

## Hume, *Enquiry*, Section VII

The “necessary connection” between cause and effect

The “power” or “force” or “energy” by which the cause brings the effect into existence.

Need to clarify this idea by asking: From what original impression is it copied?

Searching for the original impression

We can’t find it in *single cases*.

Not in the impressions of outer sense (351-2)

Nor in the impressions of reflection (352-7)

In *voluntary control over the movements of our body*, a volition is followed by a bodily movement. But we have no impression of *necessary connection*. If we did, then

- we would be able to grasp the “secret union of mind and body” (353),
- we would know why we can voluntarily move some parts of our body, and not others (353), and
- we would know what the will directly causes (changes in the animal spirits, for example) (354).

In *voluntary control of the operations of our own mind*, a volition is followed by another mental event – e.g., the “raising up of a new idea.” But we have no impression of necessary connection.

One thing follows another, but we fail to see how the one produces the other. We only feel the event, namely, the existence of an idea, consequent to a command of the will; but the manner in which this operation is performed, the power by which it is produced is entirely beyond our comprehension. (355)

If we did have an impression of the necessary connection between cause and effect,

- we would be able to see why “the command of the mind over itself is limited” (355), and
- why the mind’s self-control is “different at different times.” (356)

Excursus on occasionalism (357-9)

Malebranche and his followers had held that God causes everything in accordance with rules he has established for himself. So the event we call the “effect” follows the one we call the “cause” because God causes the second event on the “occasion” of the first.

Hume suggests: (i) that God would be greater if he could “delegate” causal power; (ii) that Malebranche and company have engaged in speculation about matters that lie “beyond the reach of our faculties” (358) and (iii) that the connection between God and what God causes is just as little understood as the connection between natural causes and natural effects. (359)

If we can't find the original impression in single cases, perhaps we can find it after we have experienced the *constant conjunction* of cause and effect?  
(Experienced regularities)

We can find nothing in the *objects* themselves that is not present in single cases.

But we can find within our own minds a *sentiment* or *feeling* of expectation. This is the original impression from which the idea of necessary connection is copied. (360-1)

Hume's two “imperfect” definitions of “cause.” (362)

*An object, followed by another, and where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second.*

*An object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other.*

Another important statement:

... as we feel a customary connection between the ideas, we transfer that feeling to the objects; as nothing is more usual than to apply to external bodies every internal sensation which they occasion. (end of note 11, p. 363)

An interpretive question

How are we to interpret Hume's statement that “both these definitions” are “drawn from circumstances foreign to the cause” and that “we cannot attain any more perfect definition?”

Does Hume accept the regularity theory of causation?

A critical question:

Has Hume succeeded in clarifying the metaphysical idea of causation? Or should he, in all consistency, admit that there is no such idea? That what we have here is a word with no real meaning, and a theory about how we delude ourselves into thinking it has one?