Late Islamic Philosophy and the Humean Problem of Causation

Abstract

David Hume's argument concerning causation is probably the most famous argument in the history of philosophy. According to him, there is no basis for believing in necessary connections among physical objects. Since our knowledge of laws of nature is derived from our experience of causal relations, and since our knowledge of future depends on our knowledge of laws of nature, then we are not justified in what we believe about future either. This contradicts our common causal beliefs. There have been different approaches towards this argument and different areas of philosophy are concerned with this argument and its consequences. Some Islamic philosophers have argued against Hume's position. They claimed that we are justified in our common causal beliefs and the justification is due to a cooperation between experience and reason together. We are justified a priori in believing in necessary connections between physical events in general but our knowledge of specific causes and effects is empirical. In this paper I show that none of these attempts are successful. However, there seems to be a better future perspective for dealing with this problem within the sphere of Islamic philosophy.