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Hume: Second Newton of the Moral Sciences

JANE L. McINTYRE

The subtitle of *A Treatise of Human Nature* declares that work to be “An Attempt to introduce the experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects.”¹ In the light of this expressed intent, and in recognition of the evident influence of Newtonianism on Hume’s thought,² many commentators have echoed the judgment that Hume’s ambition was to be “the Newton of the moral sciences.”³ A problem with this interpretation of the *Treatise*, however, is that there already was at least one prominent exponent of Newtonianism who could lay claim to that title—the rationalist Samuel Clarke.

Philosophers writing on Hume often consider Clarke only as an exemplar of the ethical rationalism attacked by Hume in the opening section of Book III of the *Treatise*, but Clarke’s credentials as a Newtonian were impeccable. Although he translated Rohault’s popular textbook on Cartesian physics into Latin, Clarke’s notes on the text introduced readers to Newton’s system. By the third edition of 1710 Clarke’s notes were printed at the bottom of the page along with the text; they presented criticisms of the Cartesian theory of vortices based on its inability to account for various observations, and quoted from Newton’s *Principia*.⁴ This work was “arguably the best and most familiar natural philosophy textbook in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.”⁵ Clarke read, and made corrections to, Cotes’ preface to the second edition of the *Principia*.⁶ His defense of Newton’s view of space and time against Leibniz’s criticisms is, of course, well known.

The “General Scholium” at the end of the *Principia* makes it clear that Newton and Clarke shared a set of theological and metaphysical assumptions as well. Indeed, Newton expressed a view of the self strikingly like Clarke’s.⁷ Clarke’s philosophical works depict the marriage of Newtonian science to a theologically based ethical rationalism.⁸ Insofar as Hume undertook a systematic attempt to show that these elements could be divorced from each other, his views constituted a challenge to Newtonian orthodoxy. Yet this challenge was not launched entirely from an external vantage point, for Hume applied a methodology derived from Newton, and appealed to principles modeled on Newtonian principles. He wanted to show that, contrary to the received view, Newtonianism *so applied* could provide the explanatory framework for a secular, sentiment-based ethical theory. In effect, this constitutes Hume’s own conception of what Newtonian science had to offer to “moral subjects.”

Although the opposition to Clarke is evident at many places in the *Treatise*,⁹ I intend to focus on Hume’s attack on Clarke’s arguments for the simplicity and the immateriality of the self. I hope to shed some light on a particularly puzzling section of the *Treatise*: Book I iv 5, “Of the Immateriality of the Soul.” If I am correct, in this section and the section on personal identity which follows, Hume was joining an ongoing debate about the nature of the self in which Clarke (and others) participated, and his account of personal identity is crafted to answer problems posed by the Newtonian Clarke by appealing to principles modeled on Newtonian ones.

I will begin with an analysis of *Treatise* I iv 5, “Of the Immateriality of the Soul.” Through a comparison with Clarke’s arguments in *A Demonstration of the Being and the Attributes of God* I will argue that Clarke (though not explicitly mentioned in this section) is a target of Hume’s criticism there. Hume’s account of personal identity will be considered in the context of this comparison, and in the light of Clarke’s debate with Anthony Collins over the nature of the soul. Finally, I will outline some consequences of my argument for the interpretation of the *Treatise*.

“Of the Immateriality of the Soul”: An Overview

“Of the Immateriality of the Soul” is an unsettling section of the *Treatise*. The section begins with two short arguments that we can have no idea of the substance of our minds, nor can the traditional definition of substance give an adequate account of it (T 233). Hume then states that this “seems to me a sufficient reason for abandoning utterly that dispute concerning the materiality and immateriality of the soul, and makes me absolutely condemn even the question itself” (T 234). But Hume does *not* abandon the question he has condemned. The discussion that follows criticizes materialists and immaterialists, Spinoza’s argument that the world is a single substance, and

“theologians’” arguments that the soul is a simple substance. Indeed, Hume shows that essentially the same argument can be used against all these positions. Neither materialists nor immaterialists, according to Hume, can adequately explain the relations between our perceptions, for our perceptions are not all of one type. Those of touch and sight are extended, but others “may exist, and yet be no where” (T 235). Thoughts and passions cannot be united with extension because they have no place. But, similarly, there can be no union of perceptions of sight and touch, which are extended, with immaterial substance. Critics of Spinoza recognize this fact when they argue that one substance cannot support the diverse objects of the world, but fail to see that the same argument can be pressed against the defenders of the view that the mind is immaterial. Hume’s tone is satirical throughout, and he ends with the disclaimer that his arguments take nothing from the arguments for religion (T 251).

Since Hume begins this section with the conclusion that the question of the substance of the soul is not meaningful, it might be suspected that the section is merely a vehicle for presenting Hume’s critical (and lampooning) remarks about the debate between the materialists and the immaterialists. But Hume’s arguments are actually quite focused, and as we will see below, establish the framework for his own account of the self. Further, unusual as the conjunction of topics and arguments in this section of the *Treatise* appears to be, they *do* occur together in another work. In *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* Clarke argues against materialism and Spinoza’s view that the world is one substance, and for immaterialism and the simplicity of the soul. Especially in view of Hume’s criticisms of Clarke elsewhere in the *Treatise*, these arguments provide a valuable context for the analysis of Hume’s argument in “Of the Immateriality of the Soul.”

Clarke’s Arguments: An Overview

A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God covers considerable philosophical territory. Clarke’s refutation of materialism and Spinozism follows from his argument for the existence of God, the essential steps of which are as follows:

- 1) Something must have existed from all eternity. (II: 524)
- 2) This something must be an unchangeable and independent being. (II: 526–7)
- 3) This eternal, unchangeable and independent being must be self-existent (necessarily existing). (II: 527)
- 4) Whatever necessarily exists cannot be material. (II: 531–2)
- 5) Therefore, the self-existent being must be simple, without parts or any of the attributes of matter. (II: 540)

Clarke's argument for (1) is straightforwardly that it is contradictory for something to be produced out of "Nothing." His argument for (2) is that without an unchangeable and independent being it is impossible to explain why there is something rather than nothing. (3) is supported by an argument that refers to Newton. We cannot imagine any part of space removed from itself without contradiction. Immense, eternal, empty space still requires a substantial support—it is not "Nothing." In support of (4), that what necessarily exists cannot be material, Clarke argues that it is contradictory to suppose that the structure of the world and the arrangement of its parts could not be other than they are: but the necessary existence of the material world would entail this. And, finally, (5) the simplicity of the independent being that necessarily exists follows from its immateriality—that which cannot have parts must be simple.

Clarke argued that, since Spinoza takes "the whole and every Part of the Material World" to be a necessarily existing being, arguments (1)–(4) disprove Spinoza's theory. Further, and more importantly for the present purpose, (5) shows:

the Vanity, Folly, and Weakness of Spinoza: who, because the Self-existent Being must necessarily be but One, concludes from thence, that the whole world and everything contained therein, is one Uniform Substance...Whereas just on the contrary he ought to have concluded that...because all things in the World are very different one from another, and have all manner of Variety,...and Arbitrariness and Changeableness...being plainly fitted with very different Powers, to very different Ends; [they are] distinguished one from another by a diversity, not only of Modes, but also of Essential Attributes, and consequently of their Substances themselves also. (II: 542)

Clarke then immediately turns to a proof that the self-existent being must be intelligent, and it is in this context that he presents his argument for the immateriality of the self (II: 543). Clarke held that "In Men there is undeniably that Power, which we call Thought, Intelligence, Consciousness, Perception, or Knowledge" (II: 544). According to Clarke, one of the following three suppositions must be true. Either (a) there has been an infinite succession of dependent beings endued with consciousness; or (b) beings with consciousness arose from that which did not have consciousness; or (c) they were produced by an intelligent superior being. Clarke argued that (2) disproves (a). The form of his argument against (b) is *modus ponens*. If consciousness is a distinct quality, and not "a mere Effect or Composition of Unintelligent figure or motion," then beings with consciousness could not have arisen out of that which did not have that quality (II: 544). But, according to Clarke, consciousness is a distinct quality.

All possible Changes, Compositions, or Divisions of Figure, are still nothing but Figure; And all possible Compositions or Effects of Motion, can eternally be nothing but mere Motion. If therefore there ever was a Time when there was nothing in the Universe but Matter and Motion; there never could have been any thing else therein, but Matter and Motion. And it would have been as impossible, there should have existed any such thing as Intelligence or Consciousness...as 'tis now impossible for Motion to be Blue or Red, or for a Triangle to be transform'd into a Sound. That which has been apt to deceive Men in the Matter, is This; that they imagine Compounds, to be somewhat really different from That of which they are Compounded: Which is a very great Mistake. (II: 545-6)¹⁰

On the basis of this argument, Clarke concludes that (c), the existence of an intelligent creator, is the only remaining possibility.

Hume's Attack on Clarke

Looking back over Clarke's argument, we can see that all of its key features are directly or indirectly countered by Hume. The first three steps in the argument, which are intended to prove the existence of an eternal, independent, necessarily existing being, have already been attacked in earlier sections of the *Treatise*, prior to "Of the Immateriality of the Soul." The opening step, that something cannot be produced from nothing, is criticized with a reference to Clarke, in *Treatise* I iii 3; this criticism applies to the second step of Clarke's argument in exactly the same way.¹¹ Hume's account of space in Book I, Part Two rebuts Clarke's third conclusion, which draws on the Newtonian concept of absolute space. In "Of the Immateriality of the Soul" Hume moves on to address the fourth and fifth steps in Clarke's proof of the existence of God, and the related proof of the immateriality of the soul.

It is important to note before going on that the issues discussed in this section of the *Treatise* are central to both Clarke and Hume. In the context of Clarke's argument, even to show that it is *not necessary* for the self to be simple and immaterial would undermine the argument for the intelligence of necessarily existing substance. Equally significantly, Clarke's ethics requires that there be simple immaterial substances. On his view, only beings with thought and consciousness have the capacity to perceive what is fit to do, or not do, given the essential natures of things and their necessary relations to one another. Clarke's theory is therefore involved in a twofold commitment to an essential difference between simple minds and composite bodies. Only conscious beings, essentially different from material substance, can perceive relations of fit, and there must be essential differences to be perceived (II: 571, 575).¹²

Hume's attack on Clarke's position is aimed directly at this foundational concept of the simple immaterial self, and its close relation, essentialism. If it is *not possible* for the self to be a simple, immaterial substance—if that concept is incoherent, as Hume alleges, because our perceptions are not all of one type—the basis for Clarke's ethical theory would be destroyed.

If Hume's argument is successful, it clears the way for his own account of the self as an inherently complex entity, and the sentiment-based moral theory built on it. But Clarke's argument places demands on Hume as well, for Hume must show that his account of principles by which complex selves are formed withstands Clarke's argument that the self cannot be composite.

Clarke's argument against Spinoza, quoted above, focuses on proving the impossibility of matter being the single substance of the world. He appeals, in part, to the variety and changeableness of the things in the world to support this conclusion. From the conclusion that whatever exists necessarily cannot be material, he further argues that such a being must be simple. When Clarke turns to the argument that the mind must be immaterial, he argues that mental activities such as thought, perception and consciousness cannot be the result of composition from parts. According to Clarke, therefore, thought must inhere in a simple, immaterial substance.

Clarke's dual conclusion that *both* the single necessarily existing being and the self must be simple sets up Hume's argument in "Of the Immateriality of the Soul." Hume turns Clarke's argument against Spinoza back against Clarke himself by arguing that perceptions, too, are varied and changeable (T 240; T 242-4). Indeed, perceptions cannot all be reduced to one type; some are extended, some unextended (T 235; T 250). Hence, both materialists and immaterialists are wrong in their conclusions about the nature of the mind or soul. The hypothesis of the substantial self (whether material or immaterial) conflicts with what we know through experience about our perceptions. If Hume is right, given the nature of our perceptions, the self must be *doubly* complex, a compound entity composed of things of different types. But "matter and motion may often be regarded as the causes of thought, as far as we have any idea of that relation," for constant conjunction is the basis for our knowledge of causal connections, and things which are not "susceptible of local union" may be constantly conjoined (T 250).

One possible criticism of Hume's strategy must be considered at this point. Hume's argument rests on his proof that some perceptions are extended, a position that at least some critics find paradoxical or problematic.¹³ It might be thought, therefore, that Clarke could avoid Hume's clever recasting of the argument against Spinoza by denying that perceptions have any extension. However, that was *not* Clarke's view. Unwilling to allow that something might act where it did not exist, Clarke attempted to defend the vulnerable position that *immaterial* beings could have extension.¹⁴ Unlike the Cartesians, he did not take extension to be essential to matter. Clarke,

therefore, could only criticize Hume's linking of extension with matter, not the fact of allowing some perceptions to be extended. Indeed, Clarke's position illustrates exactly the propensity, noted by Hume, to "complete the union" of qualities united by some relation by adding some new relation to them. Concerning this propensity Hume wrote in "Of the Immateriality of the Soul," "But we shall not find a more evident effect of it, than in the present instance, where from relations of causation and contiguity in time betwixt two objects, we feign likewise a conjunction in place, in order to strengthen the connexion." (T 237-38).

Problems of Complexity and Unity: Clarke, Collins and Hume

The conclusion of "Of the Immateriality of the Soul," that the self is doubly complex, made up of parts that cannot be construed as modes of one substance, represents only the first half of Hume's argument against Clarke's account of the self. Clarke developed the position that the soul could not be composite in a lengthy series of published exchanges with Anthony Collins in 1707-08.¹⁵ The parts of this debate were re-published several times between 1708 and the publication of the *Treatise*.¹⁶ The arguments that evolve in this debate clearly define the problems that must be solved by a theory, like Hume's, that denies the simplicity of the self. The similarity between some of Collins' arguments and Hume's is striking. One notable coincidence is Collins' suggestion that if Clarke takes immaterial substance to be extended, then the same arguments that Clarke uses to show that matter cannot think will apply to immaterial substance as well (III: 775-76; see III: 794 for Clarke's reply).

The debate between Clarke and Collins began with a response by Clarke to Dodwell's defense of the view that the soul was naturally mortal. Clarke's argument expanded on points previously made in the *Demonstration*. The following typical passage focuses clearly on the basic problem he found with the view that the soul might be composite:

For *Matter* being a divisible Substance, consisting always of separable, nay of actually separate and distinct parts, 'tis plain, that unless it were essentially Conscious, in which case every particle of Matter must consist of innumerable separate and distinct Consciousnesses, no System of it in any possible Composition or Division, can be any individual Conscious Being: For, suppose three or three hundred particles of Matter, at a Mile or any given distance one from another; is it possible that all those separate parts should in that State be one Conscious Being? Suppose then all these particles brought together into one System, so as to touch one another, will they thereby, or by any Motion or Composition whatsoever, become any less truly distinct Beings, than they were when at the greatest distance? How then

can their being disposed in any possible System, make them one conscious Being?" (III: 730)

Clarke frequently refers to the particles of the brain being in "perpetual flux," (an expression repeated by Hume at T 252) and therefore being incapable of being the seat of consciousness (see III: 787; 798; 843; and 853 for examples). He also held that:

I think I know infallibly, as soon as ever I have it in my Mind, that the Idea I call Consciousness, Perception or Thinking, is the very Idea that it is; and that it is not another Idea...Simple Ideas cannot be defined or described. When any Dispute is carried so far, as to terminate in questioning the Idea itself; there is nothing then left but to appeal to the Idea which every Man has in his own Mind. (III: 840)

The latter suggestion, of course, Hume used to his own purposes. (T 252) Collins' reply to Clarke defends the position that:

...an Individual Power may reside in a Material System, which consists of actually separate and distinct Parts; and consequently, that an Individual Being is not indispensably necessary to be a subject of an Individual Power. (III: 751)

On Collins' view,

Human Thinking has Succession and Parts, as all material Actions have; for all our Thoughts succeed one another, can be suspended in a Point, or continued in a like manner...and so are as much distinguishable into Parts. (III: 864)

Many aspects of Collins' account of the nature of the self are also found in Hume. As the passages just quoted show, Collins denied that the self must be supported by a simple substance, and emphasized the successive and discontinuous nature of conscious experience.¹⁷ Collins also held "That we are not conscious, that we continue a Moment the same individual numerical Being." (III: 870). But Collins, like Hume later, had to explain the nature of the relations that unify the self. Here his philosophical resources were slimmer than Hume's.

One of Collins' most intractable problems in defending his position against Clarke was that Collins granted that consciousness was a real and distinct quality. He nevertheless argued that it might result from other qualities void of consciousness (III: 819). In contemporary terms, Collins held the view that mental properties are supervenient upon physical properties. He attempted to account for this with a distinction between numerical and generic

powers of objects (III: 805), but without much success. Collins' overall approach to the problem of the relations that unify the self is Lockean. He stresses continuity of consciousness and memory as criteria for personal identity, supporting this account with a materialist analysis of mental phenomena such as memory and forgetting. Collins' examples show that, unlike the Newtonians, he assumed that causation was essentially mechanical, that is, based on physical contact.¹⁸ His assumptions about causation and his focus on consciousness and memory as the most significant features of personal identity limit Collins' ability to respond convincingly to Clarke's objections.

When Hume turned to the topic of personal identity, he confronted a set of issues about the possibility of a compound self already thoroughly debated by Clarke and Collins. But Hume could employ the philosophical innovations of the *Treatise* to construct an account of the self that responded to Clarke's criticisms.

First, Hume could agree with Clarke that we "*imagine* Compounds to be somewhat really different from That of which they are Compounded: which is a very great Mistake." (II: 545–46, emphasis added) without granting that the self is not composed of parts. The *Treatise*, in fact, explains how we can imagine this, by appealing to the propensity of the imagination to confuse the resembling thoughts of invariable objects and related successions of variable objects. It is the difficulty of continuously correcting this mistake that leads us to the feigning of an unintelligible principle connecting the distinct and variable objects together (T 254). This explanation undermines Clarke's position that the self *must* be different in nature from a compound entity. As in "Of the Immateriality of the Soul" (T 238), Clarke's position is exposed as an absurdity resulting from an uncorrected propensity of the imagination.

Second, unlike the Lockean Collins, Hume's account of personal identity was not based on continuity of consciousness. Memory plays a supporting role in producing and discovering personal identity, but only because it creates resemblances and reveals causal connections (T 261–262). While Hume (like Collins) accepted Locke's view that the identity of the self did not require the identity of a substance, he did not attempt to explain the nature of the personal identity in the terms that they defined. Hume looked to the passions and to sympathy, and not merely to consciousness and memory, for his account of the causal relations that bind together the disparate parts of the self.¹⁹

Collins could not effectively answer Clarke's criticisms by appealing to the causal relations among the material parts of the mind, because he could not explain how matter and motion give rise to something other than matter and motion. But, as we have seen, Hume's account of causation did not entail that things causally related be "susceptible of a local union" (T 250; T 75, note: T 504, note). This aspect of Hume's account of causation is particularly critical for his own theory that the self is a complex entity composed of different types of perceptions. For Hume, causal relations unify the self through time.

connecting a person to the past and the future through memory, through passions such as pride and humility, and through the operation of sympathy. This causal unity is possible because causal relations do *not*, on Hume's view, have to conform to the mechanical model of contact of one body against another; they do not have to be located at a place. Traits of both character and body figure among the causes of pride and humility (T 303). In sympathy, the passions and emotions of one person cause passions and emotions in another (T 576). Though persons have location, most of their perceptions, including their passions, do not (T 236; T 246).

The Newtonian account of causal explanation differed from the Cartesian on precisely this point. Although the nature of gravity was a source of both controversy and confusion,²⁰ a definitive feature of Newtonianism was the view that gravity *need not* be reduced to mechanical impulse. In Query 31 of the *Opticks* Newton wrote:

What I call Attraction may be perform'd by impulse, or by some other means unknown to me. I use that Word here to signify only in general any Force by which Bodies tend towards one another, whatsoever be the Cause. For we must learn from the Phenomena of Nature what Bodies attract one another, and what are the Laws and Properties of the Attraction, before we enquire the Cause by which the Attraction is perform'd. ²¹

Indeed, Clarke made this point against both Leibniz and Collins (IV: 630; III: 847–48).

Hume's account of causation involves a generalization of this Newtonian position. The experimental method of reasoning can allow for explanations that are not mechanical, in the sense of being reducible to physical contact. If all causal relations do not reduce to impact, then things of different types can stand in causal relations to each other. If it is correct to see this account as Newtonian, then particularly in its reliance on the passions, Hume's account of the self in the *Treatise* presents a Newtonian rebuttal to Clarke's arguments that the self cannot be composite. Hume thus drives a wedge between Clarke's ethical theory, which rests on the assumption of the simplicity of the soul, and his adherence to Newtonian scientific principles.

Implications for Hume's Philosophy of Mind

It is in the context of his argument against Clarke in "Of the Immateriality of the Soul" that Hume first explicitly discussed the principle that things can be constantly conjoined, and hence causally related, even when they are not both locatable in space. This principle is necessary for the account of the causal unity of the self presented in "Of Personal Identity," given that the perceptions that constitute the mind are both extended and unextended.

However, it is not introduced *ad hoc*. Hume makes reference to it earlier in Book I, when first analyzing the idea of causation:

We may therefore consider the relation of contiguity as essential to that of causation; at least we may suppose it such, according to the general opinion, till we can find a more proper occasion <Note: Part IV. sect.5.> to clear up this matter, by examining what objects are or are not susceptible of juxtaposition and conjunction. (T 75)

The embedded note is to "Of the Immateriality of the Soul." In Book III this same point is made again in a long footnote to "Of the Rules which Determine Property."

Many of our impressions are incapable of place or local position; yet those very impressions we suppose to have a local conjunction with the impressions of sight and touch, merely because they are conjoin'd by causation.... (T 504)

Here too Hume has a note referring to "Of the Immateriality of the Soul." And far from being unique to his account of personal identity, causal relations that cross traditional metaphysical barriers occur, without special comment, throughout Books II and III of the *Treatise*, in Hume's accounts of the indirect passions, the will, the natural virtues and sympathy. They are, therefore, entrenched in Hume's theories of the self and of morals. "Of the Immateriality of the Soul" reveals that Hume took his assertion in the Introduction to the *Treatise* that the essence of mind and the essence of body are equally unknown quite seriously (T xvii). He refused to acknowledge any metaphysically based objections to judgments about causal relations.

The radical nature of Hume's view is reflected in the difficulty that critics have had in placing Hume's philosophy of mind into any familiar category. (This is not surprising, since I believe that Hume was trying to deflate the importance of the mind/body distinction.) Interpretations in relatively recent works have concluded that Hume advocates an identity theory, because he stated that thought can be caused by matter and motion;²² and that Hume is a dualist, but, frustratingly, one without any account of the differences between the mental and the physical.²³ The former interpretation fails to take Hume's rejection of materialism as having equal weight with his rejection of immaterialism; the latter looks for an account that, if I am correct, Hume may not have expected to find at all.

Hume accepts the existence of particular things with the properties of being extended or unextended, but he refuses to take the differences between them to be more significant than other differences. The relations between things with different properties are all to be discovered in experience: the discovery that certain pairs of extended and unextended things are constantly

conjoined does not entail that they *must* be (although they may be) related in any further way. What Books II and III of the *Treatise* seem to show is that the metaphysical distinctions Clarke took to be basic are revealed, by experience, not to be.²⁴

Two Newtonian Approaches: Simple Souls vs. Complex Persons

Clarke's essentialism was at the root of a problem touched on earlier that Clarke himself recognized. Clarke struggled to find a *location* for the simple self in the world,²⁵ but it was not a part of the world, and could exist without a body and without other selves. Its own identity might be assured, but its connections to everything else were problematic.

In at least some passages, Clarke quite literally takes our relations to other persons to be governed by the same principles that apply to our knowledge of mathematical propositions. For example:

He that refuses to deal with all Men equitably, and with every man as he desires they should deal with him: is guilty of the very same unreasonableness and contradiction in one Case; as he that in another Case should affirm one Number or Quantity to be equal to another, and yet That other at the same time not to be equal to the first. (II: 613)

It is as if simple selves, by their very natures, can only be tied to each other through abstract relations. But, as even Clarke acknowledged, the recognition of these abstract principles is not guaranteed to have any influence on action:

Assent to a plain speculative Truth, is not in a Man's Power to withhold; but to Act according to the Plain Right and Reason of things, this he may, by the natural Liberty of his Will, forbear. (II: 613)

Hume reverses Clarke's approach. The self Hume starts with is inherently complex and relational. The relations among its components, and to other things and other persons, are on a par. These causal relations constitute the self's identity. Even in Book I of the *Treatise*, the self Hume introduces to replace Clarke's simple, immaterial soul is a compound of extended and unextended perceptions. There is no stage of analysis, therefore, where the Humean self is detached from the world. Because the Humean self is complex and relational, what was most problematic for Clarke emerges as most natural for Hume's moral theory.

Newton wrote that he considered principles such as gravity "not as occult Qualities, supposed to result from the specifick Forms of Things, but as general Laws of Nature, by which the things themselves are formed..."²⁶ The *Treatise*

describes in astonishing detail the causal, associative, and sympathetic relations which form the complex self. Hume thus provides a realization of the model Newton described, in a domain where Clarke never expected it would find application.²⁷ This account of the complex self, connected to the world and to other selves, is the anchor of Hume's moral theory. As Hume observed in the concluding sentence of Book III of the *Treatise*:

...the most abstract speculations concerning human nature, however cold and unentertaining, become subservient to practical morality; and may render this latter science more correct in its precepts and more persuasive in its exhortations. (T 621)

REFERENCES

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1 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); hereafter references are cited within the text.

2 The nature of the relationship of Hume's work to Newtonianism is a matter of ongoing debate. The "experimental method" referred to in the subtitle was certainly not unique to Newton. However, even authors like Peter Jones, who question the extent or the seriousness of Newton's influence on Hume, acknowledge that (1) Hume used what he took to be Newton's method in a general way and (2) that there are Newtonian passages and analogies in the *Treatise*, particularly in the account of the association of ideas. See Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiments* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), Chapter One. I argue that there is a strain of Newtonianism in Hume's philosophy that is not merely metaphorical, yet that sets Hume apart from traditional Newtonians such as Clarke.

3 For example, John Passmore, *Hume's Intentions*, 2nd ed., (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 131. A brief survey of this description of Hume can be found in James Noxon, *Hume's Philosophical Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 29.

4 Florian Cajori, "Historical and Explanatory Appendix," in Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, translated by A. Motte, revised and edited by F. Cajori, vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 631. References to the *Principia* will be to this edition.

5 Michael Barfoot, "Hume and the Culture of Science in the Early Eighteenth Century," in *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment*, edited by M.A. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 171.

6 *Correspondence of Sir Isaac Newton and Professor Cotes*, edited by J. Edleston (London: 1850), reprinted 1969, 158-9.

7 Newton wrote in the General Scholium, "Every soul that has perception is, though in different times and in different organs of sense and motion, still the same indivisible person" (*Principia*, 545).

8 In the dedicatory letter to the published edition of his correspondence with Leibniz, Clarke wrote of Newton

It appeared to Me...a most certain and evident Truth, that from the earliest Antiquity to this Day, the Foundations of natural Religion had never been so deeply and so firmly laid, as in the Mathematical and Experimental Philosophy of that Great Man... 'Tis of Singular Use, rightly to understand and carefully to distinguish from Hypotheses or mere Suppositions, the True and Certain Consequences of Experimental and Mathematical Philosophy; which do with wonderful Strength and Advantage...confirm, establish, and vindicate against all Objections, those Great and Fundamental Truths of Natural Religion...

(Samuel Clarke, *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, [London: 1738; Garland Reprint edition, vol. IV, 1978], 582.) References to Clarke will be to this edition of his works and hereafter are usually cited within the body of the paper.

In the Introduction to *A Discourse Concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion* (his second Boyle lectures), Clarke argued that the proof of "the Being and the Natural attributes of God" given in *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (his first Boyle lectures) entailed (1) the moral attributes of God and (2) the obligations of morality as well as natural religion (*Works*, II: 67). In both of these works, Clarke argued that the ground of moral obligation must be independent of the will or command of God, or it would be impossible to ascribe moral attributes to God (II: 576). This independent ground of obligation Clarke found in the necessary and eternal relations of fitness or unfitness holding among things. For Clarke, his Newtonianism, his natural theology, and his ethical rationalism formed a seamless whole. And, indeed, a similar connection is expressed by Newton himself at the end of Query 31 in *Opticks*:

For so far as we can know by natural Philosophy what is the first Cause, what Power he has over us, and what Benefits we receive from him, so far our Duty towards him, as well as towards one another, will appear to us by the Light of Nature.

(Isaac Newton, *Opticks* [New York, 1979], 405.) References to the *Opticks* will be to this edition, which is based on the 1730 fourth edition of the *Opticks*.

9 Clarke is criticized by name in the section of Book I entitled "Why a cause is always necessary" (T 80). Hume's attack on Clarke's ethics in Book III of the

Treatise has already been mentioned. But these two points where Hume's opposition to Clarke is explicit or obvious are connected by Clarke in a direct chain of argument in *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*. Attention to the intermediate links in the chain reveals the extent of Hume's systematic assault on Clarke's philosophical position. An examination of their respective arguments on the liberty of the will provides an illustration.

For Clarke, right actions are actions directed by the knowledge of the natural and necessary relations of fitness or unfitness that things bear to each other (II: 571). The connexion between understanding and action in this case is only one of "Moral Necessity," not that of a "Physically Efficient Cause" (II: 565) because an agent must be free to be morally responsible for actions. Clarke held that direct experience proves that we have the power to initiate action (II: 558). The primary argument against free will, according to Clarke, was derived from materialism; he therefore held that his refutation of materialism eliminated the foundation of the argument against free will (II: 564).

Hume argued that the understanding alone cannot influence action (T 414; T 457); that we have no idea of power derived from experience (T 161; T 632-33); that liberty is "destructive to all laws, both divine and human" (T 410); that responsibility requires a connexion between a person's motives and character and her actions (T 411-12); that there is no distinction between moral and physical necessity (T 171) and that therefore the connection between motives and actions must be causal (T 404; T 406-407).

Clarke's defense of free will is a critical step in his derivation of the moral attributes of God and human moral obligation. Placing Hume's opposing account in this context contributes to an understanding of the development and integration of Hume's arguments throughout the *Treatise*. The discussion of these specific connexions between Hume and Clarke are beyond the scope of this paper. The argument against materialism (and Hume's reaction to it) is discussed in some detail below.

10 Hume would agree with the conclusion here, but would take this to be an argument against the simplicity of the self. It is also interesting to compare this passage with T 246.

11 Clarke comments that the supposition of an infinite succession of dependent beings "is only a driving back from one step to another...the Question concerning the Ground or Reason of the Existence of Things" (II: 526).

12 The citations given here are to Clarke's references to fitness in the *Demonstration*. His moral theory is more fully developed in *A Discourse Concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, Works*, vol. II.

13 See Robert F. Anderson, "The Location, Extension, Shape and Size of Hume's Perceptions," in Donald Livingston and James King, eds., *Hume: A Re-evaluation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976) and John Bricker, *Hume's Philosophy of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 44.

14 This view is evident in his published correspondence with Leibniz, and featured prominently in his published controversy with Anthony Collins as well. See III: 763; 794; 799; IV: 610, for example.

15 Both halves of this debate are included in Clarke's *Works*, vol. III. I am not aware of anywhere else that they are currently in print.

16 These works, originally published as pamphlets, were reprinted together in 1731. For this and other useful information about the Clarke-Collins debate see John Yolton, *Thinking Matter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), Chapter Two.

17 See also III: 807 and III: 876, for example.

18 In some passages he clearly struggles to reduce gravitation to this model. See III: 812, for example.

19 As I have argued at length elsewhere, these are the relations that create a compound self concerned with its past and its future—one which meets the conditions for moral responsibility. See my "Personal Identity and the Passions," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (October 1989), 545–557.

20 See Cajori's Appendix to Newton's *Principia*, 633–5; Newton's four letters to Richard Bentley in *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, edited by H. W. Turnbull (Cambridge, 1961) vol. III, letters 398, 399, 403 and 406; and Query 31 of the *Opticks*; John Wright, *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 163–64.

21 *Opticks*, 376.

22 Wright, 156–57.

23 Bricke, 44.

24 This interpretation is, I believe, further supported by Hume's many discussions of animals in the *Treatise*, where distinctions between human nature and the natures of animals appear to be matters of degree, not kind.

25 See section IV, above. Clarke argued that immaterial substances could have extension.

26 *Opticks*, Query 31, 401.

27 Newton wrote toward the end of Query 31:

And if natural Philosophy in all its Parts, by Pursuing this Method, shall at length be perfected, the Bounds of Moral Philosophy will also be enlarged. (*Opticks*, 405.)

However, given that Newton shared Clarke's view of the indivisible self (see note 7), it is far from certain that he would have embraced Hume's generalization of his concept of attraction. As note 8 indicates, Newton's brief suggestion in Query 31 of the potential contribution of natural philosophy to moral philosophy has affinities with Clarke's rationalism.

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