UNIT: 7 CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS OF CAUSAL LANGUAGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1: Learning objectives

7.2: Introduction

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7.5: Causality in Indian philosophy

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7.1: LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Know about causality.
- Understand the nature of causality.
- Describe various views on causal relation.
- Analyse Indian concept of causality.
- Compare both Indian and western views regarding causality.

7.2: INTRODUCTION:

This unit deals with the notion of causality. Generally, the relation between cause and effect is known as causality. A very definition of causality can be expressed as if 'C' then 'E'. It is a formula of 'constant conjunction' that advocated by David Hume. According to theformula, 'C' causes 'E' means the same as 'C' is constantly conjoined with 'E' or 'C' is regularly followed by 'E'. Hume appears to be describing causal relationship, and in this description, psychology and philosophical analysis are interwoven. Hume gives two definitions of cause on the same page 170 of his Treatise. (a) We may define cause to be 'an object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in like relations

of precedenceand contiguity to those objects that resemble the latter.' (b) '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. The definition of cause given in (a) is based on philosophical analysis and (b) is based on psychological analysis.

This unit also discusses various contemporary philosophers view regarding causality. Again, it attempts to explain Indian notion of causal relation too.

7.3: CONCEPT OF CAUSALITY:

Causation is the most important category for Hume. According to him, our knowledge of the matters of fact depends on causation. Again, on its strength we pass from the immediate impressions to something not immediately presented in senses. On the basis of the causal principle we bind together the passing impressions into universal laws. If this principle is valid then there is rationaljustification for the science. Otherwise, Hume points out that we have no reason to accept their claim to certain knowledge.

According to Hume, all reasoning concerning matters of fact are founded on the relation of cause and effect. Whenever we want to go beyond our perception and memory, beyond the testimony of our senses and reports of memory- we base our knowledge on cause and effect. A man finding a watch or any other machine in a desert island would conclude that there had once been men in the island. In such cases, we always suppose that there is a connection between the present fact and the past fact which we are inferring. Hence our knowledge of causal relation helps us to pass from known facts to the unknown.

Hume claims that our knowledge of cause and effect is derived entirely from experience and cannot be derived from 'a priori' reasoning. Because, for Hume, all judgments of pure reason like '2+2=4' or 'three times five is equal to half of thirty'-are analytic. Causal judgments are synthetic.

Being analytic an a priori proposition is necessary, but a causal proposition like 'bread affords nourishment' is possible only, not certain. Here, the predicate adds some new character to the subject that may not always be true. Such a proposition is obtained by experience only. Moreover, Hume also argues that cause and effect are two different things. No amount of analysis of cause gives us any knowledge of the effect. They are entirely independent of each other. If an absolutely new object is given to a man, he will not be able to discover its cause nor its effect. Hume says, every effect is a distinct event from its cause. Therefore, it could not be discovered in the cause. There is nothing in any object, considered in it, which can afford us a reason for drawing a connection beyond it. He says, we argue that fire will warm us and bread affords nourishment because we have often perceived these causal pairs closely connected in space and time.

Hume had divested causality of all such notions as power or efficacy. The bond which connects cause and effect, the force that puts forth the second from the first, the power that produces the effect from the cause is not perceived but is added to perception by thought, is constructed into it. Any and every pair of successive events is not looked upon as related by way of causality. It is only when we find in our experience that a certain event follows a certain prior or antecedent event several times that we come to believe that these two events are necessarily connected with each other. E.g. taking poison is the cause of death. Several times we have seen these two events happening one after another which helps us to conclude that poison and death are causally connected, that poison has the power of producingdeath. Therefore, necessary connection or power is a product of our imagination. Hence, for Hume causality is a custom-born habit of expectation and nothing more. Objects are not connected, but we imagine them to be connected, because they often go together in our experience. Thus, Hume's final definition of cause is this 'a cause is an object, precedent and contiguous to another and so united with it in the imagination, that the appearance of 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. It means,

not necessary connection, but regularity of sequence is the essence of the relation of cause and effect.



LET US KNOW

Cartesian philosophers and the scholastics believed that casual relation is a relation of necessary connection, like logical connections. But Hume denies it by his two fold arguments- (a) Hume showed that causal propositions are not a priori, (b) Hume pointed out that there is no 'power' or 'force' in cause, that is usually believed not only by the philosophers but also by the ordinary people.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Define cause.

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Q 2: State true or false-

(i) Hume gives two definitions of cause in his book 'Treatise'.

(ii) His definition of cause is based on philosophical analysis only.

(iii) For Hume, cause and effect are the two different things

7.4: ANALYSIS OF CASUAL LANGUAGE:

Contemporary western philosophers have interpreted the relation between cause and effect or causality in their own way. That is why this analysis occupies an important position in contemporary philosophy.Hume was the pioneer of this analysis. According to him, the causal connection is not one of logical entailment, for there is no object which implies the existence of any other. The denial of such a connection does not result in any self -

contradiction. If the connection is not logical, it must be empirical. But as Hume insists, there is nothing observable in any one instance except the mere regular sequence of events. This is constant conjunction. It is not a real external necessary connection between events, but it provides the key to the psychological explanation of why we think of some events as necessary connected. The idea of necessary connection has its source in this felt passage of the mind. It is merely a psychological necessity. For Hume, necessity is a feeling of expectation or of habitual transition, what Price calls the feeling of 'of course-ness'.Far from denying the existence of necessary connection Hume has offered only a definition of it as of course-full transition.

True to the Hume an tradition, Hans Reichenbach says, since repetition is all that distinguishes the causal law from a mere coincidence, the meaning of causal relation consists in the statement of an exception less repetition- it is unnecessary to assume that it means more. Hence, the cause is anthropomorphic in its origin and is dispensable. Moritz Schlick observes, " the word 'cause' as used in everyday life, implies nothing but regularity of sequence because nothing else is used to verify the proposition in which it occurs."

Hume maintains that there is no nexus in experience between cause and effect and hence discards the causal notion as lacking objective validity. He says that so far as our experience goes, the category of causality can be justified but beyond experience it has no validity. Hume concludes that causal connection is to be replaced by invariable succession. Hume's treatment of causation has provoked Kant's critical philosophy. According to Kant, succession to be apprehended as succession must be apprehended as connected. But Hume would reply that he admits the very same thing; his only point is that beyond the apprehension of the causal notion there is no ontological connection. At this point Kant asks Hume whether the question of objective validity which Hume has raised can be identified with that of ontological validity. The object as with Kant, so also with Hume, is that which is known or experienced. His question is whether the field of knowledge

or experience there can be anything answering to this category. Hume, therefore, to be consistent, cannot raise question of the objective validity of causality. Whitehead points out that 'at bottom' Kant's answer is the same as Hume's, because like Hume, he too restricts the category of causality to experience. Mackie remarks, "Causation in the (phenomenal) objects is, for Kant no less than for Hume, just regularity. All that is a priori should be some regularity covering in every case.

F.P. Ramsey holds that belief in causal laws isnot capable of logical justification, but it is still reasonable because it is a useful habit leading to beliefs which are generally true. F.H Bradley criticizes causality from the standpoint of metaphysical idealism. He says it is a relation that does not relate. Cause can never be continuous with the effect, for in that case the marking out of the cause from the effect becomes impossible. Nor can the cause be discontinuous with the effect, for the cause has to depend on something else to enable it to produce the effect. But if this third something is sought to make the cause causative, this will also necessitate a fourth something and so on ad infinitum. So cause can neither be continuous nor discontinuous. Alexander says that every movement is continuous with every other within the system. The movement, which in order of timeprecedes another movement and passes on to it, is the cause and the other is the effect. But the cause thereby does not disappear in the effect, but it is only added to other movements present there.

Bosanquet, from the standpoint of his logical idealism reacts on the validity of the notion of causality. He says, the notion of causality does not sustain logical analysis, for the essential element of time involved in the causal relation is found to be contradictory. Hence, if time is not real, the temporal relation of causality also thereby becomes an appearance. While this is the negative part of Bosanquet's contention, the positive part of his contention lies in substituting the logical relation of ground and consequent for the temporal relation of cause and effect. Hence according to him, time cannot be regarded as real, and the temporal relation of cause and effect must be replaced by the logical relation of ground and consequent, since

the latter is intelligible or logically sustainable. Alexander criticizes Bosanquet because the logical relation of ground and consequent is conceived after the pattern of geometry. Moreover, the relation of ground and consequent is intelligible only in the background of the temporal antecedent and temporal consequent.

Bertrand Russell thinks that the word 'cause' is bound up with misleading associations. So he recommends its complete extrusion from the philosophical vocabulary. Modern science does not use the 'primitive' concept of cause. Thus Russell maintains that the notion of causality is replaced by the purely factual notion of functional correlation. Alexander finds in Russell's logical atomism an attempt to rehabilitate Humean psychological atomism under a logical garb. Stebbing speaks of an advance from qualitative laws of causal relation to quantitative laws of functional dependence. She holds that both are appropriate to different regions of facts but she also admits that both are subjects to logical difficulties. Mill says that the cause is the 'sum total of the conditions, positive and negative taken together'. Inspired by Mill's account one may maintain that cause is both the sufficient and the necessary condition for the occurrence of the effect. According to Mackie, the cause is 'an insufficient but necessary part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for result'.

A.C. Ewing holds that causation involve entailments. If implication is to be of use in the analysis of causality, it must be a relation between facts. But implication is regarded as a relation between propositions. As R.E. Hobart says, Hume's main point is that-'a proposition may implies another proposition but a thing cannot implies another thing. A.J.D. Porteous asserts some kind of ontological necessity but denies that it can be assimilated to logical necessity. The regularity analysis fails to explain the supposed validity of inductive arguments. This makes philosophers inclined to the entailment view. But it is not very plausible to identify causal entailment with any kind of logical necessity. Richard Taylor holds the thesis that cause and effect neither precede nor succeed each other but are contemporaneous.

For him, the conditions under which the cause is sufficient and necessary for the effect are precisely those conditions under which the effect is also sufficient and necessary for the cause. Since relations of sufficiency and necessity are 'identical both ways'. G.H. Von Wright seeks to explain causal asymmetry in terms of 'human action'. In certain locutions 'when I bring about q by doing p, p is the cause and not q, and in case when I bring about p by doing q, q is the cause and not p'.The cause is the one by which we can manipulate the effect. We can control the effect only through a control over the cause. Thus the asymmetrical nature of causation between two physical events can be determined by the direction of human action.

Ayer says that our action is directed towards future. According to him, "it is part of the meaning of causative verbs, like the verb 'to bring about', that they are forward-looking. To talk of bringing about an event which had already happened would be not merely silly but self- contradictory". For Ayer, cause cannot succeed effect, is necessarily true. The use of the word cause is such that if one event is said to be the cause of another, it is implied that it precedes or at any rate does not succeed, the event which is said to be the effect. Dummett says that when we say that effect can precede the cause, we are talking of quasi-cause only and not full cause. If the cause is regarded as contemporaneous with, or even posterior to the effect, then the very distinction between them would disappear and any one of the two events may be described as cause or effect at pleasure. So we must maintain temporal priority of the cause over the effect in order to explain dependable regularity of sequence.

In this way, the contemporary philosophers have explained their view about causal relation in a broad way.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: "The necessity is a feeling of expectation is the feeling of 'of course-ness'."-who said this?

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Q 4: What type of observation is made by Mortiz Schlick regarding causal relation?

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Q 5: State the notion of causality from the standpoint of logical idealism of Bosanquet

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Q 6: Richard Taylor said that cause and effect neither precede nor succeed each other but are contemporaneous. (true/false)

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7.5: WAS HUME A SKEPTIC?

In the last chapter of his book "Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding", Hume declares himself as a skeptic. A skeptic denies the very possibility of knowledge. It is an enquiry into the conditions of knowledge. Hume says that causal relation is only a product of imagination, a habit of expectation due to custom. There is no objective basis of this relation. It may be that, in the past, two events occurred repeatedly one after the other, and we expected one with the appearance of the other. Yet there is no guarantee that in future also such correlation between two events will be observed. Therefore, all our inferences regarding future events are uncertain, probable and doubtful. All our knowledge regarding matters of fact is based

on the relation of cause and effect. So, according to Hume, all our knowledge of matters of fact is uncertain and probable.

But though Hume is a skeptic regarding our knowledge of matters of fact, he admits our natural instinct towards the reality of external objects, even knowledge of matters of fact, as true. As B. Russell puts it "If we believe that fire warms or water quenches, it is because it costs us too much pain to think otherwise. We cannot help believing, but no belief can be grounded in reason." Hume says that he enjoys everything of this world as a common man does, yet when he philosophizes- he does not believe in everything but doubts in many well- accepted views. That is why Morris observed that Hume 'was less a skeptic than he thought himself to be. He was a skeptic in his views regarding 'false metaphysics' -which are discussions on super -natural, super-sensible objects like theology.

Hume was a skeptic no doubt. But "his skepticism was," as Copestone observes, "a healthy antidote to dogmatism and fanaticism. Kant, the greatest philosopher of modern times, observed that it is Hume who woke him from his dogmatic slumber. Hume's skepticism is inescapable for an empiricist.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: In which book Hume himself declares as a skeptic?

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Q 4: Was Hume a skeptic?

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7.6: INDIAN CONCEPT OF CAUSAL RELATION:

Causality implies a host of philosophic problems which are pertinent to different branches of philosophical studies. While explaining the notion of cause as it was understood by different philosophical schools of classical India, it shows that (a) concern for the notion of causation was taken more seriously in some Indian philosophical schools than it had been in some of their Western counterparts, and (b) that the meaning of 'cause' or 'karana' is much wider in Indian philosophy than it is in the West. Theories of causation are a part of the theory of creation. Indian philosophers have tried to find out where the mere matrix of creation actually converts into the world or the world is a mere reflection of it. This has given birth to Satkaryavada and asatkaryavada. Whether creation is real or unreal has been discussed in Parinamavada and vivartavada of Ramanuja and Sankaracarya respectively. Concern for a causal notion was fundamental in almost all schools of Indian Philosophy. We should remember that philosophic activity in India arose out of the cosmogonic speculations of the Vedas and the Upanisads. Various alternative theories were propounded from the very early period, as is well evidenced in the passage of the SvetasvataraUpanisad, and in the Nyayasutra, chapter 4. Some of the main views about the original cause of the universe were: (a) time, (b) nature or 'own-nature', (c) pradhana 'the unmanifest' matter, (d) god, (e) atoms, and (f) cyclical dependent origination. Theory of dependent origination or the doctrine of Pratityasamutpada or the chain of twelve links is the basic foundation of all teachings of Buddha. In the theory of dependent or conditional Existence of things, there is a spontaneous and universal law of causation which conditions the appearance of event, mental and physical. According to it 'everything depends upon some condition'. It is a cause and effect relationship which originates from a particular relationship. The existence of everything is conditional, because without a cause no effect arises.

The earliest critique of the notion of cause is to be found in India in the 'satkaryavada' doctrine of the Samkhya School,which was historically the earliest of Indian philosophical systems. The doctrine means that the

so-called effect pre exists in its cause, causation being merely a change of transformation from one state to another while the original 'thing' remains constant and unchanging. An effect means a change in only the attributes or characteristics of the thing, a new state of affairs means manifestation of what was potentially present in the early state of affairs, that is, in its so-called cause. According to samkhya philosophy, cause and effect are different states and that is why they are distinct from each other.

The Nyaya-Vaisesika school opposed the Samkhya by its doctrine of asatkaryavada, according to which an effect is a new creation, and hence numerically different, from its cause. The description of causation in this school is closer to the commonsense view of cause. True to the spirit of empiricism, causal relation is described here also as one of invariable sequence. Udayana asserted, in answer to the skepticism about causality, that a causal explanation of an event is needed unless we want to settle for a total accidentality or 'whimsicality' of everything. A particular effect happens at a particular moment, not always. Hence, the Nyaya-Vaisesika gives an empirical definition of cause. The nyaya- vaisesika philosopher Udayana defines it as its unconditional antecedent or necessary antecedent. If a necessary or unconditional antecedent which is always present when an effect is present and which is always absent when an effect is absent, where not recognized as its cause, then the effect would be uncaused. Thus it is clear that the cause is defined as unconditional and invariable antecedent of an effect and an effect is an unconditional and invariable consequent of a cause. Satkaryavadins believe that the effect is not a new creation, but only an explicitly contained in its material cause. Here, another important question arises-is the effect a real transformation or an unreal appearance of its cause? Those who believe that the effect is not a new creation, but only an explicit manifestation of that which was implicitly contained in its material cause. Again, anotherimportant question arises here: is the effect a real transformation or an unreal appearance of its cause? Those who believe that effect is real transformation of its cause are called Parinamavadins; while those who believe that it is an unreal appearance

are called Vivartavadins. Samkhya, yoga and Ramanuja believe in Parinamavada. The view of Samkhya-Yoga is called Prakriti-Parinamavada, while the view of Ramanuja is called Brahma-Parinama-vada. According to Parinamavada, the cause is really changing into effect, while according to Vivartavada, this changing of the cause into the effect is not real but illusory. In rejecting the notion of 'efficacy' or 'power' Nyaya resembled the position of David Hume; the doctrine of invariable sequence was not propounded here exactly in Humean spirit. For Hume, it is only the mind that spreads itself on external objects and conjoins them as cause and effect while nothing really exists between them to be so conjoined. This is more like the Buddhist view than the Nyaya. For Nyaya, invariable sequence is discovered by the mind but it exists between extra mental realities like universals or class characters. Thus, it was felt in Navyanyaya that the criterion of invariable sequence was not enough for distinguishing causal conditions of a particular effect. Suppose there is a unique tribe, each adult member of which has produced, after going through the usual tribal training period, a particular craft. This craft is unique to this tribe, and let us assume that no one else on earth has succeeded in producing that craft. Now suppose that each such adult member, after his training period and before producing the craft, has gotten up from bed at 6 A.M. on two successive Sundays. If invariable sequence is enough to establish causal connection, then not only the tribal training period but also their getting up at 6 A.M. on two successive Sundays should be causally relevant. In fact, to be true to the Humean spirit of empiricism, one has to accept such an apparently absurd consequence. The question of what is relevant, namely, the training period, and what is not relevant to the production of the craft cannot be decided unless some notion like the Navyanyaya idea of ananyathasiddhatva is introduced. In other words, when an event is caused, almost everything through its noninterference can be causally responsible for it. Thus, the question of excluding irrelevant items from the domain of causation does not arise.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: Fill in the blanks:

(i) Sankhya theory of causation is known as ……..

(ii) Ramanuja and Sankara accepts ……. and ……. respectively.

(iii) …….. is the basic foundation of all teachings of Buddha.

(iv) The Nyaya-Vaisesika school is the follower of ……..

Q 8: What is the meaning of Pratitya-samutpada?

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7.7: FURTHER READINGS:

- From the above discussion it is clear that the notion of causation has a big impact in both the philosophies of Western and Indian.
- In western philosophy, basically the contemporary thinkers have explained causal relation in their own ways. Similarly the Indian systems also contributed their views about it.
- Hence from these explanations we come to know that causation is not mere succession of cause and effect. Mere antecedent is insufficient to explain the production of effects. It should be a necessary antecedence.
- The necessary antecedence would be merely positive but both positive and negative. Two things cannot be said to be causally connected unless there is the positive negative relation between them such that the presence of the cause means the presence of the effect. Each effect has only one cause.
- With the help of the doctrine of causal relation, Indian philosophers proceeded on to account for the two fold experience of the form of the

generic and the specific and in this connection depending on their cherished viewpoint; they ultimately posited some basic cause of some type.

- Then endeavoring to explain as to how this basic cause stands related to the multiplicity of gross and subtle phenomenal effects visible in the world they finally arrive at the diverse doctrines such as Pratityasamutpada, satkaryavada, asatkaryavada, and vivartavada etc.



7.8. FURTHER READING

1. Sengupta, Ira; A short history of western philosophy, new central book agency, London.2012
2. Hobert, R.E ; Hume without skepticism, Mind, July 1930
3. Chakravarty,D.K. Fundamental questions of Epistemology an Metaphysics. Manthanprakash , Guwahati 1993
4. Masih, Y ; A critical history of western philosophy; Motilalbanarsidass publishers , Deihi 1994



7.9: ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Ans to Q 1: 1.Ans: Hume gives two definitions of cause in his 'Treatise'. They are- (a) a cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in like relations of precedence and contiguity to those objects that resemble the latter. It is based on philosophical analysis. (b) 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. This definition is based on psychological analysis.

2. Ans: (i) true, (ii) false, (iii) true.
3. Ans: Price.
4. Ans: Moritz Schlick observes, the word 'cause' as used in everyday life, implies nothing but regularity of sequence because nothing else is used to verify the proposition in which it occurs.

5. Ans: From the standpoint of logical idealism, Bosanquet says that the notion of causality does not sustain logical analysis, for the essential element of time involved in the causal relation is found to be self-contradictory. Hence, if time is not real, the temporal relation of causality also thereby becomes an appearance.
6. Ans: true.
7. (i) Satkaryavada.
   (ii) Parinamavada, Vivartavada.
   (iii)Pratitya-samutpada.
   (iv)Asatkaryavada.
8. Ans: Pratitya-samutpada means the existence of everything is conditional, because without a cause no effect arises.

7.10: MODEL QUESTIONS:

A. Very short Questions

Q1: What are the bases of Hume's twofold definitions of cause?

Q2: What is the nature of cause and effect according to Hume?

Q3: In which book, Hume declares himself as a skeptic?

Q4: What is the name of Nyaya-Vaisesika theory of causation?

Q5: Vivartavada is accepted by which branches of Indian philosophy?

B. Short Questions (Write in about 100-150 words)

Q1: What is the relation between a cause and an effect?

Q2: How many theories are there in Indian philosophy regarding causality? What are they?

Q3: State the view of F.H Bradley regarding causality?

Q4: Write short notes

(i) Satkaryavada,

(ii) theory of dependent origination.

Q5: Is there any relation between Indian and Western view of causality?

C. Long Questions (Write in about 300-500 words)

Q1: Explain Western views of causality.

Q2: Was Hume a skeptic in the true sense?

Q3: What is the foundation of all teachings of Buddha? Explain

Q4: What are the theories of causality in Indian philosophy? Discuss

Q5: State the nature of causal language as observed by different thinkers of contemporary western philosophy.

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