

CHAPTER VIII

HUME'S NOTION OF CAUSALITY : A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

HUME'S NOTION OF CAUSALITY : A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

In popular thought "cause" means something which produces something else. The commonsense belief is that there is power or activity in the cause to bring forth the effect. The source of this belief is, without doubt, the feelings of personal effort or activity and resistance which accompany changes produced by us, in our surroundings and by our surroundings in us.

The commonsense view is that causation involves a relation between two phenomena and antecedent, which are related to each other in a special manner. Moreover the effect does not simply appear after the cause but some force or power exercised by the cause compels the effect to happen. Hence there is a necessary connection between a cause and its effect. If the cause happens to be, the effect must follow. Some rationalistic Philosophers hold that the cause contains the ground of the effect. That means if we want to know why an event has taken place we have to find out its cause. Both Locke and Berkeley had criticised the commonsense conception as well as the ordinary rationalistic conception of causation. Berkeley had said that there is no more necessary connection between a cause and an effect than between a word and the thing which it signifies. Locke in agreement with commonsense but inconsistently with his empirical standpoint, had maintained that one event can cause another in virtue of some power inherent in it.

✓ David Hume undertakes to prove that the commonsense view of causation is full of serious defects and the concessions

made to commonsense in this connection by Locke and Berkeley are unwarranted. According to Hume the most fruitful method of studying the true significance of the idea of causation is to find out the original impression of which this idea is a copy.

Hume holds that what we call the effect of an event or phenomenon is simply another event or phenomenon which has been founded by us to follow the former a number of times. Causality is only a uniform temporal relation between a particular antecedent and a particular consequent. There is no necessary link or tie between the cause and the effect nor does the cause exercise any force or power in bringing about the effect. It is only custom-bred association which prompts us to expect the effect whenever we perceive the cause.

Hume's doctrine of causality occupies an important place in his system. He points out that most of our generalisations are based on causal laws and we can never hope to make statement about things or events which can not be directly experienced without appealing to such laws. "All reasonings concerning matter of fact seem to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. By means of that relation alone we can go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses". (Enquiry concerning human understanding Pg. 20). He therefore attaches great importance to the doctrine of causation and insists on a correct analysis of the causal connection.

Hume holds that it is only causation which produces such a connexion, as to give us assurance from the existence or action of one object that it was followed or preceded by any

other existence or action". He begins by observing that the power by which one object produces is not discoverable from the ideas of the two objects and that we can therefore only know cause and effect from experience, not from reasoning or reflexion. Hume's philosophy is a logical development of empiricism according to which experience is the only source of knowledge and as such whatever cannot be experienced or perceived cannot be accepted as real. From this empirical point of consideration Hume held the view of causation. To take Hume's example let us suppose that one billiard ball strikes another as a result of the impact the second billiard ball moves. There is, he asserts no power in the first ball to make the second ball move. Admittedly the movement of the second ball has been observed repeatedly to follow the impact of the first. It is for this reason that one minds, influenced by this repeated conjunction of the two events conclude that the second event will always follow the first and jump to the idea of necessary connexion. Thus, the idea of causation is simply an idea of the mind and not a fact to be proved by any rational process.

We have seen that Hume's doctrine of causality has two parts, one objective and the other subjective. The objective part says : when we judge that A causes B, what has in fact happened, so far as A and B are concerned, is that they have been frequently observed to be conjoined, i.e., A has been immediately followed by B; We have no right to say that A must be followed by B or will be followed by B on future occasions.

The subjective part says : The frequently observed conjunction of A and B causes the impression of A to cause the idea of B. Hume contends, over and over again, that the frequent conjunction of A and B gives no reason for expecting them to be conjoined in the future, but is merely a cause of this expectation. But if the objective part of the doctrine is accepted, the fact that, in the past, associations have been frequently formed in such circumstances, is no reason for supposing that they will continue, or that new ones will be formed in similar circumstances. If Hume's objective doctrine is right, we have no better reason for expectations in psychology than in the physical world.

With regard to the question of a necessary connection between a cause and its effect Hume has discussed as follows:

(1) Causation not given in experience :

Hume says, if one thing had power over another we should have some experience of this power. But in fact we experience neither of this kind, "when we look about us towards external objects we are never able in a single instance to discover any power. We only find that one does actually in fact, follow the other". We have no sensory experience of a power in the cause in virtue of which it produces the effect. Hume points out that our external perception does not provide us with any impression of which the idea of necessary connection can be said to be a copy.

(2) Causation not established by reason :

If experience is unable to discover any such power can reason discover it ? Hume answers that it is not.

(a) His first argument is based upon the difference between necessary and contingent facts. A necessary fact or a necessary relation is defined by him as one which it is impossible to conceive of differently. One cannot, for example, conceive of the relation between 7×7 and $48 \div 1$ being other than that of equality. The relation of equality between them is therefore a necessary relation. But the so-called relation of cause and effect is not of this kind. In fact, it is possible to find out what causes will have, what effects only by experience. Although we have become used to the second billiard ball moving when the first hits it. When we were first brought into the world we could very well have conceived, "that a hundred different events might as well follow from the cause". Since, then, we cannot without repeated experience find out what effect a given cause will have, causation is not based on reason.

(b) If a cause and an effect are two different events each must be really distinct and separate from the other. But if they are separate there can be no necessary connection between them. "The mind can never possibly find the effect in the supposed cause by the most accurate scrutiny In a word every effect is a distinct event from its cause".

What Hume is here denying is the notion that there is anything in the nature of a tie binding the events together.

If there is no tie, then the cause cannot possibly exert any power over the effect.

"All events seem extremely loose and separate. One event follows another but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined but never connected." The effect cannot be discovered in the cause. Again we have no sense - impression of any force or power passing from the cause to the effect. It is sometimes said that when we move the organs of our body or direct the faculties of our mind we are conscious of internal power. According to Hume such a view is untenable. We cannot explain why our will has influence over some parts of the body and not all shows that we do not really understand the nature of the force or power by which the will performs its operations. Hence it is wrong to suppose that we are conscious of any power or energy when we raise a new idea in the mind or combine several ideas. Hence there is no original impression of which the idea of power is a copy. This is therefore not a genuine idea at all.

(c) If the causal relation were a necessary one it would have to occur universally and with absolute uniformity. We should be able to know that it will be as universal as the example that 7×7 will everywhere and always make 49. But we have not similar assurance with regard to it. Although certain events in the past may have been always followed by certain other events, we do not know that similar events will be so followed in the future. For, says Hume, "past experience can be allowed to give direct and certain information of those precise objects only."

And that precise period of time, which fall under its cognisance; but why this experience should be extended to future times and to other objects, this is the main question, it is impossible that any arguments from experience can prove this resemblance of the past in the future".

(3) In the "Treatise of Human Nature", Hume offers another argument. In spite of an experience of two events following each other repeatedly without any change in the order, the nature of connection is mysterious. The relation known so far to hold between two objects is either a time relation of priority and succession or a space relation of contiguity and nearness, but from these relation we can never be sure of a causal relation between the events. In other words what is prior for what is near and contiguous may not necessarily be a cause.

(4) We can never demonstrate the necessity of a cause to every new existence, or new modification of existence. Hume says that we shall find upon examination, that every demonstration, which has been produced for the necessity of a cause is fallacious and sophistical. The proposition whatever has a beginning has also a cause of existence - is neither intuitively nor demonstrably certain.

(5) Whatever is produced without any cause is produced by nothing; or in other words has nothing for its cause. But nothing can never be a cause, no more than it can be something or equal to two right angles.

(6) According to Hume the sole contents of human knowledge and impressions and ideas, of which the latter is copied from the former. In order to establish the reality of any idea, therefore we must be in a position to point out the original impression. In his examination of the idea of causation, Hume makes the same demand - what is the impression from which this idea is derived ? He declares that after the constant conjunction of two objects, heat and flame, weight and solidity, for example, the mind is carried, or determined by habit or custom to 'believe' that the two objects in question are connected. This customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant is the impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection. Thus necessary connection rest on purely psychological basis and is not a fact that can be by any rational process.

They are still more frivolous, who say, that every effect must have a cause, because it is implied in the very idea of effect. Every effect necessarily pre-suppose a cause; effect being a relative term, of which cause is the correlative. But this does not prove, that every being must be preceded by a cause; no more than it follows, because every husband must have a wife, that therefore every man must be married.

According to Hume Causality is a cause of "Belief" only and like the judgements of value expressing certain sentiments as in ethics, all judgements of belief based exclusively on feeling. As such an idea of causality is merely a product of feeling. But this view of Hume does not appear to be a correct

approach to the study of what is real or existent. It is an undeniable fact that events known as cause and effect continue to occur at all times and in all places even though there is not any man to perceive them and feel accordingly. A tree grows out of a seed in a deep forest and that tree continues to bear flowers and fruits even though there may not be any human being to observe them feel or enjoy them in any way. How can such events be a mere cause of feeling is still a problem for Hume to justify.

C.A.M. Joad points out that the first of the argument from reason does not seem to disprove the so-called postulate of reason that every cause must have an effect. It merely demonstrates that experience is required to show us what particular effect a particular cause will have. But my inability to know without experience precisely what effects will follow from what causes does in itself prove either that relation of cause and effect is not a necessary one or that are not certain of its necessity. H

Having disposed of the doctrine that there is a necessary connection between cause and effect Hume proceeds to state more positively his own doctrine of causation. As a matter of fact the only relations that we can discover between things or events are those of contiguity and succession. Whenever we find one event following another particular prior event in a uniform manner an association between the ideas of the two events grows up in our mind and we get into the habit of believing that

whenever a particular antecedent occurs a particular consequent will follow. Belief is simply an idea of special force and vivacity. It will lead us to expect what we call an effect. Belief in necessary connection is thus simply due to what may be called 'custom-bred-association'. If we say that there is a necessary connection between the cause A and its effect B the statement will be true if we take it to mean that whenever we perceive A we are constrained to think of B which has followed it uniformly up to the present time but will not be true if we take it to mean that the object A forces or compels B to appear after it.

Necessary connection is not an affair of the reason but of the imagination. We cannot derive the effect from a cause by any a-priori reasoning. Strictly speaking belief in necessary connection is an illegitimate inference to what is utterly beyond our experience. A cause should be defined as any phenomenon which has been repeatedly observed by us to be followed by another phenomenon.

The necessary connection between causes and effects is the foundation of our inference from one to the other. Hume says, the idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression conveyed by our senses which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be derived from some internal impression or impression of reflection. After all, necessity is something, that exists in the mind not in objects. Pratiyā-samutpāda also holds that cause does not introduce effect. There is no essential connection between the cause and the

effect. It is asatkārya-vāda.

From Hume to Russell it has been a common contention that necessity is a fiction and that causality merely means invariable connection of uniformity of processes. Though necessity, should be a fiction or a myth it is certainly not a meaningless concept. Hume who presents the most effective objections to the concept of necessity, was quite certain that the concept has a meaning, since otherwise his criticisms would have been of no importance.

Hume says that the idea of causation is simply an idea of the mind and not a fact to be proved by any rational process. In short cause and effect have no necessary relationship between them.

Causation is the subject of the most extended application of Hume's methods. It is, he claimed, a complex idea. Two of its elements priority and contiguity, are accessible to the senses, but we can have no sense impression to the third necessary connection. Hume concluded that it is an internal impression of reflection from which this elusive idea is derived, a kind of compulsive expectation which leads us from a present impression to the idea of its usual associate. If in our experience two kind of event have constantly accompanied each other, association will lead us to expect an event of the second kind when we have an impression of an event of the first kind. There can be no proof of the proposition that every event has a cause, though Hume thought it true as a matter of fact and there is no logical necessity in any particular relation between a cause and

its effect. Hume shows that statements of causal connection cannot be logically necessary truths, in spite of the fact that we do attach some necessity to causal connections. After a long discussion he finds the explanation for this in the fact that causes precede their effects, are contiguous to them, and are such that there is a constant conjunction between them. Hume denied any real connection between cause and effect but tried to explain why we think that there is such. His demonstration that the causal connection is a contingent one is of the utmost importance, but his conclusions about it are skeptical. He held that there can be no real or objective justification for inference from cause to effect. He found that all inferences from the existence of one object to that of another are non-demonstrative and based on the relation of cause and effect. The terms "cause" and "effect" do not stand for any features, observed or inferred, in the objects to which they are applied.

Over and above contiguity, succession and constant conjunction, there is, Hume said, another element in our idea of cause, the idea of necessary connection, although as we have seen, Hume's microscope can find no impression corresponding to it. Therefore, Hume examined the way in which we actually discover causal relations and base inferences on them. It is, he said, a simple matter of association of ideas. Experience shows A to have been frequently followed by B and never to have occurred without B. The idea of B is therefore associated with A in a way in which no other idea is. As a result, when the idea of A occurs, the mind is determined to pass to the idea of B, and

when the impression of A occurs, it is determined not only to form the idea of B but to transfer to that idea a share of the "Vitality" of the impression of A.

Hume is interested in the causal connection because he believes that it is the only matter of fact relation that can lead us from one idea to another. Causality is not a logical or a-priori connection, but it is a connection. This assertion is of the utmost importance. There is some necessity in causal connection but it cannot be logical necessity; also, it cannot be derived from a more general necessity such as might be provided by a principle of universal causality, for Hume believes that such a principle must be contingent. Now, from the above discussion it seems that, if we strictly examine Hume's doctrine of causality, we will find that it is open to serious objections.

The main defect of the doctrine is that it is vitiated by what may be called the atomistic view of experience. Hume regards experience as consisting of isolated impressions and ideas and he asserts that there is nothing in any object which gives us any reason for going beyond it. Now as a matter of fact it is quite impossible ever to reach an isolated particular - whether it is impression or an object. What we call cause and effect, therefore, are not even to begin with isolated sense - experiences but are already bound up with each other. As a matter of fact a phenomenon is perceived as connected with one or more preceding phenomena and continued into one or more succeeding phenomena. This becomes clear when we observe a single continuous process. The very assumption that all things are loose and

separate, on which Hume builds up his theory of causation, is wrong and to establish a necessary connection between phenomena is not so difficult a matter as Hume imagines. Hume assumes that the necessary connection between cause and its effect must be a tertium quid (a third something) which can be separated from the two and perceived by itself, and since no such thing is actually experienced by us he comes to the conclusion that no such connection exists.

Hume is wrong in excluding the idea of power or force from the idea of cause. The sole argument in support of his contention is that there is no impression corresponding to the idea of power in our mind. There is nothing more certain than this that we are immediately conscious of our own activity, i.e., of doing things. His argument is that "if by consciousness we perceived any power or energy in the will, we must know this power, we must know the secret union of soul and body" or that we should be able to explain "why the will has an influence over the tongue and fingers and not over the heart and the liver" or that while moving a limb we do not know the intermediate links between the volition and the limb (*Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*) is quite irrelevant to the point at issue. The actual question is whether in controlling the course of our ideas or moving our limbs we are immediately conscious of any power or force and not whether we understand the nature of this power or the relation between our volition and the movements of our ideas or limbs. It is not a question of understanding but of experiencing something. The consciousness

of activity in ourselves, involving the use of power is a fundamental fact of experience which cannot be explained away by any means. We must therefore, admit that we have an impression of power or force. It is through muscular sensation that we derive the impression of power. It may be true that when we see a billiard ball moving as soon as another ball in motion comes into contact with it we do not see any power passing from the latter to the former we merely project our idea of power into the external phenomena but there is no/^{Reason}for thinking that such an act of projection must necessarily be erroneous.

Sometimes it is said that the popular conception of causation involves anthropomorphism and is therefore unscientific. When we say that earth attracts material things towards itself we implicitly assume that the earth experiences certain muscular sensations in the presence of those things. Hume's contribution of Philosophy, consists in this that he divested the conception of causality of anthropomorphism. Such a remark would not be correct. We may hold that we experience power through muscular sensations without holding that power and the sensation of power are identical. Hence the popular conception of causation does not necessarily involve anthropomorphism.

Again Hume asserts quite dogmatically that there is no actual impression corresponding to the so-called idea of 'necessity'. He says, we have no idea of connection at all and this word is absolutely without meaning when employed either in philosophical reasoning or common life. That Hume is quite wrong in asserting all this can be shown by reference to numerous

cases in which we unmistakably apprehend a necessary connection between two events or objects. Unless we had somehow or other an immediate apprehension of necessary connection between two phenomena a repeated observation of their successive or simultaneous appearance would never generate in us even the spurious idea of necessary connection.

Hume is not able to explain the universality of our demand for a cause, or, in other words, to tell us why we say that every event must have a cause. He mixes up two distinct beliefs, viz. the belief in the uniformity of nature and belief in causality. The belief that a particular cause is followed by a particular effect has its origin in experience but the belief that every event must have a cause cannot be traced to experience. In Kant's language the latter is a-priori and not a-posteriori.

We notice that Hume does not recognise it as a power which is existent by itself independently of any mind to perceive the same. According to him it is simply an idea of the mind formed by the perception or uncontradicted experience of an invariable succession of events. Causal connection appears to be necessary simply because two ideas have succeeded each other so frequently without contradiction that when one appears the other is immediately suggested to the mind. It is thus a case of psychological necessity and not a logical necessity based on any law or principle so far discovered.

Those who disagree with Hume maintain that 'cause' is a specific relation, which entails invariable sequence, but is

not entailed by it. Causation, Hume says, is different in that it takes us beyond the impression of our senses, and informs us of unperceived existences. As an argument, this seems invalid. We believe in many relations of time and place which we cannot perceive. We think that time extends backwards and forwards and space beyond the walls of our room. Hume's real argument is that, while we sometimes perceive relations of time and space, we never perceive causal relations, which must therefore, if admitted, be inferred from relations that can be perceived. The controversy is thus reduced to one of empirical fact : Do we or do we not, sometimes perceive a relation which can be called causal ? Hume says no.

Bertrand Russell thinks that the strongest argument on Hume's side is to be derived from the character of causal laws in physics. It appears that simple rules of the form "A causes B" are never to be admitted in science, except as crude suggestions in early stages. The causal laws by which such simple rules are replaced in well-developed sciences are so complex that no one can suppose them given in perception.

Hume is not content with reducing the evidence of a causal connection to experience of frequent conjunction; he proceeds to argue that such experience does not justify the expectation of similar conjunction in the future. As for example when we see an apple, past experience makes me expect that it will taste like an apple, not like meat; but there is no rational justification for this expectation.

Again, it is important to note that Hume has not in any justified our belief, in the necessity of the causal connection; he has merely attempted to explain the origin of the belief by giving psychological explanation, not a philosophical justification of the belief. But he has rejected all theories of occult powers in the things, so that in one sense he may be considered to have said that what we mean by calling, one thing the cause of another is that it is a uniform and contiguous antecedent of another event. To this extent his account is a reductive analysis; he analyses our notion of cause by reducing it to notions that we understand. Yet Hume can find no justification for inferring the occurrence of one event from that of another.

Hume's utilization of the empiricist criterion for detecting meaningless ideas is significantly illustrated in his criticism of the idea of "necessary connection" an idea that philosophers traditionally believed characterised the cause-effect relationship. He began by reviewing the important uses to which the notion of causation is put, acknowledging, for example, that it is the basis of our inference from present experience to future events. He then proposed to re-examine the belief of many philosophers that causation is a complex idea analyzable into spatial juxta-position, temporal succession and necessary connection. Hume readily found that ^{the} first two elements but failed completely to find a source in experience — either sensory or introspective — for the third element.

✓ An essential feature of the Humean analysis is the rejection of the thesis that a proposition such as, "Billiard ball A causes billiard ball B to move" has the same status as the proposition " $2 + 2 = 4$ ". That these propositions are not similar may be seen through an examination of their contradictories: To say that " $2 + 2 \neq 4$ " is self-contradictory; to say that "Billiard ball A does not cause billiard ball B to move" may be false, but it is not self-contradictory. Thus to admit that a mathematical relation implies a necessary connection is not to admit that a causal relation does.

Hume was drawing a sharp distinction — a distinction that was to play so decisive a role in subsequent philosophy that it cannot be overemphasized — between relations of the mathematical or logical variety and relations of the factual variety. Since, as we have seen, the causal relation is different in kind from the mathematico-logical relation, it must be factual and this relation, like any other "matter of fact", must be verified experimentally. Hume failed to discover any experimental relation corresponding to the notion of necessary connection; all he discovered was the relation of constant conjunction. At his most compromising, he was willing to say no more than that the mistake of conceiving causal relations as involving necessary connections results from a natural tendency to take a psychological habit of expectation about events to be indicative of a logical relation obtaining between the events themselves.

It was sufficiently demonstrated by David Hume that the recognition of the inherent temporality of the causal relation

of the cause and the effect as that of the antecedent and the consequent understanding of the relation presuppose the dismissal of the way of interpreting things in terms of the category of the substance. But, curiously enough, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, on the contrary held the ātma-vāda (the doctrine of substance) is not incompatible with the temporality of the causal relation, and that one may admit this doctrine and yet affirm, without contradicting oneself, that the effect is divided from the cause by a time-gap and as such is related to the latter as its consequent instead of as its mode (Parināma).

The notion of cause is central for Hume. Not finding cause in his analysis of perception, Hume is forced to seek it in a kind of mental fiction, produced by habit or custom, by which the mind passes from an impression to the idea of its usual attendant. John Laird complains that Hume should have concluded that the feeling of necessary connection is a manner rather than an impression or an idea. He also concedes that if the idea of cause must proceed from an impression, then Hume did not discover any such clear impression.

According to Hume, we infer a causal connection between events because of the repetition of certain sequences in our experience. If A and B have associated in certain ways in our experience, then we expect B when A is given. And that, in belief, is all there is to causality. Let us see how that explanation fares.

Suppose an electric light is turned on in a room where a man has been sitting for sometime in the dark. The man's eyes

blink. But why it is happened ? The physiological explanation is straightforward even if the details are rather complicated. A spasm of neuro-muscular excitement is transmitted along nerves to some nodal center, and a responding nervous impulse causes the contraction of the eyelids. This account is, of course, over simplified but a technically refined account would still involve no reference to impressions of sensation or ideas. Although the account is wholly in causal terms, there is not the slightest suggestion of Hume's theory of cause.

But what would be the reply of Hume to this criticism ? The physiological explanation is sheer conjecture about a side of the world of which we must remain completely ignorant. Let us turn instead to the experience of the man himself. The man knows what made him blink — the flash of light. If his statement be doubted, he will retaliate, "I know the flash made me blink; I felt it."

Hume would not accept the man's statement that the flash made him blink. There is no impression of making; there are just the flash and the blink. What the man actually felt, according to Hume, was his habit of blinking after flashes. There are obvious difficulties with Hume's explanation. Although it is improbable, the man may never have been exposed to sudden bright light, in which case he cannot have developed the required habit. But even if the man does habitually blink after flashes of light, how can a habit be felt when a cause cannot ? The feeling of habit is not the perception of something that there as a spatial object; it is not an impression of sensation,

as Hume freely admits. The formation of a habit requires time; and the feeling of a habit requires memory. How is it different from a cause? Hume has confused a habit of feeling blinks after flashes with something quite different — the feeling of the habit of feeling blinks after flashes.

Hume's analysis of the cause and effect relationship enables us to see how an analysis, of an idea into impressions for the purposes of clarification is actually carried out. Throughout his discussion, Hume speaks of the constant conjunction of objects, which must be taken as a reference to what we ordinarily call objects, even though Hume's explicit consideration of what an object is does not involve a material substance. The analysis assumes that a relationship between cause and effect is intuitively known, and that in some sense this intuitive relationship is such that cause and effect are necessarily related. Thus, if we say that an event a is the cause of an event b we would ordinarily say that a must be followed by b or is necessarily followed by b. Hume takes the analysis of this necessary connection to be an important problem.

Moreover, it is clear, that Hume is very much aware of the central part played in contemporary science by the methodological structure of scientific laws and theories. Again, as we have noted, it is sometimes suggested that this is all Hume offers us to establish the formulation of a particular causal law or connection. This interpretation, though wrongheaded, is unfortunately on occasion supported by Hume himself.

In a somewhat puzzling fashion, Hume's account appears simply to trace the genesis of the idea of cause or necessary connection, arising spontaneously on such occasions where previously we have encountered repeated 'perceptions' of constant conjunctions of a set of impressions. Here we see a weakness because this account squares badly with all the tasks of 'causal reasoning' which his 'methodological' approach tries to accomplish.

Hume's basic contention is of course that the idea of necessary connection, and in general all notions of causal relationships, must be 'founded on experience'¹. The notion of 'experience' here involved is, rather complex. The operative condition in all causal reasonings from one class of objects or events to another is the fact that the corresponding impressions are constantly conjoined in our experience. Now it is a fact, says Hume, that under these conditions we (our imagination) spontaneously claim to have the idea of a necessary connection between the conjoined terms. However, since these terms (impressions) as such are subject to the atomistic postulate, neither a single conjunction, nor any number of them repeated indefinitely, can give rise to this idea, since no impression is discovered.² If it is so, then to what do we owe the idea? The answer would be that: though nothing is added to the 'object', 'yet the observation of' the resembling instances produces a new

-
1. Cf., for instance, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1739, ed. Selby-Bigge, Oxford 1946, Pg. 88.
 2. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Pg. 88, 163-4; i.e., discovered as an object of perception.

impression in the mind, which is its real model.

Hume's claim to have 'founded' causation 'on experience' thus splits up into two parts. First, there is our experience of constant conjunctions. Secondly, there is the fact that we find ourselves 'determined' to pass, when presented with one instantial member of a conjunction, to the other, in spontaneous fashion. It is not clear whether this 'determination to pass' is also supposed to be 'experienced'.

So far we remember that Hume was not trying to 'justify' the causal connection. He is only telling us that on those occasions on which we postulate causation, we 'feel the determination to pass' from 'cause' to 'effect'. The feeling is not meant to 'guarantee' that the future will be like the past. He is only characterising our belief, described as a peculiar 'manner' of the way in which the ideas in question 'feel to the mind.'³ If it is described as a 'customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant',⁴ we must remember that Hume does not consider it to be a deficiency that, as he says, the 'gentle force' in question is one that only 'commonly prevails'.

Of course, it is true that Hume feels uneasy about whether such a description completely explicates causation. To compensate for this he adds remarks which affirm that the activities involved in causal reasoning are very basic.

3. Cf. Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals. - ed. L.A. Selby-Bigg
Oxford, 1951, Pg. 49

4. Cf. Ibid., Pg. 75

It was perhaps peculiar to claim that the idea of necessary connection was 'based on experience'. Again the close relationship between the 'necessary connection' and the relation that supports an inductive inference is expressly asserted. The original and traditional position as we have seen, was to base induction on necessary connection, or some relation of entailment between putative 'cause' and 'effect'. At 'treatise of Human Nature' Pg. 88, Hume rhetorically wonders whether this should not be inverted : "perhaps ----- the necessary connection depends on the inference, instead of the inferences depending on the necessary connection."

But in spite of the defects of Hume's treatment of causality, it has a very great importance in the history of philosophy and has subsequently been developed in various ways. Hume never denies that we do in fact regard certain events observed by us as being causally related to each other. All that he is denying is that there is any power in the cause by the cause themselves that produces the effect. An important school of modern philosophy, the school of Logical Positivists agrees with Hume that it is from regularity or uniformity of sequence from which the idea of cause is derived.
