

Hume: Conceptual Empiricism and the Idea of Necessary Connection (*Inquiry*, sections 2, 7)

“When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”
(114.5)

--Impressions and Ideas (10.7-11.0)

--The Empiricist Principle: quick: (11.7, 41.0). Toward a more careful formulation, distinguish simple vs. complex ideas: 11.4-12.1, 41.2-41.6: Every idea one has is either copied from some impression one has had, or else is a complex idea and is composed of simpler ideas that are copied from impressions one has had.

--“Banishing Jargon” (13.2-.6)

--Two Arguments for the Principle (11.7-12.6)

--“One Contradictory Phenomenon” (12.6-13.2)

--“Power, Force, Energy, or Necessary Connection” (40.8)

--The Search for the Impression of Power, Part I: The Outward Senses (41.7-42.5)

--The Search for the Impression of Power, Part II: Berkeley’s “Pretension” (42.8): (42.5-48) (see also section 28 of Berkeley’s *Principles*)

--On the Verge of Surrender? (49.5)

--Impression Found! (50.6-.7)

--Hume’s “Two” Definitions of Cause (51.6-.7)

--Def. 1a (Constant Conjunction): “an object, followed by another, and where all objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second”

--Def. 1b (Subjunctive Conditional): “an object, followed by another...where, if the first object had not been, the second had never existed”

--Def. 2 (Subjective): “an object, followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that other”

--Problems for each, and a Humean definition of cause that avoids these problems

--Hume’s admission: “Yet so imperfect are the ideas which we form concerning it, that it is impossible to give any just definition of cause, except what is drawn from something extraneous and foreign to it.” (51.5)

Undergoing Conceptual Analysis



And when you see the first billiard ball roll into the second, how does that make you *feel*?

*Drawn by Jesse Prinz. Idea by Keith DeRose. Impression from which idea was derived: Hume's Enquiry concerning Human Understanding, sect. VII.

The Treatise version of Hume's second (subjective) definition of cause:

A cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other.

—Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I, III, XIV, p. 170.3 in the L.A. Selby-Bigge, ed., Oxford UP (1978) edition

A Humean definition of cause:

Event A causes event B iff A is followed by B and the observation of A-type events is constantly followed by the expectation of a B-type events (and (perhaps) also: thinking about A-type events is constantly followed by the thinking of B-type events).