A Significant Difference Between al-Ghazālī and Hume on Causation

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Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī's views on causality, as expressed in the seventeenth discussion of *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, have been frequently compared to David Hume's treatment in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. According to M. Saeed Sheikh, for instance, the two bear a "strikingly close similarity."[1] Yet, while al-Ghazālī's seventeenth discussion in the *Tahāfut* is commonly understood as not only a defense of the possibility of miracles, but also of some version of occasionalism, Hume actually argues in the *Treatise* that the very "course of reasoning" that leads the Cartesian occasionalists to deny the efficacy of matter should also lead them to deny occasionalism itself. This suggests greater differences than similarities between the two thinkers on the issue in question.

Nevertheless, there is at least one similarity between them; they are quite likely the two thinkers in history whose positions related to causation, specifically, have generated more interpretive controversy than any others. In the case of al-Ghazālī, the controversy surrounding the *Tahāfut* has centered largely on whether, in the course of his discussion there, he ultimately maintained an occasionalist doctrine, and if so, what sort of (or how "extreme") an occasionalism, and to what extent it represented a departure from the Ashʿarīte school of *kalām*.[2] I do not attempt to sort out this question

[1] M. Saeed Sheikh, "Al-Ghazālī: Metaphysics," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed., M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963).

[2] For more on this controversy, see (among others): B. Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Causality," *Studia Islamica* 68 (1988); I. Alon, "Al-Ghazali on Causality," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100 (1980) 397–405; Richard Frank, *Al-Ghazali and the Ashʿarīte School* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994; Lenn Evan Goodman, "Did Ghazali Deny Causality?" *Studia Islamica* 47:95 (1978); and Michael

in the space of this paper. Fortunately, however, none of the plausible positions in this regard bear heavily on the nature of a difference, to which I draw attention here, between the *Tahāfut* discussion and the Humean position on causation, in relation to which their similarities are superficial.

In the case of Hume's position on causation, however, the issue of interpretation is not so easily laid aside. Recent literature on this is even more immense, and the nature of the difference with al-Ghazālī that I advance here does indeed depend on accepting as correct a specific interpretation or range of interpretations of Hume's position. Were other interpretations of his position brought to bear in the comparison, it is safe to say that there would still turn up a significant, and perhaps greater, difference between the two; yet it would be a *different* difference from that which I wish to bring to light here.

But since the interpretation of the Humean position that I employ here is quite standard, in the interests of simplicity of presentation, I support it largely from the primary sources, allowing the reader to assess the interpretation against its alternatives.[3] Also, since Hume's shorter *Enquiry* largely corroborates the *Treatise* on the topic of causation, I will limit my references to the latter. Ultimately, then, what follows is reduced to a clarification of an important difference between *a plausible*

Marmura, "Al-Ghazali's Second Causal Theory in the 17th Discussion of his *Tahāfut*," reprinted in *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed., P. Morewedge (New York: Caravan, 1981).

[3] The major alternatives are the "projectivist" and "skeptical realist" interpretations. For the former, see Helen Beebee, *Hume on Causation* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Simon Blackburn, "Hume and Thick Connexions," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K Richman, (London: Routledge, 2000), 100–112. For the latter, see: Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941); Galen Strawson, *The Secret Connexion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and J. P. Wright, *The Skeptical Realism of David Hume* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1983).

reading of Hume's position on causation and *a plausible reading* of al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* discussion.

First, I will review al-Ghazālī's argument in the *Tahāfut*, followed by Hume's refutation of occasionalism from the *Treatise*. From this, the difference in question will become clear: while al-Ghazālī simply means to deny necessary causal connections between natural events or things, Hume champions a thoroughgoing reductive analysis of the very concept of causation. It is a small step from there to understand why reductionism about causation is, contrary to initial impressions, not supportive of occasionalism. The origin of the difference between Hume and al-Ghazālī on this issue lies in Hume's copy theory of meaning, upon which he bases his argument for reductionism about causation, but which, I argue, is ultimately incompatible with that position.

"The connection between what is habitually believed to be a cause and what is habitually believed to be an effect is not necessary, according to us," al-Ghazālī writes in the opening of the seventeenth discussion.

> But [with] any two things, where "this" is not "that" and "that" is not "this," and where neither the affirmation of the one entails the affirmation of the other nor the negation of the one entails negation of the other, it is not a necessity of the existence of the one that the other should exist, and it is not a necessity of the nonexistence of the one that the other should not exist. . . Their connection is due to the prior decree

> of God, who creates them side by side, not to its being necessary in itself, incapable of separation.[4]

Here, al-Ghazālī provides a list of examples, and makes clear that he intends his proposition to include "all [that is] observable among connected things."[5] In a sequence of events involving the contact of cotton with fire, for example, al-Ghazālī maintains that each is possible without the other, opposing the position that, "the agent of the burning is the fire alone, it being an agent by nature [and] not by choice—hence incapable of refraining from [acting according to] what is in its nature after contacting a substratum receptive of it."[6] This position contains both the claim that the burning action follows necessarily from the nature of fire and, "after contacting a substratum receptive of it," the nature of a receptor (in this case, the cotton), as well as the claim that the agent of the burning is the fire alone. Al-Ghazālī rejects both claims, insisting not only that inanimate things do not bring anything about with necessity, but that they do not bring anything about at all.

> As for fire, which is inanimate, it has no action. For what proof is there that it is the agent? They have no proof other than observing the occurrence of the burning at the [juncture of] contact with the fire. Observation, however, [only] shows the occurrence [of burning] at [the time of the contact with the fire], but does not show the occurrence [of burning] by [the fire] and that there is no other cause for it.[7]

[4] al-Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 170.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid., 171
[7] Ibid., 171.

Observation shows only spatiotemporal proximities between events (e.g., the burning of cotton at the time of contact with fire), and these do not amount to evidence of any causal relation between observable things, as, in al-Ghazālī's words, "existence 'with' a thing does not prove that it exists 'by' it."[8] This does seem to resemble Hume's argument, in the *Treatise*, for the claim that, "the simple view of any two objects or actions, however related, can never give us any idea of power, or of a connection between them."[9] The most we can observe, according to Hume, is that like objects are constantly conjoined, and that does not imply a causal relation. "For it [constant conjunction] implies no more than this," he writes, "that like objects have always been placed in like relations of contiguity and succession. . . "[10]

Stephen Riker has observed that, while both al-Ghazālī and Hume "denied necessary causality" on the basis of the fact that "all one can get from observation is the succession of events," this denial leads them, respectively, to radically different positions on religious issues. For instance, while al-Ghazālī uses the position to defend divine omnipotence and the possibility of miracles, Hume is led thereby to the denial of the possibility of miracles and to skepticism about the very existence of God.[11] However, what Riker seems not to notice is that these latter differences stem from the fact that, though both al-Ghazālī and Hume do conclude that "all one can get from observation is the succession of events," they reach this conclusion from very different epistemological premises, so that the respective senses in which one "gets" something

[8] Ibid.
[9] Hume, *Treatise*, 166.
[10] Ibid., 88.
[11] Stephen Riker, "Al-Ghazālī on Necessary Causality in *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*," *The Monist* 79 (1996) 3:315–324.

"from observation" is quite different for each thinker, and hence, so are the natures of their "denials" of necessary causality.

Consider Hume's comments in the *Treatise* regarding the Cartesian occasionalists.

> For if every idea be deriv'd from an impression, the idea of a deity proceeds from the same origin; and if no impression, either of sensation or reflection, implies any force or efficacy, 'tis equally impossible to discover any such active principle in the deity.[12]

The Humean argument against occasionalism, then, is as follows:

1) *Every idea is derived from an impression.*

2) *No impression implies any force or efficacy.*

Therefore, we have no idea of force or efficacy.

Therefore, we have no idea of force or efficacy as an attribute of God.

This argument rests essentially on Hume's epistemological premise, that every idea is derived from an impression. The lack of any impression that implies force or efficacy must render a global denial of the possession of any meaningful concept thereof in order to generate the conclusion. If we are truly without any such idea, then occasionalism is a meaningless doctrine; that is, nothing is really attributed to God at all, in calling Him "first cause," and nothing is really denied of creation in calling Him "only cause." "Since these philosophers, therefore, have concluded, that matter cannot be endow'd with any efficacious principle, because 'tis impossible to discover in it such

[12] Hume, *Treatise*, 160.

a principle;" writes Hume, "the same course of reasoning should determine them to exclude it from the supreme being."[13]

The course of reasoning that Hume attributes to the Cartesian occasionalists here is as follows:

1) *It is impossible to discover any efficacious principle in matter.*

Therefore, matter does not have any efficacious principle.

This, and not the Humean argument, more closely resembles Al-Ghazālī's line of reasoning regarding the issue, as represented in both the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* and *Al-iqtiṣād fī al-iʿtiqād.*[14] Contrary to Hume, such an argument need not lead one to deny the efficacy of God. Unlike the Humean argument, nothing here entails that we simply have no *idea* of efficacy. The first premise only states that we do not discover it in matter. It is reasonable, on the basis of this premise, to draw the conclusion that matter itself is not efficacious. One need not adopt either of the first two premises of Hume's argument in order to draw such a conclusion. Thus, while it is correct that an occasionalist cannot deny the very concept of causation, the epistemological occasionalist argument, from the premise that efficacy is not discovered in matter, does not turn on such a denial.

It would be more accurate to understand Hume as contending, not simply that we have no concept of causation, but that we have no *logically irreducible* concept of causation. That is, we have no concept of causation that is not exhaustively analyzable in non-causal terms—terms for which we must, according to Hume, discover corresponding impressions of origin. Thus, Hume actually offers two definitions of cause, which he claims "are only different, by their presenting a different view of the

[13] Ibid.
[14] For more on al-Ghazālī's discussion in *al-iqtiṣād* see Michael Marmura, "Ghazālī's Chapter on Divine Power in the *Iqtiṣād*," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 4 (1994): 279–315.

same object, and making us consider it either as a *philosophical* or as a *natural* relation; either as a comparison of two ideas, or as an association betwixt them."[15] Cause, considered as a philosophical relation, or a comparison of two ideas, is defined as: "An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are plac'd in like relations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter."[16]

Considered as a natural relation, or an "association betwixt" ideas: "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."[17]

There is therefore, considerable ambiguity as to whether it is more correct to say that Hume "denied causation" (a problematically vague but common statement); or just that he denied that there is any meaning of "causation" other than that given by one of these two definitions. While the latter characterization is more precise, there remains, for the Hume reader, the lingering sense that, in asserting these definitions, Hume has meaningfully ruled out something that was previously, perhaps naively taken for granted. This sense is manifest in the common understanding that Hume, here, is telling us that A is not *really* the cause of B. Repeated experience of their conjunction, rather, has conditioned us to expect the one to follow upon the other, and a "cause" is simply that which brings on this feeling of expectation, arising from a purely instinctual associative habit. In this case, however, A *is* the cause of B after all,

[15] Hume, *Treatise*, 170.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

and nothing has really been eliminated from the ontology by Hume's analysis, despite our strong initial impression otherwise.

It should be clear by now why, contrary to a common assumption, reductionism about causation is not conducive to a doctrine of occasionalism. A reductive analysis of a *concept* can leave no special application of it unreduced. If we maintain, for example, that the relation between x and y that is asserted in the proposition "x caused y" is logically reducible to some set of non-causal relations *R*, then we are committed to the consequence, that "x caused y" is true if and only if xRy, regardless of what instantiates the placeholders x and y—whether material, immaterial, created, or Creator.

Al-Ghazālī, however, is definitely denying that any natural event is really the cause of any other; and while he does explain our practice of causally linking natural events as an associative habit, he is definitely *not* going to accept that all that God's being the cause of these events *means* is that His willing an event evokes in our minds an expectation that it will occur, given an associative habit formed from repeated experience of their past conjunction. Despite the superficial similarities between the treatment of causation by al-Ghazālī and Hume, then, they are fundamentally different in this respect. While Hume's is a reductive analysis of causation itself, al-Ghazālī's is simply an empirical argument to the effect that we have no reason to believe that creatures exercise causal efficacy.

On this point, we are in agreement with Giacaman and Bahlul. "Unlike Hume," they correctly observe, "al-Ghazālī's intent is not primarily the analysis of the meaning

of causation."[18] However, their contention that "al-Ghazālī's argument presupposes an empiricist epistemology" is hasty.[19] As we saw, the argument in question is basically similar to that which Hume attributes to the Cartesian occasionalists, and nobody would describe the Cartesians as empiricists. All that is presupposed in al-Ghazālī's argument, epistemologically, is that any possible knowledge of causal connections between observable events (i.e., what, specifically, caused what), if we had any, would have to be derived from the observation of those events. This is far short of a full-blown empiricist epistemology, and is quite compatible with the position that knowledge ultimately depends on a range of innate ideas, and even that empirical knowledge is altogether impossible. It is considerably less plausible to claim that one's knowledge of the details of the myriad causal relations between a nearly infinite range of various natural phenomena (e.g., that fire burns cotton under such and such conditions, etc.) is innate, than it is simply to claim that the *concept* of causation, or the knowledge that every contingent thing has a cause, or indeed that God exists, is innate. Thus, Barry Kogan's objection—cited by Giacaman and Bahlul—that "God is certainly not something of which we have experience," has little force against al-Ghazālī's argument.[20]

To return to the topic at hand, the Humean premise at the root of it—that every idea is derived from an impression—which has become known as the copy theory of meaning, is essentially the guiding principle of all Hume's philosophy, including his pronouncements regarding causal notions. It is on this basis that he prescribes his method of analyzing them by stating, "'Tis impossible to reason justly, without

[18] George Giacaman and Raja Bahlul, "Ghazālī on Miracles and Necessary Connection," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 9 (2000), 42.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 44, with reference to Barry Kogan, *Averroes and the Metaphysics of Causation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 89.

understanding perfectly the idea concerning which we reason; and 'tis impossible perfectly to understand any idea, without tracing it up to its origin, and understanding the primary impression from which it arises."[21]

The copy theory is articulated in the beginning of the *Treatise* as the "general proposition," ". . . That all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent."[22] Ideas and impressions, for Hume, are jointly exhaustive of the kinds of "all the perceptions of the human mind," differing only with regard to "the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought and consciousness."[23]

> Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions, and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning; such as, for instance, are all the perceptions excited by the present discourse, excepting only, those which arise from the sight and touch, and excepting the immediate pleasure or uneasiness it may occasion.[24]

Hume makes the further distinction between "simple" and "complex" impressions as follows:

> Simple perceptions or impressions and ideas are such as admit of no distinction nor separation. The complex are contrary to these, and may

[21] Hume, *Treatise*, 74–75.
[22] Ibid., 4.
[23] Ibid., 1.
[24] Ibid.

> be distinguished into parts. Tho' a particular color, taste, and smell are qualities all united together in this apple, 'tis easy to perceive they are not the same, but are at least distinguishable from each other.[25]

The upshot of the "general proposition," then, is that all our perceptions that "admit of no distinction nor separation" into parts, and that are "faint images of these [impressions] in thinking and reasoning" originate from those perceptions that also "admit of no distinction nor separation" into parts, "enter with most force and violence," and have the distinction of being those perceptions of which the former are "faint images." It should be clear that, in distinguishing ideas as faint images of impressions, Hume has built the presupposition of the truth of the general proposition into his very definition of "idea" from the outset.

If we eliminate any such presupposition from his distinction between impression and idea, we are left with nothing to distinguish the two other than the varying degrees of "force and violence" with which they "enter." This leaves us with the troubling question of just how much force and violence a perception must enter with in order to be an impression, as opposed to a mere idea. Perhaps if the general proposition could be established on independent grounds, the fact that members of one class of perceptions bear the relation of being "faint images" of the other could be retained as the distinguishing feature between them.

Hume offers a single argument for the general proposition, and then describes what he claims to be the only possible method of its refutation. I call this the only argument Hume offers for the general proposition for the simple reason that all the

[25] Ibid., 2.

other observations he makes in its favor (e.g., that a congenitally blind person cannot form the idea of a color, or that "we cannot form to ourselves a just idea of the taste of a pineapple, without having actually tasted it")[26] focus specifically on "ideas" that are just memories of sensible qualities. These may be enough to establish that we cannot have memories of impressions that we have never had, but that does not show that *all* simple ideas are derived from impressions.

The argument in question is based on Hume's observation that "all simple ideas and impressions resemble each other," differing only in the "degree of force or vivacity." That is, "every simple impression is attended with a correspondent idea, and every simple idea with a correspondent impression,"[27] and:

> From this constant conjunction of resembling perceptions I immediately conclude, that there is a great connexion betwixt our correspondent impressions and ideas, and that the existence of the one has a considerable influence upon that of the other. Such a constant conjunction, in such an infinite number of instances, can never arise from chance; but clearly proves a dependence of the impressions on the ideas, or of the ideas on the impressions.[28]

The dependence, Hume argues, is evidently that of the ideas on the impressions, as "the simple impressions always take the precedence of their correspondent ideas, but never appear in the contrary order." "The constant conjunction of our resembling impressions," he writes, "is a convincing proof that the one are the causes of the other;

[26] Ibid., 5.
[27] Ibid., 2–4.
[28] Ibid., 4–5.

and this priority of the impressions is an equal proof, that our impressions are the causes of our ideas, not our ideas of our impressions."[29] As it stands, this argument seems to depend on the premises that: 1) constant conjunction amounts to proof of a causal connection, and that 2) temporal priority amounts to proof of causal priority. But as noted earlier, one of Hume's central contentions in relation to causation is precisely the fact that 1) is false.

In spite of the contradiction between these claims, the level of confidence that Hume places in the premise in question is evident in his implication that the only possible refutation of his argument for copy theory lies in disputing its first premise, i.e., the observation that "every simple impression is attended with a correspondent idea, and every simple idea with a correspondent impression."

> But if any one should deny this universal resemblance, I know of no way of convincing him, but by desiring him to shew a simple impression, that has not a corresponding idea, or a simple idea, that has not a corresponding impression. If he does not answer this challenge, as 'tis certain he cannot, we may from his silence and our own observation establish our conclusion.[30]

Hume's certainty of the impossibility of meeting this challenge notwithstanding, if it is made in good faith, then the implication would be that if one were to produce an example of a simple idea that has not a corresponding impression, the general proposition would be sunk. Then if one were to respond to the production

[29] Ibid., 5.
[30] Ibid., 4.

of an example of such an idea merely by concluding, on the basis of the absence of a corresponding impression, that the idea is actually no idea at all, one would be clearly cheating. That is, since the general proposition wholly depends on the general observation that there are no simple ideas without corresponding impressions, it cannot be employed as a litmus test for determining whether one does or does not have an idea by looking to see whether there is or is not a corresponding impression. But we find that this is precisely the move Hume makes in the case of causation, for example, in claiming that "as we have no idea, that is not deriv'd from an impression, we must find some impression that gives rise to this idea of necessity, if we assert that we really have such an idea."[31] Instead, he should say, "we should find no idea that is not derived from an impression, if we assert that we really have no such idea."

Al-Ghazālī's denial of natural necessity also turns on the proposition that constant conjunction does not prove causation, i.e., existence *with* a thing does not prove that it exists *by* it. His argument for this proposition does not depend, however, on the denial, on the grounds of a strict empiricist theory of meaning, of any meaningful concept of a genuine (i.e., one not reducible to non-causal terms) causal relation. On the contrary, the argument he offers actually entails our possession of such a concept.

> Indeed, we will show this by an example. If a person, blind from birth, who has a film on his eyes and who has never heard from people the difference between night and day, were to have the film cleared from his eyes in daytime, [then] open his eyelids and see colors, [such a person]

[31] Ibid., 155.

> would believe that the agent [causing] the apprehension of the forms of the colors in his eyes is the opening of his sight and that, as long as his sight is sound, [his eyes] opened, the film removed, and the individual in front of him having color, it follows necessarily that he would see, it being incomprehensible that he would not see. When, however, the sun sets and the atmosphere becomes dark, he would then know that it is sunlight that is the cause for the imprinting of the colors in his sight.[32]

The seeing of colors, in this example, occurs *with* the opening of the sight but not *by* it in the sense that the latter is not the agent. Rather, the opening of the sight is the removal of an impediment to the eye's passive disposition to receive the "imprinting" of the colors, not an independently active cause that necessitates the seeing of colors. But though it may appear to turn out that the sun is the agent, this also must be simply a false appearance. As entailed by al-Ghazālī's stated position, the sun is no more an agent than the eye. So what the example shows us is a man coming to the realization that an initial belief was mistaken, only to be led by this realization to another ultimately false belief. The observation of the sun setting "with" the cessation of seeing colors is no more proof that the sun was the agent "by" which the colors were seen than the replacement of film on the eyes "with" such cessation was proof that its removal was the agent.

> Whence can the opponent safeguard himself against there being among the principles of existence grounds and causes from which these [observable] events emanate when a contact between them takes place—

[32] Ghazālī, *Tahāfut*, 171–172.

> [admitting] that [these principles], however, are permanent, never ceasing to exist; that they are not moving bodies that would set; that were they either to cease to exist or set, we would apprehend the dissociation [between the temporal events] and would understand that there is a cause beyond what we observe?[33]

For any situation in which it appears that a given observable event or state of affairs follows necessarily from a separate set of observable events or conditions, there is nothing to rule out the possibility of conditions obtaining external to the latter set, under which the "effect" does not follow. Then the conditions in the set, which were thought to constitute the active causal principle/s necessitating the effect, would be, instead, mere dispositions operative only under certain conditions of actualization; conditions which can only be provided by an independently active cause. With this, al-Ghazālī moves more approvingly to the position of Ibn Sīnā—"the exacting among them"—that the causal order rests ultimately on unchanging metaphysical principles rather than observable phenomena. Al-Ghazālī's only disagreement here is, as he puts it, that: "We do not concede that the principles do not act by choice and that God does not act voluntarily."[34] Needless to say, all of this falls far outside of what Hume would have considered epistemologically admissible.

What I wish to focus on here, however, is only the idea implicit in al-Ghazālī's example that, stripped of its robustly metaphysical language, is equivalent to the well-known epistemological problem of inferring causation on the basis of correlation: that is, the possibility that the real cause is a hidden third factor. The simple observation of

[33] Ibid., 172.
[34] Ibid., 173.

a constant conjunction between events of type A with events of type B is not sufficient to rule out an unknown factor, C, which is, in fact, the cause of the constant conjunction of A and B, creating the false impression that A and B are causally related, when in fact, A and B are only constantly conjoined, in virtue of C, which is the real cause.

Now, it is plain to see that, if such a scenario constitutes an intelligible possibility, then we must be in possession of some meaningful concept of a causal relation that is essentially distinct from (i.e., not reducible to) any mere spatiotemporal correlation. That is to say, the intelligibility of the proposition that constant conjunction is not proof of causation entails our possession of an idea of causation that is not just constant conjunction. Conversely, the claim that we have no meaningful concept of causation that is not just reducible to some sort of constant conjunction entails that the observation of that sort of constant conjunction between any two events does, in fact, logically rule out the possibility that these two events are not, thereby, causally related, since that sort of constant conjunction just *is* the causal relation. In this case, for an unknown third factor to be the "real" cause just *is* for that factor also to stand in the same relation of constant conjunction to the observed conjunction, or at least in *some* relation of conjunction to which causation is logically reducible, in which case it would not mean that the first conjunction is not also a real causal relation. The moral is that not all skepticisms or denials of causation, so generally described, are the same; and some may even be logically incompatible with others.

Consequently, when Hume, on the basis of the premises that all ideas are derived from impressions and that we have no impression that implies force or efficacy, concludes that we have *no idea* of force or efficacy, a problem arises. If we have no idea of force or efficacy, then on the basis of Hume's copy theory of meaning, the very proposition that no impression implies force or efficacy is rendered meaningless. But if this proposition is meaningless, then how can it be a premise in an argument on the basis of which we conclude that we have no idea of force or efficacy? What is it that we were looking for among our impressions, that our failure to find then led us to conclude that we have no idea? Al-Ghazālī's argument, which also entails our possession of a meaningful idea of causation over and above constant conjunction, does not face this conundrum, simply because he does not conclude that we have no such idea. His position, again, is simply that we do not find causation within our experience of observable things.