

Some remarks regarding the regularity model of cause in Hume and Kant

Abstract

At first, I intend to discuss summarily the role of propensities of human nature in Hume's theory of causality. I ascribe to Hume a regularity model of cause according to which the meaning itself of the word "cause" does not depend on natural propensities. But then I suggest that, because Hume's regularity model is also nomicist (necessitarian), belief in the reality of such an idea of "cause" does depend on those propensities, since that idea does not have an objective reference in the sense of a corresponding impression in the objects. After making these points, I intend to show that an a priori concept of "cause" is able to support such a regularity model of cause better than a naturalist theory, because an a priori concept of "cause" could ascribe an objective reference to the regularity model of cause given merely empirical regularities between events. To sum up, I suggest that both Hume and Kant share the same regularity model of cause, but only Kant has the means to justify regularist-nomicist causal claims while Hume can only account for our taking a subjective reference (an internal impression) for an objective one.

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i.

According to Hume, the concept of "cause" is to be applied when one is able to identify all these three circumstances about the relation between any two objects¹:

the objects are to be contiguous to each other (contiguity)
(*THN*, 1.3.2, §6);

¹ I am going to use "object" and "event" indistinctly in this paper, but, by "event", I understand a changing of states in an object.

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an object is to be prior to the other one (succession) (*THN*, 1.3.2, §7); there must be a necessary connection between the objects (necessary connection) (*THN*, 1.3.2, §11).

In fact, Hume does not pay so much attention to the first two circumstances. Certainly, the core of the concept of “cause” is the last point: necessary connection. But what does this concept mean? Hume rejects the idea that one could understand a necessary connection between two objects based on a faculty in one of these objects to produce the other one:

... when we speak of a necessary connection between objects, and suppose, that this connection depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endowed; in all these expressions, so applied, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas. (THN, 1.3.14, §13. See also EHU, 7.2, §26)

As it is well known, Hume’s criterion of meaning rests on his principle of copy. According to this principle, every *simple* idea must be a copy of a sensible impression (see *THN*, 1.1.1, §7 and *EHU*, 7.1, §4). Since Hume also thinks that a word must be associated to an idea in order to have a meaning, one cannot meaningfully apply a word if it cannot be finally related to sensible impressions. For this reason, the problem with common words such as “power”, “force”, “efficacy”, “energy”, “agency”... is that one will be unable to relate them to any sensible impression appropriately corresponding to them *if* one takes them as applying to a faculty in the object.

This is why one cannot give an account of the meaning of “necessary connection” just by employing this expression as a synonym of those words *so applied*. Indeed, Hume intends to “ascribe” a true meaning to those words by applying them in a different way: “...it’s more probable, that these expressions [“efficacy”, “energy”, “power”...] do here lose their true meaning by being wrong applied, than that they never have any meaning” (*THN*, 1.3.14, §13). However, in order to find this right way of applying such words, we first have to find an empirical meaning of “necessary connection”. Then those words will have a “true meaning” based on their being synonyms of “necessary connection”. Now I would like to suggest that the objective meaning of “necessary connection” is to be located in Hume’s philosophical definition of cause.

In the *Treatise*, Hume says: “We may define a *cause* to be ‘An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the

former are placed in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter” (*THN*, 1.3.14, §30)². On account of this definition, I am suggesting that a necessary connection between cause and effect is to be understood as a universally valid (“all the objects...”) relation between two types of objects. But how does such a universally valid connection come to have an empirical meaning?

Hume famously believes that we can observe constant conjunctions between some types of objects. He clearly has a point here, since nobody will deny, for instance, that fire has always burned. But then one has to admit that an observed constant conjunction does not mean a strict universality, since we are talking only about those cases that we have observed so far. After all, the conjunction may have never failed, but this is still an assertion about a limited number of instances: *all* the past cases, but also *only* past cases. In accordance with that, sometimes Hume also limits the meaning of the universality contained in or implied by the concept of “cause” to the extent of past instances of conjunctions between two objects: “We have no other notion of cause and effect, but that of certain objects, which have been *always conjoined* together, and which in all past instances have been found inseparable” (*THN*, 1.3.6, §15). Indeed, a few lines after this passage, Hume asserts that causation, as a philosophical relation, implies “contiguity, succession, and constant conjunction” (*THN*, 1.3.5, §16). This is a claim obviously weaker than the one that is contained in the philosophical definition of cause that I have quoted above.

At this point, one can believe that only this weaker sense of “cause” could have an empirical meaning so that we should rephrase the philosophical definition of cause in this way: “An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former *have been* placed in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter”. Nevertheless, if we accepted this amendment to the philosophical definition of cause, we would not need to struggle to understand the concept of “cause” anymore, because we could dispense with it, since it would be completely useless.

As Hume has said, the concept of “cause” is supposed to enable us “to control events, and govern futurity” (*EHU*, 3, §9). This being so, the relation

2 As for the Enquiry, the only extra ingredient to be noted in the equivalent definition of “cause” is a contrafactual element (in fact, a contrafactual explanation of the definition) that we are not going to survey at this moment (see *EHU*, 7.2, §29).

of cause and effect should enable us to “go *beyond* the evidence of our memory and senses” (*EHU*, 4, §4, my italic). In other words, by applying the concept of “cause”, one is supposed to be able to believe in a matter of fact that is not observed based on some other fact that is observed: for instance, if one believes A is cause of B, then one believes B to be the case, given that one observes A to be the case. Besides, one can control the future by avoiding A if one intends to avoid B or by producing A if one intends to produce B. Nothing like that would be implied if one were to define a cause in the weak sense of a philosophical relation that we have seen above (in our amendment to the philosophical definition of cause). Therefore, if the concept of “cause” is to be useful, one should stick to the stronger (and original) philosophical definition of cause. The reason for this is that the strict universality or necessity contained in a causal relation will allow one to infer one object when in presence of another.

As a result of this analysis, we have to face the problem of the empirical meaning of a definition of cause that goes *beyond* our experience of a constant conjunction in past instances of a relation between A and B. I would like to suggest that Hume would be entitled to go beyond experience in his philosophical definition of cause, because such a definition just extends the number of instances from a limited universality to a strict universality. In other words, if one understands the meaning of the claim 1. “A *has been* always conjoined to B”, then one also understands the meaning of the claim 2. “A is always conjoined to B”.

With regard to this, when Hume talks about the meaning of the idea of “God”, his reasoning is exactly like that: “The idea of God, as meaning *an infinitely intelligent, wise, and good Being*, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom” (*EHU*, 2, §6). Hence, I suggest that the claim 2. above has a meaning for Hume because it is compounded by an operation of our mind based on the claim 1.. In the same way, the Humean philosophical definition of cause has a meaning because it is compounded by an operation of our mind based on constant conjunction in past instances of relations of contiguity and succession between two objects.

However, to give an account of the meaning of an idea is not the same as to give an account of our belief in the reality of this idea. Hume is pretty clear about our being able to grasp a meaning while rejecting the corresponding belief in its reference:

Suppose a person present with me, who advances propositions, to which I do not assent [...] it is evident, that notwithstanding my incredulity, I clearly understand his meaning, and form all the same ideas, which he forms. My imagination is endowed with the same powers as his; nor it is possible for him to conceive any idea, which I cannot conceive; or conjoin any, which I cannot conjoin. (THN, 1.3.7, §3)

This passage makes clear that, according to Hume, an expression of a complex idea may have a meaning while it does not have a corresponding reference, i.e., while the complex itself does not obtain in reality, so that I can grasp the meaning of an expression while I do not believe in the reality of the idea expressed by it. The reason for this is that, as Hume is willing to admit, his principle of copy does not hold universally for complex ideas (see *THN*, 1.1.1, §4-5). Thus, for instance, if one is able to conjoin the idea of “Pegasus”, I can conjoin the same idea given that I have the idea of “horse” and the idea of “wings”. Evidently, one being able to conjoin the idea of “Pegasus” does not imply that Pegasus obtains and does not imply that one believes that it is the case that there is a Pegasus.

Now, the question is, would the philosophical definition of cause be in the same category as the fictitious idea of “Pegasus”? I will show in my next section that, even though Hume is able to explain why we do believe in the reality of causes while we do not believe in the reality of ideas like “Pegasus”, he is not able to ascribe an objective reference to the idea of “cause”.

ii.

As I said before, the philosophical definition of cause extends the limited/comparative universality that is contained in our experience of constant conjunctions to strict universality that amounts to necessary connection. Hence, a belief in the reality of cause implies a belief in a necessitarian principle according to which future instances of a relation between two objects will be conformable to the past instances we have observed (see *EHU*, 4.2, §19). Let's call this the “principle of uniformity”. In order to be true, this principle needs to be either a relation of ideas or a matter of fact, because, as it is well known, these are the only two types of truth that Hume conceives of.

A relation of ideas is “discoverable by the mere operation of thought”, because the contrary of a relation of ideas is impossible, since it implies a

contradiction (see *EHU*, 1, §§1-2). On the other hand, the contrary of a matter of fact is always possible so that it “is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness” (idem). Thereby, if a belief is a matter of fact, it is based on one of three kinds of evidences:

- “the present testimony of our senses” (*EHU*, 1, §3);
- “the records of our memory” (idem);
- “the relation of Cause and Effect” (*EHU*, 1, §4).

As it is easy to note, we cannot appeal to 1) or 2) as appropriate type of evidence for the principle of uniformity, because this principle extends the validity of our claims beyond our past and present observations. Unfortunately, we cannot appeal to 3) either, because, as we know, 3) presupposes the principle we are in need to prove. Therefore, the principle of uniformity should be a relation of ideas. But it is not! It is equally easy to note that there is no contradiction in the thought that the future would not be like the past. For this reason, Hume himself concludes: “...the supposition, *that the future resembles the past*, it is not founded on arguments of any kind...” (*THN*, 1.3.12, §9). Nonetheless, we do believe in relations of cause and effect, hence, we do believe that the future will resemble the past. Why is this? Everybody knows the Humean answer: it is not because of any argument, but because of the habit that we believe that the future will resemble the past. As Hume says in the passage just quoted:

... *the supposition, that the future resembles the past, it is not founded on arguments of any kind, but is derived entirely from habit, by which we are determined to expect for the future the same train of objects, to which we have been accustomed. This habit or determination to transfer the past to the future is full and perfect ...* (idem)

This “determination to transfer the past to the future” is a psychological feature of human mind. Thus, only in a psychological and naturalist way Hume can account for our belief in the principle of uniformity. It is in order to note here that Hume is not claiming that he can prove that reality conforms to that principle, but only that our mind is determined to believe in it. This is why I would like to suggest now, without any pretension of originality, that the Humean natural definition of cause is to be read as the foundation which supports the belief that reality conforms to the philosophical definition of cause:

“[a cause is] *an object followed by another, and whose appearance always conveys the thought to that another*” (EHU, 7.2, §29)³.

This definition introduces a second meaning of the idea of “cause”, i. e., a subjective meaning. This subjective meaning has a subjective reference: a feeling. We feel that we must transfer the past to the future. Then a second propensity of human nature makes us take a subjective reference for an objective one, since “we transfer that feeling to the objects” (EHU, 7.2, §29, n. 17. See also THN, 1.3.14, §23).

What else could account for the principle of uniformity? Could Hume have dispensed with the psychological approach if he had been able to make sense of a power model of cause? I do not think so. Lets suppose that we were able to grasp a clear and determinate meaning of “cause” as a power that an object is endowed with. In this case, causality could be a power belonging to an individual, even if there were no others of its type. In other words, for instance, I could have the power to act upon a physical object distinct from me or to heal sick people by using only the force of my thought while nobody else would be able to do the same, i. e., I might be the only token of a type endowed with this power. We can even go further and think about the power in an individual as something that this individual can take control of. Then we would not be able even to make predictions about the future behavior of a same individual whose power we would know. For these reasons, such a power model of causality does not imply a regularity one⁴.

Therefore, it is harmless to Hume’s regularity theory of causality that he is unable to ascribe a true meaning to a power model of causality. On the other hand, one can be dissatisfied with the fact that the regularity model of cause was made to rest on such a *subjective* ground and it was lacking an objective reference in the sense of a corresponding impression *in the objects*. Certainly, Kant was one of those dissatisfied with Hume’s psychological solution. Maybe because of this dissatisfaction, Kant will change even the sense of an objective reference in order to ascribe one to the concept of “cause”.

3 According to the natural definition in the Treatise: “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” (THN, 1.3.14, §31).

4 For a different point of view, see Chibeni, “Chance is nothing real in itself: As bases científicas da tese humeana de que não há acaso no mundo”, pp. 32-38.

iii.

First of all, it is useful to take a look at Kant's thoughts about two kinds of universality: true or strict universality (*a priori*), and assumed or comparative universality (through induction). According to Kant, the first kind of universality is inseparable from necessity and no exception at all is allowed to be possible. On the other hand, regarding the last kind of universality, one can just say: "as far as we have yet perceived, there is no exception to this or that rule" (CPR, B 3-4). I have said that the Humean philosophical definition of cause consists in a statement about a strictly universal relation between two objects⁵. This amounts to say that, according to my view, Hume would also agree with Kant when, based on the concept of "an absolutely universal rule", he says that: "the effect does not merely come along with the cause, but is posited *through* it and follows *from* it" (CPR, A 91/B 124)⁶. This may seem not to be the case if we pay attention only to the Humean philosophical definition of cause as found in the *Treatise*. Here, an effect may seem to be nothing else than an object that comes along with the cause.

However, this reading does not fit the Humean account for the philosophical definition of cause found in the *Enquiry*: "we may define a cause to be an object, followed by another, and where all the objects, similar to the first, are followed by objects similar to the seconds. Or in other words, where, if the first had not been, the second never had existed" (EHU, 7.2, §29). This last sentence introduced by the conjunction "in other words" clearly contains a contrafactual understanding of cause. One can observe that A has always been followed by B, but no one can observe that B would never have existed if A had not been, an assertion that, at the same time, implies necessity in the relation between A and B (no B unless A) and also implies that B follows from A just as Kant wanted.

5 To mention only two examples, Lorne Falkenstein and Norman Swartz have made the same type of claim about Hume's doctrine of causality: "empiricist though he was, Hume also took the connection between a cause and its effect to be absolutely necessary and strictly universal" (Falkenstein, "Hume's Answer to Kant", p. 337. See also Swartz, "A Neo-Humean Perspective: Laws as Regularities", p. 06). It is interesting to note that I do not follow Swartz's opposition (that seems to be usual) between the regularity and the necessitarian theories of causality. I rather think that the necessitarian theory is a type of regularity theory while the true opposition obtains between the regularity model and the power model of cause, as Falkenstein has formulated in the paper just mentioned.

6 Michael Friedman and Graciela de Pierris have called my attention to the relevance of this quotation to my points. I appreciate their comments about a previous version of this paper presented at the XIII Colóquio Kant da UNICAMP: Kant e a ciência de seu tempo.

All things considered, it is my interpretation that, in spite of the fact of Hume being able to show how the philosophical idea of cause can arise by augmentation from simple impressions, he would admit that the complex referent of this idea so formed cannot be empirical. This is why, I have been suggesting that Hume would have been well aware of the impossibility of grounding such a strict universality of a rule on experience. This is to say that it is my claim that Hume would completely agree with Kant when he says: “Empirical universality is therefore only an *arbitrary* increase in validity from that which holds in most cases to that which holds in all...” (CPR, B 4, my italic). Thus, I have argued that Hume advocates a psychological hypothesis in order to account for our belief that there are causes in reality. Human beings would be psychologically determined by habit to feel that “there is no exception to this or that rule” given that they observe a comparative universality. But then, this is exactly the solution that Kant was not willing to accept at all:

... the very concept of a cause so obviously contains the concept of a necessity of connection with an effect and a strict universality of rule that it would be entirely lost if one sought, as Hume did, to derive it from a frequent association of that which happens with that which precedes and a habit (thus a merely subjective necessity) of connecting representations arising from that association. (CPR, B 5)

To sum up, my claim is that Hume and Kant share basically the same concept of “cause”, i. e., the strict universality of a rule of the succession between two events in the order of time⁷, while they disagree on the reference of this concept as well as on the origin of it. According to Hume, there would be nothing in reality as we know it conformable to this concept. There would be a feeling of necessity instead, therefore, an internal impression that we would project to reality because of a propensity of our mind “to spread itself on external objects, and to conjoin with them any internal impressions, which they occasion...” (THN, 1.3.14, § 23). This being so, according to Hume’s hypothesis,

7 “The schema of the cause and of the causality of a thing in general is the real upon which, whenever is posit, something else always follows. It therefore consists in the succession of the manifold insofar as it is subject to a rule” (CPR, A 144/B 183). My reading is really close to the Falkenstein’s on this point: “Kant and Hume do not disagree over what causes are—Kant, like Hume, considers causes to be events that are necessarily followed by effects, not powers that necessitate those effects. Neither do they disagree over the necessity of this connection—Hume, like Kant, considers causes to be events that are necessarily and not merely probably followed by their effects” (“Hume’s Answer to Kant”, p. 338).

the origin of the concept of “cause” is empirical and its reference is indeed fictitious, even though we do believe in causes (because of our propensities). On the other hand, Kant struggles to prove that the concept of “cause” is *a priori* valid in order to assure its objective reference in reality, what will take him to deny that a sensible impression is enough for an objective reference even in the case of events as we will see later on.

Now, I need to acknowledge that Hume should have been well aware of the possible advantages of an *a priori* concept of “cause”. It is easy to note that if the concept of “cause” were an *a priori* one, then the principle of uniformity would also be *a priori* valid and, therefore, given that one were able to find regularities in experience on exact scrutiny, one could extend this regularity to the future as well. To be certain, one could be wrong about the relevant conjunctions found in experience, but, if she had not made mistakes about this, she would be entitled to extend her observations to a strict universality. In other words, the content of statements about causal relations would always be contingent, but its form as a strictly universal rule would be *a priori* grounded. Above all, one could always consider as possible to find regularities in experience and, in short, the concept of cause would have an objective reference: those regularities to be found.

But if it is sound to think that Hume was really aware of all that, then why did he reject the possibility of the concept of “cause” being an *a priori* one? In fact, we already know this answer. The only type of *a priori* knowledge that Hume conceives of is a relation of ideas. As we have seen, the principle of uniformity contained in the Humean definition of cause is not a relation of ideas. Kant agrees with Hume on this. Therefore, in order to avoid the same fate of Hume, Kant needs to come up with a new kind of *a priori* knowledge. My next suggestion is that the principle of uniformity contained in the Humean definition of cause as well as in the Kantian schema of cause⁸, according to Kant, is to be considered as a valid synthetic *a priori* principle.

A synthetic *a priori* principle is not supposed to be valid, because one cannot conceive of its contradictory. It is supposed to be valid, because experience would not be possible if it were not valid. It is not by chance that, immediately after exposing his objection against Hume as I quoted above, Kant says about the “reality of pure *a priori* principles in our cognition” that “one could establish their indispensability for the possibility of experience itself”, what amounts to “establish it *a priori*” (*CPR*, B 5). This being so, my next

8 See note 7.

step consists in an attempt to show - only in general lines, of course - why Kant thinks to be able to prove that the experience of a constant conjunction between objects, in fact, the bare experience of an event, presupposes the regularity concept of “cause” that he shares with Hume. We will see that this amounts to deny that a sensible impression is enough to guarantee any objective reference.

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It is interesting to note that the proof that the concept of “cause” must be an *a priori* concept amounts to a proof that every event must have a cause. In other words, if it is true that the experience of an event presupposes the concept of “cause”, then 1. the concept of “cause” in its turn does not depend on experience, and 2. every event will entail a cause. Now, this Kantian formulation has not been rejected by Hume. Hume has rejected the different hypothesis according to which the *idea* of “event” presupposes the idea of “cause”. This is why he has rejected 1. and 2. by making the concept of “cause” rest on experience and by refusing to ascribe necessity to the general maxim of causality that says that every event has a cause. Kant also rejects the hypothesis according to which the very concept of “event” presupposes the concept of “cause”, but he wants to avoid Hume’s conclusions about 1. and 2.. For this reason, he intends to prove that, not the idea, but the experience of any event presupposes the concept of “cause”. Lets see in a very schematic way how Kant could succeed in his enterprise.

In the Second Analogy of Experience, Kant intends to prove that every event “presupposes something which it follows in accordance with a rule”, as he said in the first edition of the first *Critique* (see A 189). Given the regularity model of causality that Kant embraces⁹, that amounts to prove that all events “occur in accordance with the law of the connection of cause and effect”, as he said in the second edition of the first *Critique* (see B 232). In order to understand why there can be experience of an event if and only if the event is taken as a token of a type involved in a causal regularity, first, one should understand the Kantian concept of “experience”. It is not by chance that Kant opens his arguments in support of all the Analogies of Experience with his concept of “experience”, i. e., an empirical cognition that “determines an object thorough perceptions” (CPR, A 176/B 218). Above all, what matters is

⁹ Again, I could not agree more with Falkenstein: “Kant, in short, is no less a regularity theorist than Hume” (“Hume’s Answer to Kant”, p. 337).

to understand that such an object is neither a thing in itself nor those perceptions themselves. An object is determined thorough perceptions if and only if there is a “representation of the necessary connection [a synthetic unity] of the perceptions” (idem). Kant is even clearer about the point in the core of the Second Analogy of Experience, where the object becomes pure and simply “that in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension” (CPR, A 191/B 236).

Kant connects the object in general to a necessary rule of apprehension, because he treats “objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone)” as “interchangeable concepts” (Prol, AA 04: 298). This amounts to say that “although we do not know the object in itself, nonetheless, if we regard a judgment as universally valid and hence necessary, objective validity is understood to be included” (idem). I believe the following quotation helps us to understand the reason why the relation of a representation to an object and its validity for everyone else are interchangeable concepts according to Kant:

if a judgment agrees with an object, then all judgments of the same object must also agree with one another, and hence the objective validity of a judgment of experience signifies nothing other than its necessary universal validity. But also conversely, if we find cause to deem a judgment necessarily, universally valid (which is never based on the perception, but on the pure concept of the understanding under which the perception is subsumed), we must then also deem it objective, i.e., as expressing not merely a relation of a perception to a subject, but a property of an object; for there would be no reason why other judgments necessarily would have to agree with mine, if there were not the unity of the object – an object to which they all refer, with which they all agree, and, for that reason, also must all harmonize among themselves. (idem)

This being so, the Kantian concept of “experience” includes the necessity of a rule of apprehension, because we cannot apprehend the thing in itself, while the output of the synthesis of apprehension in experience needs to be valid for everyone. Therefore, if there is experience of any event, since, as even Hume would agree, we cannot appeal to any access to the event as a thing in itself, then, Kant concludes, there must be a necessary rule of the apprehension of the event. Thus, the claim in the Second Analogy will be: there is experience of an event of type B, if and only if there is a rule according to which there is an event of type A which, whenever is posit, an event of type B always follows (it needs to be reminded that this is in accordance with the

schema of cause). In other words, the experience of an event B presupposes the following reasoning: “if A, then B; A; therefore, B” so that to take an event B as being the case implies to take an event A as being the case and the rule “if A, then B” as being true.

Of course, it is possible that one does not know that A is the antecedent of the rule. Indeed, it is impossible to know for sure that it is. This is why we are talking about an Analogy, i. e., a regulative principle (see *CPR*, A 178-179/B 221-222). Thus, it is more exact to say that the Second Analogy teaches us that, in order to be an experience of B, there must be some variable *x* such that “if *x*, then B”. In this way, if the concept of “event” has an objective reference, then the concept of “cause” also has an objective reference, since the objective reference of the concept of “event” depends on the concept of “cause”. Indeed, the reason for the concept of “cause” being considered an *a priori* concept is its being a condition for the objective reference of the concept of “event”. Now, if this rule “if *x*, then B” is only the form of “a subjective connection of perceptions” arising from the fact that “a certain appearance is constantly followed by another” (see *Prol.* AA 04: 312), then the experience of B is only subjectively valid, even though one can account for its being shared by others.

But then what if the concept of “event” does not have an objective reference in the strong Kantian sense? Certainly, Hume would concede that we do believe that the idea of “event” has an objective reference. However, for Hume, it only means that there is an impression corresponding to this idea¹⁰. But it is exactly because a sensible impression alone, according to Kant, is not enough to assure objective reference to any concept that he considers he can prove we are in need of an *a priori* concept of “cause”. Hence, to sum up, Kant is able to ascribe an objective reference to the concept of “cause”, only because he takes the objective reference of the concept of “event” as requiring more than a mere sensible impression corresponding to it. Would there be a problem also for Hume if we were not able to guarantee more than a sensible impression as the reference of the idea of “event”? Well, Hume has not admitted that and, if he should, it must be the subject of another paper. Anyway, the fact remains: according to Kant’s doctrine of causality, if it is sound, one can make sense of the idea of an “objective reference” for the regularity model

10 Indeed, from a Humean point of view, all that matters is our belief in the reality of an idea, while belief, on its turn, “consists in a lively idea related to a present impression” (*THN*, 1.3.8, § 1). In other words, a belief is a feeling or manner of conception of an idea that depends on the presence of an impression (see *THN*, 1.3.7).

of cause, whereas, according to Hume's doctrine of causality, if it is sound, one can make sense only of our believing in an objective reference for the regularity model of cause.

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