

ON CAUSATION

LALITA JAIN

T.D.C. III Year (Major)

Common man believes that a cause is a power or force which actively produces the effect. Locke takes cause in the sense of power'. In our daily life, we have direct experience of being active when we displace things of the environment or when in volition we exert effort to do something. We ascribe this power to inanimate objects by analogy. The causal relation is universal and necessary, e.g. butter placed in front of fire will surely melt.

Empirical View : According to the Empiricists, experience is the only source of knowledge. Knowledge is derived from sensation and introspection. What is not given in sense-experience is not true. The empiricists hold that a cause is the invariable antecedent of the effect. Cause is always antecedent to the effect. Causal relation is nothing beyond this invariability of antecedent. We never apprehend any force of power or energy in our sense-experience. Cause cannot therefore, be regarded as a force.

In the past, we have seen that downpour of rain made the ground wet. But on the strength of this past experience we have not warranted to say that rains will wet the ground in future also. Future things cannot be given in our experience and hence, it is not possible for us to say what will happen in future.

Hume, himself a through-going empiricist, does not admit that the cause is any force or power or energy, nor does he admit any necessary connection between cause and effect. Locke himself an empiricist, regards cause as a power. But Hume contends that all that we experience is merely a succession of events. We merely perceive one event being followed or preceded by another. We never perceive any necessary relation between them.

J.S. Mill defines cause as the unconditional invariable antecedent. In the definition Mill indirectly introduces the notion of power or efficiency into the idea of causality, because "unconditionality" of an antecedent implies something else than mere succession, it means efficiency and necessary connection.

Kant and Hegel's views : The empirical view fails to account for the necessary connection between cause and effect, for experience never gives us the idea of necessity. Kant holds that experience does not give us the idea of causality. Causality is an a priori category of understanding

which it applies to experience to interpret it. If the idea of causality were not apriori in our mind, human mind would not search for a cause for the explanation of the happening of an event. Causality has been evolved by the mind from within itself. It applies to phenomena only. It does not apply to things-in-themselves. Thus causality is a subjective apriori category of understanding. Kant, moreover, says that there is necessary connection between cause and effect. In perceiving a house, we may perceive its roofs, then walls, floor etc. Yet we perceive the house. This shows that the parts of the house are co-existent with one another and can be perceived in any manner without making any change in the thing perceived. But in perceiving a ship floating down the river, I must perceive the ship first as it is higher up the stream and then its position lower down the stream. Here the order in the sequence of perceptions is determined. My apprehension of the ship's movement is regulated by this order. Here there is an objective sequence of phenomena which determines my subjective sequence of perception. Kant, therefore, admits that there is objective necessity in phenomena which is understood with the help of the category of causality. Though Kant has admitted the existence of objective necessity in the causal relation, an object to him is only an object of knowledge. According to him, knowledge constructs its own world. The noumenon or things-in-itself is unknown and unknowable. Thus in the final analysis the so-called objective necessity in causality turns to be only subjective necessity. The category of causality is not applicable to things-in-themselves.

Hegel regards the final minds to be the finite reproductions of the Absolute or Divine Mind of which the world or nature is the objective expression. Thought and reality are at bottom identical. Therefore, the category of the mind is also the category of nature. Causality is not only a subjective category; it is also objective in nature. The necessary connection between cause and effect is not only subjective but also objective.

Recent views: Russels does not regard the relation of causality as one of necessity. To him the relation of causality is nothing but one of correlation. Thus Russel seems to rehabilitate Hume's views. Alexandar views causality as a categorical feature of the existents. Every object can be viewed from two angles of vision, static and dynamic. Viewed in its static aspect, an object is called a substance, and viewed in its dynamic aspect; the object is called a cause. Whitehead holds that reality can never be conceived otherwise than as a process in which everything is connected with every thing. In this process, the foregoing event is the cause and the succeeding one is the effect. But as the process is continuous, the cause or foregoing event is continuous with the effect. Our view of the world as made up of discrete entities is due to the fallacy of "Simple location". Thus according to Whitehead, causal relation is an objective relation. □