



ISSN: 3049-2017  
 IJMH 2026; 3(2): 48-50  
 © 2026 IJMH  
 www.themultijournal.com

Received: 27-02-2026  
 Accepted: 11-03-2026  
 Publish : 12-03-2026

**Babul Hossain**  
 Department of Philosophy,  
 Murshidabad University

## The Problem of Causation: A Comparative Study of Hume, Rationalist Philosophers and Kant

**Babul Hossain**

### Abstract

The concept of causation has long been one of the central problems in philosophy. Philosophers have debated whether there exists a necessary connection between cause and effect or whether causality is merely the result of repeated observation and mental habit. In everyday life, people generally believe that every event has a cause, and this assumption plays a crucial role in scientific reasoning and practical life.

This paper examines the problem of causation through a comparative study of the views of empiricist and rationalist philosophers. The empiricist philosopher David Hume argued that we do not perceive any necessary power connecting cause and effect. According to him, causation is nothing more than a constant conjunction between events that leads the human mind to form a habit of expectation. In contrast, rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza maintained that there is a necessary relationship between cause and effect which can be understood through reason.

Immanuel Kant attempted to reconcile these opposing views by arguing that causality is not derived from experience but is an a priori category of the human understanding that structures all experience. Through a comparative analysis of these philosophical perspectives, this paper evaluates their strengths and limitations and highlights the importance of causality in philosophy, science, and everyday life.

### Keywords:

Causation, Empiricism, Rationalism, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Philosophy of Causality

### Introduction

The concept of causation occupies a fundamental place in philosophical inquiry as well as in scientific explanation. In everyday life, people generally assume that every event occurs due to some cause. This belief forms the basis of scientific investigation and human understanding of the world. However, philosophers have long debated whether there truly exists a necessary connection between cause and effect or whether this connection is merely the result of habitual observation.

Different philosophers have presented different views regarding the nature of causation. Among them, David Hume raised serious doubts about the existence of any necessary connection between cause and effect. According to Hume, our belief in causation arises from repeated experience and the formation of mental habits.

On the other hand, rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza argued that there exists an inherent and necessary relation between cause and effect that can be understood through reason. Later, Immanuel Kant attempted to resolve this debate by proposing that causality is an a priori category of human understanding. According to Kant, our experience of the world becomes possible only because the human mind organizes events through such categories.

The aim of this paper is to examine the problem of causation through a comparative analysis of empiricist, rationalist, and Kantian perspectives.

**Correspondence:**  
**Babul Hossain**  
 Department of Philosophy,  
 Murshidabad University

**Conditions of Cause**

Cause can be understood as the combination of several conditions that together produce an effect. For example, if a person falls from a roof and dies, we often say that the fall from the roof is the cause of death. However, upon closer examination, we realize that many other conditions are involved in the occurrence of this event. If the roof were not high, or if the person had encountered an obstacle while falling, or if the ground had been soft, the person might not have died.

Therefore, what we initially identify as the cause is actually a combination of several conditions. The height of the roof, the absence of obstacles, the hardness of the ground, and the severity of the injury together contribute to the person's death. Thus, cause can be understood as the sum of several conditions.

**Necessary Condition**

If two events A and B are such that B cannot occur without A, then A is called a necessary condition for B.

For example, oxygen is a necessary condition for combustion. Combustion requires several conditions such as fuel, heat, and oxygen. However, without oxygen, combustion cannot occur. Therefore, oxygen is a necessary condition for combustion.

**Sufficient Condition**

A sufficient condition is a condition that, if present, guarantees the occurrence of an event.

For instance, poisoning may be considered a sufficient condition for death. If a person drinks a deadly poison, death will occur. However, death may also occur due to other reasons. Therefore, poisoning is a sufficient condition for death but not a necessary one.

**Hume's Regularity Theory of Causation**

David Hume, the empiricist philosopher, developed a theory of causation often referred to as the regularity theory. According to Hume, we do not perceive any necessary power connecting cause and effect through our senses. Instead, we only observe that certain events regularly follow others.

For example, we observe that fire is followed by heat or that drinking water quenches thirst. Through repeated observation of such sequences, the human mind forms an expectation that similar events will occur in the future. This repeated association creates a mental habit.

Therefore, according to Hume, causation does not exist as a necessary connection in the external world. Rather, it is a psychological tendency of the human mind formed through repeated experience.

**Rationalist Theory of Causation**

Rationalist philosophers such as Descartes and Spinoza rejected Hume's view. They argued that there is an

inherent and necessary relationship between cause and effect.

According to rationalists, the relationship between cause and effect is similar to the logical relationship between premises and conclusions in a valid deductive argument. If the premises are true, the conclusion must necessarily follow. Similarly, the effect necessarily follows from the cause.

Thus, rationalists believe that causation is not merely a matter of repeated observation but involves a real and necessary connection.

**Kant's Theory of Causation**

Immanuel Kant proposed a different solution to the problem of causation. According to Kant, the concept of causality is not derived from experience. Instead, it is an a priori category of the human mind.

Kant argued that the human mind organizes sensory experiences through certain fundamental categories, and causality is one of these categories. Without the concept of causality, it would be impossible for us to understand events as occurring in a meaningful order.

Thus, causality is not simply a habit of the mind, as Hume suggested, nor is it purely a logical relation as rationalists claimed. Instead, it is a fundamental structure of human understanding that makes experience possible.

**Causality in Science and Everyday Life**

Causation plays a crucial role in modern science as well as in everyday life. Scientific explanations are largely based on the identification of causal relationships between events. Without the assumption that certain causes produce certain effects, scientific investigation would become impossible.

Similarly, in everyday life people constantly rely on causal reasoning when making decisions, predictions, and plans for the future.

**Conclusion**

The problem of causation has been a central issue in philosophical discussion for centuries. Empiricist philosophers such as Hume argued that causation is merely a psychological habit formed through repeated observation. Rationalist philosophers, on the other hand, maintained that there exists a necessary and logical relationship between cause and effect. Kant attempted to reconcile these opposing views by proposing that causality is an a priori category of human understanding.

Through this comparative discussion, it becomes clear that the concept of causation is essential for both philosophical reflection and scientific reasoning. Without accepting some form of causal relationship, it would be impossible to explain the order of events in the world or to make predictions about the future.

**Bibliography**

1. Hume,David. A Treatise of Hume,Oxford,Clarendon Press-1896
2. Hume,David. En Enquary of Human Understanding, Oxford University Press-1748
3. Kant,Immanual. The Critique of Pure Reason, German,-1781
4. Kant,Immanual, On The Metaphysics of Moral and Ethics,Cambridge University Press-1946
5. Russell,Bertrand. History of Western Philosophy,United Kingdom,1946
6. Munshi, Ramesh History of Western Philosophy,-1959
7. Chakraborty, Nirad Baran, Introduction to Philosophy. Kolkata-06
8. Das, Rashbihari, Kant's Philosophy, Kolkata-06
9. Bhattacharya, Samarendra, Introduction to Western Philosophy, Kolkata-700049, Book Syndicate Private Limited-2005
10. Stace,W.T, A Critical History of Greek Philosophy,Princeton University Press-1952
11. Frank,Philipp Frank,The Law of Causality and its Limit,Vienna Circle Collection.1998
12. Masih,Yakub,A Critical History of Western Philosophy.Surjeet Publication 2019