

## Hume's Causality

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It has been long debated as to what came first-- the chicken or the egg? Whether you are a proponent of either one, the problem is called *causality*. Causality is when every effect has a cause, that is, event A causes event B, in this case either the chicken laid the egg, or the egg hatched the chicken. This is an idea that 17th Century philosopher David Hume was particularly interested in. This essay will explore a more profound explanation of the concept of causality and its problems and concerns through examples. Towards the end of this essay, the applications of causality will be anticipated, and a critique of the philosophical idea shall be presented.

While thinking about causation, Hume realized that there is a link between these two entities, a link or gap that people are not able to perceive it with their senses, and this became a problem for Hume as it left a lot unexplained. This he calls "The Problem of Induction". People do not have the sensory experience, the perception he calls it, of the link happening between the two events. For example, consider a game of pool. One has impressions and sensible ideas of the situation, those being the deflection of one ball as it hits another, their direction of motion, their relative speeds, their separations etc., but one is not able to perceive the cause as the ball hits the second ball and the effect of the second ball being hit and going its separate way. In other words, Hume defines this notion of necessary connection as the "instances of which we have had no experience resemble those of which we have had experience" (Treatise Of Human Nature, pg 89). Another example: assuming you touch a hot stove and get burned. The touching of the stove causes the burning sensation of the finger. One can perceive and understand the pre-touching of the stove and the afterwards, but no one can comprehend through their senses (as all knowledge and experience is derived from that), the tiny instance in between the touching of the hot stove and getting burned. This leaves Hume an unexplained reason as to *why* one causes the other and, furthermore, whether something even *is* the cause of the other. This caused Hume to reflect. And he concluded that since everything is made up of cause and effect, yet we cannot know this instance that links the cause and the effect, it means that we must be skeptical of everything. Going back to the hot-stove example, it means that by touching the stove, we understand that we can get burned, but since we are not certain of the link between this cause and effect, perhaps a time will occur when we will touch the hot stove and it will **not** cause a burned finger! If this is so, we must be doubtful of everything as nothing is certain. This complete incomprehensible gap is the Problem of Induction, which leads to Hume's basis for Skepticism.

All our perception of the world is shaped due to this concept of cause and effect, and it is experience that allows us to know of it. It carries many applications and creates

an understanding of the physical world in many ways. This is because scientific knowledge and discoveries relies largely on scientific observation. Now that we have an understanding of the world, we still cannot be certain of anything. Because, as with the stove example, there is an uncertainty in everything, thus meaning many of our scientific understanding may be incorrect as in some random-occurring situation in the universe, the physical laws that we know of begin to vary and be either relative or flexible, but definitely not certain. Especially with current theories of theoretical physics, it is very visible of the varying laws of physics and the uncertainty and randomness in our universe that we are yet to comprehend.

Cause, Effect, and necessary connection applies to our daily life as well. Firstly, our experience plays a large role in our learning process. We can observe the relations between the people around us, of our actions, behaviors and thoughts based on the observations of cause and effects, as well as the probability of future events. Furthermore, our emotions play a grand role in our lives. And Hume is certainly correct about the fact that our emotions are a strong part in human motivation. Whether it is stronger than reason is the large debate. But nonetheless, based on Hume, people being sensible and emotionally-inclined animals, our actions and thoughts are driven by that.

Hume is largely correct in the idea of cause and effect. He is accurate in realizing the Problem of Induction in the concept of causality. It should be kept subconsciously, but not drive one mad while thinking about necessary connection. Cause-and-effect is a concept that allows us to learn and perceive things through experience, thus in that regards it is a very important topic to be made aware of, as it is all around us, and Hume makes us realize this, as well as its importance in everything ranging from science to our daily customs and practices. However, Hume would also support the notion of moderation, and how even though we should doubt everything, cause and effect should only go so far as to not interfere with our daily lives, and skepticism should be taken in a moderate dose.

Nonetheless, David Hume's philosophies played a vital role in history, and this one idea of Causality should not go unnoticed but rather be applied creatively in everything that we do, to see the world holistically (and with skepticism). As a later, famous philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer wisely stated: "There is more to be learned from each page of David Hume than from the collected philosophical works of Hegel, Herbart and Schleiermacher taken together".

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