called "identity" is just a union created in the imagination.

Implications for Cultural Identity

Hume's conception of personal identity has significant implications for cultural identity. According to Hume, personal identity is a dynamic and complex construct, shaped by various factors such as perception, memory, and imagination[14]. This perspective can be applied to cultural identity, highlighting its fluid, contextual, and multifaceted nature.

Cultural Identity as a Dynamic Construct

Research supports the idea that cultural identity is a dynamic construct, influenced by historical, social, and cultural factors[15]. Individuals may identify with multiple cultural groups,

[11] Hume, D. 1985. *A Treatise of Human Nature*

[12] Maurer, Armand. 2013. *Western Philosophy: Basic Science of Human Nature in Hume. Toronto: Political Institute of Mediaeval Studies*

[13] Maurer, Armand. 2013. *Western Philosophy: Basic Science of Human Nature in Hume. Toronto: Political Institute of Mediaeval Studies*

[14] Hume, D 1739. *A treatise of human nature.*

[15] Erikson, Eric H. 1968. *Identity: Youth and crises*. New York: Norton

and their cultural identity may shift depending on context[16]. Cultural identity can be negotiated and performed through language, customs, and practices[17].

Challenges to Essentialism

Hume's view challenges essentialist notions of cultural identity, which posit that cultural identity is fixed and essential[18]. Instead, cultural identity is complex and multifaceted, shaped by various contexts and experiences[19]. Recognizing the complexities of cultural identity can help us better understand the ways in which individuals negotiate and perform their cultural affiliations.

Culture plays a significant role in the lives of people the worldwide. As a crucial element of life, culture unifies and reinforces the population that makes up the human society. It is a useful aspect of life and living. It serves as a symbol of identity amongst the generality of the masses. The relevance of culture in any nation cannot be undermined.

Cultural identity can be expressed through styles of clothing or other aesthetic markers, and other symbols. It emphasizes more on the identity of a group or culture or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture. Cultural identity is similar to and has overlaps with, but is not synonymous with, politics. Various modern cultural studies and social theories have investigated cultural identity. In recent decades, a new form of identification has emerged which breaks down the understanding of the individual as a coherent whole subject into a collection of various cultural identifiers. These cultural identifiers may be the result of various conditions, including: location, gender, race, history, national, language, sexuality, religious beliefs, ethnicity and aesthetics. The divisions between cultures can be very fine in some parts of the world, especially places such as Canada or the United States, where the population is ethnically diverse and social unity is based primarily on common social values and beliefs.

Pratt notes that as a historical reservoir", culture is an important factor in shaping identity.[20] Some critics of cultural identity argue that the preservation of cultural identity, being based upon difference, is a divisive force in society, and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship. Brown maintains that when considering practical association in international society, states may share an inherent part of their 'make up' that gives common ground and an alternative means of identifying with each other.[21]

Singh highlights the interplay between cultural identity and new media. Rather than necessarily represent an individual's interaction within a certain group, cultural identity may be defined by the social network of people imitating and following the social norms as presented by the media.[22] Accordingly, instead of learning behavior and knowledge from cultural/religious groups, individuals may be learning these social norms from the media to build on their cultural identity.

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[16]Hall, Stuart. 1990. *Cultural identity and diaspora. In Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence and Wishart*

[17] Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity.*

[18] Giltroy, Paul. 1993. *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.*

[19] Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The location of culture.*

[20] Pratt, Nicola, 2005. *Identity, Culture and Democratization: The Case of Egypt Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner.*

[21]Brown, Chris. 2001. *Understanding International Relations.*

[22] Sing, C. I. 2010. *New Media and Cultural Identity*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press

Humans sometimes do not have memory of these critical moments. According to Jordania , human ability to follow the rhythm in big groups, to sing together in harmony, dance for many hours and enter the ecstatic state, as well as the tradition of body painting, were all the parts of first universal rituals, that were primarily developed as the means to change each individual neural activity (through the release of neurochemicals,) in order to reach the state of collective identity. In this state the needs for the group survival were overriding the instinct of individual survival.[23]

Recommendation.

This perspective can inform research on: 1. Self-perception 2. Social identity 3. Cultural identity

By exploring the dynamic nature of self and identity, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of human behavior and development.

Conclusion

Some have criticized Hume's bundle theory interpretation of personal identity. It is argued that distinct selves can have perceptions that stand in relations of similarity and causality with one another. Thus, perception must already come packaged into distinct "bundles" before they can be associated according to the relations of similarity and causality. In other words, the mind must already possess a relationship alone. Rather than answering an ontological question as is widely believed. Strawson suggests that Hume might have been answering an epistemological question about the casual origin of our concept of the self. [24]

Bring this to bear on the issue of cultural identity. It has been well argued that a man without culture is one without identity. Every human being is to a large extent, is a product of an environment. Man is, in his existence, environmentally conditioned. The human being from birth thinks his first thoughts in the language and myth of his locality. He speaks first the language of his locality and continues in his development to see the world from the worldview of a group or community. The significance of culture in shaping identity is undeniable. This development can be said to be composed of bundles of successive impressions and experiences, however, in the long run, the self, molded with a particular identity subsists and that is what is presented to the outside world as the person.

Thus, it is not out of place to argue here that to agree with Hume that there is no subsisting concept of the self or personal identity is to say that even rules and principles cannot be established for human being to follow the rules and principles. And because rules and laws are promulgated, and principles established, there must be a self and personal identity which subsist for whom these rules, laws, and principles are made.

Finally, the existence of rules, laws, and principle governing human behavior implies the presence of a subsisting self and personal identity. This contradicts Hume's bundle theory**.**Hume's conception of personal identity offers valuable insights into the nature of cultural identity.

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[23]. Jordania, Joseph. 2011. *Why Do People Sing? Music in Human Evolution*. Tbilisi: Logos.

[24]. Strawson, Galen. 2011. *The Evident Connection: Hume on Personal Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

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