

## Free Will and Irreligion in Hume's *Treatise*\*

“... *there can be no Religion without Freedom of Will...*”

-- Samuel Clarke

“... *religion, which has been very unnecessarily interested in this question...*”

-- David Hume

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Hume's views on free will have been enormously influential and are widely regarded as representing "the best-known classical statement of what is now known as compatibilism".<sup>1</sup> There are a number of valuable studies that consider his contribution on this subject from a contemporary, critical perspective, but this will not be my particular concern in this paper.<sup>2</sup> My primary interest, consistent with the specific aims and objectives of this volume, is to explain the way that Hume's arguments in T, 2.3.1-2 relate to his fundamental intentions in the *Treatise* as a whole. Contrary to what is generally supposed, I will show that Hume's arguments in these two sections are significantly concerned with problems of religion. More specifically, Hume's necessitarian commitments, I argue, contain features that are systematically irreligious in character. These features of Hume's views on this subject are indicative of his deeper and wider irreligious intentions throughout the *Treatise*.

### ***I. The Elements of Hume's Compatibilism***

A widely accepted understanding of the general relationship between Hume's *Treatise* and his first *Enquiry* is that the former work has little or no direct or substantial concern with problems of religion, whereas significant irreligious themes are (first) introduced in the *Enquiry*.<sup>3</sup> In support of this view, it is often pointed out that there are several important passages and discussions in the *Enquiry* which are strongly hostile to religion (i.e. the established doctrines of Christian theology) but do not appear in the *Treatise*. The most famous of these are sections X and XI of the *Enquiry*, where Hume discusses miracles and the argument from design. The accepted account of this situation is that when Hume was preparing the *Treatise* for publication he wanted to avoid causing "offence", so he "castrated" his work and removed its "nobler parts", most notably his discussion of miracles.<sup>4</sup> It was only when Hume "cast the first part of [the *Treatise*] anew", in the form of the first *Enquiry*, that the "nobler parts" were returned to his work, along with other irreligious themes and objectives.<sup>5</sup>

This understanding of the general relationship between the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* has a direct bearing on the interpretation of Hume's intentions in T, 2.3.1-2. Although Hume's two versions "Of liberty and necessity" closely resemble each other they are not

identical. In particular, the first *Enquiry* version includes a long discussion where Hume describes the difficulties that the doctrine of necessity presents for religion (EU, 8.32-6 / 99-103). Many commentators have interpreted this as reflecting irreligious aims and objectives that are otherwise (entirely) absent from the *Treatise*.<sup>6</sup> What this view of things presupposes is that the elements of Hume's discussion that are common to both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* are without any religious or irreligious significance. A careful examination of Hume's arguments, considered in their relevant historical context, shows that this view of things is seriously mistaken.

In order to identify the religious/irreligious significance of Hume's discussion "Of liberty and necessity", as presented in the *Treatise*, we need to begin with a description of the basic features of his argument. Six elements of his argument in these two sections are especially important.

(i) The feature of Hume's discussion in T, 2.3.1-2 that has been given particular prominence by most commentators is his famous distinction between two kinds of "liberty".<sup>7</sup> One kind is "liberty of indifference", which means "a negation of necessity and causes" (T, 2.3.2.1 /407). Being free, on this account, means not being causally necessitated to act. The other kind is "liberty of spontaneity", which is "oppos'd to violence" or constraint and force. According to this view, being free means being able to act according to the determination of our own will as opposed to "external causes" of some kind (e.g. like a prisoner behind walls and bars: T, 2.3.1.17 /406). Hume indicates that this distinction was familiar and well established when he was writing, and that it can be traced back to "the schools".<sup>8</sup> He also argues that it is liberty of spontaneity that is "the most common sense of the word" and that it is "only that species of liberty, which it concerns us to preserve" (T,2.3.2.1 /407-08).<sup>9</sup>

(ii) If liberty of spontaneity is the only kind of liberty that we actually care about and want to preserve, why is the doctrine of liberty of indifference so "prevalent"? One explanation that Hume gives for this is that there is "a false sensation or experience" of liberty of indifference. This is accounted for by the different perspective we have on action depending on whether we are an agent or a spectator. When we are performing an action, "we feel that our actions are subject to our will on most occasions, and imagine we feel that the will itself is subject to nothing" (T,2.3.2.2 /408). The fact remains,

however, that “a spectator can commonly infer our actions from our motives and character; and even where he cannot, he concludes in general, that he might, were he perfectly acquainted with every circumstance of our situation...” (T, 2.3.2.2 / 408-09). Clearly, then, we can “never free ourselves from the bonds of necessity” (T, 2.3.2.2 / 408). According to Hume, therefore, there is no experimental basis for claiming that human action manifests “free will” (i.e. understood as some form of indifference or chance).

(iii) A more important reason that Hume gives for the “prevalence” of the doctrine of liberty of indifference is our natural tendency to suppose that necessity implies constraint or violence of some kind. If this were true, then it would follow that if our actions were caused we would not only lack liberty of indifference but also liberty of spontaneity. The source of our confusion here, according to Hume, is a mistaken understanding of the meaning of “necessity”. There are, he claims, two things that are essential to necessity: they are (i) the “constant union” of objects and (ii) “the inference of the mind” from one object to another (T, 2.3.1.4/ 400; cp. AT, 32/ 660). Wherever we discover a regular succession of objects and make inferences from one object to another on the basis of our observation of these regularities, we must conclude that the objects are indeed governed by necessity. Hume devotes the whole of T, 2.3.1 to argue that experience and observation shows that necessity governs human motivation and action no less than it does “the operation of external bodies” (T, 2.3.1.3-4 / 399-400). Human life is as regular and uniform as the movement of bodies in the natural world, which allows us to anticipate and predict how other people will act in the future.<sup>10</sup> As long as Hume’s definition of “necessity” is properly understood, it is simply an observable fact that human life is subject to causation and necessity of the same kind that we discover in the rest of nature. Beyond this, the free will debate is “a dispute of words” (T, 2.3.1.16 / 406; cp. EU, 8.1-3 / 80-81).<sup>11</sup>

(iv) Hume’s views on necessity and causation plainly involve several negative claims, as well as a positive account of what “causation” and “necessity” (really) mean. In the first place, as Hume has already made clear in his discussion of causation in Book One, “all causes are of the same kind” (T, 1.3.14.32 / 171). He denies, for example, that there are any “final causes”. There are only efficient causes as he has defined them (i.e. in

terms of precedence, contiguity and regularity). Hume also denies that there is any distinction between “causes” and “occasions”.

For the same reason we must reject the distinction between cause and occasion, when suppos'd to signify any thing essentially different from each other. If constant conjunction be imply'd in what we call occasion, 'tis a real cause. If not, 'tis no relation at all, and cannot give rise to any argument or reasoning. (T, 1.3.14.32 /171)

Hume goes on to say that “there is but one kind of necessity, as there is but one kind of cause, and that the common distinction betwixt moral and physical necessity is without any foundation in nature” (T,1.3.14.33 /171 – Hume’s emphasis)

'Tis the constant conjunction of objects, along with the determination of the mind, which constitutes a physical necessity: And the removal of these is the same thing with chance. As the objects must either be conjoin'd or not, and as the mind must either be determin'd or not to pass from one object to another, 'tis impossible to admit of any medium betwixt chance and absolute necessity. (T, 1.3.14.33 /171 – Hume’s emphasis)

Hume concludes this paragraph by arguing that there is no basis for the distinction that is sometimes drawn between power and the exercise of it (T, 1.3.14.34 /171; cp. 2.1.10.5 / 313).<sup>12</sup>

(v) Hume’s scepticism regarding “moral necessity” and “unexercised powers” is intimately related to his scepticism concerning the immateriality of the soul (T, 1.4.5). In particular, Hume rejects the suggestion that thought is in some way “more active than matter” (T, 1.4.5.31 / 249). We have, he says, no idea of (any) immaterial beings, understood as a simple, indivisible, identical substances, that are supposed to possess “active powers” of some kind (T, 1.4.5.1-6 / 232-4; and, more generally, 1.4.6). All these claims, as presented in the earlier sections of the *Treatise*, lay the foundation for the central argument of 2.3.1, which is that we discover that human thought and action is

subject to causation and necessity in the same way as the operations of matter, and that there is no significant difference between them in this respect.

(vi) There is a further reason why the doctrine of liberty of indifference “has generally been better receiv’d in the world than its antagonist” (i.e. the doctrine of necessity). This is because religion “has been very unnecessarily interested in this question” (T, 2.3.2.3 /409). Hume observes that it is a common, but blameworthy practice to try to refute an opinion by pointing to its “dangerous consequences to religion and morality” (T, 2.3.2.3 /409). Moreover, while any opinion that leads us into absurdities is certainly false, an opinion cannot be proved false simply because of its dangerous consequences. Be this as it may, Hume sets about to show that the doctrine of necessity “is not only innocent, but even advantageous to religion and morality” (T, 2.3.2.3 /409).

According to Hume both human and divine laws are founded on rewards and punishments, which serve to motivate obedience. The influence of rewards and punishments is causal; they produce good actions and prevent evil ones. As such, they involve necessity as Hume has defined it, and without necessity of this kind both human and divine laws would be subverted (T, 2.3.2.5 /410). Hume pays particular attention to God’s role in inflicting punishment on criminals. Clearly, in so far as we view God as a “legislator” such punishment (i.e. in a future state) is designed to produce obedience (T, 2.3.2.6 /410). Moreover, even if we consider God in his “magisterial capacity”, exacting retribution for crimes, this is possible only if there is some “necessary connexion of cause and effect in human actions” (T, 2.3.2.6 /410-11). The basis for this claim, however, needs careful articulation in terms of Hume’s more general commitments.

If there was no necessary connexion of cause and effect between human thought and action, not only would rewards and punishments be ineffective, they would also be unjust. More importantly, it would “never enter into the thoughts of any reasonable being to inflict them” (T, 2.3.2.6 /411). Why does Hume make this claim? The standard account of why Hume believes that necessity is essential to morality is that he is making a logical or conceptual point. We can attribute an action to an agent only if it is something that she does. If actions were not caused they would be entirely random, so there would be no basis for saying that the agent produced or brought them about. Clearly, then, if there is no causal connexion between the agent and her actions we would never consider her an

object of approval or disapproval. Chance is not a reasonable metaphysical foundation on which to rest our analysis of responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

The difficulty with this interpretation of Hume's argument is that it fails to take proper account of both the specific role of necessity (as Hume defines it) and the way that it relates to the mechanism that produces our moral sentiments. The relevant passage reads:

The constant and universal object of hatred or anger is a person or creature endow'd with thought and consciousness; and when any criminal or injurious actions excite that passion, 'tis only by their relation to the person or connexion with him. But according to the doctrine of liberty or chance, this connexion is reduc'd to nothing... a man is as pure and untainted, after having committed the most horrid crimes, as at the first moment of his birth, nor is his character any way concern'd in his actions; since they are not deriv'd from it, and the wickedness of one can never be us'd as a proof of the depravity of the other. 'Tis only upon the principles of necessity that a person acquires any merit or demerit from his actions, however the common opinion may incline to the contrary.

(T, 2.3.2.6/ 411)

These remarks must be understood within the framework of Hume's (complex) account of the indirect passions and the way they are aroused (i.e. as described in T, 2.1,2). Fundamental to Hume's position is that virtue and vice, considered as pleasant or painful qualities of mind, arouse calm forms of love and hate, which are (moral) approval and disapproval. To hold a person responsible is to regard them as an object of approval or disapproval. Unless we are able to infer these qualities of mind on the basis of our experience of regularities of the relevant kind between action and character, no moral sentiments would, as a matter of psychological fact, be aroused in us. It follows that without necessity – understood in terms of the relevant regularities and inferences – morality would be impossible. Hume's claims about necessity being essential to morality

are, therefore, deeply embedded in his detailed account of the mechanism of the indirect passions and the way that our moral sentiments are generated.<sup>14</sup>

The above elements of Hume's position on the subject of free will, as presented in T, 2.3.1-2, do not appear to have any obvious irreligious or anti-Christian significance. In fact, it may appear that Hume does not address any point of particular religious significance until he comes to describe religion's "unnecessary interest in this question" (T, 2.3.2.3 / 409). In dealing with this specific matter Hume maintains that his views about necessity are, not only "innocent", they are actually "advantageous to religion and morality" (T, 2.3.2.3 / 409). In the *Enquiry*, however, there is a significant shift in Hume's way of dealing with this objection. In this context, Hume repeats the claim that both necessity and liberty, as he has defined them, "are not only consistent with morality, but are absolutely essential to its support" (EU, 8.26 / 97), but he does not suggest that necessity is "advantageous" to religion. Instead, he adds a long discussion where he describes the difficulties that the doctrine of necessity presents for religion (EU, 8.32-36 / 99-103). This discussion has no counter-part in the *Treatise*. The general conclusion that Hume reaches in this passage is that religion faces an insuperable dilemma on this subject. More specifically, the doctrine of necessity must imply either that God is the author of sin or that there is no real (moral) evil in this world, since all (human) action derives ultimately from "so good a cause" [i.e. God] (EU, 8.32 / 99). Moreover, any attempt to evade this dilemma by embracing the free will position encounters other difficulties relating to God's foreknowledge (EU, 8.36 / 103). Although Hume presents himself as (innocently) puzzled by these theological "perplexities", the overall force of these additional passages is to show that it is not clear how religious doctrine can be reconciled with any coherent or plausible system.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Enquiry* the reader is led to the conclusion that while necessity is "absolutely essential" to morality, religion encounters "inevitable difficulties, and even contradictions" (EU, 8.36 / 103; cp EU, 8.26 / 96, where Hume points out that "when any opinion leads to absurdities, it is certainly false"). This shift in both presentation and substance certainly lends support to the general claim that Hume introduces irreligious themes in the *Enquiry* that are otherwise (entirely) absent in the *Treatise*.

## *II. Hobbist Necessitarianism, “Atheism”, and the Clarke-Collins Controversy*

We have observed that in the *Treatise* Hume maintains that his views about necessity are not only “innocent”, they are, he claims, actually “advantageous” to religion (T, 2.3.2.3 / 409). How plausible is this claim? Consider Hume’s particular account of why necessity is essential to morality, where he assimilates our understanding of merit and demerit as it relates to human beings and God (T,2.3.2.7 /411). From a theological point of view his account is highly problematic. More specifically, according to Hume’s system our ability to hold people responsible depends on our moral sentiments. Our accountability to God, therefore, presupposes that God is subject to (moral) passions of the same general kind that we observe in human beings. This would include passions such as “hatred or anger” that can motivate God’s retributive practices in a future state (i.e. when he acts “as a avenger of crimes” and sends people to Hell). While Hume does not explicitly comment on these problems in the *Treatise*, he does raise them in a letter to Francis Hutcheson written in March 1740.

I wish from my heart, I could avoid concluding, that since Morality, according to your Opinion as well as mine, is determin’d merely by Sentiment, it regards only human Nature and human Life. This has been often urged against you, & the Consequences are very momentous... If Morality were determined by Reason, that is the same to all rational Beings: But nothing but Experience can assure us, that the Sentiments are the same. What Experience have we with regard to superior Beings? How can we ascribe to them any Sentiments at all?<sup>16</sup>

In his *Illustrations Upon the Moral Sense* Hutcheson argued that this difficulty can be dealt with if we are willing to assume that “the Deity has something of a superior kind, analogous to our moral sense”.<sup>17</sup> Hume’s reference to Hutcheson’s critics would certainly include John Balguy, a prominent follower of Samuel Clarke, who placed this criticism at the head of his polemics against Hutcheson.<sup>18</sup> What this indicates is that Hume’s account

of the way that necessity is essential to morality involves the operation of moral sentiments, and he was well aware that this presents a fundamental difficulty in accounting for the existence and nature of God's moral sentiments. In general, his theory of responsibility, which involves necessity in the workings of our moral sentiments, is far from "innocent" from the point of view of religion. Although he was well aware of this -- as his letter to Hutcheson indicates -- he makes no effort to show how religion can deal with it. He leaves this problem sitting at the surface of his discussion, where it would be easy for his contemporary audience to spot it.

The other obvious "gap" in Hume's discussion is his studied silence on the issues that he subsequently addressed directly in the closing passages of EU, 8. In the *Treatise*, while Hume condemns religion's "unnecessary interest" in the free will question, he makes no attempt to deal with the problems of evil and foreknowledge -- issues that were central to the debate as discussed by his own contemporaries. Nor can there be any doubt that Hume was aware of these fundamental points of contact between the free will problem and theological systems. We know, for example, from Hume's "Early Memoranda", which reflects his reading in the period about the early 1730's, that he was reading Bayle's *Dictionary* and King's *Essay on the Origin of Evil*, both of which explore these problems in some detail. Hume's notes on King are specifically concerned with the problem of evil and the free will defence.<sup>19</sup> The fact that Hume makes no effort in the *Treatise* to deal with these issues makes clear that his remarks about religion's "unnecessary interest" in this subject is less than sincere, and that his intentions are by no means "innocent".<sup>20</sup>

In response to these observations concerning Hume's irreligious intentions in the *Treatise* as they relate to his discussion of free will, it may be argued that all that has been shown is that there is evidence that when Hume wrote the *Treatise* he was aware that his overall position could be put to irreligious ends. However, without knowledge of his private letters (e.g. to Hutcheson) or his later writings on this subject (i.e. in the *Enquiry*) none of this is obvious to readers of the text itself. In contrast with this, his remarks about free will and religion in the *Enquiry*, although superficially "innocent", plainly manifest some irreligious intent. The contrast between the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* versions, therefore, remains significant in this respect.

This perspective on the way that Hume's discussion in the *Treatise* should be read makes two important assumptions. First, it assumes that T, 2.3.1-2 can be properly understood without much detailed knowledge of the specific background debate(s) that Hume is responding to and engaging in. This perspective also assumes that Hume's contributions in these sections can be understood without considering them in relation to other sections of the *Treatise*, much less in relation to his fundamental intentions in this work. Both assumptions are mistaken.

Let us begin with the background debate as it relates to Hume's specific arguments in the *Treatise*. In so far as commentators make any observation about Hume's predecessors and debts on this subject, the most common is that his compatibilist position is very similar to the position that was defended by Hobbes in the previous century.<sup>21</sup> Hendel points out that Hume's title "Of liberty and necessity" seems to have been taken from the essay of the same title that is included in Hobbes's *Tripos*.<sup>22</sup> The close relationship between Hobbes and Hume on this subject is generally regarded as an exception, in so far as Hume's major debts are supposed to lie elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> On any reading, however, given the particular relationship between Hobbes and Hume on this subject, it is important to understand the significance and reputation of Hobbes's necessitarianism in the context of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Hobbes's necessitarianism, with its associated denial of free will, was widely regarded as a key element of his "atheistic" philosophy. The most prominent of Hobbes's contemporary critics on the subject of liberty and necessity was Bishop Bramhall, who wrote a vigorous reply to Hobbes and defended the (libertarian) free will position.<sup>24</sup> The influence of the Hobbes-Bramhall debate extended well into the eighteenth century, by which time a number of other important contributions had been made. Among the major participants at this time were figures such as Locke, Bayle, Leibniz and William King.<sup>25</sup> Without any doubt, however, in the context of early eighteenth century British philosophy, the most important and influential response to Hobbes's (atheistic) philosophy in general, and his necessitarianism in particular, came from Samuel Clarke. Clarke's reputation among his own contemporaries was established primarily on the basis of his Boyle Lectures of 1704-05. His first series of lectures was titled A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: More particularly in Answer to Mr. Hobbs, Spinoza

and their Followers.<sup>26</sup> This is followed by a description of his work on the title-page: “Wherein the Notion of Liberty is stated, and the Possibility and Certainty of it Proved, in Opposition to Necessity and Fate.” It is Clarke’s fundamental objective in these lectures to demonstrate the “truth and certainty of the Christian Religion” and to refute the “atheistic” doctrines of Hobbes, Spinoza and their followers. As the title-page indicates, Clarke identifies Hobbes’s necessitarianism as one of several doctrines that were particularly “dangerous” or “destructive” of religion and morality (Wks. II, 555,559,567).

Clarke’s arguments against the necessitarianism of Hobbes (and Spinoza) were developed in further detail when he entered into a controversy with Anthony Collins in 1707. The positions that Clarke and Collins take up closely resemble the respective positions of Bramhall and Hobbes in the previous century.<sup>27</sup> At this stage, the controversy with Collins also concerned the closely related issues of the immateriality of the soul and personal identity.<sup>28</sup> A second stage of this debate evolved in 1717 when Collins published his *Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* and Clarke replied to this work in his *Remarks* on Collins’s *Human Liberty*.<sup>29</sup> These exchanges between Clarke and Collins on the subject of free will came to dominate the eighteenth century discussion of this topic, and this is particularly important for understanding the significance of Hume’s arguments as presented in the *Treatise*.<sup>30</sup>

Before examining the arguments exchanged between Clarke and Collins, the contrasting reputations of these two thinkers should be taken note of. Whereas Clarke was the most distinguished representative of Newtonian philosophy and theology at this time, Collins’s associations were of a very different character. Along with John Toland, Collins was the most significant and influential member of a circle of radical freethinkers who arose in England during the first three decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup> All the members of this circle were very active and hostile critics of the Newtonian philosophy and theology in general, and particularly critical of Clarke. Clarke and other prominent Newtonians viewed the radical freethinkers as nothing more than “atheistic” followers of Hobbes and Spinoza – a judgment that was, on the whole, well justified. The philosophy of this circle was thoroughly anti-clerical and critical of established religious dogma in both tone and substance. It would not be incorrect to describe the general debate between the Newtonians and the radical freethinkers as one between defenders and critics of the

Christian Religion.<sup>32</sup> Nor can the historical importance of this wider debate be doubted. As one historian has noted, “the antagonism between the freethinkers and the Newtonians stands as one of the main themes in the intellectual history of the early eighteenth century”.<sup>33</sup> Clearly, then, not only was the Clarke-Collins debate on free will of central importance in the context that Hume was writing the *Treatise*, this debate was laden with theological significance, and any contribution that obviously endorsed one position rather than the other would be (and should be) interpreted in this light.

The relevant question that needs to be asked, therefore, is where does Hume stand in relation to the Clarke-Collins debate on free will? To answer this we need to review the most basic points of controversy between Clarke and Collins.

(1) In the Preface to *Human Liberty* Collins states that although he denies “liberty in a certain meaning of that word; yet I contend for *liberty*, as it signifies, a power in man, to do as he wills, or pleases...” (*Human Liberty*, ii, 16; cp. Clarke, Wks.III,872). The mistake that is commonly made is to confuse this kind of liberty with “liberty from necessity”, which Collins claims does not have any existence and is contrary to experience (*Human Liberty*, 12-15, 115). Clarke rejects Collins’s account of liberty as “false” and argues that this kind of liberty belongs to “clocks and watches” (Wks. IV, 721-22; cp. Wks. II, 559; III, 905-06). True liberty must exclude necessity, as “a necessary agent or a necessary action is a contradiction in terms” (Wks. IV,722). In his *Demonstration* Clarke argued that the real question is not whether a person can do as he pleases, but whether or not he has “liberty of will” or a power of agency or free choice (Wks. II, 565-6; cp. II, 549). This idea of liberty involves the “power of beginning motion” (Wks. II, 553,557; cp. IV, 728-9). To be an agent, in the true sense, is to have this power to begin motion or “self-moving power”, which is genuinely active and not a passive reaction to external, efficient causes (Wks. IV, 723, 728-9).<sup>34</sup>

(2) Collins denies that experience provides any evidence for free will. On the contrary, he argues that the “vulgar” mistakenly conclude that they have a freedom of this kind only because they “either attend not to, or see not the causes of their actions” (*Human Liberty*, 12). Clarke’s position is diametrically opposed to this. In the *Demonstration* he claims that “the arguments drawn from continual experience and observation” that we have “liberty of will” or a “power of beginning motion” are so

strong that nothing less than a demonstration that it is impossible or implies a contradiction “can make us in the least doubt of it” (Wks. II, 558-9). In response to Collins’s arguments Clarke maintains that, although there is a “bare possibility” that we are deceived by God about this issue, “no man in his senses” doubts that his experience is not proof that he has free will (Wks. II, 726-8).

(3) A central point of disagreement between Clarke and Collins is the issue of causation. Both thinkers are agreed that everything must have a cause (Clarke, Wks, II, 552; IV, 729; Collins, *Human Liberty*, 58). What they disagree about is whether every cause is such that it is an antecedent efficient cause that necessitates its effect. Collins maintains that if a cause does not necessitate its effect in such a way that in the same circumstances its effect must follow (i.e. could not be otherwise) then the cause is not “suited to its effect”, and so is “no cause at all” (Wks, III, 872; *Human Liberty*, 58-9,82-3). Against this view Clarke argues that it is essential to distinguish “moral necessity” from “physical efficiencies” (Wks. II, 553, 565,572; III, 906; IV, 723,725,729). Collins, Clarke says, is guilty of a “double absurdity”.

First, in supposing Reasons or Motives... to make the same necessary Impulse upon intelligent Subjects, as Matter in Motion does upon unintelligent Subjects; which is supposing abstract Notions to be Substances. And Secondly, in endeavouring to impose it upon his Reader as a thing taken for granted, that Moral Necessity and Physical necessity do not differ intrinsically in their own Nature, but only with Regard to the Subject they are applied to: When on the contrary he well knows, that, by Moral Necessity, consistent Writers never mean any thing more than to express in a figurative Manner the Certain of such an Event, as may in Reason be fully depended upon, though literally and in philosophical Strictness of Truth, there be no Necessity at all of the Event. (Wks. IV, 725)

Since motives or reasons “determine” our actions only in a figurative or metaphorical sense, or as mere “occasions”, it is the active power of the agent himself – understood as

an immaterial, intelligent substance – which is the proper cause of action (Wks. IV, 723, 728).

(4) In *Human Liberty* Collins argues that necessity, far from being destructive of morality, is essential to it. He uses two specific arguments to defend this position. First, he argues that if humans are not necessary agents, and pleasure and pain are not causes that determine our will, rewards and punishments would not have any influence on our conduct (*Human Liberty*, 87-9). Second, he argues that necessity does not destroy the distinction between virtue and vice or morality and immorality. “Morality or virtue”, he says, “consists in such actions as are in their own nature, and upon the whole pleasant; and immorality and vice consists in such actions as are in their own nature, and upon the whole painful” (*Human Liberty*, 90). More specifically, as conscious beings who understand good and evil, a person can judge his own conduct as immoral or vicious, and feel shame in response to it (*Human Liberty*, 106; cp. Clarke Wks. III, 872). Clarke rejects both these arguments. Against the first he argues that a being “with a Power of Self-motion or Action” is in no way “indifferent” to reasons or motives, as “indifference to power” should not be confused with “indifference to inclination” (Wks. IV, 733). Regarding the second point, Clarke argues that if human beings are subject to necessity then they are no more deserving of rewards and punishments than clocks or watches (Wks. IV, 734-5; cp. III, 851, 905-06; II, 651-2).

(5) Clarke devotes the final sections of his *Remarks* to explaining why necessity is destructive of religion. His basic point, which is also stated in the closing sections of his earlier debate with Collins, is that necessity erodes all moral desert, and so there would not be “any Justice in God’s final Distribution of rewards and Punishments” (Wks. III, 905-06; IV, 734-5). In the *Demonstration* Clarke makes the further point that moral evil is a consequence of humans’ “abuse of liberty”, which proves that God is not the source of evil, which would otherwise compromise his moral attributes (i.e. infinite goodness and justice) (Wks. II, 568-9, 573-5).

In *Human Liberty* Collins argues that “if any future were contingent, or uncertain, or depended on the liberty of man... God himself could only guess at the existence of such things” (*Human Liberty*, 83-4). Divine foreknowledge, therefore, must presuppose “the necessary existence of all things future” (*Human Liberty*, 84). Collins also points out

that his views on this subject are in line with those of other thinkers (e.g. Luther) who are not tainted with the reputation of irreligion or atheism (*Human Liberty*, 85-7). Earlier in his *Answer* to Clarke's *Third Defence*, Collins summarized the situation this way:

I know the Doctrine of Necessity is too generally supposed to be irreligious and atheistical; and I must confess, I cannot but wonder at it, considering that the Predestinarians are so numerous in all Sects of Christians ... And if, in the Church of England, its Members incline to Arminianism, yet it is affirmed by many, that our articles are Calvinistical, and acknowledged by all, that they are not designed to exclude a Calvinistical Meaning: which is a sufficient Ground to presume, that the Compilers were Calvinists, or at least, they did not think Calvinism led to Irreligion. (Wks. III, 873)

Clarke's response is that God's foreknowledge has no influence on the course of things nor necessitates them (Wks. IV, 733). While it is impossible for us to explain how God can foresee the future, his foreknowledge does not itself "cause the course of things" (Wks. II, 566-8). Clarke is also clear that the doctrine of necessity – whatever a given author's intentions may be – "takes away all Foundation of Religion" (Wks. IV, 734). This is consistent with the general claim that he makes repeatedly in the *Demonstration* that the question of "liberty of will" is "of the greatest consequence to Religion and Morality" (Wks. II, 555,559,567).<sup>35</sup>

The resemblance between Hume's views and Collins' (Hobbist) necessitarianism is so obvious that it hardly needs further comment. On every one of the basic issues in dispute between Clarke and Collins Hume comes down firmly and unambiguously on Collins's side. Hume's account of liberty of spontaneity is the same as that which Collins contends for, while he rejects any notion of liberty of indifference of the kind that Clarke advocates. Whereas Clarke maintains that experience proves that we have a liberty that involves the absence of necessitating (efficient) causes, Hume contends that experience shows us that the very opposite is true – all our actions are governed by necessity in the same way as the operations of external bodies. According to Hume, the distinction between moral and physical necessity, which lies at the heart of Clarke's position on this

subject, is "without any foundation in nature". Similarly, Hume denies that there is any evidence that "thought is more active than matter", and he undercuts the whole ontology of immaterial souls on which Clarke's account of free agency rests. Hume maintains, as Collins does, that both the justice and efficacy of the system of rewards and punishments depends on our conduct being causally necessitated. Clearly, then, Hume is systematically opposed to the free will position of Clarke and those who followed him. Given the circumstances that the *Treatise* was written and published in, it is only reasonable to suppose that Hume and his contemporaries were perfectly aware of the irreligious significance of the position that he took up and defended in the *Treatise*.<sup>36</sup>

Two of the earliest reviews of Hume's *Treatise* show that his own contemporaries viewed him as a necessitarian who belongs in the "freethinking" company of Anthony Collins. A review that appeared in *The History of the Works of the Learned* in November 1739 begins:

I do not recollect any Writer in the English Language who has framed a System of human Nature, morally considered, upon the Principle of this Author, which is that of Necessity, in Opposition to Liberty or Freedom... Some have endeavoured to prove even the Impossibility of Liberty, while others have asserted it to be an essential Property of human Nature, the Basis of all Morality, Religion and Happiness, which can subsist upon no other Foundation, and are utterly subverted by the Denial of it. To form the clearest Ideas we can have upon this abstruse Subject, we should read some Letters that passed thereupon between those two acute Reasoners, Mr. Locke and Mr. Limborch, and the incomparable Dr. Clarke's Answers to several Pieces of Leibniz and Collins.<sup>37</sup>

The reviewer's subsequent remarks make clear that Hume is generally opposed to the philosophy of Clarke and Locke – two thinkers who the reviewer holds in high regard.<sup>38</sup> The author of another review, printed in *Common Sense* in July 1740, had previously written a pamphlet that aimed to demonstrate the immateriality of the soul and free-agency, with a specific view to refuting Collins' *Human Liberty*.<sup>39</sup> This reviewer begins

by complaining about the “impenetrable Obscurity and incomprehensible Jargon, we find in the Writings of almost all those, who have hitherto appeared as Advocates for Necessity.” He praises Collins as “the only one, who has treated the Subject with any order or perspicuity” and goes on to say that he is not sure if he understands the (anonymous) author of the *Treatise*, but he seems to “adopt the Doctrine of Necessity”.<sup>40</sup> What is especially significant about these two reviews is that they associate Hume’s necessitarianism with Collins, without any knowledge of Hume’s later additions and changes to “Of liberty and necessity” in the *Enquiry*, where Hume discusses the problems of evil and foreknowledge. The irreligious significance of Hume’s necessitarian doctrine, therefore, is already evident to these reviewers and does not depend on passages that subsequently appeared in the *Enquiry*.

### ***III. Necessity and the Metaphysical Foundations of Hume’s Hobbist Project***

It may be objected to the irreligious interpretation, described above, that many defenders of the necessitarian doctrine are entirely orthodox Christian believers (e.g. Luther and Calvin -- as Collins points out). Moreover, later in the eighteenth century necessitarians such as Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Priestley appeared on the scene, and they are plainly not irreligious freethinkers of any kind.<sup>41</sup> Why, then, presume that Hume should be read this way? To answer this objection we must consider two things: (i) we need to examine how Hume’s own contemporaries distinguished religious from irreligious necessitarians; and related to this (ii) we need to assess how Hume’s necessitarianism connects with his other intentions and objectives throughout the *Treatise*.

Priestley’s Preface to his 1790 edition of Collins’ *Human Liberty* directly addresses the difficulty that faces the religious necessitarian: “It has”, he says, “been unfortunate for the doctrine of necessity, that some of its first and ablest defenders were either unbelievers in Christianity, or at least generally considered as such. This was the case with Mr. Hobbes in an early period of the business, of Mr. Hume in a later, and also Mr. Collins who came between them.”<sup>42</sup> It is, however, a mistake to suppose that all

necessitarians are unbelievers.<sup>43</sup> Although Priestley was careful to take steps to put distance between himself and Hobbes, Collins and Hume in this respect, denials of this kind were met with a degree of scepticism by contemporary defenders of the free will position such as James Beattie. Beattie observes that the doctrine of necessity would be fatal to his religion and moral principles but allows that it may not have the same effect on every other person. Nevertheless, it is, he says, “remarkable, that some of its most distinguished advocates, of whom I shall mention Spinoza, Hobbes, Collins, Hume and Voltaire, were enemies to our faith; whereas of the modern defenders of liberty I do not recollect one who was not a Christian.”<sup>44</sup> Dugald Stewart is also concerned with this connection between the doctrine of necessity and irreligion. He suggests that “it will not be denied, that in the History of Modern Philosophy, the schemes of Atheism and Necessity have hitherto, always been connected together”. “Not that I would by any means be understood to say”, he continues, “that every Necessitarian must ipso facto be an Atheist, or even that any presumption is afforded by a man’s attachment to the former sect ... but only that every modern Atheist I have heard of has been a Necessitarian.”<sup>45</sup> Clearly, then, from the perspective of Hume’s contemporaries, and the generation that followed, the relationship between necessitarianism and “atheism” was a close one. At the very least, a commitment to the doctrine of necessity provides some ground for suspecting an author of having irreligious intentions. Whether an author’s necessitarianism is in fact irreligious must be judged, in the first place, by his explicit effort(s) to disown associations and intentions of this character (e.g. as we find in Edwards and Priestley). The sincerity of these efforts of this kind, however, must be judged in terms of the relations that hold between the author’s necessitarianism and other themes and objectives in his work. It is, therefore, from this perspective that Hume’s necessitarian commitments in the Treatise should be considered.

Whatever general interpretation of Hume’s intentions in the Treatise may be advanced there can be no doubt that his own contemporaries considered his discussion in close connection with the problem of the immateriality (and immortality) of the soul, since together they serve as the foundation for the general doctrine of future rewards and punishments. Although the standard view of the Treatise is that it has no substantial or direct concern with problems of religion, his discussion of the soul (T,1.4.5,6) is

generally recognized as an exception to this rule.<sup>46</sup> In these sections Hume advances arguments that cast doubt on “the metaphysical arguments for the immateriality of the soul” and the notion of the soul understood as a simple, indivisible immaterial substance. The general position that he defends is, on most points, consistent with the views of Collins, and his most obvious targets certainly include the views of Clarke.<sup>47</sup> In his posthumous essay “Of the Immortality of the Soul” Hume’s attack on this doctrine is obvious enough, but his irreligious intentions on this subject in the *Treatise* are only thinly concealed.<sup>48</sup> This general scepticism about the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the related doctrine of future rewards and punishment, would certainly encourage his contemporary audience to view his necessitarianism in an irreligious light.<sup>49</sup>

There is, in general, a striking gap between the various interpretations of the *Treatise* that have been advanced over the past century or so (e.g. sceptical, naturalist, etc.) and the early responses to his work, several of which have already been mentioned. Hume’s own contemporaries regarded his irreligious intentions throughout the *Treatise* as both obvious and central to his fundamental aims and objectives. Moreover, his commitment to the doctrine of necessity (and the associations with Hobbes, Spinoza, Collins et al) was viewed as entirely consistent with this. In my view, it is Hume’s contemporaries, not our own, who are right about this important matter. The irreligious significance of his views on free will must be understood, therefore, within the wider framework of the irreligious or “atheistic” interpretation of Hume’s fundamental aims and objectives in the *Treatise*.

The irreligious interpretation of Hume’s *Treatise* does not deny the importance, much less the presence, of naturalist project of his “science of man”, nor that of his sceptical arguments and commitments. What the irreligious interpretation claims is that the nature and relationship between these two components in Hume’s work must be understood in terms of his (even more) fundamental concern with problems of religion broadly conceived. The constructive or “positive” side of Hume’s thought in the *Treatise* – his “science of man” – must be interpreted in terms of his concern to establish a secular, scientific account of moral and social life. Hume models this project on the same plan as Hobbes, who pursued a very similar project in *The Elements of Law* and the first two

parts of *Leviathan*.<sup>50</sup> The structural parallels that hold between Hobbes's work and Hume's *Treatise* are indicative of the fundamental similarity of their projects. More specifically, both Hobbes and Hume agree that moral and political philosophy must proceed upon the same scientific methodology that is appropriate to the natural sciences (although they disagree about the nature of that methodology), and they agree that this scientific investigation of morals and must begin with an examination of human understanding and the passions. The metaphysical basis of this project is their shared naturalistic and necessitarian conception of human beings.

The destructive or critical side of the philosophy of the *Treatise* is simply the other side of the same irreligious, anti-Christian coin. That is to say, in order to clear the ground to build the edifice of a secular, scientific account of moral life, Hume had to undertake a sceptical attack on the theological doctrines and principles that threatened such a project. The varied and apparently disparate sceptical arguments that he advances in the *Treatise* are in fact largely held together by his overarching concern to discredit and refute Christian metaphysics and morals. An especially prominent target of these sceptical arguments is the philosophy of Clarke.<sup>51</sup> In the *Treatise* Hume undertakes a systematic attack on the Christian rationalism of Hobbes's most celebrated critic. Hume's criticism of Clarke reaches well beyond the issues of free will and the immateriality of the soul. In particular, two of the most salient prongs of Hume's battery of sceptical arguments are aimed precisely against the two major prongs of Clarke's Christian rationalism: namely, his demonstrations concerning God's existence and concerning morals. Clearly, then, an important feature of Hume's sceptical intentions in the *Treatise* – one giving unity and direction to seemingly unrelated sceptical arguments – is an attack on the attempts by Christian thinkers (most notably by Locke and Clarke) to use demonstrative reason in defence of the Christian religion.

This account of Hume's fundamental intentions in the *Treatise* puts his discussion of free will in a new light. Hume is not simply a "sceptic" about (metaphysical) free will; nor is he simply a "naturalist" who describes human thought and action in the wider fabric of causes and effects. There is truth in both these claims, but they miss the more fundamental connection between Hume's views on this subject and the general irreligious aims of his project in the *Treatise*. Hume's necessitarianism is both metaphysically and

methodologically a core part of his entire (Hobbist) project to establish a secular, scientific account of moral life. Beyond this, one of the central lessons of Hume's discussion of free will in the *Treatise*, and of his more extended views about the nature and conditions of moral responsibility, is that these are issues that we can make sense of only within the fabric of human nature and human society. Hume's naturalistic framework explicitly excludes not only the metaphysics of free will (e.g. modes of "moral" causation by immaterial agents) but also all the further theologically inspired metaphysics that generally accompanies this (i.e. God, the immortal soul, a future state, etc.). The metaphysics required by religious doctrine, Hume suggests, obscures and misrepresents the real character of human freedom and moral responsibility, and the way that they are grounded and structured in human motivation and passions.<sup>52</sup> It is precisely this secular perspective and the extension of scientific naturalism to the study of (human) moral life that Clarke and other Christian critics of Hobbes found to be especially "dangerous" for religion and morality.

In sum, Hume's necessitarianism and compatibilist account of the nature of moral responsibility serves as the very foundation on which he builds his secular and scientific account of moral and social life. His general approach to the problem of "liberty and necessity" in the *Treatise* is, therefore, part-and-parcel of his more general irreligious aims and objectives throughout this work.

### FOOTNOTES:

- \* I am grateful to Donald Ainslie for his helpful comments and suggestions concerning this paper.
- (1) Terence Penelhum, “Hume’s Moral Psychology”, in his *Themes in Hume: The Self, The Will, Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 2000), 139.
- (2) I present my own discussion of these matters in *Freedom and Moral Sentiment: Hume’s Way of Naturalizing Responsibility* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). See also Barry Stroud, *Hume* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), Chp. 7; Don Garrett, *Cognition and Commitment in Hume’s Philosophy* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Chp.6; and Penelhum, “Hume and Freedom of the Will”, in *Themes from Hume*, 156-76. For a discussion of this kind that is specifically concerned with Hume’s views in the *Treatise* see Pall Ardal, *Passion and Value in Hume’s Treatise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), Chp. 4; and concerning the first *Enquiry* see Antony Flew, *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), Chp.7; Stephen Buckle, *Hume’s Enlightenment Tract* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 215-30; George Botterill, “Hume on Liberty and Necessity”, in P. Millican, ed., *Reading Hume on Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 277- 300.
- (3) For a particularly important and influential statement of this general perspective see Flew, *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief*. References to Hume's writings are to *A Treatise of Human Nature* [T], ed. by D.F. Norton & M.J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* [EU], ed. by T.L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000). I will also provide references to the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch editions of the *Treatise* and *Enquiries*. Following the convention given in the Nortons’ *Treatise* (and Beauchamp’s *Enquiry*), I cite Book.Part.Section.Paragraph, followed by *page* references to the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch editions. Thus T,1.2.3.4/ 34: will indicate *Treatise* Bk.1, Pt.2, Sec.3, Para.4/ Selby-Bigge/Nidditch pg.34. Other references are to *An Abstract of A*

*Treatise of Human Nature* [AT], reprinted in T; *A Letter from a Gentleman to his friend in Edinburgh* [LG], ed. by E.C. Mossner and J.V. Price (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967); *The Letters of David Hume* [LET], 2 Vols., ed. J.Y.T. Greig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932); and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* [D], ed. N.K. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1947).

- (4) On this see Ernest Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 113. Mossner cites Hume's letter dated 2 December 1737 (LET, I, 24/ #6) as evidence that in the *Treatise* Hume "was counting on ... serious consideration of his philosophy as philosophy, rather than as religious controversy". Hume's letter was written to his friend Lord Kames (Henry Home) and in it he describes "castrating" his *Treatise* before presenting his work to Joseph Butler.
- (5) Hume, "My Own Life", in LET, I,3.
- (6) See, e.g., Flew, *Hume's Philosophy of Belief*, 6,160f.
- (7) See, e.g., Stroud, *Hume*, 144-6; and cp. Russell, *Freedom and Moral Sentiment*, 12f.
- (8) The distinction between liberty of spontaneity and indifference features prominently in the opening sections of the debate between Hobbes and his critic Bishop Bramhall, which is discussed below.
- (9) In the *Treatise* Hume tends to identify "liberty" with "liberty of indifference" or "chance". In the *Enquiry*, however, he drops the terminology of "liberty of indifference" and "liberty of spontaneity". Instead, he provides a defence of what he terms "hypothetical liberty" (EU, 8.23 / 95), which belongs "to every one who is not in chains" (EU,8.23 / 95). In the same passage he says that hypothetical liberty is "a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will". It is worth noting that a person may have "liberty of spontaneity", in the sense that they are acting according to the determination of their own will, but still not have "hypothetical liberty", because if they chose to act differently they would not be able to do so. Hume's discussion fails to bring this out, but the relevant distinction can be found in Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P.H. Nidditch, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II, 21,10.
- (10) Hume devotes a fair bit of attention to dealing with the objection that human action is in fact "capricious" and "irregular". He accounts for this by arguing that in these

circumstances there are “contrary or concealed causes” at work, and this is something we also encounter when dealing with the operations of body (T, 2.3.11-3 /403-04; and cp. 1.3.12.1-5; 2.1.4.3; 2.1.10.6; 3.3.1.7 / 130-2, 283, 313, 575).

- (11) According to Kemp Smith “Hume adheres, without qualification, to the necessitarian standpoint” [*The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan, 1941), 433]. However, at least two qualifications are called for: (i) this is more accurate about the tone of the *Treatise* than the *Enquiry*, and (ii) in both these works Hume is careful to emphasize that his “new definition of necessity” does not imply any “invidious” form of necessity that is supposed by many to lie in matter (T, 2.3.2.4 / 410; E, 8.21-3 /92-4).
- (12) See Hume’s eighth rule for judging of causes and effects, which denies that an object that exists for any time “in its full perfection without any effect” can be the sole cause of that effect. For the effect to be produced the object requires the assistance of “some other principle” (T, 1.3.15.10 /174).
- (13) For this kind of interpretation see, e.g., Stroud, *Hume*, 149.
- (14) The details of this account, as I have indicated, are complex. I provide a fuller account and analysis in *Freedom and Moral Sentiment*, Chp.4. The relevance of necessity for Hume’s account of the generation of the moral sentiments considered as a mode of the indirect passions play in this sphere serves to explain why his discussion “Of liberty and necessity” appears in the context of Book Two. It is a mistake to conclude, therefore, as Kemp Smith does, that Hume’s discussion of free will is simply “a lengthy digression” that does not belong in the context of Book Two of the *Treatise*. Norman Kemp Smith, *The Philosophy of David Hume*, 161, 433.
- (15) For further discussion see Flew, *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief*, 160-5; and J.C.A. Gaskin, *Hume’s Philosophy of Belief*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1988), 69-72. Hume’s general position in the *Enquiry* is very similar to Mandeville’s in *Freethoughts on Religion* [1720], ed. by I. Primer (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2001), Chp.5. See, in particular, Mandeville’s summary of his argument in the Preface (p.3). Mandeville’s views on this subject were themselves influenced by Bayle’s *Dictionary*. Both Mandeville and Bayle were, of course,

widely regarded as irreligious and anti-Christian freethinkers in the eighteenth century.

- (16) LET, I, 40 /#16. Books I and II appeared in January 1739, but Book III did not appear until November 1740 – i.e. six months after Hume wrote this letter to Hutcheson. In a letter to William Mure written in June 1743 Hume suggests that God “is no Object either of the Sense or the Imagination, & very little of the Understanding”. To avoid this difficulty “enthusiasts” are liable to “degrade him [i.e. God] into a Resemblance with themselves, & by that means render him more comprehensible” (LET, I, 51/ #21). This is, of course, a fundamental theme of the *Dialogues*. See, e.g., D, 212 where Hume suggests that we ought to “exclude from [God] moral sentiments, such as we feel them”. Cp. Also D, 156: “All the sentiments of the human mind...”
- (17) Hutcheson, *Illustrations Upon a Moral Sense* [1728], Sect. 1; reprinted in D.D. Raphael, ed., *British Moralists 1650-1800*, 2 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), I, 313.
- (18) Balguy, *The Foundations of Moral Goodness* [1729], Part I; reprinted in Raphael, ed., *British Moralists*, I,390.
- (19) E.C. Mossner, “Hume’s Early Memoranda”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9 (1948), 499f. See, in particular, Hume’s notes in section II,#18,20,22-5; and also #32 and33 citing Calvin and Bayle.
- (20) In other passages of the *Treatise* Hume refers to the difficulties that theological views encounter with respect to evil and God’s role in bringing it about or being its source. See, e.g., his remarks about the occasionalist doctrine of “Malebranche and other Cartesians” who render “the supreme being ... the real cause of all our actions, bad as well as good, vicious as well as virtuous” (T, 1.4.5.31 /249). See also Bayle’s *Dictionary*, ed. by R. Popkin (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), art. “Paulicians”, esp. notes E,F and M; and art. “Spinoza”, O.
- (21) See, e.g., Stroud, *Hume*, 153; Penelhum, “Hume and Freedom of the Will”, 158.
- (22) Hendel, *Studies in the Philosophy of Hume*, 289. Hobbes’s *Tripos* (1684) contained his *Human Nature* and *De Corpore Politico*, as well as “Of Liberty and Necessity”, which was originally published in 1654. (The first two works, although published

separately in 1650, were originally written as one work, *The Elements Of Law*.) D.D. Raphael has also pointed out that the title of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* was suggested "by the use of the phrase in the body of Hobbes's brilliant little book, *Human Nature*." (Raphael, *British Moralists*, I, v.)

- (23) On the traditional "sceptical" interpretation, Hume is presented as following closely in the tracks of Locke and Berkeley. Kemp Smith's "naturalist" interpretation maintains that Hume has particularly important debts to Hutcheson and Newton (*The Philosophy of Hume*, Part I). See also David F. Norton, *David Hume* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), who argues that the primary relationship between Hume and Hobbes should be understood in terms of Hume's aim to refute Hobbes's moral scepticism. My own account, as described further below, presents a very different view of the nature of the Hobbes-Hume relationship.
- (24) Selections from these exchanges are in V. Chappell, ed., *Hobbes and Bramhall on Liberty and Necessity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Another element in Hobbes's "atheistic" philosophy, closely associated with his views on free will, is his materialism. Further elements include his scepticism concerning various issues of natural and revealed religion, as well as a number of his ethical doctrines, such as egoism, hedonism and conventionalism – all of which were generally interpreted as manifesting moral scepticism. In general, in the period in question, Hobbes was widely regarded as an enemy to religion and morality, and the most prominent representative of "modern atheism". For more detail on Hobbes's reputation and the reception given to his philosophy see Samuel Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).
- (25) For details on this see James O'Higgins' Introduction to his edition of Collins's *Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* in *Determinism and Freewill* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976). Leibniz's *Theodicy* (1710) is especially useful for insight into the early eighteenth century debate, as Leibniz presents discussion and criticism of others such as Hobbes, Bramhall, King and Bayle.
- (26) Clarke, *Demonstration* (London: 1705). Clarke's *Demonstration* was followed by a second series of Boyle lectures that continues the same chain of argument, titled *A*

Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion etc. (London: 1706). These works were subsequently printed together under the title A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God etc. and reprinted in The Works of Samuel Clarke, 4 Vols. (London, 1738; reprinted New York: Garland, 1978), Vol. 2. Hereafter cited as Wks. By the middle of the eighteenth century Clarke's Discourse had gone through ten editions. For further details regarding Clarke's philosophy and its impact see James Ferguson, The Philosophy of Dr. Samuel Clarke and Its Critics (New York: Vantage, 1774).

- (27) Ferguson notes that Clarke makes extensive use of Bramhall's arguments and that Collins "reproduces the position of Hobbes". He also notes, however, that neither mentions "the two writers to whom they are so much indebted" (Clarke and his Critics, 156). A useful account of this general debate from the early nineteenth century perspective is presented in Dugald Stewart, Dissertation: Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy; Second Part (Edinburgh: 1821), Notes MM and NN.
- (28) For further details on this see Ferguson, Clarke and his Critics, 138f; James O'Higgins, Anthony Collins (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), Chp.5. A helpful contemporary summary of the central points of debate is contained in an appendix by John Maxwell, in his translation and new edition of Richard Cumberland's A Treatise of the Laws of Nature (London: 1727), a work that is primarily devoted (like Clarke's) to refuting Hobbes's philosophy.
- (29) Collins, Human Liberty (London: 1717), reprinted in O'Higgins, Determinism and Freewill. Clarke's Remarks in Wks., Vol. 4. The remarks were originally published in the same volume with Clarke's (hugely influential) correspondence with Leibniz.
- (30) Evidence of the importance and influence of the Clarke-Collins debate on the subject of liberty and necessity can be found throughout the relevant eighteenth century literature on this subject (e.g. in the writings of Voltaire, Price, Priestley, Reid, Beattie and many others).
- (31) Another prominent member of this freethinking circle was Pierre Desmaizeaux, who Hume was in contact with in London in 1739 while preparing the Treatise for publication. At this time Hume was staying at the "Rainbow" Coffeehouse which

only a few years before had served as an important meeting place for the circle to which Desmaizeaux, Collins and Toland all belonged. An interesting account of this circle and its activities is presented in Margaret Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), Chp. 6; see also Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981), Chps. 5, 6; and also Jonathan Israel, *The Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. Chp. 33. On Collins' life and work see O'Higgins, *Collins*; and David Berman, *A History of British Atheism* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), 70-92.

- (32) I discuss the wider relevance of this debate between Newtonians and radical freethinkers to various aspects of Hume's philosophy in the *Treatise* in the papers cited in note 51 below.
- (33) Jacob, *Newtonians*, 208. For a more recent and wider ranging study, see Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. Chps. 27 and 33.
- (34) It is evident that Clarke's views on this matter anticipate important aspects of Reid's agent-causation theory. On the relevance of Clarke's conception of agency for understanding Reid's theory see William L. Rowe, *Thomas Reid on the Morality of Freedom* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. Chp.2.
- (35) Clarke's position was entirely orthodox among the leading lights of the Anglican clergy at this time. Butler claims, for example, that "the opinion of Necessity seems to be the very basis, upon which infidelity grounds itself." [*The Analogy of Religion*, Chp.6. First published in 1736, reprinted in *The Works of Joseph Butler*, S. Halifax ed., 2 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1849), I, 115.] See Berkeley's similar view in *Alciphron: or The Minute Philosopher* (London: 1732), 7<sup>th</sup> Dial., esp. #16-20 Scottish Presbyterians, with their strong Calvinist roots, were more divided on this issue, but many held the same free will views as Clarke.
- (36) In the two decades that followed the publication of the Clarke-Collins debate a number of other significant contributions appeared that extended this controversy (e.g. including an exchange between John Trenchard, a necessitarian associate of Collins, and John Jackson, a prominent defender of Clarke's philosophy). An especially important strand of this debate led right to Hume's own doorstep in the

Scottish Borders in the early 1730's. The primary figure involved was William Dudgeon, a local freethinker who anticipates a number of Hume's doctrines in the *Treatise*, including his necessitarianism. Dudgeon's *The State of the Moral World* (Edinburgh: 1732) provoked a strong and hostile reaction from Andrew Baxter, another philosopher living in the same area. Baxter was an influential and distinguished Scottish disciple of Clarke. His polemics against Dudgeon were closely linked to a prosecution of Dudgeon that was initiated by the Presbytery of Chirnside. The early stages of these proceedings, which began in 1732 and dragged on for several years, directly involved Hume's uncle, the Rev. George Home, who was the minister at Chirnside at this time. Dudgeon was involved in several other philosophical debates on the subject of free will, including a series of exchanges with John Jackson that were published in 1737. A few years later, about the same time that Hume's *Treatise* was published, Dudgeon also got involved in a debate with William Warburton concerning the interpretation of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* as it relates to the issue of necessity. This controversy is also of some significance for Hume since Warburton, who was a notoriously hostile critic of Hume's, was also a close friend and admirer of Baxter's. In May 1740 Baxter was corresponding with Warburton about "a squabble betwixt my Antagonists and me [i.e. Baxter]". This "squabble" certainly involved Dudgeon and may also have included Hume and his close friend Kames, who were both (necessitarian) opponents of Baxter's. In general, the important point concerning the specific Scottish dimension of this debate is that it shows that the Clarke-Collins debate was of immediate (i.e. local) concern for Hume at the time that he was writing the *Treatise*. For further details relating to the Scottish dimension of the free will debate as it involved Hume see my "Wishart, Baxter and Hume's *Letter from a Gentleman*", *Hume Studies*, 23 (1997), 245-76.

- (37) Reprinted in James Fieser. ed., *Early Responses to Hume's Metaphysical and Epistemological Writings*, 2 Vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2000), I,4. The reviewer's claim that he does not "recollect any Writer in the English Language who has framed a System of human Nature" on the principle of necessity overlooks Hobbes. It seems unlikely that the author was unaware of such an obvious

precedent, and it is possible that this is simply a sarcastic way of alluding to Hume's associations -- which would be consistent with the general tone of the review.

- (38) Mossner conjectures that the author of this review was perhaps Warburton. [Mossner, *Life of Hume*, 123-4, 617-8.] It is certainly true that Warburton was an admirer of both Locke and Clarke.
- (39) [anonymous], *An Essay towards Demonstrating the Immateriality and Free Agency of the Soul* (London: 1740\*; misprinted as 1760); Chp. 11 deals specifically with Collins's arguments for necessity.
- (40) Fieser, ed., *Early Responses*, I, 86-7.
- (41) Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will* [1754], P. Ramsay, ed. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1957); Joseph Priestley, *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* (London, 1777) and *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity, In a Correspondence between Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley* (London, 1778). Kames could also be added to this list, since he too is a necessitarian and had no irreligious or anti-Christian tendencies (although he was treated by some of his critics in these terms). See his *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (Edinburgh, 1751; reprinted New York & London: Garland, 1983). An illuminating account of the way that Edwards's (Calvinistic) necessitarianism relates to Clarke's criticism of the (atheistic) necessitarianism of Hobbes and Collins is presented in Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), Chp.6.
- (42) Priestley, Preface to Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (Birmingham: 1790). Reprinted with a new introduction by John Stephens (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990), xi. Priestley's remarks in this context, of course, were made with full knowledge of Hume's later writings.
- (43) cp. Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, Pt. IV sect.6, who argues that a true doctrine should not be rejected because a philosopher such as Hobbes has made "bad use" of it (p.374, and cp. 430).
- (44) Beattie, *The Elements of Moral Science*, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: 1817), I, 153-4.

- (45) Stewart, *Dissertation*, 574. Stewart goes on to say that “the most consistent Necessitarians who have yet appeared, have been those who followed out their principles till they ended in Spinozism, a doctrine that differs from Atheism more in words than in reality.”
- (46) See, e.g., Gaskin, *Hume’s Philosophy of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1988), 1-2, who says: “The *Treatise* ... is not overtly concerned with religion, although we do know that Hume removed from it before publication a chapter on miracles and possibly other sections...which he had reason to believe would provide hostility from Scottish ecclesiastics or involve him in religious controversy. A few brief and apparently inoffensive references to the existence of god and to religion remain, but with the exception of the section called “Of the Immateriality of the Soul” they occur only incidentally in sections dealing with other subjects.”
- (47) For further details on this see my “Hume’s *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins Controversy”, *Hume Studies*, 21 (1995), 95-115.
- (48) When Hume applied for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University in 1745 his critic claimed that he was “chargable with denying the immateriality of the soul, and the Consequences flowing from this Denial” (LG,18). Gaskin conjectures that Hume’s essay “Of the Immortality of the Soul” was originally prepared for inclusion in the *Treatise*, but was “castrated” along with several other sections. (*Hume’s Philosophy of Religion*, 182) It is also important to note that other sections of the *Treatise* betray Hume’s general scepticism about the doctrine of a future state. See, e.g., T, 1.3.9.13-4 / 113-5, where Hume argues that this doctrine is one that has little influence on either human belief or action; and cp. T, 2.3.7; 3.2.7.2-6 / 427-32, 534-7 where Hume argues that we are “always more concerned about the present life than the future (T, 3.2.5.15 / 525).” The same theme reappears in the *Dialogues* at D, 220-21.
- (49) Necessitarianism does not appear among the charges that were presented against Hume when he applied for the Edinburgh Chair in 1745. This may reflect, as we have already noted, divisions within the Scottish clergy on the subject of free will. However, Hume’s critics on the subject of free will include a number of Scottish Presbyterian thinkers. This includes, not only Reid and Beattie, but also others, such

as George Anderson and James Balfour. Clarke's philosophy was highly regarded in the circles to which these thinkers belonged.

- (50) For further detail on this see my "Hume's *Treatise* and Hobbes's *The Elements of Law*", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46 (1985), 51-64.
- (51) On this see my "Skepticism and Natural Religion in Hume's *Treatise*", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49 (1988), 247-65. Other papers of related interest include: "Hume's *Treatise* and the Clarke-Collins Controversy" (cited above); "Clarke's 'Almighty Space' and Hume's *Treatise*", *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 16 (1997), 83-113 [Special Issue on the Philosophy of Samuel Clarke, J. Dybikowski ed.]; "The Material World and Natural Religion in Hume's *Treatise*", *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* (forthcoming: December, 2003); and "Butler's 'Future State' and Hume's 'Guide of Life'", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (forthcoming).
- (52) For further discussion of this point see Russell, *Freedom and Moral Sentiment*, Chp.11.