

# Humes critique of causality

Philosophy



of Hume's Critique of Causality Hume claims that the relation of cause and effect plays a dominant role in all our cognition. But from what impression does this idea of causality stem from? If it cannot be derived from sensation, then it must be so that it stems from the mind, i. e. from the way in which objects are related to each other. Our idea of causality arises from our impressions of three kinds of relations between objects: the relation of contiguity or contact, such as when billiard balls collide, and second, temporal priority, the idea that the effect should immediately follow the cause. These two, when taken together, is what Hume calls conjunction, which can be confirmed by sense experience, but it cannot give us an idea of necessary connection. The third kind of relationship that must be present in our idea of cause and effect is indeed, necessary connection. By necessary connection, Hume means the relation between cause and effect in which the cause necessarily produces the effect. But from what impression do we derive the idea of a necessary connection between cause and effect? Hume claims that there is no rational proof or basis for the causal principle; " this principle is mere custom or habit" (Hume 37). We only think that a particular cause must ' necessarily' have a particular effect because we have the idea of a necessary connection between a cause and an effect after we experience their conjunctions repeatedly. If Hume were right here, science would seem to be an impossible endeavor, for it is based on scientific causal laws (Lavine 168). If causality were reduced to a mere psychological law, then we would have no basis for scientific knowledge, or any objective knowledge for that matter. The foundations of knowledge would collapse into nothing but meaningless psychology. Works Cited Lavine, Thelma Z. From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophical Quest. New York: Bantam Books, 1985. <https://assignbuster.com/humes-critique-of-causality/>

Print. Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. New York: Oxford University Press. Print.