LIBERTY AND NECESSITY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN: The Clarke-Collins and Price-Priestley Controversies

by

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ABSTRACT

This essay presents an analysis of two eighteenth-century controversies on liberty and necessity of the will. The first debate between Anthony Collins and Samuel Clarke took place in the early part of the century, and that between Richard Price and Joseph Priestley in the second half.

The bulk of the essay relates to Clarke and Collins. In Chapter One I introduce the question of liberty and necessity in the context of a challenge to traditional theism through the work of Thomas Hobbes; Hobbes' compatibilist arguments were later adapted by Collins. In Chapter Two I consider Clarke's rationalist theology and his arguments for libertarianism presented in reaction to Hobbes in *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (based on his 1704 Boyle Lecture series), and in Chapter Three the influence of John Locke on Collins' compatibilist position. Chapter Four is an examination of the texts of the debate itself, in the 'Dodwell' pamphlets published between 1707 and 1709, in Collins' *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (1717), and in Clarke's *Remarks* (1718) on Collins' book. I draw out evidence from the texts to show that, though nominally a general survey of the arguments, Collins wrote his *Philosophical Inquiry* with Clarke specifically in mind.
In Chapter Five I turn to the later controversy between Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, considering Price's *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals* (1758, revised 1769), Priestley's reply in *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated* (1777), and finally the correspondence between them, published as *A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity* (1778).

Price and Priestley were followers of Clarke and Collins respectively, and adapt many of their arguments. I argue that it is Priestley who develops the debate by incorporating Hume's reworking of causation in his *Treatise* (1739-40) and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1st edition 1748), a conception which is rejected by Price. I conclude, however, that it is Price, in his development of Clarke's arguments, who comes closest of the four to a satisfactory position.
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A NOTE CONCERNING INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

In common with convention of the period, 'man' is used to denote the species *homo sapiens*, or an arbitrary member thereof, and the masculine pronoun is used throughout the primary texts examined in this essay. In order to avoid excessive clumsiness in moving between quotation, paraphrase and commentary, I generally follow these conventions, though use more clearly neutral terms when appropriate. The arguments, however, are nowhere gender-specific.
1.1 The British Enlightenment

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment brought dramatic developments in scientific, religious, political and philosophical thought in Britain as elsewhere. The century which saw the French Revolution and the American War of Independence, also saw a much quieter, but related, revolution in intellectual culture, as the established churches of Europe began to lose their grip on patterns of thought and educational institutions.

The chief figures in the developments in British Philosophy in the Enlightenment period (to cast this wider than the century itself) were Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Mill. The chief figures do not stand alone, however, for they were products of their time, both influencing and influenced by their less well-remembered contemporaries. This essay will examine one aspect of the work of four of these influential though now largely forgotten writers: they are Anthony Collins, Samuel Clarke, Richard Price, and Joseph Priestley.

Anthony Collins and Samuel Clarke wrote in the early part of the century, Richard Price and Joseph Priestley in the second half. Collins and Clarke were products of the established colleges, Price and Priestley of the new Dissenting Academies;
all were remarkable polymaths, and Price and Priestley in particular made contributions much wider than the fields of moral theory and metaphysics. (The eventful lives of these four writers are most interesting quite apart from their authorship of the texts considered in this essay; a brief biographical sketch of each is given in Appendix A.)

1.2 Liberty and Necessity

In this essay I will expound and compare the two disputes that Collins and Clarke, and later Price and Priestley pursued in relation to liberty and necessity of will. The latter debate is a close development of the former: Price and Priestley were strongly influenced by their predecessors. The debates exemplify the contrast between the two main philosophical traditions of the time: Clarke and Price were rationalist in outlook, Collins and Priestley largely (though not entirely) empiricist.

The format of the discussion to follow may be briefly summarized. In 1704 Clarke delivered a series of lectures, subsequently re-written as *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, in which he set out to establish a rationalist theology, including a proof of libertarianism, in reaction to Hobbes among others; this will be the subject of Chapter Two. In 1717 Collins published *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, nominally a general survey of arguments concerning liberty, but from the structure of the book
it appears that Collins' intention was specifically to address Clarke; indeed Collins and Clarke had had an earlier debate in the form of a series of pamphlets, which had included among its issues the question of liberty and necessity. Clarke published Remarks on Collins' book appended to a separate correspondence between himself and Leibniz. Collins' compatibilist position is strongly influenced by both Locke and Hobbes. The relation of Hobbes to both Clarke and Collins will be examined in the remainder of this chapter, and the influence of Locke on Collins in Chapter Three. The arguments between Collins and Clarke are discussed in Chapter Four.

Price and Priestley published a correspondence of their own in 1778, which discussed very similar themes. Each acknowledges a debt to their predecessors: Price was a follower of Clarke, and Priestley of Collins. It will be argued in the examination of this correspondence in Chapter Five, however, that Priestley advances the debate by adopting Hume's re-working of causation, a conception which Price does not accept.

1.3 Hobbes

The chief figure in the background to the Clarke-Collins controversy is Thomas Hobbes. In his short treatise "Of Liberty and Necessity" written in 1646 or 1652\textsuperscript{1}, Hobbes presented a

\textsuperscript{1} The date is given as 1646 in the first edition, published in 1654, and as 1652 in subsequent editions.
compatibilist conception which Collins adapts and which Clarke rejects. It is part of Hobbes' project to show inconsistencies (at best) in theism, specifically in the questions of divine judgement and prescience. Clarke's project, by contrast, is to provide a coherent 'proof' of theism from first principles, and Collins' project is to counter Clarke.

Hobbes' stance on liberty and necessity is slightly ambiguous. On the one hand, his explicit definition of liberty is simplistic: "Liberty is the absence of all the impediments to action that are not contained in the nature and intrinsical quality of the agent" (Hobbes\(^2\), p.273). Under this definition, even possession of a will is not a condition of liberty; Hobbes' illustration, indeed, is of water falling in a channel (p.273f). On the other hand, he defines a 'free agent' as one "that can do if he will, and forbear if he will" (p.275). Taken together this enhances the concept of freedom to include the possibility of alternative courses of action not excluded by external constraints. This is later developed by Locke, Collins and Hume (see Chapter Three).

This is not to say, however, that any given choice of action is not determined by causes prior to that choice; Hobbes argues for such necessitarianism on the basis of a strong

---

That which I say necessitateth and determineth every action...is the sum of all things, which being now existent, conduce and concur to the production of that action hereafter, whereof if any one thing now were wanting, the effect could not be produced. This concourse of causes, whereof every one is determined to be such as it is by a like concourse of former causes, may well be called...the decree of God. (p.246)

Thus action is consequent upon volition, which is in turn determined "inasmuch as the will itself, and each propension of a man during his deliberation, is as much necessitated, and depends on a sufficient cause, as anything else whatsoever" (p.247). A 'sufficient cause', that is, a cause "to which nothing is wanting that is needful to produce the effect" (p.274) is also a 'necessary cause', i.e. when the cause is found to be extant, the effect must immediately and necessarily follow. The argument for this is straightforward enough: if the effect does not occur, then a necessary aspect of the cause must have been missing - in which case the putative cause was not 'sufficient'; if a cause is 'sufficient', therefore, it is impossible that the effect does not follow; therefore the cause is necessary.³

³ It is apparent that the term 'necessary cause' is analogous to the modern term 'sufficient condition', as opposed to 'necessary condition': in Hobbes' (and Collins') terminology, if C is the 'necessary cause' of E, then C -> E; this does not imply E -> C, the formal expression for 'C is a necessary condition of E'.

5
Everything that is, is therefore part of a complex causal pattern, "an innumerable number of [causal] chains, joined together, not in all parts, but in the first link God Almighty" (pp.246f), i.e. a prime mover or free first cause.\(^4\) That we have will and that we can do as we will are therefore necessary, but so also the volitions of that will are necessarily what they are:

[It] is no more necessary that fire should burn, than that a man or other creature, whose limbs are moved by fancy, should have election, that is liberty, to do what he hath a fancy to do, though it be not in his will or power to choose his fancy, or choose his election and will. (p.247)

Hobbes, as we can see, gives an argument for the deterministic basis of compatibilism, based on an a priori causal argument. The argument structure is closely followed by Collins (see Section 4.4). In Hobbes' view, his compatibilist account of liberty is perfectly sufficient, "for it cannot be conceived that there is any liberty greater, than for a man to do what he will" (p.263). This assessment would be echoed by Collins in the closing words of his Philosophical Inquiry: "...can any other liberty be conceived beneficial to [man]? Had he this power or liberty in all things, he would be omnipotent!" (Collins, p.80).

\(^4\) Hobbes does not explicitly argue for a first cause, or against an infinite regress, in Of Liberty and Necessity. He does say elsewhere that 'motion' is the "one universal cause", confirming his physicalist doctrine. (English Works, Vol. i, London: John Bohn, 1839, p.69; quoted in O’Higgins, Determinism and Freewill, p.8)
1.4 Hobbes' Relation to Clarke and Collins

Hobbes was always widely considered to be an atheist writer, for all his dressing up of his arguments in doctrinal terminology, and his work on liberty and necessity is a part of that undermining of theism. Clarke aimed to provide a defence of theism in response to Hobbes and other freethinkers. Collins, on the other hand, is generally considered to be a deist (though this is controversial; see Appendix A.1) and adapts Hobbes' arguments in response to Clarke. To see something of this interrelation, we may consider briefly Hobbes' arguments on the concepts of divine judgement and prescience in his treatise.

On divine judgement, Hobbes answers an objection to necessitarianism that if all actions are necessitated by a causal chain reaching back to God, then divine judgement would be reward or punishment of actions which not only could not have been avoided, but which would have been performed with the permission of God. Hobbes' answer is to claim that although "a man that shall command a thing openly, and plot secretly the hindrance of the same, [acts unjustly] if he punish him that he so commandeth, for not doing it" (p.249), God's actions, rewards and punishments are necessarily just: God has infinite power, and "Power irresistible justifies all actions really and properly" (p.250). The reader is left to reflect on the ironic juxtaposition of contradictory concepts of justice.
This is just what Clarke wants to avoid in arguing for his strong concept of agency: the principle of action must be in the agent in the form of a 'self-moving power' (see Section 2.4) in order for absolute justice to be possible; liberty is therefore a necessary condition of morality. Collins does not address divine justice, but only human justice; on human justice he follows Hobbes in arguing that justice is consistent with compatibilism, for justice depends only on actions being the result of an act of will that is not under external compulsion (see Sections 4.8-4.10; cf. Hobbes, pp.252ff).

Hobbes' discussion of divine prescience interestingly provides both Collins' attack and Clarke's defence of the doctrine. Hobbes points out an inconsistency between liberty and divine prescience, namely that God could not foreknow events which might never happen (p.278); this is taken up by Collins (see Section 4.7). However Hobbes also notes that foreknowledge in itself could not contribute to causation:

[T]hat the foreknowledge of God should be a cause of any thing, cannot be truly said, seeing foreknowledge is knowledge, and knowledge depends on the existence of the things known, and not they on it. (p.246)

This argument is adapted by Clarke in his defence of the consistency of liberty and divine prescience (see Section 2.6).

Hobbes' physicalist philosophy undermines most aspects of traditional theism, with the possible exception of an initial
creative act: divine omniscience, the independence of the soul from the body, and divine judgement. Clarke set out to counter this, but to argue his case on the basis of the same strong concept of causation. His attempt to do so is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

CLARKE’S RATIONALIST THEOLOGY

2.1 Clarke on "The Being and Attributes of God"

If Hobbes’ philosophy is the background, the foundational
text for both the Clarke-Collins and Price-Priestley
controversies is Clarke’s work *A Demonstration of the Being and
Attributes of God*. The reasons for this are four-fold. First,
Collins appears to base the structure of his *Philosophical
Inquiry* on Clarke’s text. He does not use Clarke’s format, but
many of the arguments that Collins addresses are used by Clarke.
Further, in supporting his own arguments for necessity, Collins
uses principles adopted by Clarke to prove liberty. Collins
makes explicit reference to Clarke only once, however: this
reference to an extract from Clarke’s fourth edition (1716)
regarding ‘moral necessity’ takes his words completely out of
context, twisting the quotation to claim support for Collins’
own position. It seems to have been this (perhaps mischievous?)
misusage that invited Clarke’s stinging response in his Remarks
on Collins’ book.

Secondly, Clarke’s *Remarks* on Collins are substantially
repetition and development of his arguments in *Being and
Attributes*. Thirdly there is the relation to Hobbes just
discussed: Clarke is explicitly opposed to Hobbes in this text,
whereas Collins incorporates Hobbes’ arguments into his own
work. Lastly, in their debate Price and Priestley use and adapt the arguments of Clarke and Collins respectively.

Clarke's text is based on his 1704 Boyle Lectures. Robert Boyle had founded the lecture series in the 1690s with the intention that eminent lecturers would defend natural and revealed religion against the freethinkers; Clarke's particular targets in this first series were "Mr. Hobbes, Spinoza, and their Followers" (Works, ii, p. 521). The work as published is not the text but the "substance" of the eight lectures, re-arranged into a series of twelve propositions to prove the existence and nature of God "from the most uncontestable Principles of Right Reason" (p. 524); maybe Clarke chose this format to accentuate his attack on Spinoza, though the propositions are not presented with anything like the same strictness of form that Spinoza used.

I intend in this chapter to consider those parts of the work which connect with the later debate with Collins. Clarke's strategy in overview is as follows: First he aims to establish that there must be a divine first cause, because otherwise there could not be a material universe containing motion. Secondly, the first cause must be intelligent for intelligence to exist in the world; the intelligent first cause or God must be free, and other intelligences must be of immaterial substance. Thirdly, God's liberty may be communicated to created beings in the form
of a self-moving power; that such a power is communicated is established by experience. Finally Clarke wants to show that human liberty is consistent with divine prescience, and that liberty is a necessary condition of morality for both God and man.

With this overview in mind, we shall look at Clarke's arguments for these points in more detail.

2.2 The First Cause and the Origin of Motion

Clarke's first proposition is that "Something has existed from all Eternity", which is proved on the basis that otherwise the things which now exist must have been produced from nothing: it is contradictory "to say that a Thing is produced, and yet that there is no Cause at all of that production" (ibid.). The claim of a contradiction is a true one, but Clarke is guilty of a sleight of hand in asserting at the outset that the manner of existence must be from production. This relates to his strong concept of causation: "Whatever exists, has a cause" (ibid.), either in its own nature (the thing is self-existent) or an external cause which "must, at least in the Order of Nature and Causality, have existed before it" (ibid.). I have here toned down Clarke's phrasing: for 'external cause' he has "the Will of some Other Being" (ibid.), thereby introducing further assumptions unwarranted at this stage.
Clarke argues that the material world cannot be self-existent:

For absolute Necessity of Existing, and a Possibility of not Existing, being contradictory Idea's; 'tis manifest the Material World cannot Exist Necessarily, if without a Contradiction we can conceive it either Not to Be, or to be in any respect otherwise than it Now is. Than which, nothing is more easy. (pp.530f)

In Clarke's view it is "absurd" to suggest that either the matter of the world or its motion are necessary. If motion is necessary "it follows that it must be a Contradiction in Terms to suppose any matter to be at Rest." It is also an "express Contradiction" to assert that matter is necessary, "though not necessary to be every where"; the existence of a vacuum (Clarke's proof of this being from the ideality of Newtonian physics) shows that "'tis evidently more than possible for Matter not to Be" (pp.531f). Newtonian mechanics is an important influence on Clarke's philosophy: references to motion and its origin occur throughout his work.¹ His argument, of course, assumes an absolute space, without which the supposed contradictions of there being no "rest" and of necessary matter being not everywhere, are meaningless. However, if matter and motion are not necessary and both are observed, a power of beginning both must be in God as the First Cause and may be, Clarke will argue, communicable by God to man. This is his fundamental argument against the denial of liberty from the

¹ See Appendix A.2 for notes on Clarke's early work relating to Newton.
necessity of a regressing chain of causes.

As noted above, Clarke’s argument is founded on a strong concept of causation: the material world is either 'necessary' or caused by an external cause. This does not allow for a third possibility: that the material world is uncaused, purely contingent and not produced by anything. The possibility of a purely contingent world does not fall foul of Clarke’s argument against ‘absolute necessity of existing’. His principle that ‘whatever exists, has a cause’ is, therefore, neither self-evident nor well-supported. It is unfortunate for Clarke that this is the first principle of his first proposition. He expects it to be common ground with his opponents, however, for he claims that the proposition that ‘something has existed from all eternity’ "is so evident and Undeniable...that no Atheist in any Age has ever presumed to assert the contrary" (ibid.).

It is notable that Locke uses the same argument that "Non-entity cannot produce any real Being" in his discussion 'Of our knowledge of the Existence of a God' in his Essay (IV,x,32). He does not, however, argue that motion cannot be necessary, but that "incogitative Matter and Motion...could never produce thought" (10). This is also taken up by Clarke.

References to Locke’s Essay will be in the form (Book, Chapter, Paragraph), or in the form (Paragraph only) where from the same chapter as the immediately preceding reference. The edition used is: John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding [1693], Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995
2.3 The Origin of Intelligence

Intelligence, Clarke argues, cannot be bestowed by an unintelligent cause ("unintelligent figure and motion"), because "nothing can ever give to another any Perfection which it hath not," else the perfection is caused by nothing (p.544). This is a principle used extensively by Clarke, sometimes expressed in the form: "Nothing can possibly be the Cause of an Effect more considerable than itself" (Works, iv, p.723). If this questionable principle is granted, the argument works only if it is shown that intelligence is a "real distinct Quality," and not a property of matter. Clarke has a simple, perhaps simplistic, argument to support this condition:

for this plain Reason; because Intelligence is not Figure, and Consciousness is not Motion. For whatever can arise from, or be compounded of any Things; is still only those very Things, of which it was compounded. (p.545)

Thus whatever combinations of matter are envisaged, they are still only matter and motion. The first cause must therefore be an intelligent being in 'the necessity of its own nature'.

2.4 Liberty and Immaterialism

Clarke argues that the intelligence of God entails that God has liberty, and does not act from necessity. This introduces his strong concept of liberty, which will be a theme throughout the controversies to follow:

Intelligence without Liberty... is really... no
Intelligence at all. It is indeed a Consciousness, but it is merely a Passive One; a Consciousness, not of Acting, but purely of being Acted upon. Without Liberty, nothing can in any tolerable Propriety of Speech, be said to be an Agent, or Cause of any thing. For to Act necessarily, is really and properly not to Act at all, but only to be acted upon. (p.548)

This is the basis of Clarke's first argument against Spinoza's conception of God as a necessary agent. He supports it with a second argument from the premise that it is "evidently most false and absurd" (p.549) that nothing in the world could possibly have been otherwise than it is; so absurd, indeed,

that of it self it immediately, and upon the first hearing, sufficiently confutes any Principle of which it is a Consequence. For, all things in the World appear plainly to be the most Arbitrary [contingent] that can be imagined; and to be wholly the Effects, not of Necessity, but of Wisdom and Choice. (p.550)

It therefore follows "that the Supreme Cause is not a mere necessary Agent, but a Being indued with Liberty and Choice" (p.549). Clarke offers further direct criticism of Spinoza's own arguments for necessity; however, since the Spinozistic scheme is adopted by none of the disputants in the two controversies to be examined, we need not consider the details. It is common ground between Clarke and Collins, Price and Priestley, that God or the First Cause is free; Clarke and Price argue that liberty is "a Power capable of being communicated to Created Beings" (p.553), whereas Collins and Priestley do not.

With regard to immaterialism, Clarke has already argued
that thought is incompatible with matter alone, and he therefore argues for thinking, immaterial substance. The argument is that if there can be immaterial substances, then "'tis most reasonable to believe, that such Substances as are indued with Consciousness and Thought...are those Immaterial Substances" (p. 555). His argument that immaterial substances may exist is by contradiction of the impossibility of such substances: the impossibility could only follow from a claim that because we have no ideas of something, it cannot exist - which is absurd. The argument, in sum, is not wholly satisfying but neither is it wholly inadequate: there is thought; thought cannot arise from material substance; immaterial substance is not impossible; therefore thought must arise from immaterial substance. When Collins attacked Clarke on this issue in their first series of exchanges, he chose to argue that it is not impossible that thought is an effect of matter.

Clarke's argument for liberty of the will follows a similar pattern, and is dependent on there being a power of beginning motion in man. A power of beginning motion is possible, because it is in God. It is possible for God to communicate that power to man, "Because no Powers are Impossible to be Communicated, but only those which imply Self-existence and absolute Independency" (p. 558); this principle is established on the basis that it is "no Contradiction". This establishing only the barest of possibilities, Clarke argues for supporting evidence.
He takes it as indubitable that we have a power of perception, "Unless Perception be Nothing else, but a mere Passive Reception of Impulse; which I suppose it is as clear that it is not, as that a Triangle is not a Sound, or that a Globe is not a Colour" (ibid.). If it is indubitable that we have this power, a power which must have been communicated from the First Cause (whereby all power has its origin), the communication of a power of self-motion may be similarly conceived, and confidently established by experience:

...I suppose no considering Man can doubt, but that he actually has also a Power of Self-Motion. For the Arguments drawn from continual Experience and Observation, to prove that we have such a Power, are so strong; that nothing less than a strict Demonstration that the thing is absolutely impossible, and that it implies an express contradiction, can make us in the least doubt that we have it not. (ibid.)

This argument from experience is the pivotal point which turns a weak a priori argument into a strong claim. It is perhaps no accident that Collins, as we shall see, chose to open his Philosophical Inquiry with arguments from experience against liberty.

These are Clarke's basic arguments for thinking, immaterial substance and free, self-moving will. There are, however, some other points which are important to the debate which follows: the distinction between moral motives and physical efficients; divine prescience; and liberty as a perfection.
2.5 **Physical Efficient and Moral Necessity**

In considering the relation between will and judgement, Clarke introduces a further distinction crucial to the controversies, especially in regard to the debate on causation. The context is Clarke's opposition to the view (later adopted by Collins and Priestley) that the will is determined by 'the last judgement of the understanding'. Clarke suggests two possible interpretations: first, that the last judgement of the understanding is (as the determination to choose) the same as the volition; second, if the judgement and volition are distinguished,

then the Act of Volition, or rather the Beginning of Action, consequent upon the last Judgment of the Understanding, is not determined or caused by that last Judgment, as by the physical Efficient, but only as the Moral Motive. (p.565)

The physical efficient, that which immediately causes motion, is the power of self-motion which Clarke takes himself to have established. The preceding judgement, on the other hand, is "merely a Moral Motive, upon which the physical Efficient or motive Power begin to Act" (ibid.).

A failure properly to distinguish moral motives from physical efficient, Clarke suggests, leads to confusion with regard to 'moral necessity': the term is used by Clarke to describe the certainty with which it may be taken that action follows judgement, "that is, no Necessity at all, in the Sense
wherein the Opposers of Liberty understand *Necessity.*" Indeed, according to Clarke, this necessity is consistent with "the most perfect *Natural Liberty.*" His illustration is worth quoting in part, for this is the quotation used, or rather misused, by Collins to suggest that Clarke supports Collins' version of necessitarianism:

A Man intirely free from all Pain of Body and Disorder of Mind, judges it unreasonable for him to Hurt or Destroy himself; And, being under no Temptation or External Violence, he *cannot possibly* act contrary to this Judgment; not because he wants a *Natural or Physical Power* so to do, but because 'tis absurd and mischievous, and *morally impossible,* for him to Choose to do it. *(ibid.; cf. Collins, pp. 76f)*

Collins uses the term 'moral necessity' in a different way, to describe his conception that the will is in truth determined by moral motives (see Chapter Three and Section 4.2). The same point is later argued (from a different perspective on causation) by Priestley. Clarke and Price, on the other hand, maintain that any postulated causal scheme must include a physical efficient capable of causing action; this cannot be attributed to motives, but is provided by the self-moving power.

Finally in this section, Clarke suggests that questions of whether an agent is at liberty to will or not to will (questions subsequently addressed by Collins) are based on confused notions of liberty and agency: the agent does not choose to *will,* but chooses whether to *act.* Liberty, indeed, is the same with agency:
For a Free Agent may be, and indeed essentially every Free Agent must be, necessarily Free; that is, has it not in his Power, not to be Free. (p.566)

God is free in his own nature; man is free by appointment of God.

2.6 Divine Prescience

Due to the dominance of religion in eighteenth-century culture, the argument from divine prescience is given a prominence in these debates which would not be expected in a modern discussion of free will. Clarke’s argument here is based upon the idea that any argument that divine prescience of events renders those events necessary, depends on two inferences: that foreknowledge implies certainty, and that certainty implies necessity. Clarke’s strategy is to suggest (a) that events are not made intrinsically more certain for being foreknown, and (b) that certainty does not imply necessity.

The second argument is the crucial one for Clarke’s purposes. The argument appears to be that if someone knows $x$ then necessarily $x$ is true; this does not imply, as the necessitarian would have to infer, that $x$ is necessarily true. Knowledge changes nothing in the causal structure: "The bare Fore-sight of a free Action before it is done, is nothing different (to any purpose in the present Question,) from a simple Knowledge of it, when it is done" (p.567). All that can alter the certainty with which something is known is the

perceptiveness of the observer, God being the most perceptive of all. We shall meet Collins' criticism of this in Section 4.7. It is worth noting, however, that Clarke has the good sense to suggest that, if well-founded, an inconsistency between liberty and divine prescience would pray against divine prescience rather than liberty.

2.7 Liberty as a Perfection

Clarke argues (from God's infinite knowledge of the relations, i.e. fitness or unfitness, of things; the details are not important) that God is a perfectly moral being, acting always yet freely for the best: "'tis...no Diminution either of Power or Liberty, to have such a Perfect and Unalterable Rectitude of Will, as never Possibly to Choose to do any thing inconsistent with that Rectitude" (p.575). From this it follows, claims Clarke, that liberty, being "in the highest and completest degree, in God himself," is a perfection. Liberty, indeed, is an essential element of the moral ideas of goodness, truth, justice, etc.

He further argues that to claim that liberty is an imperfection on the grounds that freedom makes one capable of causing misery as well as happiness, is mistaken: "if we speak properly, 'tis not Liberty that exposes us to Misery, but only the Abuse of Liberty" (ibid.). If liberty is an imperfection, then "a Stone is a more excellent and Perfect Creature than
Again, we shall meet Collins' arguments on the point in Chapter Four.

2.8 Clarke and Leibniz

Being and Attributes introduces most of the issues which Collins addresses in his Philosophical Inquiry. At the time that Collins would have been writing his book, Clarke was engaged in a separate correspondence with Leibniz. Clarke was preparing this correspondence for publication when Collins' book was published early in 1717; Clarke's quickly-written Remarks on Collins (together with an exchange of letters on liberty and necessity between Clarke and "A Gentleman from Cambridge") were published in the same volume as the Leibniz correspondence but with separate pagination (Alexander3, p.2). It is therefore worth briefly considering some aspects of the Clarke-Leibniz correspondence for purposes of context.

The Leibniz-Clarke correspondence was wide-ranging in its subject matter, concerning primarily questions of the nature of space and time and Newtonian principles, but including some debate on free-will. The correspondence was occasioned by Caroline, Princess of Wales (wife of the later George II), long

3 H.G. Alexander (ed.), The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956
an acquaintance of Leibniz. Caroline wished to see Leibniz’s *Theodicy* translated into English, and Clarke was suggested to her as a potential translator. She passed to him the contents of a letter dated November 1715 in which Leibniz had criticized the apparent tendency of English thought - especially that of Locke and Newton - to undermine natural religion. Though Clarke declined to translate the *Theodicy* (being too much opposed to Leibniz’s opinions), he sent to Caroline a response to Leibniz’s remarks; an exchange of papers ensued, with Caroline acting as conduit. She herself took interest in the issues and was impressed by the work of both men, though favoured Leibniz, as shown by these extracts from letters which she wrote to him:

Send me, please, your opinion on Dr. Clarke’s works which I think have considerable merit although not comparable with the *Theodicy*. (26 November 1715)

Last Saturday I had the Abbe Conti and Mr. Clarke with me from 6 till 10 o’clock. I should have liked you there to support me. Mr Clarke’s knowledge and his clear way of reasoning have almost converted me to believing in the vacuum. (24 April 1716)

I read with pleasure the replies which you have made to Mr. Clarke. I do not know if he will be able to reply to them. Clarke is a man of the greatest vivacity and of an eloquence which is, in my opinion, unequalled. (31 August 1716)

(Alexander, pp.190,194,196f)

The cause of the dispute was Leibniz’s rejection of Newton’s claim that God must intervene in the universe to correct the irregularities in orbits that would occur from the gravitational action of the planets on each other. (That these would cancel out over time was not proved until after Newton’s
Leibniz thought this an unacceptable imputation of God's power, that "He had not, it seems, sufficient foresight to make it a perpetual motion" (p.11); rather, Leibniz's conception was of a 'pre-established harmony' in creation, of both material bodies and souls. Part of this conception is an ingenious, if odd way of meeting the standard objection to dualism - that the mutual influence of minds and bodies cannot be explained - by claiming that the mechanical operations of the body and the immaterial operations of the soul are causally separate but harmonized by God:

[T]he soul does not disturb the laws of the body, nor the body those of the soul;...the soul and body do only agree together; the one acting freely, according to the rules of final causes; and the other acting mechanically, according to the laws of efficient causes. But this does not derogate from the liberty of our souls... For every agent which acts according to final causes, is free, though it happens to agree with an agent acting only by efficient causes without knowledge, or mechanically; because God, foreseeing what the free cause would do, did from the beginning regulate the machine in such a manner, that it cannot fail to agree with that free cause. (L.V.92;pp.85f)

Clarke rejects this as a "perpetual miracle" which reduces all to necessity. His contention is for fairly standard dualism, where the soul and body interact, the soul being the principle of action.

For Leibniz, will must be motivated; for Clarke, being

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4 References to the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence will be by author's initial, paper number, and paragraph number; together with the page reference in Alexander.
moved by motives is passivity, not action. As we shall see, in this Leibniz is close to Locke and Collins; indeed Leibniz had prepared (though not published) a commentary on Locke's Essay, which - though critical of much of Locke's philosophy - is broadly sympathetic to his discussion of liberty and necessity.\(^5\) Leibniz draws distinctions between absolute necessity, hypothetical necessity, and moral necessity. Absolute necessity refers to such things as essences and mathematical truths, i.e. that which could not be otherwise without contradiction. Hypothetical necessity refers to contingent events, and follows from God's pre-ordination. Pre-ordination is, in Leibniz's view, compatible with liberty: in choosing the best of all possible worlds, God actualized the free natures of the creatures he saw in his ideas, thereby making all events certain and determined without derogating liberty.

Moral necessity is that whereby "a wise being chooses the best, and every mind follows the strongest inclination" (L.V.4; p.56). This differs from absolute necessity, because an alternative action is in itself no contradiction; thus, in Leibniz's term, motive "inclines without [absolutely] necessitating" (L.V.8;p.57). This is a consequence of his 'principle of sufficient reason', namely "that nothing happens without a sufficient reason, why it should be so rather than

otherwise" (L.III.2;p.25); the sufficient reason includes all conditions of each event in its particularity, including the motives present in the mind. Leibniz's conception is a form of compatibilism: 'free' agents act in a way that is determined by God's ordering of 'the best of all possible worlds', and is always in accordance with the strongest motive.

Leibniz's distinction between absolute, hypothetical and moral necessity is unacceptable to Clarke: "Necessity, in philosophical questions, always signifies absolute necessity... Hypothetical necessity, and moral necessity, are only figurative ways of speaking, and in philosophical strictness of speaking, are no necessity at all" (C.V;p.99). In the case of 'moral necessity' in particular he simply refuses to accept Leibniz's definition of terms, preferring his own character-related definition (see Section 2.5); this will also be an issue in the dispute with Collins.

He denies also the metaphysical framework of pre-established harmony between soul and body - this being simply incredible. Clarke astutely observes that Leibniz's 'pre-established harmony' carries the danger of leading to a physicalist notion that soul "is merely a fiction and a dream":

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6 In his first four papers Clarke answers Leibniz paragraph by numbered paragraph. In the fifth paper he ceases to do this and instead summarizes sections, dispensing with paragraph numbers.
Besides: what difficulty is there avoided, by so strange an hypothesis? This only; that it cannot be conceived (it seems) how immaterial substance should act upon matter. But is God not an immaterial substance? And does not he act upon matter? (C.V;pp.116f)

He goes on to suggest that conceiving how the immaterial soul affects the body is no more difficult (or no easier) than conceiving how physical forces operate, or how light is reflected from material objects.

The debate reached an impasse. In a letter to Caroline accompanying part of his fifth paper in August 1716, Leibniz had written:

This reply is very full since I wanted to explain everything completely and to see whether there is any hope of making Mr. Clarke see reason. For if he falls back on repeating himself, there will be nothing to be done with him and one will have to try politely to come to a close. (p.196)

And on 11 September 1716:

If he continues to dispute my great principle [of sufficient reason], and if he still claims that something can happen by a mere will of God without any motive, he will have to be left to his opinion or rather to his obstinacy. (p.197)

Clarke was indeed left to his obstinacy: his fifth reply was sent by Caroline to Leibniz on 29 October 1716; Leibniz died on 14 November.

Clarke makes two specific references to Leibniz's papers in
his *Remarks* on Collins; these will be discussed at the relevant point in the comparison of Collins' and Clarke's books in Chapter Four. In order to complete the background to the debate, we turn now to Collins and the influence of Locke on his writing.
Whereas Clarke approaches the question of liberty and necessity from the position of a rationalist theologian, Collins' approach is to combine the empiricism of Locke with the rationalist arguments of Hobbes. We have met Hobbes' discussion in Chapter One; the aim of this chapter is therefore to set Collins' thought within the context of Locke's work.

There was a close personal relationship between Collins and Locke (see Appendix A.1), given which it is perhaps unsurprising that Locke's writings on liberty and necessity are a major influence on Collins' own work. Locke's discussion on the topic is to be found in Book II of his Essay, in Chapter xxi: "Of Power". 'Power' is that which enables change: active power is the ability to affect change, passive power the ability to be changed. The source of our clearest idea of active power is reflection on the experience that we can move our bodies, apparently by mere thought:

This at least I think evident, that we find in ourselves a power to begin or forbear, to continue or end, several actions of our minds and motions of our bodies, barely by a thought or preference of the mind ordering, or as it were, commanding the doing or not doing such or such a particular action. This power which the mind has thus to order the consideration of any idea, or the forbearing to consider it, or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest, and vice versa, in any particular instance, is that which we call "the will." The actual exercise of that
power, by directing any particular action or its forbearance, is that which we call "volition" or "willing." (II,xxi,5)

I have quoted Locke at length here, as it is instructive to compare Collins' version of the definition of will, to see just how closely he follows Locke's language:

It is a matter of daily experience, that we begin, or forbear, continue or end, several actions barely by a thought, or preference of the mind, ordering the doing or not doing, the continuing or ending, [of] such and such actions. Thus, before we think or deliberate on any subject, as before we get on horseback, we do prefer those things to anything else in competition with them. In like manner, if we forbear, these actions, when any of them are offered to our thoughts: or if we continue to proceed in any one of these actions once begun: or if at any time we make an end of prosecuting them: we do forbear, or continue, or end them on our preference of the forbearance to the doing of them, of the continuing of them to the ending them, and of the ending to the continuing them. This power of the man thus to order the beginning or forbearance, the continuing, or ending, of any action, is called the will, and the actual exercise thereof, willing. (Collins, p.25)

Collins' passage reads as a paraphrase of Locke, with some additional commentary; there is no explicit reference to Locke's passage, but Collins probably expected that it would be familiar to his readers. The profound influence of Locke's philosophy on Collins' work is abundantly clear, but Collins does not uncritically accept all of Locke's discussion on liberty and necessity. In this section I shall therefore consider to what extent Locke's arguments are adopted and to what extent adapted by Collins.
Locke's delineation of the operations of the mind is in terms of 'powers' rather than 'faculties'. His complaint against describing 'the understanding' and 'the will' as 'faculties' is that they lead to the supposition of "some real beings in the soul, that performed those actions of understanding and volition" (II,xxi,6). This supposition in turn leads to confused questions of the differing scopes of action of distinct agents in the mind. Locke has no complaint, however, with the language of statements and questions such as that "the will is the commanding and superior faculty of the soul; that it is or is not free; that it determines the inferior faculties; that it follows the dictates of the understanding, &c" (6), provided that the meaning is understood as related to the priority of powers exercised by the mind as a whole.

For Locke, 'the understanding' is the power of perception, and the exercise of that power leads to 'acts' of the understanding: (a) perception of ideas; and (b) judgement, or the "perception of the connexion or repugnancy, agreement or disagreement" of ideas (5). As we shall see, this description of perception and judgement in terms of 'acts' is adopted by Collins, and is criticized by Clarke. As already noted, the exercise of the power to order action is 'willing'; the ideas of liberty and necessity arise from the extent of this power:

1 The third category of perception described by Locke, namely "The perception of the signification of signs", is not relevant to this discussion.
So far as a man has a power to think or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is a man free. Wherever any performance or forbearance are not equally in a man’s power, wherever doing it or not doing it will not equally follow upon the preference of his mind directing it, there he is not free, though perhaps the action may be voluntary. (8)

Therefore an action being voluntary is a necessary though not sufficient condition of liberty. It is not sufficient because it is possible to conceive of a situation where a voluntary action is constrained by external factors. Locke gives an example of a man waking to find that he has been locked in a room with someone with whom he actually wishes to stay and converse. In this situation, the man’s staying is voluntary, though "it is evident he is not at liberty not to stay, he has not freedom to be gone" (10). Liberty as the power to act according to preference where alternatives are available, is a development of the weak concept of freedom allowed by Hobbes, and is what Hume was later to call "hypothetical liberty" (EHU732).

Two points arise here, which are important for the Clarke-Collins debate. First, Locke appears to be equating volition and preference; this is adopted by Collins and criticized by Clarke. Locke, however, later notes the inadequacy of this equation, and warns the reader to reflect on his own experience in order that the expressions may be distinctly understood:

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2 Chapter Five, n.5
"Preferring," which seems best to express the act of volition, does it not precisely. For though a man would prefer flying to walking, yet who can say he ever wills it? Volition, it is plain, is an act of the mind knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man, by employing it in or withholding it from any particular action. (15)

Secondly, Locke considers that his formulation of the concepts of 'will', 'volition' and 'liberty' renders unintelligible the question of whether the will is free. 'Will' is the power exercised in volition; 'liberty' is the power to act according to preference; to ask whether the will has liberty is therefore "to ask whether one power has another power" (16), which is a category mistake. The common confusion, according to Locke, is to consider the will as an homuncular faculty; on the contrary, he wants to emphasize that "it is the mind that operates and exerts these powers; it is the man that does the action, it is the agent that has the power, or is able to do" (19).

The curiosity of this argument is its absence from Collins' work: given the influence of Locke's work on Collins and the close adoption of his language, it is perhaps surprising that Collins doesn't refer at all to this argument.³ The reason may be that he considered it to be a distraction from the main

³ Collins quotes a related passage from Locke (Collins, p.28; cf Locke, II.xxi.25), that to ask whether one is at liberty to choose between alternatives "is to ask whether a man can will what he wills, or be pleased with what he is pleased with", which is absurd. Collins' point is that will is judgement of what is best for the agent, and judgement is necessitated by circumstance (see Section 4.3); Locke's argument from the definition of powers is different.
issue, namely the question of whether the will is determined. With the above argument, Locke effectively by-passes the issue of whether or not there is a self-determining faculty of will; implicitly deciding in favour of a form of necessitarianism, he moves to an empirical examination of what that form might be. Collins, however, seems to be more interested in disproving, rather than circumventing the self-determining will postulated by those he wants to oppose, specifically Clarke.

For Locke, the will - being a power of the mind - is determined by the mind, so the question of what determines the will becomes, "What moves the mind in each particular instance to determine its general power of directing to this or that particular motion or rest?" (29). His answer is a form of hedonism, analyzed in terms of 'desire' as "an uneasiness of the mind for want of some absent good" (31): the 'absent good' for someone feeling pain, for example, is the ease of that pain, and the subsequent desire is desire for that ease. Locke's view is that uneasiness is the prime cause of volition: contentment causes only rest; the greatest good is rejected as motivation also, for Locke's empirical judgement is that an intellectual assessment of what ought to be the case will always be overridden by a felt uneasiness:

"It is better to marry than to burn," says St. Paul; where we may see what it is that chiefly drives a man into the enjoyments of a conjugal life. A little burning felt pushes us more powerfully than greater
pleasures in prospect draw or allure. (34)

Something is 'good' or 'evil' according to its propensity to produce pleasure or pain in us; this identification is another adopted by Collins. That which is 'good', says Locke, is not always desired, and so need not move the will. However, contemplation of a 'good' may raise in the mind some desire, "which, then beginning to make a part of our present uneasiness, stands upon fair terms with the rest to be satisfied, and so, according to its greatness and pressure, comes in its turn to determine the will" (45). The 'greatness and pressure' of competing uneasinesses is important for Locke's analysis, and leads to a further argument rejected by Collins.

The greatest and most pressing uneasiness, according to Locke, generally determines the will - but not always (47). Experience shows that the mind has a power to suspend the satisfaction of any of its desires. We may therefore evaluate the competing desires and act according to the one favoured: "This seems to me the source of all liberty; in this seems to consist that which is (as I think improperly) called 'free-will'" (ibid.). Here Locke is using the term 'liberty' differently from before: his primary definition of liberty is as the freedom of having available alternatives; the usage here is

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4 This is a contender for the best joke in the Essay - which doesn't say much for the rest.
the closest he allows to the libertarian concept of liberty as the freedom of the mind to determine choice independently of motive.

Collins denies that a power to suspend the execution of desires implies liberty, for he considers this suspension to be a suspension of will. Given that it is the ordering of consideration of ideas (see Locke's definition of 'will', above), this 'suspension of will' is itself an act of will; as such it is immediate and in accordance with the hedonistic principle. We shall see that the hedonistic principle is central to Collins' arguments, though it is less extensively developed than in Locke; there is nothing in Collins to compare with Locke's analysis of 'uneasiness'.

It is worth noting finally Locke's formulation of the determination of the willing of the mind by judgement, in order to bring out the difference in terminology which we shall find in Collins:

[W]ere we determined by any thing but the last result of our own minds judging of the good or evil of any action, we were not free; the very end of our freedom being, that we may obtain the good we choose. And therefore every man is put under a necessity by his constitution, as an intelligent being, to be determined in willing, by his own thought and judgement, what is best for him to do: else he would be under the determination of some other than himself, which is want of liberty. And to deny that a man's will, in every determination, follows his own judgement, is to say, that a man wills and acts for an end that he would not have, at the time that he will
and acts for it. (48)

This is in essence the position that Collins adopts, and that Clarke opposes. Collins, however, retains (at least implicitly) the more traditional formulation of the will as a separate faculty, which is either at liberty or under necessity. That "every man is put under necessity by his constitution" is just what Collins means by affirming 'moral necessity' and that man is a 'necessary agent', and by denying 'liberty' and that man is a 'free agent'. Collins is perhaps driven to these distinctions from Locke by his apparent aim of combining Locke's a posteriori hedonistic determinism with Hobbes' a priori causal determinism.

The background complete, I shall now turn to the details of the Clarke-Collins controversy.
4.1 The 'Dodwell' Correspondence

The first series of exchanges between Clarke and Collins began in 1707 with the publication by Clarke of *A Letter to Mr. Dodwell* in which he criticized a book in which Henry Dodwell had suggested that the soul is naturally mortal and has immortality conferred upon it during the rite of Baptism. Clarke argued that this is the top of a slippery slope leading to the denial of an soul independent of the body, which notion he had already opposed in *Being and Attributes*. Collins published an open letter in response, challenging Clarke's thesis that "the same substance cannot be both Solid and have the Power of Thinking" (p.750\(^1\)). One of Clarke's arguments for this dualist position is that consciousness, as an individual, indivisible power, cannot be a property of matter, which is divisible; if consciousness inhered in matter, then each part or atom would be an individual consciousness. Collins' response is that it is possible to conceive of powers or properties which belong to a system but not its parts; he instances the power of a rose to cause the sensation of sweetness, the power of a clock to keep time, and the property of roundness of a circular object whose

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\(^1\) Clarke's pamphlet against Dodwell, together with Collins' four pamphlets of *Reflections* and Clarke's four *Defences*, are reprinted in Clarke's *Works*, vol. iii; the page references given in this section are to this volume.
parts are not circular. The thesis which he aims to defend is a deliberately weak one: if individual powers are possible in compound systems, then thinking may be a property of matter.

Clarke accused Collins of fallacious reasoning, and the argument continued through pamphlets published over a period of two years. The details are not important to this discussion: the debate is highly repetitive and generally turgid. The 'Dodwell' correspondence is, however, of historical interest, for it helped to establish the disputants' place in the history of eighteenth-century thought. The debate was much discussed and quoted by other writers, including Price and Priestley, and it is possible to trace influences of the debate in Hume's Treatise. There are also some literary points worth bringing out. The first is that Collins published his works anonymously, whereas Clarke's authorship is identified throughout. Nevertheless, Clarke was well aware against whom he was writing: in the final paper he points out a contradiction (regarding the succession of thoughts in God) between Collins' fourth 'Dodwell' pamphlet and his Essay Concerning the Use of Reason (1707, 2nd edition 1709) with the words, "This Difficulty you must by no means pass over unsatisfied; because the Author of the Essay here cited, is believed to be a Person, whose Reasoning you

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cannot slight" (p.893).

The second point is that the pamphlets reveal a use of ironic wit by Collins also; where Clarke's style is arrogant and his irony combative, Collins is self-confident and more playful. Two fine examples of the latter relate to the Boyle Lectures. The first, used to introduce a discussion of the existence of God:

Since, on the occasion of the Boylean Lecture, the Existence of God is often made a Question (which otherwise would be with few any Question at all)...

(p.883)

The second example, later in the same discussion, sees Collins suggesting that "the great Labour [of establishing] an Idea of Creation ex nihilo, must make it more pardonable in me...if I omit for the present so useful a Design, or should leave it entirely to some of those Gentlemen that are appointed to preach at the lecture founded by the Honourable Robert Boyle" (p.884).

The question of liberty and necessity arises only late in the 'Dodwell' correspondence, when Collins ends his third pamphlet with the observation that Clarke "has not drawn up one Proposition to show that his Argument is of any use to the Ends and Purposes of Religion" (p.821); Clarke's response to this taunt is to claim that it is the denial of dualism which undermines religion by undermining liberty and hence morality. The substance of the ensuing arguments we either have met or
will meet elsewhere, but there are two points to note here. First, the arguments between Clarke and Collins concerning liberty and necessity first occur within a debate on a form of materialism, *i.e.* the question of whether matter can think or whether there must be a separate immaterial thinking substance, but in the immediate context of a discussion of theism.

Secondly, the main themes of the controversy to follow are established in this debate, eight years before Collins' *Philosophical Inquiry*. The version of compatibilism which Collins expounds in his *Philosophical Inquiry* is in evidence in his fourth 'Dodwell' pamphlet, in which he describes the only coherent notion of liberty as "a *Power to do as we will, and forbear as we will*", but the will is itself determined by motives:

> [F]or whenever I prefer one thing to another, it is always on some Motives or Causes; and I find that I cannot but prefer what I do prefer, till different Motives or Causes produce another Preference, Choice, or Will... (p.872)

This is again the 'hypothetical liberty' of Hobbes, Locke and Hume. It is the weak concept which Clarke argued against in his defence of theism in *Being and Attributes*, and the role of libertarianism in that defence is again apparent here. Clarke's final reply includes again the argument that religion supposes a "*future State of Rewards and Punishments*" (p.905), and that God, being perfectly just, cannot judge a man for necessary
actions "any more than a Man can be angry with his Clock for going wrong":

Till you can give a clear Answer to this Argument, you stand obliged by Promise to allow that man is no more a Subject of Religion, than a Clock... Though, I hope, you will be better than your Word; and own rather, that there is no such thing as Necessity. (p.906)

Collins wrote no immediate reply, but included sections on the 'nature of rewards and punishments' and the 'nature of morality' in his Philosophical Inquiry (see Sections 4.8 - 4.10, below).

4.2 Collins’ Philosophical Inquiry and Clarke’s Remarks

The question of liberty and necessity had played a substantial though secondary role in Clarke’s Being and Attributes and in the ‘Dodwell’ correspondence. It comes to the fore in the texts which are the focus of this chapter: Collins’ short book A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty, and Clarke’s Remarks upon this book. Clarke’s response was no doubt motivated by Collins’ implicit references to, and explicit misrepresentation of, his arguments in Being and Attributes.

3 The editions referred to in this discussion are: Anthony Collins, A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty, Birmingham: Joseph Priestley/Thomas Pearson, 1790; and Samuel Clarke, "Remarks, upon a book entitled...", Works, vol.iv, pp.719-735. Unless otherwise identified, page references to Clarke and Collins in the remainder of this chapter are to these texts.
The main thread of Collins' book is an argument for the form of compatibilism identified above. In the Preface he follows Locke and Hobbes in "contend[ing] for liberty, as it signifies, a power in man, to do as he wills or pleases" (p.xvii), i.e. hypothetical liberty or 'liberty' as having alternatives. In the body of the text, however, 'liberty' refers to the libertarian concept which Collins rejects, namely that the will is a free faculty of the mind, able to choose independently of motive. To this Collins contrasts and argues for 'moral necessity', "meaning thereby, that man, who is an intelligent and sensible being, is determined by his reason and his senses" (p.xviii). Necessity, therefore, is internal to the mind. Collins does reveal an underlying belief in physical necessity late in the book, though in the Preface denies that man is subject to a 'physical' or 'mechanical' necessity such as is in clocks and watches.

Collins sets out his version of the question of liberty and necessity in his Introduction: man is a necessary agent if all his actions are determined by prior causes in such a way that the actions could not be otherwise; he is a free agent if he is not so determined, but is able to perform different actions under precisely the same causes and circumstances. His argument that man is a 'necessary agent' acting under 'moral necessity' proceeds in three main stages via six arguments:
(A) Arguments from experience are considered to show that we have no reason to believe that we have liberty of will, and indeed reason to support necessity. This is the section which most clearly shows the influence of Locke.

(B) There is the central metaphysical argument for necessity on the basis of theories of causation derived from Hobbes. This is perhaps the core of the book, though one of the shortest sections.

(C) It is shown from arguments concerning (i) whether liberty is a perfection or imperfection, and (ii) divine prescience, that it is necessity rather than liberty that is consistent with religion; and from arguments concerning (iii) the justice of rewards and punishments, and (iv) moral understanding itself, that liberty is indeed harmful to morality.

The argument in each case follows a broadly similar pattern: the question is set out and previous positions examined, followed by Collins' own argument supported by authorities. In considering the details we shall see that Collins uses four basic argument types: (a) formalization of his analysis of experience; (b) positive, direct argument from first principles, or from principles previously established, or from principles accepted by his opponents; (c) argument from
authority; and (d) demonstration of inconsistencies in his opponents' positions.

Collins' arguments for necessity are criticized by Clarke in his Remarks on the Philosophical Inquiry, which remarks are essentially elaboration of his earlier arguments in Being and Attributes. There, it will be recalled, Clarke argued a priori for the possibility of a self-moving power endowed by God upon man, which possibility is confirmed by experience. Further, this strong concept of agency in man is a necessary condition of morality. Clarke aims to defend these concepts against Collins' denial of the arguments for liberty from experience and his advocacy of an adequate conception of morality based on a weaker concept of agency, namely action in accordance with will. Whereas in Being and Attributes Clarke was committed to a priori argument, here his project is less positive, the focus being to destroy Collins' arguments.

I now turn to the details of the arguments, taking each section of Collins' book in turn, alongside Clarke's criticisms.

4.3 Arguments from Experience

Collins has two reasons for beginning with arguments from experience: first, that since the question of whether we are free or necessitated is a question of what we do, an analysis of experience is sensible; secondly, that experience is "urged with
great triumph" by the libertarians he wants to oppose; as seen in Section 2.4, the argument from experience is crucial to Clarke's argument for the libertarian position. Whether because of the importance which Collins attaches to the argument, or to display his prodigious reading on the subject, this first argument takes up almost half of the book. He begins by noting that various philosophers and theologians from the ancients to his contemporaries have given definitions of liberty which are consistent with necessity; these are generally variations on (Cicero) "a power to do as we will," or (Alexander of Aphrodisias) "a power...to chuse and do what is the most eligible to our reason" (p.10f). As already noted, it will be Collins' case that will is consequent upon judgement, which is itself determined, but that as long as we are free to do as we will then that is a perfectly adequate conception of freedom. He wittily suggests that those authors (e.g. Erasmus, Archbishop King) who claim liberty from experience, yet observe that the question of liberty and necessity is philosophically difficult, contradict themselves:

But how can all this happen in a plain matter of fact, supposed to be experienced by every body? What difficulty can there be in stating a plain matter of fact, and describing what every body feels? What need of so much Philosophy?" (p.15)

Finally he cites other writers (including Christian writers), "and those the most discerning" (p.21), who either see themselves as necessitated, or see that experience cannot decide
the question one way or the other.

Having surveyed the literature in this manner, Collins turns to his own analysis of experience and in particular four 'actions' which he takes to be relevant: (1) Perception of Ideas, (2) Judging of Perceptions, (3) Willing, and (4) Doing as we will. One of Clarke's complaints against Collins is that his characterization of action is flawed, that (especially in the case of perception) that which is entirely passive cannot be termed an 'action': perception is not something one can strictly do. It is a true point but somewhat fatuous, for perception of ideas is a moment of experience which is relevant to the question, and in ordinary language is something we 'do' as subjects. However Clarke believes that his point is not merely semantic, and that Collins' confusion between active and passive moments leads him to errors in his argument. It is interesting to recall in this context that Clarke had used the power of perception in *Being and Attributes* in his argument for a power of self-motion; there he had implied that perception is not entirely passive, being other than "a mere Passive Reception of Impulse" (see Section 2.4 above).

The section on Perception of Ideas reveals Collins' debt to Locke's formulation of the categories of ideas as either sensation or reflection: we necessarily and involuntarily receive sensation, and we necessarily and involuntarily are
conscious that we think when we do think. Any libertarian is unlikely to dispute this much, though Collins continues with a highly questionable proposition:

And as we necessarily receive ideas, so each idea is necessarily what is in our mind: for it is not possible to make any thing different from itself. This first action, the reader will see, is the foundation and cause of all the other intelligent actions of man, and makes them also necessary. (p.22)

If by 'the reader will see', Collins intends 'it will be shown', then that is fair enough at this stage; but if he intends 'it is self-evident', then he is overstating his case. That perception of ideas influences intelligent actions is unquestionable, but that it is the cause of all such actions is just the question at issue: Clarke denies that perception of ideas can be a cause of anything, but is only a 'moral motive'.

The argument relating to the second action - judging of perceptions - is similar in nature: every proposition falls into one of six categories ("self-evident, or evident from proof, or probable, or improbable, or doubtful, or false" (p.23)), and we judge which exactly according as the proposition appears to us, in a manner analogous to judging an appearance to be of one colour rather than another. Again, Clarke's only response to this point is to assert that to describe this as a necessary action is absurd (p.727), not because it is not necessary but because it is not action. Clarke's concepts of action and
freedom are identical, and stated in terms of 'beginning motion', i.e. without external cause; 'necessary action' is, for him, a contradiction in terms. Had Collins, however, merely used different terminology - say 'moment' for 'action' - there would still be no dispute thus far. Clarke's similar assessment of 'perception of ideas' and 'judgement of perceptions' is that they are both passive moments.

Collins' third action is 'willing', the definition of which we met in relation to Locke's Essay in the previous chapter:

It is a matter of daily experience, that we begin, or forbear, continue or end, several actions barely by a thought, or preference of the mind, ordering the doing or not doing, the continuing or ending, [of] such and such actions... This power of the man thus to order the beginning or forbearance, the continuance, or ending, of any action, is called the will, and the actual exercise thereof, willing. (p.25)

There is question of interpretation in the definition which Clarke exploits, namely the relation between will and preference: does the will act in accordance with and consequent upon preference, or is will identified with preference? That Collins intends the latter is suggested by the following a few pages later:

Willing or preferring is the same with respect to good and evil, that judging is with respect to truth or falsehood. It is judging, that one thing is, upon the whole, better than another, or not so bad as another. (p.28)

Clarke accuses Collins of confusing the term 'willing' to mean
sometimes (as in the latter quote) "the last Perception or Approbation of the Understanding", which is a passive moment, and sometimes (as in the former definition) the "first Exertion of the Self-moving or Active Faculty" (p. 727). Is the accusation of confusion well-founded?

In the first place it should be noted that these are not Collins' terms but Clarke's, terms that Clarke used in his analysis of volition in Being and Attributes (see Section 2.5). Collins could respond that there is no confusion, that the power to order action just is the judgement. (This, indeed, was one of the interpretations of volition offered by Clarke in Being and Attributes.) Judgement is essential to Collins' concept of will, for he accepts hedonism as a motivating force:

To suppose a sensible being capable of willing or preferring (call it as you please) misery, and refusing good, is to deny it to be really sensible; for every man, while he has his senses, aims at pleasure and happiness, and avoids pain and misery; and this in willing actions, which are supposed to be attended with the most terrible consequences. (p. 29)

It is notable that there is no further argument for psychological hedonism; it may be that Collins considers it to be self-evident. The most he does is to support his point with authorities, including Plato's Protagoras on the impossibility of knowingly choosing the greater of two evils. This is a questionable authority on which to base an argument for hedonism, for Plato's flawed argument is that if hedonism holds,
then the impossibility of choosing the greater evil follows (see Appendix B for notes on Plato's text). Unfortunately for Collins, the hedonistic principle is one upon which much of his subsequent positive argument depends.

There must be an underlying assumption here that the hedonistic impulse is both what orders the judgement and what provides the causal link between judgement and physical action, but there is no further consideration of the mechanism. Clarke is vigorously opposed to this, for his is a strong conception of agency, and he denies that anything passive can be the cause of anything active; in particular, judgement "can no more possibly be the efficient Cause of Action, than Rest can be the Cause of Motion" (p.723). If, Clarke claims, Collins is really arguing that human action is the result of mechanistic, material impulses, then the question of the original cause of motion remains; this must lead either to a first mover or to an impossible infinite regress. Clarke argues instead for a free, substantial self-moving principle - endowed by God upon man - which is the physical or efficient cause of action. He doesn't explicitly state that this is the definition of will, but does say that "actually exerting the Self-moving Faculty" is what we mean by 'doing as we will' - the only one of Collins' four 'actions' properly so described. As we saw in Chapter Two, Clarke prefers to talk of 'action' and the 'self-motive faculty', and leaves the definition of will deliberately open.

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Collins poses three questions regarding liberty of the will which follow from his definition: (a) are we at liberty to will or not to will?, a corollary (b) can we suspend willing?, and (c) can we will one or other of two or more objects? Collins' answer is to deny liberty in each case: if an action is proposed - say 'walking' - we must have some immediate preference: whether to act, or not to act, or to defer the choice. To defer choice (suspend willing) itself is an act of will, which is therefore immediate and in accordance with the hedonistic principle. In willing or choosing between discernable objects, the same necessitated judgement applies: "we must will or prefer as things seem to us, unless we can lye to ourselves, and to think that to be the worst, which we think best" (p.28). As to whether we are at liberty to choose between indifferent objects, Collins remarks that cases where the choice is between truly indiscernible objects are so rare that such liberty is hardly worth having. He could plausibly let the discussion rest there, but he is keen to destroy the possibility of liberty wherever he finds it. He therefore proposes the further argument that the circumstances in which the choice is made can never be the same twice, and that "All the various modifications of the man, his opinions, prejudices, temper, habit and circumstances, are to be taken in and considered as causes of election no less than the objects without us among which we chuse" (p.32). Even the slightest difference in circumstance enters the causal chain to combine with the rest to produce the effect; since 'everything
that has a beginning has a cause' (a principle common to both
Collins and Clarke) we know that if different choices were made,
there must be a difference in the causal circumstances even if
we cannot discern it.

In terms of the categories of argument identified above,
the argument against liberty of choice in the case of
discernable objects rests on the hedonistic principle,
established only on a questionable argument from authority; the
argument for necessity in the case of indiscernible objects, on
the other hand, is from a principle shared with his opponents
but yet to be positively established. Clarke's response is again
to claim that Collins' arguments are grounded in his confusion
over willing: if willing is equated with judgement then these
questions do indeed invite Collins' answers, but if willing is
equated with exerting the self-moving faculty then, by
definition, the answer to each question is in favour of liberty.
In *Being and Attributes*, Clarke's open concept of 'will' enabled
him to claim that these questions are merely meaningless. The
main issue, therefore, is which of Collins' or Clarke's concepts
of will is the more plausible, and this we must consider in
relation to their arguments concerning causation.

Before doing so, however, it is worth pausing briefly to
look at Collins' last item in his survey of experience, namely
that if libertarians (he cites Bramhall as an example) suppose
that animals and children are necessitated, how can they claim that adult human beings have free will? There are many parallels between, say, ovine and human choices (sources of food, responsibility for young, response to danger, etc.); the differences are in the extent of the respective powers available to sheep and human beings, the seemingly specifically human regard given to absent things and future events, and that humans are "also subject to more vain fears, more mistakes and wrong actions, and infinitely more absurdities in notions" (p.38). These differences, however, cannot be the source of liberty. In the case of children the problem for the libertarian is more acute, for he must explain at what age, and how, children become free, and what actions show them to be free.

Clarke's response to this nicely witty point is the most straightforward: he doesn't attempt to explain liberty in relation to self-consciousness, but simply denies that animals and children are in fact necessitated, whatever other libertarians have said. Every action - whether of animals, children or adult human beings - is free, because it arises from the self-moving principle. The difference is in moral capability: adult human beings have moral sense, animals do not, and children as they develop become "not more free, but more moral agents" (p.729). It can be seen that, in seeking only to establish an inconsistency in his opponents' positions, Collins has here left himself open to a very simple reply. Since this is
something of an aside, it is of no real consequence to Collins' main thread of argument; its chief interest is that it shows Clarke to be a more sophisticated libertarian than some of his predecessors. We may note also that though Clarke has liberty as a necessary condition of morality, it is not a sufficient condition: in his conception some form of additional moral capacity is required. For Collins, by contrast, moral sense is grounded in hedonism and liberty is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition (see Section 4.9).

4.4 Causation

Given the centrality of cause and effect seen already in Collins' arguments, the section which deals explicitly with causal theory (Second Argument taken from the Impossibility of Liberty, pp.39-42) is astonishingly brief. Less than four pages long, half of it is theory, and half a suggestion that to assert liberty is atheistical, claiming in support as eminent an authority as St Paul. The causal argument is as follows:

(P1) All actions have a beginning
(P2) Whatever has a beginning has a cause
(P3) Every cause is a necessary cause

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4 Clarke's primary discussion of morality is to be found in the second series of Boyle Lectures, published as The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion (Works, ii, pp.579-733). There he characterizes moral sense as perception of the 'fitness or unfitness' of the eternal relations of things; these relations make it 'fit and reasonable' to act morally. Analogously to mathematical understanding, this perceptiveness of relations may increase with increasing rationality, but may be subject to perversion and error.
Therefore, all actions have necessary causes
Therefore man is a necessary agent.

Collins produces an argument in support of each of (P2) and (P3). The first of these is decidedly odd:

If any thing can have a beginning which has no cause, then nothing can produce something. And if nothing can produce something, then the world might have had a beginning without a cause: which is not only an absurdity commonly charged upon Atheists, but is a real absurdity in itself. (p.39)

There are several points to make about this argument. First, the principle is not disputed by Clarke, as previously stated; his sole comment on (P2) is that "'Tis true" (p.729). Collins' argument for the principle is indeed very similar to that put forward by Clarke at the start of Being and Attributes (see Section 2.2), including the implicit assumption that the mode of existence of the world is from production.

Secondly, Collins' argument is consistent with deism. As previously stated, Collins is generally associated with the deist movement, whatever the precise nature of his beliefs, and this is evidence in support of that thesis. The implicit first principle appears to be that the mere possibility of an uncaused universe is so absurd that there can be no such thing as an uncaused event. Thirdly, a more dialectical approach might be that Collins, while not personally believing in a deity, is arguing that uncaused events are inconsistent with theism,
thereby presenting problems for his opponents.

Lastly, whatever the merits of the argument, there is a question of why it is included at all. One possibility is that Collins included it for completeness, to support his premises by theistic or deistic first principles. Another possibility suggested by William Rowe is an expectation on Collins' part that libertarians will hold that actions or volitions are or may be uncaused (Rowe\(^5\), pp.30ff), the assumption being that uncaused events leave open the possibility of free will. The implication of Collins' argument is that if there can be no possibility of uncaused events, this line is not open to libertarians. Some, even many, libertarians may want to take this line, but not all - and, as seen, certainly not Clarke. Rowe's suggestion would have plausibility if Collins' project was to provide an argument for necessity against all-comers, but given the closeness of the arguments to *Being and Attributes* throughout Collins' book (arguments from experience, divine prescience, liberty as a perfection or imperfection) and the history of the 'Dodwell' correspondence, there is reason to think that he was referring specifically to Clarke. If this is indeed the case, it is more likely that he is here attempting to demonstrate necessity on the basis of Clarke's first principles.

The argument for (P3) is that a given cause must be 'suited to' its effect, i.e. "have relation to some particular case and not to others"; again the *reductio ad absurdum* is that if this were not the case it is possible that the ordered universe might have been produced by chance:

For in arguing against the Epicurean system of chance, do we not say (and that justly) that it is impossible for chance ever to have produced an orderly system of things, as not being a cause suited to the effect; and that an orderly system of things which had a beginning, must have had an intelligent agent for its cause, as being the only proper cause to that effect? (p.40)

This may be another reference to *Being and Attributes*, namely Proposition VIII: that "the Self-Existent and Original Cause of all things, must be an Intelligent Being" (*Works*, ii, p.543; see Section 2.3). If Collins is indeed referring to Clarke here, it may be another case of deliberately attempting to use Clarke's own principles to prove necessity.

Collins' basic argument here, derived from that of Hobbes met in Section 1.3, is that a given cause is suited to a given effect, and is no cause to other effects to which it is not suited; a cause not suited is no cause, therefore a cause suited to the effect is a necessary cause (p.40). In other words, once the particular causal chain is found to be extant, the effect must immediately and necessarily follow.

Clarke believes that Collins' argument is fallacious, due
to a begging of the question against a self-moving power. He accepts Collins' analysis of necessary causes as far as it goes, "But this is saying nothing more, than that a thing *must needs be*, when it *is supposed that it is*. Which is nothing to the Question about Liberty and Necessity" (p.729). Presumably he means by this that if something is identified as the cause of an effect, then it is necessarily the cause; this says nothing, however, about the precise nature of the cause. All Collins can consistently claim on this argument is that if the last judgement of the understanding causes actions, then it necessarily causes those actions; however, if the self-moving faculty causes actions, then it necessarily causes those actions. In using this argument to support his case that man is a necessary agent, that under a given set of conditions a person has not the power to make different choices, Collins is assuming, not proving, that man does not have a self-moving faculty. Clarke does, however, go in for a bit of overkill at this point, in claiming that Collins' argument is universal in allowing no self-moving power at all, not even in the deity - something Clarke argued in *Being and Attributes* to be inconsistent with a universe containing motion. This is a misrepresentation of Collins, for while the form of the argument is indeed universal, Collins appears implicitly to allow self-motion to an intelligent First Cause or deity.

Clarke has two arguments at work here against Collins. One
is the weak argument, simply that Collins has not proved his case, and depending on where one sees the balance of proof to lie that may be perfectly sufficient. The stronger argument is that Collins' causal chain can't work, because it depends on something passive (the judgement or preference) causing something active (the action performed as a result). Clarke gives no argument to support this, beyond an assertion of the maxim cited in Section 2.3 above: "Nothing can possibly be the Cause of an Effect more considerable than itself" (p.723). This again does not appear to be self-evident, but without it Clarke has no strong argument for the self-moving cause.

Finally on causation, Clarke makes the first of two references in his Remarks on Collins to his correspondence with Leibniz, possibly included to justify publishing the two works in the same volume. The reference is to Epicureanism:

[Collins] contends that 'Liberty stands, and can only be grounded, on the absurd Principles of Epicurean Atheism.' Mr. Leibnitz has done the same..." (p.730).

Epicurus claimed the existence of an 'atomic swerve', an uncaused irregularity in atomic motion which accounted for observed indeterminacy, including free will. Leibniz's point is analogical, that if God's will were without motive, then it would be as blind as Epicurean chance, and "A God who should act by such a will, would be a God only in name" (L.IV.18; Alexander,p.39); it would contradict Leibniz's principle of
sufficient reason. Collins' point is different, being that everything - including acts of will, God's excepted - must have a (necessary) cause; consequently there can be no free human will. Leibniz's 'principle of sufficient reason' and Collins' causal argument are not equivalent, but Clarke is opposed to both in his insistence on a self-motive principle of action in both God and man.

4.5 The Imperfection of Liberty

In the third argument, Collins seeks to disprove a libertarian proposition that liberty is more perfect than necessity. There are two possible reasons for a determinist to want to do this, one theological and one more 'psychological'. The theological reason is in two parts: first, that if liberty is no perfection, there is no reason to suppose that God would endow it upon created beings; secondly (a stronger thesis), if liberty is an imperfection and necessity a perfection, then God must be necessitated in action also; this is just what Clarke opposed in Being and Attributes. The 'psychological' reason is that if necessity rather than liberty makes man more perfect, then there is less motivation to want to pursue libertarianism. Less reason, though not no reason - for liberty of will could be seen as desirable in itself, independent of its effect on man's 'perfection'.

These observations do not relate directly to Collins' text,
for he does not describe a wider project for this argument, but states his intention only "to disprove all pretences" for liberty as a perfection. The argument proceeds in two stages: (a) five 'definitions' of liberty are attributed to earlier authors, and Collins deduces that the liberty described in each case would be an imperfection; (b) a more positive argument that necessity is a perfection.

There is no need to consider the arguments concerning the five 'definitions' in any detail. Collins cites definitions from Le Clerc, Cheyne and Archbishop King, but, first, it is not clear that the quotations were intended as definitions of liberty by the authors concerned, and secondly Clarke offers no defence of the 'definitions' of liberty, but rejects each as ridiculous. There are, however, two points worth noting regarding Clarke’s approach in the related section of his Remarks.

The first is that this section includes the second reference to the Leibniz correspondence. Collins' fourth definition, with no specified citation, is one met earlier in the section on Experience: "a power to will or chuse at the same time any one out of two or more indifferent things" (p.46). His argument here is almost trite. If two objects are indiscernible,

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6 On this point see: James O’Higgins, Determinism and Freewill, pp.34ff
then either (a) they are truly indifferent, in which case the power to choose is no perfection because it is hardly worth having; or (b) the objects differ but our powers of discernment are inadequate to differentiate them, which implies an imperfection of judgement in us.

Clarke ignores the second point, but says that the first—that there is no 'benefit' arising from the choice—"is the same Argument, by which Mr Leibnitz proved that it is impossible for God ever to have created any two Pieces of Matter exactly alike, because, whatever Situation he placed them in, there could be no Benefit in their not being transposed" (p.731). I find this to be the most curious of all Clarke's Remarks: the most obvious response to Collins is that his point is trivial, but it seems that Clarke is attempting to suggest that Collins' moral argument is absurd by comparing it to a metaphysical argument which Clarke evidently considers to be absurd.

The relevant argument from Leibniz is against indiscernibles, and is a consequence of his principle of sufficient reason: God cannot create two indiscernible real objects, because to order one rather than the other in a particular way would be without benefit and therefore without reason. Leibniz admits indiscernibles to be conceivable, but denies that they can be consistent with divine wisdom. Clarke’s response to this was that the only argument Leibniz can have is
against sufficient reason for placing, rather than creating objects; to claim that it would be impossible that it should be wise in God to create any number of indiscernible objects is to beg the question against wisdom, in assuming that God first creates and later places objects. It is a good argument on the part of Clarke here, but irrelevant to his argument against Collins; the false comparison does nothing to enhance Clarke’s criticism, and if anything detracts from it.  

The second point is that Clarke uses a misrepresentation of Collins in bolstering his argument. Collins presented an argument against King’s formulation of liberty of indifference, namely "a faculty, which being indifferent to objects, and overruling our passions, appetites, sensations, and reason, chuses arbitrarily among objects; and renders the object chosen agreeable, only because it has chosen it" (p.47). Collins believes that his former arguments (from hedonism and causal necessity) sufficiently show this version of liberty of indifference to be false, but continues to show that it would give rise to imperfection.

Clarke uses a part-quotation from this section of Collins’ argument - "It is not is [man’s] power to be indifferent to what causes pleasure and pain" (p.48) - in the context of criticizing an earlier section in Collins, on liberty as "a power to will

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7 See e.g. L.IV.1-5, C.IV.1-6; Alexander pp.36f, 45f.
evil (knowing it to be evil) as well as good" (p.45). Clarke's words are:

He supposes that a Power [a Physical Power] of choosing Evil as Evil, implies being..."indifferent to what causes Pleasure or Pain;"... Which is supposing that whatever Things are naturally possible for a Man to do, he has an equal Inclination to do. (p.730)

This is to commit the double fault of taking Collins out of context twice in one sentence to 'prove' a point: (a) King's formulation of the liberty of indifference is inconsistent with choosing evil as evil, so that the two arguments could not go together; and (b) Collins is denying the indifference to pleasure and pain anyway. Given that it was Collins' misquotation of Clarke on 'moral necessity' which occasioned Clarke's Remarks, it does Clarke no credit to resort to the same tactic, especially when he has quite sufficient ammunition against many of Collins' other arguments.

These sections on definitions of liberty tend to stand apart from the rest of the debate between Clarke and Collins, for Collins is attacking 'straw men'. O'Higgins notes that King's discussion of liberty of indifference, for example, lacked consistency and departed significantly from other supporters of the position (O'Higgins(2), pp.17-19,35); given this, it is perhaps a surprise that Clarke takes the arguments seriously at all. Usually sympathetic to Collins, O'Higgins concludes that, "This section of Collins work [on the five
'definitions'] is not his most successful" (ibid., p.35); it is not Clarke's most successful either.

4.6 The Perfection of Necessity

More significant for our purposes is the second part of the discussion, in which Collins presents more positive arguments to show that necessity is in itself a perfection. These fall into two parts: those relating to God, and those relating to man. The premise of the former is that God is necessarily perfect: necessarily so because if it is possible for something to be imperfect, then it is of itself imperfect. God therefore necessarily knows all truth, is necessarily happy, and is necessarily determined to will what is best. The only alternative to necessarily determined will would be 'indifferent' will, which would be inconsistent with wisdom and goodness. He supports this with the theological argument from Burnet, Bishop of Winchester, that as God's acts are essential and therefore necessary, "then the transient must be so likewise, as being the certain effects of his immanent acts: and a chain of necessary fate must run through the whole order of things: and God himself then is no free being, but acts by a necessity of nature" (p.53). Clarke dismisses these arguments as "Proving nothing, but only shewing the pernicious Effects of Scholastick Jargon"; in doing so he repeats his earlier conclusion that there can be no physical causal connection between judgement and action, even in God:
God judges what is right, and approves what is good, by a physical Necessity of Nature; in which physical Necessity, all Notion of Action is necessarily excluded: But doing what is good, is wholly owing to an Active Principle, in which is essentially included the notion of Liberty. (p.731)

The arguments concerning the perfection of necessity in man are to a large extent repetition of arguments given in showing liberty to be an imperfection. The basic argument is that conviction is a perfection, consequent upon judgement determined by reasons and volitions determined by what seems good; liberty, on the other hand, implies indifference to reason, pleasure and pain, etc. Clarke's responses are also generally repetitious. There is, however, one point at which a possible ambiguity in Collins' wording leaves him open to a new attack: if man were not necessarily determined, "He might reject what appears to be true to him, assent to what seems absurd to him, avoid what he sees to be good, and chuse what he sees to be evil" (p.55). He seems to be suggesting in the first two phrases that liberty implies not only power to act against the judgement of reason, but to power to reverse the judgement itself. This, Clarke argues, is a result of Collins' confused notion of action to include 'perception of ideas' and 'judgement of perceptions'; Clarke has agreed all along that these moments are necessitated in themselves, and volition has no possibility of effect on them.
4.7 Divine Prescience

In this brief section, Collins again hopes to demonstrate an inconsistency in his opponents' position, namely that liberty of will is inconsistent with divine prescience. His statement that inconsistency is all that he intends to prove by this particular argument (p.59) indicates that he is not committing himself to the doctrine of divine prescience in any way.

The argument is as follows: the doctrine of divine prescience presumes a fixed order of future events; God could not know, but only guess at events which are not certain, for certainty is a condition of knowledge. Any event which is certain depends on either God's decree or its own chain of causes (or both). Each option implies necessity: that an all-powerful being should decree something which does not then necessarily happen is a contradiction; and it is contradictory that a chain of sufficient causes should not necessarily produce its effect.

Clarke's response to this argument is to assert that Collins is confused in his language concerning divine prescience, and to expand on the distinctions introduced in *Being and Attributes* (see Section 2.6 above). Clarke distinguishes between three sorts of 'knowledge' which are ascribed to humans and can be differently extrapolated in applying to God:
(a) firm belief on the basis of unquestioned evidence, such as when someone who has never been to France 'knows' that there is such a place as Paris. Since this by definition implies finite presence, this sort of knowledge cannot apply to God.

(b) Knowledge of necessary truths (e.g. of mathematics), which is found in perfection in God.

(c) 'Right and good judging', as when someone 'knows' that another will act in a certain way in a given situation, a judgement based on the other's character. This form of 'knowledge', judging the effects of free causes, "is, in God, just as much more extensive and more infallible than in Man, as the Divine Nature and Understanding is superior to ours" (p.733). As argued in Being and Attributes, knowledge implies only truth, not necessary truth; it cannot therefore follow that God's 'right and good judging' makes necessary that which is based on free causes.

Clarke is, of course, assuming free causes as a premise. This is not question-begging, however, because Collins' argument is only that liberty and divine prescience cannot be made consistent; Clarke, on the contrary, thinks this possible. He claims that Collins would have to show that foreknowledge makes that which would otherwise have been free become necessary.
Clarke's argument, in sum, is that necessity would not follow from omniscience. However, Clarke's positive argument for omniscience, depending as it does on the somewhat strange notion of 'infinitely perfect judgement' which always foresees the action of every free cause, is of itself less than convincing.

4.8 From the Nature of Rewards and Punishments

For the penultimate section Collins returns to an earlier theme: "If man were not a necessary agent, determined by pleasure and pain, there would be no foundation for rewards and punishments, which are the essential supports of society" (p.60). The argument is that pleasure and pain either necessarily determine the will or are no causes of the determination of the will; if the latter, rewards and punishments would be useless, as they could provide no motive. He anticipates a potential objection - that people do in fact act against the motivating factor of punishment - by suggesting that these people implicitly judge the pleasure to be gained from illegal action to outweigh the risk of punishment, thus respecting his wider hedonism.

This argument recalls premise (P3) in the causal argument (Section 4.4, above): that every cause is a necessary cause. Since the hedonistic judgement is considered to be a cause of action, it must either be a necessary cause or it is no cause at all. Collins' proposition is a strong one: that rewards and
punishments can be justified only on the grounds of necessity; if free will is postulated, then punishment is unjustified. This is again to assume that hedonistic judgement is always the sufficient cause of volition, which has not been convincingly supported by Collins. Since Clarke has shown Collins' causal argument for necessity to be question-begging against a self-moving power in man, he need do no more here than argue that a mind possessing a self-moving power may have regard to reasons in choosing how to act; using the terminology from Being and Attributes (Section 2.5), the self-moving power would be the 'physical efficient', and pleasure and pain the 'moral motives'. This he does merely by suggesting that it is absurd to suppose the contrary.

4.9 From the Nature of Morality

Collins' last argument is very similar to the one above; so similar indeed that Clarke dismisses it in one sentence: "This Argument is merely to make up the Number, being the very same with the foregoing" (p.733). Though it is true that nothing new is added by Collins in this section, it provides still further evidence of his hedonism. He defines his moral concepts as follows:

Morality or Virtue, consists in such actions as are in their own nature, and upon the whole, pleasant; and immorality or vice, consists in such actions as are in their own nature, and upon the whole, painful... [A] man must be the more moral, the more he understands or is duly sensible, what actions give pleasure and what pain. (p.62)
This definition is accompanied by a reference to Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in which good and evil are similarly defined in terms of increasing or diminishing pleasure or pain (Book II, Chapter xx). It is notable that Collins’ definition seems to imply utilitarianism: presumably ‘upon the whole’ refers to the effect of an action upon all concerned, not simply the agent.

4.10 Collins’ conclusions

The six arguments discussed above are taken by Collins to have proved that man is a necessary agent. He then moves to address further hypothetical objections to this proposition and to demonstrate that the objections are not well-founded.

The first two objections are related to punishment, namely that it would be (a) unjust and (b) useless to punish offenders for their crimes if those crimes are necessitated. Collins’ argument in the first case is that the concept of free agency is not used in the justification of punishments, so the objection against necessity is at best an irrelevance. Punishment is used either to remove dangerous persons from society, as analogously are "furious madmen" and "men infected with the plague", and in this free agency is not offered as a justification; or it is used as deterrence, in which case "it is sufficient that they were voluntary agents, or had the will to do the crime for which they suffer" (p.64), for the will only is considered in making
judgements of guilt. Collins considers some categories of criminal agency - for example, what would now be termed as action under 'diminished responsibility' - as 'involuntary'; in this case punishment would not be justified by deterrence, though may be justified by need for public safety.

Collins has three answers to the second objection, that it would be useless to punish necessary agents. First, the threat of punishment enters the causal chain of judgements which determines the will, and actually punishing offenders makes the threat more real to others. Secondly, it would be useless to deter unless men were necessary agents, otherwise "if men were free, or indifferent to pleasure and pain, pain would be no motive to cause men to observe the law" (p.67). Thirdly, punishment of 'necessary agents' other than adult human beings is commonplace, in training dogs, horses, and children.

We have met the second and third of these points and contrary arguments earlier in this chapter. Clarke's complaint against the essence of Collins' arguments from punishment is that no matter what political advantages are to be gained from punishing 'necessary agents', there can be no personal justice. Clarke repeats his point from his fourth 'Dodwell' pamphlet, that justice in an absolute sense - paradigmatically God's justice - depends on free agency; if there is no free agency God could never inflict punishment, "because it must necessarily be
always unjust. And thus this Author's Opinion absolutely takes away all *Foundation of Religion*" (p.734). That he takes away 'all foundation' of certain forms of religion might not give Collins too much cause for concern: though he has addressed Clarke's challenge at the end of the 'Dodwell' debate to make necessity consistent with morality and the nature of rewards and punishments, he has done this in a way which does not depend on revealed religion.

There is a common theme also to the third and fifth hypothetical objections considered by Collins: that reasoning with, praising, or blaming a necessary agent could have no effect; and that if a person knows that he acts necessarily, then there is no basis for personal conscience. Collins' answer to the former is identical to one of the arguments against 'useless' punishment, namely that a free will could not be influenced in these ways. He notes also the tradition in classical literature of praising the actions of heroes whose actions are directed by the gods.

Collins' analysis of conscience is that it is "a man's own opinion of his actions with relation to some rule" (p.72). In acting against conscience, reluctance is not sufficient to prevent the action, but afterwards "by the absence of the pleasure of the sin, and by finding himself obnoxious to shame, or by believing himself liable to punishment, he may really
accuse himself...because of the consequences that attend it" (ibid). This appears to be a deliberately weak analysis of moral sense: the most that Collins is claiming is that to excuse one’s behaviour on the grounds of necessity would be disingenuous.

In answering the fourth and sixth hypothetical objections, Collins introduces something new to the discussion in this book: a suggestion of physical necessity. The objections are: that if events are necessary then the period of everyone’s life is fixed, and avoidance of harm or use of medicine are useless for they could change nothing; and that it would be as contradictory for apparently contingent events (e.g. the death of Julius Caesar in the Senate) not to happen, as it would be for two and two to make six.

On the first point, Collins says that "if the period of human life be fixed (as I contend it is) it cannot but happen at the time fixed" (p.71), and that the various acts of care or violence enter into the causal chain which fixes that period. The parenthetical statement ‘as I contend it is’ is revealing, for it suggests a stronger form of determinism than Collins has been advocating throughout the bulk of his argument. The main line of argument has been for a form of psychological determinism, that judgement in accordance with hedonism causes action. If here he means that the period of human life is fixed in the sense of being (in principle) predictable from knowledge
of physical causes, then he contradicts his own assertion in the Preface that "I deny man to be subject to such necessity as is in clocks, watches, and other such beings, which for want of sensation and intelligence, are subject to an absolute, physical, or mechanical necessity" (p.xviii). If, on the other hand, he means only that given the judgements that were made and causes that applied in the course of a life, the period could not have been different, then to say that the period is fixed is to say nothing. This is the import of his example of Caesar:

[W]hoever does conceive [Caesar's] death possible anywhere else, supposes other circumstances preceding his death than did precede his death. Whereas, let them suppose all the same circumstances to come to pass that did precede his death; and then it will be impossible to conceive (if they think justly) his death could have come to pass anywhere else, as they conceive it impossible for two and two to make six. (p.73)

4.11 Clarke's conclusions

Clarke declines to address these latter arguments ("...because answering Objections of his own raising...is nothing to the purpose" (p.734)) and instead sums up his own case: either man has or has not a self-moving faculty. If he has, then he is a free agent. If not, then every motion must be extrinsically caused, either by (a) motive or reason, or (b) some insensible matter or other substance or being. If the cause is motive or reason, then either motive must have substance or that which is insubstantial can put a body into motion - both of which he takes to be absurd. If the cause is insensible
substance, then the motion of that substance must be caused by another, and so on, leading to a regress which must either be infinite or end in a free cause. If infinite, then there is the contradiction of effects without cause and motion without a mover, or the contradiction of motion necessary in itself. If the regress ends in a free cause, on the other hand, "then Liberty is a possible thing: And then Man possibly may have Liberty: And if he may possibly have it, then Experience will prove that he probably, nay, certainly has it" (ibid).

Finally Clarke summarizes his moral argument. Necessity implies that "there is nothing intrinsically good or evil, there is nothing personally just or unjust...Religion there can be none, without a moral Difference of Things: A moral Difference of Things there cannot be, where there is no Place for Action: And Action there can be none, without Liberty" (p.735). He closes with some ad hominem comments against Collins: "Too great an Assurance in Arguments of this Nature,...Rejoicing in the Strength of them, and taking Pleasure in the carrying of such a Cause; is what a Good Mind can never be capable of" (ibid).

4.12 Analysis of Clarke's book

Collins was most unimpressed with Clarke’s book. In letters to Desmaizeaux he wrote:

You make a right judgement of Dr Cs book. It is very peevish and haughty; and full of misrepresentations from one end to the other; and trifling about matters
that tend not to clear the truth... (5 May 1717)\textsuperscript{8}

What he says in the close of his Remarks shows that he will act the bigot to serve his purposes... (17 June 1718)\textsuperscript{9}

While it seems that Collins had drafted a response to Clarke by 1720, it was never published and the manuscript was lost after Collins' death; the controversy rests here, therefore. What are we to make of it?

Clarke's negative arguments against Collins - i.e. those which aim to show that Collins has not proved his case against free will - are sound, for, as seen above, Collins' causal argument against free will is question-begging, and his argument for the hedonistic principle - on which much of his subsequent case rests - is not well supported. On the other hand, Clarke's positive arguments for free will are not convincing either: his argument that Collins' system can't work is based on questionable principles of causation, and his final conclusion is rather weak: that liberty in man is 'possible', which possibility is made 'certain' by experience. This is the strongest conclusion that Clarke can reach on the basis of his arguments, but it falls foul of Collins' better arguments against knowledge of liberty from experience, which at their weakest show that experience can tell us nothing one way or the

\textsuperscript{8} British Library, Add. MSS. 4282/129-30

\textsuperscript{9} British Library, Add. MSS. 4282/149-50

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other about liberty.

What Clarke is clearly lacking is a theory of how the self-moving power he postulates is supposed to operate. Collins was aware of this shortcoming, as is shown by this further extract of his letter of 5 May 1717 to Desmaizeaux:

Your advice in relation to Authors who have maintain'd the soul to have in it a principle of action &c, is very just. I had been searching before upon that head; but what I have found and the use I shall make of it, I reserve for our conversation together. I will only observe to you, that the Action, according to Dr C, is ever concomitant with, & consequent to the will; and that there must be a determination of the motive Power in Man to the action or motion, otherwise the motive power by being equally disposed to all actions or motions can begin none, and is like a body at rest incapable of beginning a particular motion. (op. cit.)

If Clarke were to make his argument persuasive, he would need to provide a theory of agency, and this he clearly fails to do.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE PRICE–PRIESTLEY CONTROVERSY

5.1 Price’s Review of Morals

Richard Price first published A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals in 1758; subsequent editions appeared in 1769 and 1787 (the latter omitting the words ‘and Difficulties’ from the title). His discussion of free will contained within the book is therefore found within the broader context of ethics. The discussion was criticized by Joseph Priestley in his 1777 publication, The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated - an appendix to his principle work, Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit.¹

Price’s libertarianism follows upon his theory of virtue. He identifies two categories of virtue under which an action may be characterized: ‘abstract virtue’, the moral status of the action considered in itself, independent of the particularities of the agent; and ‘practical virtue’, which is related to the agent’s motivations and beliefs. An action may have a different moral status according to which category is under consideration:

¹ The edition of Price’s work available for the preparation of this study was a reproduction of the Third Edition: D. Daiches Raphael (ed.), Price’s Review of Morals, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948. Given the dates of publication of the various works, Priestley must have been responding to either the First or more probably the Second Edition. However comparison of Priestley’s quotations and Price’s later version suggests that any alteration in the relevant sections between the edition used by Priestley and Third Edition was minor.
Price's example is of a magistrate deciding a case erroneously, but nevertheless conscientiously and consistent with the best evidence available to him at the time: his action is right from the 'practical' point of view, though wrong in 'abstract'.


The liberty I here mean is the same with the power of acting and determining... As far as it is true of a being that he acts, so far he must himself be the cause of the action, and therefore not necessarily determined to act. (ibid.)

Price's case is that the agent is the 'efficient cause' of his actions, and his argument is an appeal to a sense of absurdity that the cause or 'determiner' can be anything other than the self, e.g. the motive. This 'sense' is given emphasis in the text:

In short; who must not feel the absurdity of saying my volitions are produced by a foreign cause, that is, are not mine; I determine voluntarily, and yet necessarily? (p.182)

There is also an appeal to ordinary language, as Price notes two uses of the term 'action': to mean the intention or volition, and the actual event or effect of that volition. These two would always coincide for an omniscient, omnipresent being, but not always for finite beings. It is the volition or determination that decides practical virtue: "Our own determinations alone
are, most properly, our actions. These alone we have absolute
power over, and are responsible for" (p.185).

The corollary is that to act virtuously requires a virtuous
intention. Price has an internalist concept of motivation,
believing it to be "extremely evident" that motivation is
inseparable from the apprehension of moral right and wrong
(p.186). He is led to a Kantian notion of moral action: "To act
virtuously is to obey or follow reason" (p.189);

*instinctive* benevolence is no principle of virtue, nor
are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As
far as this influences, so far something else than
reason and goodness influences, and so much I think is
to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or
character. (p.191)

Price has a discussion of 'moral necessity' as "the
necessity which is said to diminish the merit of good actions"
(p.210). He echoes Clarke in his disjunctive definition of
'moral necessity' as that which

arises from the influence of motives and affections on
the mind; or that certainty of determining one way,
which may take place upon the supposition of certain
views, circumstances, and principles of an agent.
(ibid.)

The two parts of the definition appear to have different
references: the latter is a certainty of judgement on the part
of the observer that the observed agent will act in a particular
manner; the former seems to imply causality in the agent. This
causality is denied by Price, however. He speaks not of cause,
but the influence of conscience or, conversely, abandonment and moral impotence. A workable concept of liberty must be consistent with the most predictable behaviour or "steadiness of character and conduct":

The greatest influence of motives that can rationally be conceived, or which it is possible for any one to maintain, without running into the palpable and intolerable absurdity of making these physical efficiencies and agents, can in no way affect liberty. (p.211)

He differentiates between motives as causes of action, and motives as "the occasions of our putting ourselves into motion"; a person may follow his judgement, but "the motives can have no concern in effecting his determination" (p.183n). Price appeals again to what he believes to be common sense:

[Whatever to the contrary persons may say, it is impossible for them in earnest to think they have no active, self-moving powers, and are not the cause of their own volitions, or not to ascribe to themselves, what they must be conscious that they think and do. (p.182)

Each of these points we have met in Clarke, in his Being and Attributes, or in his Remarks on Collins. We do not see here, however, the same level of quotation or paraphrasing that we saw in relating Collins to Locke, for example. Though Price does retain much of Clarke's terminology, he adapts Clarke's concepts into his own framework of ethical theory, from the original context of a wider rationalist theology. There are also great differences in style between the two writers, from
Clarke's rather stilted and arrogant language to Price's clearer prose with much better use of emphasis to clarify the arguments.

This in summary, therefore, is Price's position: a free will, a power of action or a self-moving power within the mind, is: (a) a necessary condition of practical (as opposed to abstract) moral responsibility; (b) the 'efficient cause' of action, which (c) is occasioned by motives. Finally, (d) alternative schemes of necessity are palpably absurd.

As Collins opposed Clarke's formulation of these points, so Priestley attacked Price in sections V and VI of The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated. Before considering Priestley's arguments in relation to Price, however, we must place them in the context of the book - specifically Priestley's arguments from causation and their relation to Hume.

5.2 Priestley's The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity

Whereas Price presents his libertarianism in relation to his moral theory, Priestley's necessitarianism is presented in relation to materialism: "every thing belonging to the doctrine of materialism is, in fact, an argument for the doctrine of necessity" (Priestley², pp.xixf). Priestley acknowledges in the Preface to his debt to Collins, whose Philosophical Inquiry


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first converted him to necessitarianism.

This treatise is concise and methodical, and is, in my opinion, sufficient to give intire satisfaction to every unprejudiced person. I wish this small tract was reprinted, and more generally known and read. It will, however, remain, and do the greatest honour to the author's memory, when all the quibbling answers to it shall be forgotten. (p.xxx)

Priestley claims that as a youth he had maintained the doctrine of liberty in a correspondence, though he had denied his correspondent's request for permission to publish the material.

Priestley's arguments are divided into twelve sections, which can be considered under four themes:-
(a) Sections I-III: Causal arguments
   - the 'State of the Question', causation, divine prescience
(b) Sections IV-V: Psychological arguments
   - the nature of will and 'consciousness of liberty'
(c) Sections VI-IX: Moral arguments
   - liberty as a moral condition and the effect of necessity
(d) Sections X-XII: Doctrinal Arguments
   - God as author of sin, scripture, Calvinist predestination

³ Recall that Priestley himself reprinted Collins' book in 1790.

⁴ In this volume the correspondent is unnamed, though in his Memoirs Priestley identifies him as Peter Annet. Annet was the inventor of a form of shorthand, and Priestley, still at grammar school, wrote to him initially to propose some improvements; the correspondence widened to include philosophical issues. (See Jack Lindsey (ed.), The Autobiography of Joseph Priestley, pp.70f.)
I do not intend to address the doctrinal arguments at all, and will discuss divine prescience only in passing.

Following Collins, Priestley allows liberty if interpreted as the power to do as one wills, but denies that the will is itself at liberty to choose: he is to argue for "some fixed law of nature respecting the will...so that every volition, or choice, is constantly regulated, and determined, by what precedes it" (pp.7f). This he will seek to prove by considering cause and effect.

5.3 Causation and the Influence of Hume

Priestley's chapter on cause and effect is more extensive than that of Collins, and shows the first significant variation of argument. Collins' argument was an adaptation of Hobbes; Priestley's argument contains echoes of Hume's analysis of necessity:

[A] cause cannot be defined to be any thing but such previous circumstances as are constantly followed by a certain effect; the constancy of the result making us to conclude that there must be a sufficient reason in the nature of things why it should be produced in those circumstances. (p.11)

Hume's argument on liberty and necessity derives from his radical re-working of cause and effect, which relates necessity to the observed constant conjunction of phenomena. This is emphasized in the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding by the order of the arguments in the book: 'Of Liberty and Necessity'
immediately follows the section on cause and effect, itself entitled ‘Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion’. Priestley was familiar with this work: he makes two direct quotations from the Enquiry (though has the title as Philosophical Essays) during the course of his book, in relation to rewards and punishments and God as the author of sin (pp.90-1,118-9; cf EHU76,78). Hume’s argument is summarized early in Section VIII: knowledge of ‘real existences’ is obtainable only through memory and the senses, therefore

Our idea...of necessity and causation arises entirely from the uniformity observable in the operations of nature, where similar objects are constantly conjoined, and the mind is determined by custom to infer the one from the appearance of the other. These two circumstances form the whole of that necessity, which we ascribe to matter. Beyond the constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference from one to the other, we have no notion of any necessity or connexion. (EHU64)

Since we happily ascribe necessity to the relations of matter in this way, so "whatever is in this respect on the same footing with matter, must be acknowledg’d to be necessary" (T400). What is therefore required, according to Hume, is an examination of mental phenomena in order to discover what may concur with this notion of necessity. The study of history, for example, reveals

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5 I follow the convention of making reference to the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding by the initials EHU followed by the paragraph number, and to the Treatise by the initial T followed by the page number, in the Selby-Bigge/Nidditch editions (OUP: Enquiries, 1975; Treatise, 1978)
"the constant and universal principles of human nature". We are so confident of these principles that

Should a traveller, returning from a far country, bring us an account of men...who were entirely divested of avarice, ambition, or revenge; who knew no pleasure but friendship, generosity, and public spirit; we should immediately from these circumstances, detect the falsehood, and prove him a liar...⁶ (EHU65)

Through everyday encounters we learn to infer people's "inclinations and motives, from their actions, expressions, and even gestures", and to predict their actions from assessment of their characters. Hume's analysis allows for variations - even significant variations - in the observed regularity, and therefore for the apparently capricious nature of human action:

Below [constant and invariable conjunction] there are many inferior degrees of evidence and probability, nor does one single contrariety of experiment entirely destroy all our reasoning. The mind ballances the contrary experiments, and deducting the inferior from the superior, proceeds with that degree of assurance or evidence which remains... [S]upposing that the...contrariety proceeds from the operation of contrary and concealed causes, we conclude, that the chance or indifference lies only in our judgement on account of our imperfect knowledge, not in the things themselves, which are in every case equally necessary, tho' the appearance not equally constant or certain. (T403f)

There is just a hint of the traditional treatment of cause here, but Hume seems to be implying the constant conjunction is so regularly observed, that where it is not observed we may infer

⁶ ...or conclude that he had been to Canada.
that this is a fault of our perception, not its absence. In both the Treatise and the Enquiry Hume offers multiple hypothetical situations to demonstrate this 'necessity' of relation of "motives, inclinations, and circumstances" to actions, and concludes that by 'liberty' "we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determination of the will" (EHU73), the same weak concept supported by Hobbes, Locke and Collins.

Priestley likewise infers necessity from constant conjunction, and also that these maxims are universal: if there are laws of nature ordering the mind (and the implication is that there is evidence for such laws), then no particular determination of the mind could have been otherwise than it was, without postulating either a change in circumstances or an effect without a cause; "The application of the term voluntary to mental determinations cannot possibly make the least difference in this case" (p.14).

The similarity of Priestley and Hume in this section is not surprising: Priestley tells his readers in the Preface that "They will also find some things very well written on [liberty and necessity] by Mr. Hume" amongst others (p.xxi). Though this re-casting of cause and effect is a departure from the a priori arguments in Collins, Priestley does bring in one of Collins' arguments on causation, namely that if one uncaused event is
postulated, then all events may be uncaused, "which entirely takes away the only argument for the being of a God" (p.15). I have previously commented on the oddity of this argument (see section 4.4). In Priestley's case, however, there is little reason to suppose anything but sincerity in relation to theistic argument: his commitment to Christianity appears to be firm, if unorthodox.

Thus Priestley combines an empirical explanation of our knowledge of cause and effect with a theistic a priori argument to support a principle of universal causation. The result is that actions may be both voluntary and necessitated: in making a choice, a person "follows the laws of his own nature" (p.17). Priestley derides those who distinguish between the observed certainty of the influence of motives and the necessity associated with physical causes:

[T]his is a distinction merely verbal. For the only reason that we can have to believe in any cause, and that it acts necessarily, is that it acts certainly, or invariably. (p.18)

'Any cause' here must be taken to mean 'any particular cause': if the a priori argument has established that there must be a cause for every event, observation of certainty establishes what cause applies to what effect. Some form of psychological investigation is therefore required to establish the nature of causation of the will; this Priestley offers in Section IV: "Of the cause of Volition, and the nature of will", and V: "Of the
supposed Consciousness of liberty, and the use of the term Agent".

5.4 The Causes of Volition

Collins' discussion of the nature of the cause of volition was brief, being effectively a poorly-supported statement of the 'truth' of psychological hedonism. Priestley's argument is more extensive, though his analysis leads to a similar conclusion: that volition is akin to judgement or association of ideas, and is subsequent to desire.

Priestley begins by noting that in a proper investigation, the philosopher considers appearances and accounts for them by no more causes than necessary - as gravity is used consistently to account for both falling objects and the motion of the planets, so the same approach should be used to consider the rule and causes of volition. Two circumstances, says Priestley, are evidently concerned in choice: predisposition towards given objects, and the current view of the objects to which the choice relates. Priestley gives an example: given a choice between an apple and a peach, if I have a predilection for apples and a dislike for peaches, then I will always choose the apple. This, he claims, is as necessary as any other cause and effect situation.

As a philosopher, therefore, I ought to acquiesce in this, and consider motives as the proper causes of volitions and actions. And the more I examine my own
action, or those of others, the more reason I see to be satisfied that all volitions and actions are preceded by corresponding motives. (p.28)

The paradigm case is that of 'regular deliberation' in which each motive is weighed in the mind, and a judgement is made according to the strongest or best motive; from habit the process may be abbreviated, as when a geometrical proposition is accepted due to us remembering that we once saw a proof.

Besides, since every deliberate choice is regulated by motives, we ought, as philosophers, to take it for granted that every choice is made in the same manner, and is subject to the same rules, and therefore determined by motives... (p.29)

The reason Priestley gives for this move is that whether a choice is made with or without deliberation, it is still a choice; a deliberated choice allows us better to reflect on the process by which choices are made, but there is no reason to suppose that the mechanism differs from case to case. Further evidence cited is that "opposite motives, as causes of love and hatred, are known to balance one another, exactly like weights in opposite scales" (p.30).

Priestley challenges what he sees as an inconsistency, or at least an instance of implausibility, in libertarianism: it cannot be denied that motives have "some real influence upon the mind" (p.31) without contradicting experience; how then can it reasonably be claimed that the nature of the will allows for action upon it both by motives and by something bearing no
relation to motive? (This is not strictly the libertarian’s case, which is that the will may act independently of being acted upon.) Each other faculty operates uniformly in a given mode (the passions under stimulus, the memory by retention of impressions, the judgement by comparison ideas), but the will is supposed to be sometimes influenced, sometimes self-determined. Self-determination, says Priestley, is merely a term with no proper conception of how it operates. He further contends that will is analogous to judgement (which was Collins’ position): the former relates to action and the latter to opinion or fact, but otherwise they are the same; a self-determining will would therefore suggest a self-determining judgement, which is absurd in its uselessness.

This leads Priestley to a more general point, adopted from Hartley, namely that the will, as with all other faculties of the mind, is "a particular case of the general property of association of ideas, which is necessarily of a mechanical nature" (pp.34f). His argument for this is as follows. The mind is indifferent to all objects until they become associated with pleasure or pain, when they become either pleasing or displeasing, i.e. objects of love or hate. It is universally admitted, claims Priestley, that "the view of a favourite object, of an apple to a child, for instance, is immediately followed by an attempt to seize it" (p.37), and this constant conjunction of circumstances is sufficient to establish
necessity. It is also sufficient to account for the passions: constant frustration of attempts to seize the favourite object will lead to 'despair'; more moderate states of expectation are variously 'hope' or 'fear':

To this state of mind, viz. within the extreme limits of hope and fear, we apply the term desire; and it is in this state, which is of some continuance, that we distinctly perceive that affection of the mind to which we give the name of wishing, or willing. (p.39f)

'Volition' is, for Priestley, a special case: not the result of a simple desire but the resolution of "suspense between desiring and not desiring an object" (p.40). Thus a 'proper volition', the result of deliberation, "is not less mechanical, and dependent upon ideas, and on the state of mind, than the others."

To summarize, then, Priestley's argument from causation: (a) everything must have a cause, else God's existence cannot be proved (from Collins). (b) Particular causes are discovered by observation of constant conjunction, which is all that is required to establish knowledge of necessity (from Hume). (c) Motives are commonly discoverable for given choices; by extrapolation, every choice is made in accordance with the strongest motive or desire. (d) 'Self-determined will' is an empty term without a proper concept. (e) Motive or desire is grounded in the association of ideas of objects with ideas of pleasure and pain.
This completes the background to Priestley’s first explicit criticism of Price, namely the arguments on the ‘supposed consciousness of liberty and the use of the term Agent’. Once we have examined this next section, we shall be in a position to consider the continuation of the debate through the relevant correspondence between Priestley and Price, and the relative strength of the various causal/psychological arguments.

5.5 The Agent’s Consciousness of Liberty

In Section V Priestley sets out to undermine Price’s arguments that it is impossible earnestly to consider oneself to have no active self-moving powers, and that there can be no physical connection between judgement and actions: motives cannot be agents, but may be "the occasions of our putting ourselves into motion" (Priestley, quoting Price, p.45). Priestley in his gentlemanly manner acknowledges the clarity of Price’s argument, but considers it to be fallacious through ambiguity of terms.

I do not think that this objection to the doctrine of necessity can be expressed in a stronger or better manner, and I have purposely made this [lengthy] quotation, in order to meet the difficulty in its greatest force; being confident, that, when the ideas are attended to, it will appear that the writer is, in fact, a necessarian. (p.46)

When a person is in the position of making a choice, Priestley argues, all that he can be conscious of is choosing without constraint (or declining to make a choice) according to his preference. There is, however, always a reason for the
choice - a reason, as previously argued, grounded in the person's predispositions and present view of the relevant objects. Similarly, this is all we can observe with respect to other's choices. We may speculate about the motive, but will always assume a dominant motive to be present.

Priestley continues from this basis to argue that there is no more than a verbal distinction between ascribing the causal agency or determining power to the motive and ascribing it to the mind: whichever mode of ascription is used, it is still the presence of a motive in a mind which brings about the cause of action. His case is that the agency he has described is sufficient to account for human volition and action, and to establish "every just rule of life, respecting the regulation of the will and the conduct", which would have "no propriety or use at all on any other hypothesis" (p.51).

From this position, Priestley counters Price's challenge that to consider motives as the causes of action is absurd. Priestley's response is on the basis of common language: the very language which Price has claimed to be absurd ("our inclinations act upon us and compel us" - *ibid.*), Priestley suggests to be in actuality the common description of conduct, "and therefore must have a foundation in the common apprehension of mankind" (p.52). Priestley believes Price's distinction between the motive being the cause of action and being the
occasion by which the self causes action, also to be merely verbal: if Price is admitting a certainty of relation between motive and action, then he is consistent with Priestley's definition of necessity.

Priestley's alternative to Price's concept of agency is that - given the dual cause of volition, namely the predisposition of mind and the present view of the objects of choice -

it is the latter that is generally, and in a more especial sense, called the motive, and compared to the impeller (to use Dr. Price's language) while the inclination, or disposition, of the mind, is only considered as a circumstance which gives the motive an opportunity of acting upon it, or impelling it, and producing its proper effect. In this I appeal, as before, to the common sense of mankind. (p.53)

The issue between Price and Priestley in relation to the causal argument is now established. For Price, the cause of an action has to be something of which it is conceivable that it could be the 'efficient cause' of motion; this cannot be the motive, which has no 'being', but must be the self. Implicitly the self can override the motive, and is therefore free. For Priestley, this claim regarding 'efficient cause' is mistaken: the cause is the presence of a motive in the mind. Empirically, choice always follows motive; the motive is therefore the cause and the self is the agent by which the motive causes action.

The issue is therefore very similar to that between Clarke
and Collins. Price's position is, as noted, an interpretation of Clarke. Priestley has arrived at Collins' 'necessary agent', though by a slightly different route: whereas Collins' argument from causation was \textit{a priori} with an assumption of the truth of psychological hedonism, Priestley's argument is a combination of one of Collins' \textit{a priori} arguments and a Humean analysis of causation. Priestley, therefore, offers a more sophisticated development of Collins.

5.6 Further Debate on Causation

Price and Priestley continued their debate in a correspondence, published by Priestley in 1778. The correspondence was edited into sections, so that each self-contained argument from Price is followed immediately by Priestley's response. This makes for a much more readable correspondence than the 'Dodwell' controversy between Clarke and Collins, as published in Clarke's Works. There are, of course, two major differences between the two controversies: the Clarke-Collins controversy was conducted by the publication of pamphlets, and so each work was intended for immediate publication; the Price-Priestley correspondence, on the other hand, was prepared by exchange of letters between the disputants, but (with the exception of Price's first communication) always intended for publication in book form when the correspondence was complete. The Clarke-Collins debate was therefore immediate and public throughout its conduct; the
Price-Priestley debate was more contrived and public only at its completion. This no doubt also accounts for the caustic conduct of the debate between Clarke and Collins (especially on Clarke's side), and the much more gentlemanly nature of the Price-Priestly correspondence. Any consideration of politeness, however, did not prevent Priestley, as editor, from always giving himself the last word on each topic.

Price's substantive reply to Priestley's criticisms above comes in his second communication. He proceeds largely by clarifying his position, and further indebting himself to Clarke. He begins by asserting that all animals, being self-moving, have liberty (as Clarke asserted in his Remarks on Collins; see section 4.3), and that there are no degrees of liberty: "there is no medium between acting, and not acting", and "Acting, and being acted upon, are incompatible with one another" (D.P.M.N.\textsuperscript{7}, pp.135f). Further, there cannot be an infinite regress of causes of motion: there must at some point be a first cause.

Price's second argument is that self-determination is consistent with acting in accordance with motives: it is still liberty. He claims that Priestley's assertion that self-determination implies an effect without a cause is unjustified:

\footnote{7 Joseph Priestley (ed.), \textit{A Free Discussion of the Doctrines of Materialism and Philosophical Necessity}, London: J. Johnson, 1778}
"Does it follow that because I am myself the cause, there is no cause?" (p.136).

Price agrees that the power to act "can never be exerted without some view or design. Whoever acts, means to do something" (p.137). The difference between his libertarianism and determinism is "the intolerable absurdity of making our reasons and ends in acting the physical causes or efficient causes of action". He emphasizes the distinction "much insisted upon by Dr. Clarke" between the "operation of physical causes, and the influence of moral reasons": physical causes are beings, moral causes are "only the views of beings"; in the former case the agency rests with another (the purveyor of motives, whether God or - to borrow Sartre's term - 'The Other'), in the latter the agent moves himself. So far there is no argument to support the claim.

5.7 The 'Balance' Analogy

Price's third and fourth points form the closest we get to moving the dispute on to common ground:

The certainty of event arising from the operation of physical causes is always equal and invariable, but the certainty of event arising from moral causes, that is, from the views and perceptions of beings, admits of an infinite variety of degrees; and sometimes passes into probability and contingency. (p.140)

The degrees of probability arise when a person is faced with contrary motives, for example a person with a love of virtue being offered the temptation of vice: "If his love of virtue
exceeds the influence of passion, there will be a probability of his acting virtuously, portioned to the degree in which the love of virtue prevails within him" (p.140f); even where there is the highest degree of motivation, leading to certainty that the person will act in a given way, it is always in his power to act differently:

A man at the bottom of St. Paul's will not jump up: A man at the top will not jump down. Both events may be certain. But a man at the bottom cannot jump up: A man at the top can jump down. And if in common speech we should say in the latter case, that a man at the top cannot jump down, we should speak figuratively and improperly; meaning only that he will not. (p.142)

It is not until his 'Additional Observations', composed after the printing of the main correspondence, that Price corrects a tendency to rest his argument solely on the physical efficiency of the cause, and not on the choice itself. In choosing an action we have a choice of ends, a choice made under the influence of motives. Priestley's argument is that a dominant motive is usually recognizable, and when not recognizable we still have reason to believe that there must be one undiscerned. Further, we have reason to believe that

8 This brings to mind Sartre's characterization of vertigo in *Being and Nothingness*, namely the realization when standing at the edge of a precipice that there is *nothing* to stop one freely choosing to throw oneself over.

9 From Price's letter of 19 September 1778 (pp.321ff), it appears that, on seeing the printed proofs of the correspondence, Price reviewed his work and wrote 'Additional Observations' which he considered to include new and enlightening material. Priestley wrote further ' Replies', and each were included in the final publication.
contrary motives "balance one another, exactly like weights in opposite scales" (see Section 5.4 above).

We have reason to believe these propositions, but are those reasons convincing? Priestley's *a posteriori* argument is open to challenge. It is conceivable that a particular choice could be made against all discernable motivation; *a priori* this is possible: it is common ground that there must be a cause of a given choice; the dispute is what constitutes the cause. If this choice is made, Priestley's argument would have to be that there must have been some overriding motive of which we were unaware. This, however, is question-begging: it rules out the logical possibility of counter-example, which renders the investigation meaningless. Further, there is no evidence given to support the contention that contrary motives balance "exactly as weights in opposite scales", which assertion does not appear to be self-evident (except on another question-begging assumption), though Priestley claims it to be "known". If his argument that the motive is invariably the cause is undermined, then the possibility of a freely willing mind returns: a mind that can select its own ends, independently of the force of the motives.

This analogy of the balance is discussed in Price's 'Additional Observations' and in Priestley's 'Replies'. Price indeed makes reference to the fourth and fifth papers exchanged in the Clarke-Leibniz correspondence, in which the same analogy
was a point of dispute; Clarke there argued that a balance is no agent but is only acted upon, and so cannot be a proper analogy for the mind (Alexander, pp.36, 45, 55ff, 97ff; cf D.P.M.N., pp.350f). Price's contention is that it is possible to conceive of a situation in which a person is presented with equal and opposite motivations, for example temptation by an attractive proposition which is morally wrong: he has contrary and balanced motives of gratification and duty. Price's case is that we possess "a power to make either of the motives the strongest; that is, to make either of them the motive that shall prevail, and on which we shall please to determine" (p.347).

This move from the principle of action to consideration of the choice itself is an improvement to Price's argument. He claims further that "we are continually finding ourselves in these circumstances" of equal and opposite motive. Priestley's response is to suggest that this claim is simplistic. Motives depend for their force on the receptive state of mind of the agent at the time the choice is to be made, and this state is in constant fluctuation. Analysis of the causes of thought is therefore impossible in most cases, and we must respect the complicated nature of our psychology:

If it were possible to make a balance which would support a thousand pounds weight, and yet turn with one thousandth part of a grain, would it be any wonder that a person should not be able easily to bring it to equipoise? But what is even this to the exquisite structure of the mind? (p.385)
This is certainly an improvement on the mere assertion of the analogy by Priestley in the main correspondence, but it doesn't remove the objection that the claim that there is always a dominant motive which decides choice is question-begging.

5.8 Conclusions on Causation

The discussion of the 'balance' analogy is something of an aside to Price's main line of argument, which is to offer an alternative causal scheme and to suggest that his is the more plausible. His tactic is to claim that even if Priestley's analysis of motivation always deciding choice is allowed, it does not give a plausible account of the mechanism. Price's analysis (following Clarke) emphasizes metaphysical concepts: it has to be plausible that the postulated cause is capable of being an efficient cause, and therefore must be a 'being'. Priestley's analysis (following Hume) emphasizes epistemological concepts: we can reasonably consider only that which can be known about causation, namely observation of constant conjunction; metaphysical claims regarding what may or may not constitute an 'efficient cause' are empty.

This divergence underlies Priestley's response to Price's question quoted above: "Does it follow that because I am myself the cause, there is no cause?" Priestley responds that if it is perceived that the will invariably acts according to motives, then we must conclude that it could not be otherwise. The entire

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effect is therefore accounted for by the motives, and there is no need to postulate another cause. "A power manifested by no effects, must be considered as merely imaginary, it being from effects alone that we arrive at the knowledge of causes" (p.147). He agrees that there can be no motion without a self-moving first cause, but that nothing more can be said; specifically nothing can be said about whether that power is in God or communicable to man, as Clarke claimed in Being and Attributes. "Though the idea be ever so incomprehensible, and confounding to our faculties, we must acquiesce in it; for to stop short of this, or to go beyond it, is impossible."

The correspondence proceeds little further in relation to causation, and what there is is generally repetitive. It is worth mentioning briefly the question of divine prescience, however, for a point of comparison with Clarke-Collins. Priestley had given a brief discussion in Section III of his book, which adds nothing to Collins beyond some argument from scripture. Price, however, declines to repeat Clarke’s argument (that God has infinitely perfect judgement, which doesn’t necessitate that which is free) or indeed to offer any argument at all:

The fore-knowledge of a contingent event carrying the appearance of a contradiction, is indeed a difficulty; and I do not pretend to be capable of removing it. (pp.175f)

Clearly Price was not impressed with Clarke’s argument. Whether
Price believed in divine prescience but couldn’t justify that belief by reason alone, or whether he is implying that his belief in liberty entails disbelief in that particular doctrine (an admirable position), it is not possible to say on this evidence.

5.9 Moral Arguments

Our consideration of the moral arguments may be brief. First, for the most part they follow, in a similar manner to Clarke-Collins, on the causal arguments, and second, the majority of the discussion leads into the doctrinal issues of whether God can be considered the author of sin, which issues are not pertinent to this thesis.10

It is worth noting, however, that as Priestley follows Hume’s conception of causation, so he is influenced by his approach to moral sentiment. Price’s view of morality, it will be recalled, is based on assessment of particulars: what choice was made by a particular agent with particular motives leading to a particular action; this is what he termed ‘practical virtue’, which depended on liberty. Priestley, on the other hand, favours Hume’s account of moral assessment. As a rule, we

10 The issues of whether God can be considered the author of sin is mentioned in passing by Collins in his survey of the literature at the start of his Philosophical Inquiry, with a quote from Bayle: "That the best proofs alleged for liberty are, that without it man could not sin; and that God would be the author of evil, as well as good thoughts" (Collins, p.19). Collins does not address the point in his own consideration of morality, however.
trust our ability to make moral assessments regarding a person’s character. Such assessment is dependent on consistency of motives: if there is no necessity of conduct, no causal influence of motive on will, then we could never be justified in assessing character:

A good action produced [by a self-determining power, independent of motive] is no indication of a good disposition of mind, inclined to yield to the influence of good impressions, and therefore is nothing on which I can depend for the future. (Priestley, p.82)

Moral sentiments, Priestley argues, refer to states of mind, not acts of self-motive will, and this is useful for moral development. Someone who is ashamed of a past action may think that he could have acted differently, but if he understood that a vicious action followed unavoidably from "the deplorable state of his mind," then this would "operate so as to make him act better, and become better disposed for the future" (p.88).

Priestley also rejects Price’s rationalist moralism, that to act virtuously is to follow reason not character (Section 5.1). For Priestley it is irrelevant whether the motive to act a given way is instinctive or acquired: "does a course of virtue become less virtuous, in consequence of being persisted in, and consequently being a more easy and mechanical thing?" (p.69).
The Price-Priestley correspondence is a close development of the Clarke-Collins debate. Although I have concentrated on the issues of liberty and necessity, each debate is within the context of disputes on whether there is an immaterial, thinking soul or spirit (held by Clarke and Price), or whether thinking is a property of matter (held as possible by Collins, and as certain by Priestley). Neither Collins' nor Priestley's arguments, however, are dependent on this form of materialism being true, for the argument for necessity is independent of the mechanism by which the action of motives in the mind is brought about.

The debates hinge on the issue of causation, specifically the different concepts of causation and action adopted by the four writers. Clarke has a strong a priori concept of causation - whatever begins, has a cause - and a strong concept of agency: to act, to begin motion, is to be free. Collins shares Clarke's strong concept of causation, but has a weak concept of agency: to act is merely to bring something about, perhaps to transfer motion or energy. For Clarke, the causal chain must end with the self-moving power in man, if man is to be an agent. For Collins, agency is compatible with being necessitated by causes, and the hedonism adapted from Locke seems to fit the bill.
Clarke gets the better of the causal arguments, as he successfully shows that Collins begs the question against a self-moving power in man. It is also the case that Collins' positive arguments for hedonistic causes of choice are not well-supported. However Clarke can only show a priori that a self-moving power in man is possible, not certain. In his argument Clarke very cleverly avoids the question of a definition of 'will': he says that exercising the self-moving power is what is known as 'doing as we will', but that is as far as he goes. In particular, the relation of judgement, volition and action is left deliberately vague (Section 2.5). This allows Clarke to present an argument strong on the question of what it is to act, to begin motion, but it has the drawback of leaving his analysis weak on the question of what it is to choose.

The secondary arguments in Collins' Philosophical Inquiry provide evidence - and I think good evidence - that he wrote the book primarily against Clarke. The argument from experience, discussed at length by Collins, is central to Clarke's own argument for libertarianism in Being and Attributes. Clarke also discusses divine prescience and 'liberty as a perfection' in that work, and Collins considers these same issues in his book. Finally he addresses the nature of rewards and punishments and the nature of morality in response to Clarke's direct challenge to him in the last 'Dodwell' pamphlet, though not in the religious terms that Clarke sought.
It is Priestley who moves the pivot of the debate by following Hume’s re-working of the analysis of cause and effect, from a metaphysical analysis to an epistemological approach: where constant conjunction of phenomena is observed, a causal relation may be inferred, but no more may be said. The precise mechanism of a given causal relation is something which cannot be known and is therefore irrelevant. This approach is not accepted by Price: he follows Clarke in the contention that if something is postulated as a cause, then it must be conceivable that it is capable of producing the effect; this does not apply to motives, which are not 'beings', but merely 'views of beings'.

My stronger complaint against Priestley is that the analysis is set out in such a way as to make it logically irrefutable on its own terms. He cogently argues that the cause of choice is the presence of a motive in the mind, but decides that it is the motive, not the mind, which is the variable factor: he treats the mind as a 'balance' whose movement is decided by the relative 'weight' of motives. If evidence were presented to contradict this conception, e.g. examples of actions chosen contrary to all identifiable motives, then Priestley's assumption must be that there were unidentified yet decisive motives at work. The whole argument depends on the truth of the 'balance' analogy, which is not self-evident, and therefore begs the question.
This complaint does not apply to Clarke and Price, who share a rationalist approach: a weak a priori claim that a self-moving power in man is possible, turned on the basis of argument from experience into the strong claim that the power does in fact exist. Clarke's approach is subject to well-founded criticism from Collins, that the arguments from experience required by Clarke to establish his position are not decisive.

It is, I believe, Price who, of the four, comes closest to a satisfactory analysis of the question. It is notable that Price changes his analysis of motive between the main correspondence with Priestley and his 'Additional Observations' (Section 5.7). In the earlier papers he, following Clarke, denies that motives can be the cause of anything, and remains wedded to Clarke's discussion of liberty in terms of beginning motion, rather than analyzing choice. However he moves towards an analysis of choice in the 'Additional Observations', where he proposes that when presented with opposing motives, we have the power to decide on which motive to act.

This accords well with both Priestley's analysis that what causes choice is the presence of motives in the mind, and with the intuition that a choice is just that: in any given situation, whatever choice is made could have been made differently. Although this postulation is introduced by Price in the context of equal and opposite motives, the implication of
the text is that the postulated power is equally applicable to overriding otherwise dominant motives:

Has a man, urged by contrary inclinations, (by passion on one hand and a regard to virtue on the other) no controuling power over his inclinations to make one of them over the other, the inclination that he will follow[?] Or is he then impelled by contrary forces, which must be carried along by the strongest? If this is the truth, then there is no action of the man, when a temptation overcomes him; nor consequently, if there is any meaning in the words, can there be any guilt, or ill-desert. I intreat Dr. Priestley to remember, that this is the doctrine, and the only doctrine of necessity that I mean to oppose. (D.M.P.N., pp.347f)

As Priestley advances beyond Collins on the necessitarian side of the debate, so Price adds materially to Clarke's arguments. However, plausible as it might seem in abstract, the power to choose as the power to 'make either of the motives strongest' is only postulation, and Price gives no consideration to how this power might operate, or its relation to the other powers of the mind. As suggested in relation to Clarke, a proper theory of agency is needed before the libertarian can hope convincingly to prevail over necessitarianism.
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APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

A.1 Anthony Collins

Anthony Collins showed promise from the very start of his life: in common with all the best people, he was born on the Summer Solstice; in his case the year was 1676, and the place Isleworth, near Hounslow, Middlesex. The son of "a man of good estate", as the Dictionary of National Biography puts it, his school education was received at Eton. He had the good fortune to attend King's College, Cambridge, though left King's without taking a degree. From 1694 he combined his studies at King's with legal training at Middle Temple, which he had the good sense to abandon as being too dull.

He married Martha Child in 1698; they had four children of whom one son and two daughters survived, but Martha herself was to die early, in 1703. Shortly before her death Collins met John Locke, and the two formed a remarkably close friendship during the last two years of Locke's life. Collins assisted Locke in many practical matters, and also sent him comments on his reading. The letters between them demonstrate both the depth of affection and Locke's regard for Collins' abilities as a critic:

Give me leave to tell you: that I am not mistaken in you, for though you are not a Young Lady a Beauty and a fortune Yet I have more satisfaction and pleasure in your friendship than I can hope for from those qualifications only... If I fall into the strains of
a Lover, it is from motives that arise within me, and that are not in my power to prevent. You must cease to be what you are; nay you must never have been what you have been, to destroy that disposition of mind that has so much merit for its foundation. (Collins to Locke, 30 March 1704\(^1\))

I do not like [your protestation that] I have given you an argument against presuming so far again upon the liberty I allow you [to comment on my Essay]. That is to say you may give me books, you may buy books for me, you may get books bound for me, you may trudg up and down with them on my errant to Ladys, but my book you may not presume to read, use your judgment about, and talke to me freely of. Though I know no body that understands it so well, nor can give me better light concerning it. (Locke to Collins, 3 April 1704\(^2\))

Locke encouraged Collins to write, and was a major influence on his thought (see Chapter Three).

Collins was an advocate of free-thinking at a time when the orthodoxy of the established church still held sway in almost all intellectual matters: his early publications (published anonymously) included an Essay on the Use of Reason (1707), regarding evidence from testimony and a Discourse of Freethinking (1713). The breadth of Collins' free-thinking approach is indicated by Priestcraft in Perfection (1710), in which he presented a challenge to the legal authority of a clause in the twentieth of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, namely that 'the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith',

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\(^2\) Ibid., Letter no. 3504
claiming that it had been fraudulently inserted. Collins' personal religious views are open to question: he was anticlerical, but not openly atheistical—though this was a common charge against him. His writings suggest a belief in deism—a rejection of revealed religion but belief in a First Cause or Prime Mover—though this could have been the nearest safe haven of an atheist: his biographer James O'Higgins believes Collins to be a deist, whereas David Berman argues that he was an atheist.³

Collins' works to be considered in this essay are his exchange of pamphlets with Samuel Clarke from 1707 to 1709, and A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty (1717). Collins travelled on the continent; his works were influential on the philosophes of the French Enlightenment, and appeared in several translations and collections. Collins' book and Clarke's Remarks on it were major sources for Voltaire's writing on liberty and necessity; between 1734 and 1748 Voltaire appears to have moved from support for Clarke's libertarianism to Collins' necessitarianism.⁴


In the later part of his life, Collins was an active county official. He was a magistrate, first in Middlesex and latterly in Essex. He was a brilliant administrator, and in 1718 became county treasurer of Essex, transforming the finances of the county following a period of lax or corrupt administration. He married for the second time in 1724, to Elizabeth Wrottesley. He collected a large personal library, which contained 6,906 items by the time of his death; compare that to Locke's 3,210 and Voltaire's 3,867.

Collins died on 13 December 1729, aged 53 years. His manuscripts were left to his friend and collaborator Pierre Desmaizeaux, who sold them to Collins' widow for fifty guineas; Desmaizeaux appears to have repented and attempted to reverse the transaction, but to no avail. Collins' library was dispersed and his manuscripts were lost.

A.2 Samuel Clarke

Samuel Clarke was born in Norwich on the less significant date of 11 October 1675, making him Collins' senior by eight months. He was educated at the Norwich free school and Caius College, Cambridge, where he was recognized as an exceptional student. He did take a degree, defending one of the (then unfavoured) Newtonian principles in a final examination; as Collins became an intimate of Locke, so Clarke was to become a friend of Newton, for whom he translated the Opticks into Latin.
This was Clarke's second scientific work, for in 1697 he had prepared a new Latin translation of Jacob Rohault's *Physics*, then the standard Cartesian textbook. Clarke footnoted the work with references to Newton's physics which refuted the main text. Further editions were published in 1702, 1710 and 1718, and the work was translated into English by Clarke's brother. Clarke's text was still being used in Cambridge in 1730.\(^5\)

In 1698 Clarke was made Chaplain to the Bishop of Norwich, a post he held for twelve years. This period saw the first of his theological publications, and in 1704 and 1705 his two series of Boyle Lectures. In 1706, the same year as he published *A Letter to Mr Dodwell* which led to the first controversy with Collins, Clarke was introduced to Queen Anne, who in 1709 gave him the parish of St James, Westminster. It seems that after this preferment Clarke changed his method of preaching from extemporization used at Norwich, to carefully prepared texts, many of which were subsequently published.

It was at this time that Clarke took the degree of Doctor of Divinity at Cambridge. He defended a thesis on the propositions that no article of the Christian faith is contrary

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to right reason, and that there can be no religion without the liberty of human action. The oral examination was conducted by Professor James, Regius Professor of Divinity, and the defence became famous. A (second-hand) account is given in Hoadly's Preface:

The Professor himself, who was a Man of Humour as well as Learning, said to him towards the End of the Disputation,...Profecto, Me probe exacuisti: which I hardly know how to interpret to the English Reader, unless by a phrase of a low kind, In truth You have thoroughly rubb'd me up. Others think that word was Exercuisti. (Works,i,p.vi)

'Nam te probe exercui' ('I have sufficiently worked you') was James' usual form of dismissal to a candidate; 'Nam me probe exercuisti' ('You have thoroughly worked me') was his way of paying compliment to Clarke.

Clarke's publication of The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity (1712) led to a long controversy in which he was accused of heresy; there was an official complaint by the lower house of the church's Convocation to the upper house. No action was taken by the bishops, following a statement of orthodox belief in which Clarke circumvented the problem, and a promise not to preach any more on the subject. For the remainder of his life Clarke accepted no further preferments which required him again to subscribe to the Articles; the only preferment he took was the mastership of a hospital in Leicester, "the Method of taking possession of it," states Hoadly, "free from some of those
circumstances which by Law attend upon most other Preferments" (p.viii).

His scientific work continued, with the controversy with Leibniz on the nature of space and time, as well as free will (see Section 2.8), and one of his last works was 'On the Proportion of Force to Velocity in Bodies in Motion', published in the Transactions of the Royal Society (1728). In addition to his works on theology, philosophy and science, Clarke published editions of Caesar's Commentaries and of the first twelve books of Homer's Iliad.

Clarke's reputation among his contemporaries was as the primary English philosopher after Locke's death, and his commitment to an a priori philosophy makes him the foremost 'English Rationalist' of the eighteenth century. A measure of his reputation is that George Berkeley sent Clarke a first edition of his Principles, hoping for Clarke's comments, but Clarke declined; however, at the time that Berkeley was preparing for his move to the New World they met twice weekly at Queen Caroline's court. Voltaire was also acquainted with Clarke, and reportedly recorded that Clarke's appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury was prevented by one Bishop Gibson "telling the Queen that Clarke was the most learned and honest man in all her dominions, but had one defect - he was not a christian" (D.N.B.,iv,p.446).
Clarke died on 17 May 1729, seven months before Collins. He was survived by his wife Katherine and five of their seven children.

A.3 Richard Price

The son of a Calvinist minister with the lyrical name of Rice Price, Richard Price was born on 23 February 1723 at Tyn- ton, Llangeinor, Glamorgan. He was educated at various Welsh academies, and from the age of eighteen at the Fund Academy, a non-conformist college in London led by John Eames, a friend and follower of Newton. During his teenage years Price had rejected the strict Calvinism of his father, being more impressed with the more liberal works of Clarke and Butler.

Following the completion of his education, Price became chaplain and companion to George Streatfield, a businessman in Stoke Newington, and worked with various congregations in northeast London, including Newington Green. In 1756-7 he inherited from Streatfield and an uncle, and in 1757 was able to marry Sarah Blundell. In 1758 he published his primary philosophical work, A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals. That same year he moved to Newington Green, which congregation he was to serve for the remainder of his life.

Price was better known to his contemporaries as a writer on finance and politics. He had strong mathematical abilities, and
was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1765 for mathematical editorial work. He was instrumental in the early development of actuarial science. Many insurance societies founded during the mid-eighteenth century collapsed due to inadequate calculation of risk; Price’s work and data research helped to correct this, and he acted as adviser to the founders of what is now the Equitable Life Assurance Society, which successfully developed life-insurance.

In politics, Price wrote pamphlets on the national debt, and, more dramatically, on civil liberty and against the war with the American colonies. He was sympathetic to the colonials’ case, and had been an acquaintance of Benjamin Franklin during the latter’s residence in London from 1757 to 1763. Price’s basic position was that every community or nation ought to have the right of self-government. His political writings earned him the freedom of the City of London, and in 1778 the following resolution of the American Congress:

That the Honourable Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee and John Adams, Esqrs. or any one of them, be directed forthwith to apply to Dr. Price, and inform him that it is the Desire of Congress to consider him as a Citizen of the United States, and to receive his Assistance in regulating their Finances. That if he shall think it expedient to remove with his Family to America and afford such Assistance a generous Provision shall be made for requiting his Services. (quoted in Thomas(1)6, pp.79ff)

Due to his age and reluctance to leave his connections in Britain, Price declined the invitation. In 1781 Yale University voted to offer him the honorary degree of LL.D., received at the same time as George Washington.

In 1782 Price was offered the post of private secretary to the new Prime Minister, Lord Shelburne, and is said to have suggested one of the paragraphs included in that year's King's Speech. Price continued to support reform, and in 1789 gave a sermon reflecting on the centenary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9, and the American and French Revolutions; the speech invited attack from Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, and Price defended himself in subsequent printed editions. His text includes a proclamation which is worth quoting at length, for it sums up the spirit of the Enlightenment:

> What an eventful period this is! I am thankful that I have lived to it; and I could almost say, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error - I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it. I have lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. After sharing in the benefits of one Revolution, I have been spared to be a witness to two other Revolutions, both glorious. And now, methinks, I see the ardor for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests
giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience. (Thomas(2)\textsuperscript{7}, p.301)

Richard Price died on 19 April 1791. He had survived his wife Sarah by five years; they had no children. His friend and philosophical disputant Joseph Priestley preached his funeral sermon.

A.4 Joseph Priestley

Joseph Priestley was born at Birstal Fieldhead, near Leeds, on 13 March 1733. The eldest son of a cloth-dresser, his family became large, and at the age of four he was sent to live with his maternal grandfather near Wakefield. He returned to his father’s house following his mother’s death in 1740, but in 1742 was adopted by an aunt, Sarah Keighley. In 1745 he entered Batley grammar school, learning Latin and Greek, and during school holidays studying Hebrew with the local dissenting minister, to whose school he transferred until its close in 1749.

At that time he showed signs of tuberculosis, and his formal education was suspended. He subsequently recovered, however, and in 1752 entered a new dissenting academy at Daventry, Northamptonshire, as its first enrolled student. During his studies he met the mechanistic psychology of David


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Hartley (1705-57), which confirmed for him the view of necessity he had earlier read in Collins:

It was a reference to 'Dr. Hartley's Observations of Man', in the course of our Lectures, that first brought me acquainted with that performance, which immediately engaged my closest attention, and produced the greatest, and in my opinion, the most favourable effect on my general turn of thinking through life. It established me in the belief of the doctrine of necessity, which I first learned from Collins; it greatly improved that disposition to piety which I brought to the academy and freed it from the rigour with which it had been tinctured. (Memoirs, p.76)

In 1755 he left the academy to become an assistant minister in Needham Market, Suffolk. He was not a great success as a preacher: an inherited stammer worsened, and he alienated some with his Arian views, denying that Christ was divine in the same manner as God. An attempt to establish a school failed as he attracted no pupils. He did manage to open a school of thirty-six pupils following his move to Nantwich, Cheshire, in 1758, and subsequently became a tutor at Warrington Academy in 1761. He was ordained in May 1863, and the following month married Mary Wilkinson, then eighteen years old, at Wrexham. In 1764 he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Law from the University of Edinburgh, in recognition of his educational work.

It was in 1766 that Priestley was introduced to the Royal Society, where he first met Richard Price; Priestley was elected

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Priestley spent the five years from 1767 based in Leeds, until appointed, on Price's recommendation, as librarian to Lord Shelburne in 1772. It was while in this post that Priestley wrote and published his main philosophical work, *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777), which set out his version of materialism, and its supplement *The Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity Illustrated*; both were preceded in 1775 by his re-publication of Hartley's *Theory of the Human Mind*. He resigned from Shelburne's service in 1780 (Shelburne, possibly disapproving of Priestley's publications, had proposed to transfer him to an Irish estate), and moved to Birmingham. There he continued his scientific and theological research, and was engaged in several controversies. It was in 1790 that Priestley re-published Collins' *Philosophical Inquiry*, adding his own Preface.

Priestley took a minor part in politics. He was a friend of Burke until 1783; he published a number of political papers,
including an Essay on the First Principles of Government (1774), and preached against the slave trade in 1778. In 1791 he helped to establish the Birmingham Constitutional Society; the society was modelled on the Manchester Constitutional Society, a group of middle-class radicals founded the previous year to campaign for parliamentary reform. In 1789-90 Priestley helped organize campaigns for the repeal of laws discriminating against dissenters; he was much caricatured and was denounced to Members of Parliament. Priestley's reputation worsened due to his public support for the French Revolution, and in 1791 he was the victim of rioting in Birmingham. He and his family escaped injury, but their house was ransacked and nearly all of his books, papers and scientific instruments were destroyed. He moved to London, where he lectured at the New College in Hackney. He was made a citizen of France in September 1792 and was invited to be a member of the National Convention, but declined, preferring to remain in London at the time.

In 1793 Priestley's sons emigrated to America; Priestley and his wife followed in 1794. They settled in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, in preference to Philadelphia. He wrote of this decision,

Philadelphia was excessively expensive, and [Northumberland] comparatively a cheap place; and my

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sons settling in the neighbourhood will be less exposed to temptation, and more likely to form habits of sobriety and industry. (Memoirs, p.133)

He continued his scientific work and presented papers at the American Philosophical Society, but rejected the presidency of the society. He also rejected a professorship of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1803 the presidency of the university.

Predeceased by his wife and youngest son, Priestley died on 6 February 1804. He was buried in the quakers' burial ground in Northumberland.
Collins' reference to Protagoras is as follows:

[Plato] asserts that it is contrary to the nature of man, to follow evil, as evil, and not to pursue good; and that when a man is compelled to choose between two evils, you will never find a man who chooses the greatest, if it is in his power to choose the less (Collins, p.30; cf Protagoras 358d)

There are two separate issues here. The first is that Plato has Socrates base this argument (352a-358d) on the premise of what we might call 'moral hedonism', namely that that which is good is that which is on the whole pleasurable, and that which is evil is that which is on the whole painful. Questions regarding whether Plato or Socrates actually held this view at that time, or whether the premise is adopted for the sake of argument, and related contrasts with some of Plato's later works, are not relevant here. 'Moral hedonism' may be separated from 'psychological hedonism', which is the point at issue: is it true that when a person is faced with a choice between two painful options, he will always choose the less painful, if it is in his power so to do?

Plato has Socrates argue that one who holds that a person may knowingly choose the worse option, must hold that knowledge of the available options "may be over-mastered by anger, or
pleasure, or pain, or love, or perhaps by fear" (352c\(^1\)). The only ones of these candidates considered by Plato in any detail are pleasure and pain, perhaps because he considers the others to reduce to pleasure or pain; this might have some plausibility in the case of 'love' and 'fear', but 'anger' is not so obvious a case.

Even on its own terms the argument is flawed. Plato's argument is that to say that "a man does what is evil knowingly" is the same as to say that "he does what is painful knowingly, and because he is overcome by pleasure" (355e). In response to the hypothetical point that future pains have less influence on the mind than present pleasures, he says that these ought to be carefully weighed, and "then that course of action should be taken in which the painful is exceeded by the pleasant, whether the distant by the near or the near by the distant" (356b). The problem with the argument is that 'should be taken' does not imply 'will be taken', which is what is required to 'prove' that "the statement is absurd which affirms that a man often does evil knowingly when he might abstain, because he is seduced and overpowered by pleasure" (355a); a logical entailment does not imply a causal relation. As Gregory Vlastos suggests in the introduction to his edition, there is no contradiction in the statement, "I ought to do what is most pleasant; \( x \) is most

\(^1\) The edition used is: Plato (tr. Jowett/Ostwald, ed. Vlastos), Protagoras, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956
pleasant; I shall not do x" (Protagoras, p.xlii).

There being no valid argument, the statement quoted by Collins is, indeed, assertion on the part of Plato, and Collins' argument remains no more than appeal to authority.