



Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

**THE METAPHYSICS OF 18TH CENTURY
NATURAL RELIGION**

THOMAS JOHN CURTIN

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Trinity College,
Dublin University, in the Department of Philosophy

March 2011



Thesis 9686

DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University or any other degree awarding body. This thesis is entirely my own work.

The librarian of Trinity College, Dublin may lend or copy the thesis upon request without reference to me on the understanding that such authority applies to the provision of single copies made for study purposes, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.

Signature

.....

In Memoriam

Brad Cohen

(1953-2008)

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
world! the paragon of animals!

Hamlet (Act II, scene ii)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	xi
Summary	xiii
Abbreviations	xv
Introduction	1

CHAPTER I

Malebranche, Berkeley, and the Causal Efficacy of Finite Wills

1. Introduction.....	9
2. Causation as creation in Malebranche's philosophy.....	11
3. Malebranche's Epistemic Argument against knowledge of causal power	13
4. Causation as necessary connection in Malebranche's philosophy	15
5. The nature of Berkeleyan spirits	20
6. Berkeleyan spirits as causes.....	25
7. Berkeley on the limitations of finite spirits.....	29
8. The essence and existence of spirits	32
9. Concluding remarks	36

CHAPTER II

Berkeley, Causal Power, and the Absolute Necessitation Model of Causation

1. Introduction.....	38
2. Berkeley's identification of causation with volition.....	39
3. Berkeley's rejection of the absolute necessitation model of causation.....	50
4. Berkeley's definition of wisdom in <i>A New Letter</i>	51
5. Berkeley's definition of causal power in terms of willing.....	55
6. Berkeley's understanding of necessary connection	58
7. Concluding remarks	63

CHAPTER III

Hume on Causal Power and Necessary Connection

1. Introduction.....	65
2. Hume's skepticism and the science of human nature	68
3. The Bare Thought and knowledge of causal power.....	70
4. Hume and natural causal necessitation	76
5. Introspection and knowledge of causal power.....	79
6. The causal structure of the world and the Image of God doctrine.....	91
7. Hume and Berkeley on necessity in causal relations	95
8. Concluding remarks	101

CHAPTER IV*Berkeley on Causal Power and the Volitional Activity of Spirits*

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Introduction..... | 103 |
| 2. Berkeley, volitions, and necessary connections..... | 105 |
| 3. Berkeley, human agency, and the influence of the divine will..... | 111 |
| 4. Finite spirits, causal efficacy, and the volitional activity of the will..... | 117 |
| 5. Hume's skepticism regarding power and the efficacy of the divine will..... | 123 |
| 6. Farther reflections upon Berkeley's response to Hume..... | 129 |

CHAPTER V*Conclusion: Hume's Philosophical Reformation of Causation*

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Hume's motivation in his negative account of causal power..... | 133 |
| 2. A further reflection upon Hume's negative account of causal power..... | 137 |
| 3. Hume's philosophical reformation of causality..... | 139 |
| 4. The skeptical realist interpretation of Hume..... | 144 |
| 5. Conclusion..... | 147 |

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Primary literature..... | 153 |
| Secondary literature..... | 154 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the years which it has taken me to complete this dissertation I have incurred many debts, though I can only express a fraction of them at present. I would like to express my thanks to Professor David Berman, whose supervision and helpful comments throughout the process of researching and writing this dissertation have been of great benefit to the whole. I would also like to take this opportunity to express a great thanks to Dr. James O'Shea, whose comments have been of great value in helping me to produce a far better work overall than what I would have been capable of accomplishing if left to my own devices and researches. The willingness he showed to assist me with this dissertation is very much appreciated. A debt of thanks is likewise owed to Aisling Crean, who offered helpful advice and criticism regarding various parts of this dissertation, and in particular, for explaining the subtleties at the heart of the contemporary debates in metaphysics regarding causation and necessity, which permitted me to view the discussion of these issues by early modern philosophers in a light that would otherwise have been concealed to me by sheer ignorance.

Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to thank my family. The debt owed to my father Charles, my mother Donna, and my sister Erin, is easily the largest I have incurred to date. Their patience, encouragement, and support, both moral and financial, have been the biggest factors in the completion of this dissertation. I cannot in such short a space as this state just how much is owed to them and how much thanks is due to them as well. An incalculable debt of thanks is forever owed to P.

Thomas Curtin
Dublin, March 2011

SUMMARY

The main focus of this dissertation concerns the influence that Malebranche's conception of causation, which understands causal power in terms of absolute necessity, had upon the writings of George Berkeley and David Hume, and the specific manner in which each philosopher responds to that conception within the context of natural religion. I argue for two main claims. First, that Berkeley rejects Malebranche's conception of a true cause and defines causal power in terms of volition in order to shelter his natural religion from the threat he foresaw in the modeling of causation upon absolute necessity. Second, that Hume accepts Malebranche's conception of a true cause as revealing the criterion that knowledge of causal power would entail, and this acceptance has a two-fold purpose: first, to illustrate that the Malebranchean conception of causation cannot account for the idea of necessary connection which the human mind applies to causal relations, since the absolute necessity inherent in that model exceeds the reach of human understanding; and second, that Malebranche's model, in supplying the criterion which knowledge of power would entail, can be utilized to undermine Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields the experiential evidence necessary to conclude that finite wills are causal powers.

The first chapter offers the historical background that I understand to be necessary for understanding the central claim of this dissertation. The chapter focuses upon the negative arguments employed by Malebranche to argue that finite wills are inefficacious and that the divine will is the only cause in existence. Afterwards, I elucidate Berkeley's argument that finite wills are secondary causes in the *Principles*. The negative arguments employed by Malebranche are also imperative to this dissertation for it is these arguments that provide Hume with a blueprint for his own negative account of causal power—an account that is directed against Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields knowledge that finite wills are causal powers. I proceed in the second chapter to argue two points: first, that Berkeley identifies all causal activity with volition; and second, that Berkeley rejects the Malebranchean modeling of causation upon absolute necessitation, and defines causal power in terms of willing—that is, in terms of a spirit's capacity to causally affect those ideas within

its power through volitional activity. I argue that this definition has two important advantages for Berkeley: it permits degrees within causal power, since the defining feature for Berkeley is not the absolute necessitation of Malebranche's model, and in permitting differing degrees of causal power, finite wills and the divine will can both be said to be causal powers. That finite wills are non-omnipotent is no impediment to denominating such wills genuine powers for Berkeley, as it had been for Malebranche in modeling causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation.

The third chapter examines the influence that Malebranche's conception had upon Hume's account of causation and how it influenced his response to Berkeley's natural religion. I argue that Hume accepts the Malebranchean model as stating what knowledge of causal power would entail in order to accomplish two ends. First, to reveal that the Malebranchean model of causation places too great a condition upon knowledge of causal power for human understanding to satisfy, leaving such knowledge inaccessible. Second, Hume employs that model to deny the Berkeleyan inference that reflection upon the will yields a conscious awareness that finite spirits are causal powers. After treating Hume's acceptance and use of Malebranche's causal model, I proceed in the fourth chapter to examine Berkeley's experiential argument that finite wills are powers and the analogical argumentation that he employs to conclude that God is a causal power. In doing so, I explicate Berkeley's argument that the volitional activity of spirits permits one to draw the conclusion that those spirits are genuine powers, which is the result of his rejection of Malebranche's conception of causation and the manner in which he defines causal power.

The fifth chapter considers some questions that remain for my interpretation to answer in reference to some potential interpretative problems. I argue that understanding Berkeley's natural religion and the belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine as the motivating factors behind Hume's negative account of causal power provides the best explanation for understanding Hume's overarching aim, and one which is sensitive to the prevailing intellectual climate of the early modern era. I emphasize the manner in which my interpretation can maintain Hume's philosophical reformation of the idea of causation, as well as examine why it need not engage in the further, and far more controversial debate, as to whether Hume believed in the real existence of causal power; and further, that my interpretation can be accepted by skeptical realists and those who dispute the skeptical realist interpretation concerning Hume's account of causation.

ABBREVIATIONS

All references to Berkeley's writings are cited from *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop. (London: Nelson, 1948-1957). References to this edition itself are abbreviated as *Works*, followed by volume and page number. References to the *Three Dialogues* are made to dialogue and page number. All other references to Berkeley's works reflect the section number of the work cited.

- A New Letter* "A New Letter by Berkeley to Browne on Divine Analogy," by J.P. Pittion and D. Berman, *Mind*, vol. 78, no. 311 (Jul., 1969): 375-392.
- Dialogues* *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Natural History of Religion*, by David Hume. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- Dialogues on Metaphysics* *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion*, by Nicolas Malebranche. Edited by N. Jolley and translated by D. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Enquiry* *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, by David Hume. Edited by L.A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd edition, revised and edited by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).
- Essay* *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, by John Locke. Edited by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
- Search after Truth* *The Search after Truth; Elucidations of the Search after Truth*, by Nicolas Malebranche. Edited and translated by T.M. Lennon and P.J. Olscamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Treatise* Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge, 2nd edition, revised and edited by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

INTRODUCTION

One of the more prevalent and wide-reaching beliefs that shaped the intellectual climate of the early modern period was the biblical belief that humankind has been created in the image of the divine.¹ The breadth of this belief was far-ranging indeed and the extent of its influence in the early modern period is reflected in a common intellectual heritage that shaped the writings of thinkers as diverse as Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley, and Hume. This inherited intellectual heritage placed great importance upon the fact that humanity has been endowed with reason, a faculty seen as divine, for it was through reason that human understanding came to know the necessary *a priori* truths of mathematics and logic. *A priori* knowledge was understood to be that element of human understanding that elevated it on a par with its divine counterpart; it enabled humankind to remove itself from the natural and situate itself in the heavens, as little gods living as children in God's house.² The mind of the divine being was therefore not to be viewed as differing from that of the human mind in essence, but rather in reference to the extent of the former's knowledge—an extent that far surpassed the more limited scope of finite minds. The belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine fostered an understanding in thinkers of the early modern period that the difference between the divine mind and the human mind is one of degree, not of kind or essence. However, in respect to *a priori* reasoning, and the infallible and certain knowledge that such reasoning discovered, there was no difference between the divine intellect and the human intellect: humanity is capable of knowing the eternal truths of mathematics in the same manner as does the divine, according to the absolute necessitation that governs those eternal truths.

Employed by rationalist philosophers, the belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine manifested itself not only in an anthropomorphic conception of the divine mind, but also in the emphasis that such philosophers placed upon the primacy of reason: in the certainty acquired through the intuitive knowledge

¹ For a sustained discussion of how the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine influenced thinkers during the early modern period—a discussion to which this work as a whole is indebted—see Craig (1987).

² See Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* (XXXVI).

of ideas such as the existence of God, the necessary connection existing between thought and being, as well as between finite and infinite existence, and the belief that reason could discover the causal structure of the world by means of *a priori* reasoning. The manifestations of this biblical belief, as grand and far-reaching as they were, established the intellectual climate into which both Berkeley and Hume were born, lived, and wrote; however, their respective reactions to this belief were markedly different. Berkeley was a religiously minded philosopher who sought to establish the divine will as the foundation upon which he erected his entire philosophy. Hume, on the other hand, devoid of similar religious convictions, sought to destroy the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine; and, through his *science of human nature*, return humanity to the natural and limit human inquiry to experience and careful experimentation.³

The principal argument of this dissertation as a whole is that both Berkeley and Hume recognized that the Malebranchean conception of causation in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect—a conception which I shall henceforth refer to as the *absolute necessitation model*—led to serious problems concerning the efficacy of the divine will, as well as finite wills. It is my belief that Hume recognized that the potential problems inherent in Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) could not only be utilized against the causal power of finite wills, but that it could be extended to the realm of natural religion in order to undermine the causal efficacy of the divine will: God cannot be said to be a causal power any more than finite wills can be said to be genuine causal powers.⁴ I suggest that Berkeley also recognized this potential problem in Malebranche's conception of causation, and it is my belief that Berkeley sought to secure his own natural religion, principally the belief that God is a causal power, by rejecting the absolute necessitation model and defining causal power in terms of the volitional activity of the will. However, in order for Berkeley to secure the causal efficacy of the divine will, he first had to secure the causal efficacy of finite spirits—that is, Berkeley had to successfully argue that finite spirits are causal powers by means of inward reflection upon a finite spirit's ability to create and affect ideas of

³ See *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xix).

⁴ See *Treatise* (I.III.14 & Appendix: 632-633), as well as *Enquiry* (VII: 65-73). In reference to Hume's negative treatment of causal power as it relates to the early modern belief that humanity was created in the image of the divine, see Craig (1987: ch. 2).

imagination, as stated in *Principles* (§28), and in a finite spirit's ability to produce motion in its body, as stated in *Principles* (§147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237). It is my belief that Berkeley accomplishes this by equating causal activity with volitional activity, and arguing that since volitional activity subsists solely in spirits, both finite and infinite, this fact permits one to conclude that spirits are causal powers.

The first chapter supplies what I believe to be the necessary historical background for understanding the responses formulated by Berkeley and Hume to Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause—that is, in relation to each philosopher's beliefs regarding natural religion. The chapter focuses solely upon Malebranche and Berkeley, concerning itself primarily with the negative arguments of the former, which are directed against the causal efficacy of finite wills, in terms of the absolute necessitation model of causation—that is, the non-omnipotence of finite wills renders their volitions incapable of absolutely necessitating their intended effects—as well as Berkeley's response in the *Principles* that finite wills are genuine secondary causes. The claim that finite spirits are genuine causes is essential to the whole of Berkeley's philosophy; however, this work will focus chiefly upon the importance of this claim to Berkeley's natural religion. The elucidation of the negative arguments employed by Malebranche will likewise supply the blueprint which Hume utilized for his criticisms of the absolute necessitation model of causation and Berkeley's natural religion—that is, in reference to Hume's criticisms in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-73) that neither finite wills nor the divine will can be said to be a causal power. My aim in the first chapter is to reveal the major difference between Malebranche and Berkeley, which consists in the latter's claim that finite wills are secondary causes, and the manner of argumentation advanced by Berkeley to draw this conclusion. The sheer importance of this single claim to Berkeley's philosophy will become readily apparent.

The second chapter focuses upon Berkeley's identification of causal activity with volition activity, and how this identification impacted his definition of causal power in terms of a spirit's ability to influence those ideas within its power by means of volitional activity. I shall argue that Berkeley rejects the absolute necessitation model of causation, advanced by Malebranche, and Berkeley's rejection of this model is on account of the danger he understood it to pose to natural religion; or more precisely, to the efficacy of the divine will. I suggest that Berkeley was astute enough to recognize the possibility that another thinker could employ Malebranche's model

of causation to the detriment of religion—a thinker which I argue in chapter three is Hume—and in order to secure his own natural religion from the threat he foresaw in the negative arguments employed by Malebranche, Berkeley rejected the absolute necessitation model and formulated his own definition of causal power in terms of willing: the capacity to affect ideas *via* volition.

I argue that Berkeley defines causal power in this manner in order to secure his experiential argument that reflection upon the will and its activities reveals finite spirits to be genuine causal powers from the type of negative argumentation employed by Hume in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69). Berkeley understood the idea of necessary connection to involve *a priori* inference in the same manner that mathematical knowledge was understood to involve *a priori* inference in the early modern period. One manifestation of this belief regarding the nature of causation was Malebranche's modeling of causal necessity on the absolute necessity of mathematics; and, it was this conception that forced Malebranche to deny the causal efficacy of finite wills. Desirous to affirm that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, as this formed the experiential basis for Berkeley's argument that God is a causal power, Berkeley was forced to reject the Malebranchean belief that causation is modeled on absolute necessitation, and define causal power in terms of the volitional activity of spirits.

The focus of the third chapter is upon Hume's negative account of causal power, his acceptance of the absolute necessitation model as stating that characteristic which knowledge of causal power would entail, which is the inseparability of a cause and effect, and the manner in which he employs that model to undermine Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields the experiential evidence necessary to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers. I argue that Hume's acceptance of the absolute necessitation model leads him to place a condition of inseparability upon knowledge of causal power—a condition that renders human understanding incapable of acquiring such knowledge on account of the absolute necessitation that is the defining characteristic of that model of causation. It is the magnitude that knowledge of causal power demands of human understanding—that is, knowledge of the entire influence of the will over the body and ideas—that renders the absolute necessitation model unacceptable in the search for an impression of power, for the connection between a cause and effect is understood in terms a logically necessary connection, which Hume argues is too strong a requirement for human thought to satisfy. Hume's employment of this model should, I believe, be understood as his attempt to return the subjects of

human inquiry, and above all others, natural religion, to its rightful place within the *science of human nature*. Natural religion must limit the scope of its inquiry to the dictates of experience, as Hume states in *Treatise* (Introduction: xv).

Hume clearly states in *Treatise* (I.III.2) that the idea of necessary connection is essential to causality, and as the absolute necessitation model understands this idea in terms of a logically necessary connection, it cannot provide an adequate model for causal necessity, for human understanding does not comprehend causal relations as inextricably united. Rather, Hume advances a notion of necessary connection that is based upon a felt determination of the mind to infer a cause from its regularly conjoined effect and *vice versa*. This is the idea of necessary connection that Hume espouses in his positive account of causation—one that is meant to provide a better alternative to the absolute necessitation model. However, I argue that Hume still accepts the absolute necessitation model as correctly revealing what knowledge of causal power would entail: the inseparability of a cause and effect. In this sense, the model is not conceptually bankrupt, but supplies that characteristic, the acquaintance with which would constitute knowledge of causal power; however, as Hume argues, the model proves unsatisfactory since the breadth of human understanding is not sufficiently large enough to know, either through demonstrative reasoning or experience, that a cause and effect are inseparable. Human thought is able to know the natural necessitation of Hume's positive account of causality: that is, the felt determination of the mind to infer a cause from observation of the constant conjunction of that cause with its usual effect or *vice versa*. However, experience (i.e., reflection upon the will) is unable to reveal an instance of causal power, and this is precisely the worry that Hume's negative account of power poses to Berkeley's natural religion. The worry is severe, for if Hume is correct in his assertion that reflection does not reveal that one is a causal power given one's ability to create and alter ideas, as well as produce motion in one's body, Hume has undermined the experiential evidence that Berkeley utilizes to argue that finite wills are causal powers; and, since such evidence is necessary for one to know that the divine will is also a causal power, the danger that this line of criticism poses to Berkeley's natural religion is particularly worrying.

The fourth chapter centers upon Berkeley's experiential argument which Hume's negative account of causal power threatens: that self-reflection reveals finite spirits to be causal powers. I argue that because Berkeley rejects the absolute

necessitation model of causation, thereby lessening the restrictive criterion that model places upon knowledge of causal power, Berkeley's definition of power requires only the experiential evidence that the will is active in its ability to influence certain ideas through volition. Where Hume failed to locate an instance of causal power in the actions of the will, Berkeley believes he succeeds. In his search for an impression or instance of power, Hume discovers only the constant conjunction of volitions and their effects, such as the creation of an idea or the motion of a bodily limb; however, the power by which those effects are necessitated escapes human understanding—the result of Hume's conceiving causal power in terms of absolute necessitation. I argue that Berkeley finds instances of power in the experiential knowledge that one is able to excite and change ideas in the mind, which he argues in *Principles* (§28), and in the experiential fact that one is the immediate cause of motion in the limbs of one's body, which he argues in *Principles* (§147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237). I suggest that it is Berkeley's definition of causal power in terms of the capacity to influence ideas through volition that permits him to draw this inference, which Hume believes to be illegitimate: that one can extend one's knowledge beyond the observation of constant conjunction and discover an instance of power. Hume's acceptance of the absolute necessitation model is meant to illustrate that knowledge of power is beyond the reach of human thought, for as Hume illustrates, the model is too stringent to allow one to acquire knowledge of that power which is said to lie behind the constant conjunction of volitions and their effects. The only idea of causal necessity which human thought can formulate is derived from the mind's natural propensity to infer a cause from an effect or *vice versa*, which is based upon the regular conjunction of the two.

After elucidating Berkeley's argument that self-reflection reveals finite spirits to be genuine causal powers, I shall proceed to explicate Berkeley's argument in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that the notion one has of God as an active power is derived *via* analogy with the causal efficacy of finite wills. In doing so, I shall likewise elucidate how Hume's negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) is applicable to Berkeley's claim that God is a causal power. What is immediately apparent is the need for Berkeley to secure his claim that self-reflection yields knowledge that finite wills are causal powers, for this assertion is imperative to Berkeley's natural religion, as well as his metaphysics as a whole, for this assertion is the basis upon which Berkeley builds the efficacy of the divine will. As *Principles* (§§29-33) assert, it is the volitional activity of the divine will which is responsible for

the creation of ideas of sense and the uniformity displayed in the natural laws—a uniformity which humanity is dependent upon for its preservation, for it provides humankind with the foresight to regulate its conduct in order to secure those things which are pleasant and avoid those which are harmful.

The final chapter considers how the interpretation I advance in this work reflects the philosophical aims of both Berkeley and Hume, and some broader concerns regarding Hume's treatment of causation. I examine how the interpretation I advance accounts for what I understand to be Hume's primary motivation in his negative assessment of causal power, as well as how my interpretation is able to account for Hume's reformation of the idea of causation in his positive account of causality in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-168) and *Enquiry* (VII: 73-79). I proceed to examine the possible manner in which the skeptical realist debate concerning Hume's account of causation—that is, the question of whether Hume believes in the real existence of causal power, though such knowledge is incomprehensible to the human mind—might impact my own interpretation. I argue that the interpretation I advance has an advantage in that it can be viewed in isolation from the further, and more divisive, debate regarding Hume's suspected causal realism. Likewise, I argue that my interpretation has the benefit that it is able to accommodate the skeptical realist position, as well as that of its critics, without causing grave difficulty to its central assertion. This is on account of the fact that my interpretation does not directly concern whether Hume actually believed in the existence of causal power, but in Hume's belief that Malebranche's modeling of causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation reveals that characteristic, the acquaintance with which would constitute knowledge of causal power, though Hume ultimately illustrates that such acquaintance is impossible given the limits of human reason and perception. The interpretation I advance seeks only to affirm that Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model as expressing what knowledge of power would entail, and employs that model to illustrate its inadequacy in serving as an individual's idea of causal necessity, as well as the manner by which that model can be employed as an argument against the experiential basis that Berkeley utilizes to argue that spirits are powers: that self-reflection yields knowledge of oneself as a causal power.

There is a final point that I wish to state which involves Berkeley's authorship of *A New Letter*, which is a private letter sent to Peter Browne in the year 1733, expressing its author's objections to Browne's claim that analogy supplies an

intermediary sense of meaning by which one comes to know the various attributes of the divine—for this letter will factor in the main contention of the second chapter. A problem arises on account that there is no signature bearing Berkeley's name; thus, it cannot be asserted with total certainty that the letter is in fact by Berkeley's hand. However, this should not prevent one from maintaining a full confidence in Berkeley's authorship, especially given the style of argument employed in the letter. The case for Berkeley's authorship is made by A. A. Luce in a note that precedes the letter itself, and the claim is offered further support by Jean-Paul Pittion and David Berman in the article's introductory section.⁵ I am in full agreement with Luce's contention that Berkeley is the letter's author, and as I can add nothing beyond what Luce has stated, I therefore, direct the reader to his argument. What I shall state is that the main line of argumentation developed in *A New Letter* is grounded in a style of reasoning which bears a striking resemblance to that utilized by Berkeley in *Alciphron* (IV. 5-18 & VII. 1-15), especially in his argument that an individual may know the internal nature or activity of a power by means of the effects it produces: one may know God to be wise and benevolent based upon the effects produced by the divine will, just as one knows force, which is a mathematical hypothesis, through the various effects it is said to produce in nature. Berkeley also employs this line of argument in Philonous' claim that one cannot conceive of any action distinct from volition in *Three Dialogues* (III: 239-240), as well as in the distinction between finite spirits and God in *Principles* (§§28-33). Given the striking similarity in the manner of argumentation employed in *A New Letter* and *Alciphron*, coupled with the extensive research that is provided by Luce regarding the letter's content and style, and that provided by the authors of the article's introduction, it appears certain to me that the letter is the product of Berkeley's pen.

⁵ See *A New Letter* (381-385). The letter first appeared in *A Literary Journal* (vol. ii, part ii) in 1745, which was a quarterly journal published in Dublin between 1744-1749. A brief history of the journal is provided on page 375 of *A New Letter*. The publication in the journal does not bear Berkeley's name as its author, but it does state that the letter was sent to Peter Browne shortly after the publication of his *Divine Analogy* in 1733.

CHAPTER I

Malebranche, Berkeley, and the Causal Efficacy of Finite Wills

1. Introduction

The idea that the relation of cause and effect involves a necessary connection was well established in 18th century philosophical thought, though Enlightenment philosophers differ in important respects as to how they understand the nature of necessary connection. Berkeley and Hume both reveal an awareness of the idea of necessary connection with regards to causation, and respond to this conception in their own philosophical writings, though to different purposes. The central focus of this chapter will be upon a particular conception of causation, espoused by Nicolas Malebranche, which understands the idea of necessary connection in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect. Malebranche defines a genuine cause in precisely these terms in the *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) in order to illustrate that the divine will alone is an active cause, as well as a means to conclude the complete causal impotency of finite wills in causing actions, which are nothing more than *occasional causes* which are performed by means of the efficacy of the divine will.¹ These were the central assertions upon which Malebranche founded the principles of his occasionalism; however, where Malebranche thought that his conception of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection proved the divine will to be the only active cause in existence, Hume adopted the former's negative arguments against the causal efficacy of finite wills and proceeded to apply those very same arguments with equal devastation to the supposed causal efficacy of the divine will.

Hume's objective in his negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) is to illustrate that the Malebranchean conception of causation in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect proves to be far too stringent a model to permit human understanding to acquire knowledge of that power said to necessitate causal relations and render a cause inseparable from its usual effect. Hume believed that human thought must remain within the experiential

¹ In particular, see *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 449-450).

boundaries of his *science of human nature*, and in *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xix), Hume chastises those metaphysicians who extend their search for the original principles of nature and natural religion beyond the scope of human experience and careful experimentation.²

It is my belief that Berkeley's desire to distance his own philosophy from that of Malebranche reflects the former's recognition of the potential problems inherent in the manner which the latter defines a genuine cause in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) that Hume exposed: that is, in terms of absolute necessity. Malebranche had utilized the absolute necessitation model of causation in order to argue for the causal inefficacy of finite wills; however, Berkeley could not accept the complete impotence of finite wills. In fact, that Berkeley is successful in arguing that finite spirits are genuine causal powers is essential to his natural religion, as well as his philosophical system as a whole, for it is through reflection upon oneself as a willing agent—that is, reflection upon the activities of the will and the will itself—that one is able to conclude, *via* analogy, that God is causally efficacious. God is that power which creates the ideas of sense that comprise the external world, as well as that power which conserves the regularity exhibited in the laws of nature—laws which the human species is utterly dependent upon for its survival and continued happiness.³

As Berkeley's argument in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) asserts, knowledge of the causal efficacy of the divine will is possible only insofar as finite spirits are first known, through self-reflection, to be willing agents who have the power to causally affect their ideas of imagination and bodily limbs through volitional activity. The importance of this experiential claim to the whole of Berkeley's philosophical system forces him to reject the absolute necessitation model of causation, which he would have known only too well from Malebranche's *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3), in order to shelter his own natural religion from the manner of objection which was to be employed by Hume in his negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69). The importance that I believe Berkeley places upon securing the causal efficacy of finite spirits in reference to his natural religion demands as full an elucidation of Berkeley's argument that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes as possible. With this in mind, the principal objective of this chapter will consist in supplying the historical background to which Berkeley and Hume respond in their respective

² See also *Enquiry* (XII: 161-165).

³ See *New Theory of Vision* (§147), *Principles* (§31), and *Alciphron* (IV. 14-15).

discussions of causal power and the idea of necessary connection—that is, to Malebranche’s conception of a genuine cause in terms of absolute necessitation.⁴ Therefore, I shall elucidate Malebranche’s arguments that finite wills are causally impotent and that the divine will alone can be said to be a genuine cause; and, after having elucidated Malebranche’s negative arguments, I shall then proceed to explain the manner in which Berkeley argues that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes in the *Principles*.

2. Causation as creation in Malebranche’s philosophy

Malebranche employs a series of arguments which are meant to prove the impotence of finite wills and the truth of his occasionalism: that the divine will is the only true cause in existence and that all supposed secondary causes are merely occasions upon which the divine will acts in order to produce some effect.⁵ Malebranche believed that if Descartes’ principles regarding the nature of material bodies and motion were carried to their natural consequences, his own occasionalist philosophy would result. The nature of Cartesian matter, being completely passive, prohibits it from possessing any active principle that is responsible for the genesis of motion; thus, within Cartesian dualism, activity must reside in immaterial substance. However, Descartes’ writings reveal a willingness to permit causal efficacy to secondary causes—a willingness that is not retained by Malebranche. Malebranche understands causation to involve a creative act, and it is the presence of this creative element in causation that leads him to relegate all finite wills to a state of utter impotency. Malebranche understood this creative aspect of causation to be too great a power to be attributed to the limited capacities of human wills; and most especially, as he states in *Search after*

⁴ There is little doubt that both Berkeley and Hume were heavily influenced by Malebranche’s philosophy, though both break from its central claims in significant ways. My aim in this dissertation is to illustrate the extent of Malebranche’s influence with regard to the specific manner in which Malebranche understands causal power—that is, in terms of the perception of a logically necessary connection, which I have labeled the *absolute necessitation model*. This is merely one aspect of Malebranche’s influence on both Berkeley and Hume; an influence that extends far beyond his discussion of causation and the inability of human minds to acquire knowledge of causal power. A fuller treatment of Malebranche’s influence on Berkeley may be found in Luce (1967). Luce contends that Malebranche should be seen as exerting the greatest influence over Berkeley philosophy, even greater than that of Locke. A very good discussion concerning Malebranche’s extensive influence on Hume’s philosophy can be found in McCracken (1983).

⁵ See Ott (2009: ch. 10) for a very good discussion of the various types of argumentation that Malebranche employs in order to support his occasionalist principles. See also Sleight (1990: 169-183).

Truth (III.ii.3), the power to create ideas *ex nihilo*.⁶ A proper analysis of the idea of causation for Malebranche reveals that it is equatable to creation, which is due to the fact that Malebranche understood causation to involve the production of a new modification in a substance by another substance, such as the production of motion in a corporeal body by the divine being. Thus, causation involves the creation of some new modification in a substance, but this act of creation likewise requires the continual conservation of that substance, whether it is in motion or at rest—that is, in the same or a different spatial location. In *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (VII. 6-9), Theodore, the spokesman for Malebranche, states that the divine will's power to create is identifiable with its power to conserve bodies in existence: conservation is nothing except the continual creation of bodies by the divine will. Theodore states in *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (VII. 7):

“The moment of creation has passed!” But if this moment does not pass, then you are in a spot, and will have to yield. Therefore take note. God wills that a certain kind of world exist. His will is omnipotent, and this world is thus created. Let God no longer will there to be a world, and it is thereby annihilated. For the world assuredly depends on the will of the creator. If the world subsists, it is because God continues to will its existence. Thus, the conservation of creatures is, on the part of God, nothing but their continued creation. I say on the part of God who acts. For on the part of creatures there appears to be a difference, since by the act of creation they pass from nothingness to being, whereas by the act of conservation they continue to be. But in essence the act of creation and conservation are but a single volition which, consequently, is necessarily followed by the same effects.

Causation, therefore, is simply the activity by which the divine will continually creates new modifications in a substance while simultaneously conserving that substance in the same spatial location (i.e., a substance at rest), or in a different spatial location (i.e., a substance in motion).

The Cartesian doctrine of the *continual creation* of passive and inactive matter is employed by Malebranche to argue for a fundamental point in his occasionalism: that all activity is possessed by the divine will alone. The power to create and continually sustain substances in the natural world could only be possessed by the will of an omnipotent and wholly benevolent being; finite minds and material objects simply do not have the power necessary to perform this simultaneous act of creation and conservation. Malebranche's belief that causation is tantamount to the creation of modifications in substances, the latter of which are simultaneously conserved by that same creative act, provides too strong a condition for finite beings to be considered as

⁶ See also *Search after Truth* (Elucidation 15: 669).

genuine causes. Theodore's claim in *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (VII. 7) reveals that the act of creation and conservation performed by the divine is volitional in nature, but constitutes a power that is too great for any finite will to perform.

3. Malebranche's Epistemic Argument against knowledge of causal power

The strategy Malebranche employs in his argument that the power behind the continual creation of substances extends beyond the capacity of finite wills focuses upon the extent of the power which would be required of finite wills. Malebranche utilizes a similar strategy, though to different effect, in his argument against knowledge of power given the infinitely complex nature of the physiological processes which control the mind and the body. Whereas Malebranche's argument concerning the continual creation of substances focuses upon the non-omnipotence of finite wills—that is, such wills lack the power necessary to create new modifications in a substance while simultaneously conserving that substance in existence—Malebranche's argument against knowledge of causal power focuses upon the non-omniscience of finite wills. Finite wills are not true causes given their complete ignorance of the relevant neurophysiological facts that pertain to volitional activity. In order for a finite will to be regarded as a genuine causal power, a human being would have to understand the totality of the neurological processes of the mind, as well as the influence of each individual neurological process over the body in leading to the intended effect. Malebranche writes regarding the impossibility of knowing that power behind such processes in *Search after Truth Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 449-450):

For how could we move our arms? To move them, it is necessary to have animal spirits, to send them through certain nerves toward certain muscles in order to inflate and contract them, for it is thus that the arm attached to them is moved; or according to the opinion of some others, it is still not known how that happens. And we see that men who do not know that they have spirits, nerves, and muscles move their arms, and even move them with more skill and ease than those who know anatomy best. Therefore, men will to move their arms, and only God is able and knows how to move them. If a man cannot turn a tower upside down, at least he knows what must be done to do so; but there is no man who knows what must be done to move one of his fingers by means of animal spirits. How, then, could men move their arms? These things seem obvious to me and, it seems to me, to all those willing to think, although they are perhaps incomprehensible to all those willing only to sense.

The same point is restated in *Search after Truth* (Elucidation 15: 670):

But if they say that the union of my mind with my body consists in the fact that God has given me the *power* to move my arm, just as He has given to my body the power to make me feel pleasure and pain in order to apply me to this body and interest me in its preservation, then surely they suppose what is at issue and go in a circle. They have no clear idea of this power the soul has over the body, nor of that the body has over the soul; they do not fully know what they are saying when they positively assert it. They have arrived at this view through prejudice; they have believed it to be so since infancy and as long as they have been capable of sensing; but the mind, reason, and reflection have no role in it.

The non-omniscience of human minds, manifested in the complete inability to acquaint oneself with the supposed causal power the soul is said to exercise over the body and *vice versa*, leads Malebranche to deny that finite wills are genuine secondary causes. In the formulation of a particular volition, such as to produce motion in one's arm, one does nothing more in Malebranche's occasionalism than produce an *occasion* upon which the divine will acts through its own volitional activity, thereby securing the production of the intended effect, which in this case, is the movement of one's arm. The causal power by which the whole process is actuated entirely escapes the grasp of human understanding: it is the ignorance of finite minds that debars their wills from being denominated genuine causal powers.⁷

Malebranche argues that human understanding does not have the capacity to discover the processes through which a volition is able to produce motion in one's bodily limbs, a line of argument that might just as easily been extracted from Hume's negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69). Rather, according to Malebranche, all that one is directly aware of is that a particular volition regularly produces a certain effect; what an individual is totally incapable of understanding or perceiving is the creative power by which the causal relation has been effected and necessitated, for to understand this power of creation, one would need to know the multiplicity of subsequent volitions underlying the initial volition, as well as the various neurological processes at work in the animal spirits when any bodily motion is produced.⁸ The epistemic argument against knowledge of causal power and the

⁷ In a similar manner, Malebranche argues in *Search after Truth* (III.i.1) that the modifications that God may produce in the souls of finite beings are of too great a number to ever be adequately comprehended by the human mind, effectively excluding finite wills from ever being genuine causes. Furthermore, in *Search after Truth* (Conclusion of the First Three Books: 261-263), Malebranche argues that all the modifications of the soul and corporeal objects are derived from God, placing further restrictions upon human beings, and even angels, from being active causal powers.

⁸ Malebranche writes the following in *Search after Truth* (Elucidation 15: 671): "For, even assuming that our volitions were truly the motor force of our bodies (although this seems incomprehensible), how is it conceivable that the soul should move the body? Our arm, for example, is moved only because spirits swell certain of the muscles composing it. Now, in order for the motion that the soul

argument concerning the continual creation of substances are both employed by Malebranche to illustrate the causal inefficacy of finite wills, although each argument utilizes a different deficiency that plagues finite wills: the non-omniscience and non-omnipotence of finite wills respectively.

4. Causation as necessary connection in Malebranche's philosophy

The various arguments Malebranche employs to illustrate the impotence of finite wills and the truth of his occasionalist principles are treated distinctly. There is, however, one argument that Malebranche employs to illustrate the causal inefficacy of finite wills, an argument which is referred to as the *no necessary connection* argument, which is of far greater importance to this dissertation as a whole than the previous two. It is from this argument that the absolute necessitation model of causality, with which the entirety of this dissertation is concerned, is derived; and therefore, must be treated before proceeding further. In *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3), Malebranche reveals an understanding of a genuine cause in terms of a logically necessary connection—that is, a connection in which “the mind perceives a necessary connection” between a cause and its effect.⁹ Malebranche argues that perception does not reveal a necessary connection to exist between the wills of human agents and the effects those wills are said to produce, nor is such a connection located in the causal relations that are said to exist between corporeal objects. That a true cause is defined as one in which a necessary connection is effected excludes any wills that are not connected with their effects by absolute necessitation. Malebranche asserts in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 446-448) that the divinity of an entity must be measured in reference to the power that it is able to exert, by which he means as a genuine cause. The granting of real power to corporeal objects by ancient philosophers is a grave error to Malebranche, for it permits individuals to “render sovereign honor to leeks and onions,” which leads to idolatry. In order to rectify this error of the ancients, Malebranche argues that the term *divinity* corresponds to the ability or power to act as

impresses on the spirits in the brain to be communicable to those in the nerves, and thence to others in the muscles of our arm, the soul's volitions must multiply or change proportionately to the almost infinite collisions or impacts that would occur in the particles composing the spirits; for bodies cannot by themselves move those they meet, as I feel I have sufficiently shown. But this is inconceivable, unless we allow in the soul an infinite number of volitions for the least movement of the body, because in order to move it, an infinite number of communications of motion must take place.”

⁹ See also *Search after Truth* (Elucidation 15) and *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (IV. 11 & VII. 11-13).

a genuine cause—that is, the production of an effect through a logically necessary connection—and as this degree of power resides in the divine will alone, it is God who may be said to be divine: God alone is a real cause for Malebranche and it is upon this foundation that he constructs his occasionalism.

The divine will is a genuine cause because one can perceive that it alone produces a logically necessary connection between its volitional activity and the effects which are produced by that activity, which is a feature of the divine will that Malebranche states in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 450):

A true cause as I understand it is one such that the mind perceives a necessary connection between it and its effect. Now the mind perceives a necessary connection only between the will of an infinitely perfect being and its effects. Therefore, it is only God who is the true cause and who truly has the power to move bodies.

The perfection and omnipotence of the divine will guarantee that any volition it forms will produce its intended effect: the nature of the divine will is such that it is impossible that its volitional activity could fail to produce the effect that it intends. In defining a true cause in terms of absolute necessitation, Malebranche has therefore assured that the wills of finite beings are affected with a complete impotence and depend entirely upon the causal efficacy of the divine will to produce movement in corporeal bodies, including the bodies of human beings. Malebranche expresses exactly this point in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 449):

But not only are bodies incapable of being the true causes of whatever exists: the most noble minds are in a similar state of impotence. They can know nothing unless God enlightens them. They can sense nothing unless God modifies them. They are incapable of willing anything unless God moves them toward good in general, i.e., toward Himself.

Neither finite wills nor material bodies are endowed with an internal power or activity which would enable either to act without the assistance of the divine will in performing a particular action. Malebranche likewise asserts that finite beings are impotent in their own cognitive states, also relying upon the divine for enlightenment, as well as being completely impotent as regards their sensory perceptions without the assistance of God. Malebranche sought to establish the divine will as the seat of all activity in the natural world, both external and internal to the mind, for in his adoption of the Cartesian idea that matter is entirely passive and lacks any active principle or power internal to itself, Cartesian dualism required Malebranche to view such activity as the province of the will; however, as I stated previously, Malebranche maintains that it is the divine will alone that possesses such activity. Furthermore, the Cartesian

doctrine of the *continual creation* of matter—a central point in Malebranche’s occasionalism, as he views causation as equivalent to an act of continual recreation of modifications in a particular substance by the divine will—renders the attribution of an internal activity or power to matter an extremely difficult task.¹⁰

Malebranche’s occasionalism places all activity squarely in the divine will, which is a direct result of the particular manner in which he defines causality—that is, as involving absolute necessitation. Finite wills are causally inefficacious due to the fact that the volitional activity of their wills fails to attain this level of necessitation and does not absolutely necessitate its intended effect. Furthermore, finite minds are not able to perceive such necessitation between the volitions of finite wills and the effects that are produced, nor in the modifications that the soul and material objects undergo—deficiencies which render finite wills devoid of all power for Malebranche. Since the will of the divine is infinitely perfect, its volitions necessarily produce their intentional actions: in this sense, the cause, being God’s will, is entirely inseparable from its attendant effect. Malebranche’s response to the imperfection of finite wills in relation to their divine counterpart is to strip them of causal efficacy and place all efficacy in the divine will, effectively rendering all purported secondary causes as nothing more than occasions for the volitional activity of the divine will.

Berkeley first voices his dissatisfaction concerning the causal impotence of finite wills in Malebranche’s occasionalism in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548):

We move our Legs our selves. ’tis we that will their movement. Herein I differ from Malbranch.

The entry reveals that Berkeley wished to distance himself from the occasionalism of Malebranche by arguing that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes which are able to affect their bodily limbs by an act of will.¹¹ I shall argue that Berkeley’s wish to distance himself from Malebranche’s occasionalism is fundamental to his overall

¹⁰ As regards Malebranche’s view that causation is equatable to the simultaneous act of creation and conservation by the divine will, see Nadler (2000: 128-129), Loeb (1981: 210-220), as well as Sleigh (1990: 172-183).

¹¹ A. A. Luce argues that Berkeley’s desire to distance himself from Malebranche was in part due to his wish to gain promotion within the Church of Ireland, and any association, however slight, with the philosophy of Malebranche—a French Roman Catholic priest who, in the *Search after Truth* (II.iii.2: 168-169), attacked the British State and Church—would have been a risk to say the least. See Luce (1967: 40) concerning this point. It therefore would have been very prudential for the young Berkeley to distance himself from Malebranche’s philosophy in his quest to secure promotion in the Church; however, this does not mask the fact that Berkeley did certainly understand his own philosophical system to differ in respect to that of Malebranche in its affirmation that finite wills are genuine secondary causes and his rejection of Malebranche’s doctrine of *Vision in God*. In particular, see *Three Dialogues* (II: 214-217).

philosophical aim, which had rather important theological considerations. I suggest that Berkeley's belief that finite spirits are causal powers is a direct result of his rejection of the absolute necessitation model that Malebranche advocates.¹² Berkeley and Malebranche agree upon the plain fact that experience reveals that finite wills are not omnipotent or perfect and often fail to produce an intended effect. However, where such failure led Malebranche to deny all active power in finite wills, it does not lead Berkeley to the same conclusion and assert the impotency of finite wills; in fact, Berkeley asserts the exact opposite in *Principles* (§28 & §147), *Three Dialogues* (II: 214-217 & III: 237), and *De Motu* (§25). I believe that the fallibility of finite wills (i.e., their imperfection relative to the divine will) prompted Berkeley to assess the various negative implications that could arise within the sphere of natural religion in espousing the absolute necessitation model favored by Malebranche; and, in recognizing those difficulties, Berkeley sought to define causal power in terms of willing: that is, in a spirit's ability to causally affect certain ideas through volitional activity.

I find a parallel in the manner that Berkeley defines causal power with how he defines wisdom in *A New Letter*—a parallel that I shall discuss further in the second chapter.¹³ I believe that Berkeley understands causal power as synonymous with the act of willing—the capacity for a spirit to exercise volitional control over those ideas within its power—and defining causal power in terms of volitional activity allows Berkeley to assert that any being that engages in such activity, in the act of willing, may be said to be a genuine causal power. The natural consequence of defining power along the same lines as wisdom in *A New Letter* is that Berkeley is committed to holding different degrees of power in the case of finite wills and the divine will. The extent of the power exerted by finite wills and the divine will is not the determining factor in what constitutes a genuine cause, nor is it determined by the fact that a true cause absolutely necessitates its effect: finite wills may fail to necessitate the effects of their volitional activity absolutely, but this need not be understood as prohibiting finite wills from being denominated causal powers. The main advantage for Berkeley in defining power in this manner is that the definition is wide-ranging

¹² As regards Berkeley's assertion that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes, see *Principles* (§28 & §§146-147), *Three Dialogues* (I: 195-197, II: 214-217, & III: 237-240), *Philosophical Commentaries* (§155, §499, & §548), and *De Motu* (§25).

¹³ See ch. 2, sects. 3-5.

enough to permit both God and finite spirits to be said to be causal powers. Inward reflection reveals finite spirits to be willing agents, a point that Berkeley argues for in *Principles* (§28 & §89) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-234), and given that the degree of order displayed in the laws of nature is not on account of the power of any finite will, one may argue by means of analogy that God is a willing agent, and therefore, a causal power—though the divine will is far more powerful and extensive than its human counterpart.¹⁴

In rejecting Malebranche's modeling of causal necessity upon absolute necessity, Berkeley's definition of causal power permits the claim that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes, since Berkeley's definition maintains the defining characteristic of causal power to be the capacity of a spirit to causally affect those ideas which fall under the control of its will by means of its volitional activity. With this in mind, any being that can be said to have this capacity, whether it is perfect or imperfect, divine or human, can be said to be a genuine causal power for Berkeley. Berkeley understands finite spirits to be active powers by virtue of their ability to create and vary ideas of imagination, as well as to cause motion in their bodily limbs, even if that power is significantly weaker than that which is possessed by the divine, which is evidenced by the superior degree of order and steadiness that is exhibited in the laws of nature, as well as in the ideas of sensation that are created and ordered by the will of the divine.¹⁵ What is central to the present chapter is Berkeley's belief that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes, for this belief leads him to reject the Malebranche's conception of causation in terms of absolute necessitation and define causal power in terms of willing; and, it is this, I suggest, that permits Berkeley to argue that finite spirits are genuine causal powers. Any being that is able to engage in the act of willing, which in finite wills is constituted by the ability to excite ideas in the mind and alter their appearance as wished, as well as cause motion in one's body, may be said to be a genuine causal power. Therefore, in order to explicate the manner in which Berkeley argues for this point and set it in a clearer light, I shall elucidate Berkeley's argument that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes in the sections which follow.

¹⁴ See also *Principles* (§§28-31) for this distinction between finite wills and the divine will.

¹⁵ See *Principles* (§§29-33).

5. *The nature of Berkeleyan finite spirits*

Berkeley's treatment of the nature of spirits, and subsequently of causation, is rather sparse in his published works.¹⁶ The sparseness of Berkeley's treatment of agency and causation, however, should not be overly surprising as Berkeley's principal concern in both the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* is the wholesale rejection of material substance, as said to have an absolute existence, independent of all perceiving minds. In so doing, Berkeley advances his own doctrine that sensible objects are ideas, the existence of which depends entirely upon their being perceived by some mind. Thus, the first two sections of the *Principles* are devoted to providing the reader with a distinction between the two existents that comprise Berkeley's ontology: passive ideas and active spirits. It is clear that Berkeley's main concern in the opening sections of the *Principles* is to establish not only this ontological distinction, but also the negative claim that ideas are not substances, and as such, are inert and dependent beings, rather than providing an extensive argument for the positive claim that spirits are substances. Berkeley does indeed affirm the latter claim in *Principles* (§7), but his wording in the first sentence of that section indicates that he understood his positive claim to be proved by the employment of his *esse is percipi* thesis in *Principles* (§§3-6). Berkeley writes the following concerning this specific point in *Principles* (§7):

From what has been said, it follows, there is not any other substance than *spirit*, or that which perceives. But for the fuller proof of this point, let it be considered, the sensible qualities are colour, figure, motion, smell, taste, and such like, that is, the ideas perceived by sense. Now for an idea to exist in an unperceiving thing, is a manifest contradiction; for to have an idea is all one as to perceive: that therefore wherein colour, figure, and the like qualities exist, must perceive them; hence it is clear there can be no unthinking substance or *substratum* of those ideas.

However, Berkeley's initial assertion is problematic since the thesis that the existence of sensible objects is dependent upon a perceiving mind only proves the claim that sensible objects cannot be substances, insofar as the term *substance* is defined within the standard reading of the term in the early modern period of philosophy. The

¹⁶ In a letter to Samuel Johnson, dated November 25, 1729, Berkeley reveals that he had begun working on the second part of his *Principles*, which concerned the nature of spirits, and therefore, the volitional nature of causal activity. However, after making "considerable progress," Berkeley reports that the manuscript was lost during his travels through Italy. See *Works* (II: 282). Berkeley comments upon the proposed second part to the *Principles* in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§508, §807, & §878), as well as in his letter to Le Clerc in *Works* (VIII: 48). The additions which Berkeley makes to his later editions of the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues* in 1734, though rather limited, provide one with further resources for his understanding of the nature of spirits.

existence of ideas is dependent upon their being perceived by a spirit for Berkeley; and, it is this dependence upon another being that entitles Berkeley to conclude that ideas cannot be classified as a substance, for independence or autonomy are conditions for any entity to be classified as a substance in the early modern period. Thus, in drawing upon the ontological distinction established by the *esse is percipi* thesis, Berkeley is only entitled to the negative assertion that ideas cannot be substances. However, *Principles* (§7) likewise supplies an argument against the existence of an unthinking *substratum* wherein those ideas inhere, for to have an idea is the same as to perceive that idea, and the notion that an unperceiving substance can perceive an idea is a contradiction for Berkeley.

What the argument in *Principles* (§7) does not prove is the initial claim that it purports to establish: spirits are substances. The *esse is percipi* thesis distinguishes spirits and ideas as two ontologically distinct entities, but it alone does not establish the independence or autonomy of spirit, which, as I stated, is the standard in early modern philosophy for the classification of a substance. At any rate, Berkeley does not really appear overly concerned with providing a further argument to prove the claim that only spirits are substances; rather, he appears satisfied to allow the claim to stand upon his implied argument which is founded upon his *esse is percipi* thesis in *Principles* (§§3-6).¹⁷ What Berkeley does in the *Principles* is reject a dualistic view of substance—that is, the dual existence of spiritual substance and material substance, the latter understood as having an absolute existence apart from all perceiving beings.

Berkeley clearly rejects the existence of material substance; however, Berkeley's treatment of the nature of spirit in the *Principles* renders it harder for one to completely ascertain whether Berkeley believed in the genuine existence of spiritual substance.¹⁸ Berkeley's repeated assertions that spirit is a substance in the

¹⁷ In truth, the complete independence of spirit may not even be a genuine possibility in the classification of spirits as substances within Berkeley's ontology, since a consequence of the *esse is percipi* thesis would appear to be the fact that spirits and ideas have a mutual dependence upon one another, since the former requires the latter for the act of perception. See *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842) for Berkeley's assertion that volition cannot be severed from ideas, and the mutual dependence each has on the other.

¹⁸ Colin M. Turbayne argues that Berkeley's conception of the mind as a substance is best understood metaphorically, rather than literally. Turbayne argues that the term *substance* provided Berkeley with the best metaphor by which to understand the mind, and therefore, when Berkeley does assert that the mind is a substance wherein ideas exist, that assertion should not be taken literally, but metaphorically. Berkeley, of course, understands the use of metaphorical language in a literal way as a major fault with the philosophers of his intellectual age—a utilization that Berkeley wishes to avoid in his own treatment of substance. See Turbayne (1959; 1962). For an article that argues against Turbayne's claim, see Grave (1962). Alternatively, Robert Muehlmann argues that Berkeley retains his congeries

Principles and *Three Dialogues* indicate that he certainly thought of spirit as a mental substance, but this should not be taken as an endorsement of Descartes' mental substance, nor the spiritual substance to be found in Locke's *Essay*. Berkeley would have been highly unsatisfied with Locke's treatment of spiritual substance as being equally unknown as material substance, given that one lacks a clear and distinct idea of either one.¹⁹ Regarding this point, Locke writes in the *Essay* (Bk. II. ch. xxiii. §5):

'Tis plain then, that the *Idea* of corporeal *Substance* in Matter is as remote from our Conceptions, and Apprehensions, as that of Spiritual *Substance*, or *Spirit*; and therefore from our not having any notion of the *Substance* of Spirit, we can no more conclude its non-Existence, than we can, for the same reason, deny the Existence of Body: It being as rational to affirm there is no Body, because we have no clear and distinct *Idea* of the *Substance* of Matter; as to say, there is no Spirit, because we have no clear and distinct *Idea* of the *Substance* of a Spirit.

Similar to the case of material substance, Locke understands the need to postulate a spiritual substance that serves as the support, by means of inherence, of mental activities such as willing, thinking, and perceiving. However, unlike Berkeley's treatment of spirit, Locke distinguishes spiritual substance from the *person*, the latter of which is known through reflection and "neither needs nor is capable of any proof."²⁰ That one exists is self-evident to Locke, as it is to Berkeley. What Berkeley takes particular issue with is Locke's postulation of an unknown *substratum* wherein mental activities such as willing and thinking inhere—a postulation Berkeley thought ultimately led to skepticism, and far worse, to atheism.

Berkeley reworks the conception of substance inherited from Descartes and Locke in the *Principles*, which distinguishes between an independent substance and the various modifications that may be predicated of a substance. In rejecting this distinction between substance and modification, Berkeley essentially denies the standard conception of substance that is to be found in early modern philosophy. If only spirit can be classified as a substance, and sensible qualities do not inhere in that

account of the nature of the mind, as expressed in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§577-581), throughout his published works, but was forced to conceal his real account of the mind and espouse an account that argued for the existence of spiritual substance, which is more in line with orthodox Christian theology. See Muehlmann (1992: ch. 6). I find Muehlmann's interpretation to be the less plausible, given that it is drawn exclusively from Berkeley's notebooks, composed prior to the publication of the *Principles* in 1710, as well as Berkeley's repeated assertions as to the existence of spiritual substance in his published works.

¹⁹ Hume employs the same manner of objection against both material substance and spiritual substance in his discussion of the immateriality of the soul in *Treatise* (I.IV.5). Hume reiterates the same objection in his essay, "Of the Immortality of the Soul." As regards the latter, see Hume (1987: 590-598).

²⁰ *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. ix. §3). See also what Locke writes in *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. xi. §1).

substance by way of modification, but are *in the mind* only by way of perception, as Berkeley states in *Principles* (§49), then Berkeley is reworking the traditional conception of substance that was commonplace amongst the thinkers of his intellectual age. Berkeley's clear rejection of the view that sensible qualities inhere in a substance as modifications or attributes in *Principles* (§49) forces him to understand the relation between the mind and its ideas as one of perception: ideas exist in the mind by means of the mind's perception of those ideas. Berkeley recognizes that if he accepts the common conception of substance, sensible qualities such as color and extension can be said to be predicated of the mind; and, this would yield the erroneous consequence for Berkeley that the mind is actually extended or is itself actually colored. The assertion that the mind is extended in space would be highly problematic for Berkeley's claim that the soul is not extended, simple, and undivided, as well as for his belief in the immortality and indivisibility of the soul. This is exactly what Berkeley recognizes in *Principles* (§49) and why he concludes in that section, "what philosophers say of subject and mode, that seems very groundless and unintelligible."²¹

To return to a point that was made previously, I do not believe that Berkeley's argument as a whole is successful in proving his positive claim that only spirits are substances in *Principles* (§7), nor do I believe that his main aim in the *Principles* is to provide such an argument. As I understand Berkeley's main objective in *Principles* (§§7-17), Berkeley believes that he has successfully proven that neither the sensible qualities of objects, being ideas, can be correctly classified as substances, nor can the supposed unperceiving *substratum*, in which those sensible qualities are said to inhere, exist as a substance. This is enough for Berkeley's present purpose. Given that Berkeley's foremost concern in the *Principles* is the rejection of matter, he would not have felt the need to provide an explicit argument for the positive claim that spirit is the only substance—that is, at least not until the more thorough treatment of the nature of spirits which he proposed in his intended second part of the *Principles*.

Berkeley's reworking of the inherited conception of substance in the early modern period did not abandon all the defining characteristics of substance: the existence of a substance is independent in the sense that it remains the same throughout any alteration to the various qualities that it supports. Spirit is indeed the

²¹ See also *Principles* (§§16-17) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-234, 237, & 250).

support of ideas in Berkeley's philosophy—that is, the sensible qualities that comprise sensible objects—but it supports ideas by way of perception. The idea that substance is the non-causal support of qualities is rejected outright by Berkeley's ontology.²² Spirit, as the sole substance, has the power to causally affect ideas: a finite spirit can create, destroy, or alter ideas of imagination by an act of will, just as a finite spirit is the genuine cause of its own bodily motion *via* the volitional activity of its will. Berkeley writes concerning the ability of finite spirits to causally affect their ideas of imagination in *Principles* (§28):

I find I can excite ideas in my mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the scene as oft as I think fit. It is no more than willing, and straightway this or that idea arises in my fancy: and by the same power it is obliterated, and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of ideas very properly denominates the mind active. Thus much is certain, and grounded on experience: but when we talk of unthinking agents, or of exciting ideas exclusive of volition, we only amuse our selves with words.²³

The claim put forth in the passage above, that the mind of a finite spirit is active in its ability to create, alter, and annihilate ideas of imagination—and, as Berkeley will argue later in *Principles* (§147), that the activity of finite spirits is also founded upon the power they possess to move their bodily limbs by means of volition—hinges in large part upon the passiveness and causal inefficacy of ideas, as well as the transparency of ideas, both of which are argued for in *Principles* (§25).²⁴ When the passiveness of ideas is coupled with the claim that neither sensible qualities nor an unperceiving *substratum* can be classified as substances from *Principles* (§7), the natural consequence drawn by Berkeley is that there must exist some active entity or being that can account for the power by which ideas are created, destroyed, united, and ordered in the mind causally.²⁵ Berkeley understood this active power or principle to be a spirit, and the activity of that spirit to be volitional in nature.²⁶

²² See *Principles* (§16) for Berkeley statement that *substratum* cannot be understood literally as when one states that “pillars support a building.” Berkeley draws here on the rather sharp distinction between speaking literally and speaking metaphorically which he makes in his discussions of language. See also *Three Dialogues* (I: 197-200).

²³ The reader may compare what Berkeley states in *Principles* (§§28-29) with that which Leibniz writes in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (XIV), as well as in *Principles of Nature and Grace* (§14).

²⁴ The transparency of ideas involves the experiential knowledge that the “bare observation” of ideas reveals that there exists nothing in an idea but what one perceives to be in that idea. See Cummins (1990) in reference to the transparency of ideas in Berkeley's philosophy.

²⁵ Leibniz utilizes a similar line of thought to criticize Descartes' argument, in the *Synopsis of the following Six Meditations*, that corporeal bodies are not genuine individuals, and therefore, cannot be classified as *pure substances*, for they lack the condition of individuality that distinguishes true substances. Descartes asserts that it is through the non-imagistic representational faculty of the *pure intellect* that one acquires knowledge of the essential property of matter, being extension in space.

6. Berkeleyan spirits as causes

In denying matter altogether and arguing that ideas are inert, there exists only one other candidate in Berkeley's ontology where he could place causal activity: spirits. Activity is the defining characteristic of spirits in Berkeley's philosophy, and it is expressed in terms of perception in the *Principles*. Berkeley rejects outright the view that sensible qualities inhere in a substance as modifications, arguing in its place that sensible qualities exist in a substance by way of perception, which is an activity that an unthinking material substance cannot perform.²⁷ Something that is completely passive cannot be a substance, given that Berkeley understands existence in terms of perceiving or being perceived: the former being an activity that an unthinking material substance simply does not possess. Of course, finite minds exist in a state of passiveness as regards the vast majority of ideas of sense, and in that sense finite spirits cannot be said to be entirely active.²⁸ However, *Principles* (§28) indicates that finite spirits are active in their ability to excite ideas in the mind, though ideas of imagination require the remembrance of some previous perception. Only the mind of God is at all times active and never exists in the state of passivity to which the minds of finite spirits are subject. Berkeley regards God as that power which exhibits ideas of sense and the laws of nature to the perceptions of finite spirits, as well as that original power which conserves the regular course of those laws—a regularity which is of the greatest importance to the survival of humankind.²⁹

Although Berkeley appears to believe that spirits are the only substances, this claim is beside his purpose in arguing that all activity between ideas requires an active principle and that ideas are causally inefficacious. In order for Berkeley to conclude that spirits alone are causal powers—in that, only spirits possess the power to causally affect ideas by means of volitional activity—he must first argue that the supposed *substratum* of the materialists does not also possess a similar power to affect ideas

However, the pure intellect for Descartes also reveals that there exists only a single material substance: the plenum. Cartesian matter is passive in nature, lacking any active power or principle internal to itself; and, furthermore, the Cartesian doctrine of a *continual creation* proves rather difficult if one wishes to attribute power to corporeal bodies that exist in the external world. Leibniz's main criticism against Descartes' argument is that there must be some internal active power in matter that unites all the various possibilities of change that a material body can undergo—a power that is entirely lacking in the Cartesian conception of matter.

²⁶ This point will be discussed in greater depth in ch. 2, sect. 2.

²⁷ See *Principles* (§49) and *Three Dialogues* (I: 197-199 & III: 250).

²⁸ See Berkeley's letter to Samuel Johnson in *Works* (II: 293) and *Three Dialogues* (I: 195-197).

²⁹ See especially *Principles* (§31) and *Alciphron* (IV. 14-15).

causally.³⁰ The denial of this claim is Berkeley's principal motivation in *Principles* (§§8-15). Berkeley provides further argumentation in these sections against the absolute existence of this supposed material *substratum*, which itself is imperceptible and is not possessed of any sensible qualities—that is, in terms of its relation to external objects by way of causation or resemblance.³¹ That Berkeley successfully argues against the former claim, that the supposed material *substratum* is not related to the ideas one has of sensible qualities by means of causation, is crucial for the conclusion which Berkeley's draws in *Principles* (§26): that is, spirits alone are causal powers.

Berkeley ultimately concludes in *Principles* (§30) that the cause of all ideas of sensation is God, the sole infinite spirit; however, in order to reach this conclusion, and thereby distinguish between the roles that finite spirits and the divine have in causally affecting ideas, Berkeley must first deny the possibility that ideas of sensation themselves possess an active power to affect one another, as well as the possibility that ideas are causally linked with the material *substratum*. The former is his primary concern in *Principles* (§25):

All our ideas, sensations, or the things which we perceive, by whatsoever names they may be distinguished, are visibly inactive, there is nothing of power or agency included in them. So that one idea or object of thought cannot produce, or make any alteration in another. To be satisfied of the truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare observation of our ideas. For since they and every part of them exist only in the mind, it follows that there is nothing in them but what is perceived. But whoever shall attend to his ideas, whether of sense or reflexion, will not perceive in them any power or activity; there is therefore no such thing contained in them.

Ideas have no internal power whereby they could causally affect one another. In fact, Berkeley argues that the supposed connections between ideas of sense are instituted

³⁰ Berkeley does not, however, address the possible claim that ideas may be brute facts, having no cause for their existence—a claim that Hume could seemingly accept in his argument in *Treatise* (I.III.3) that it is neither demonstratively nor intuitively certain that an effect must necessarily presuppose a cause. Berkeley states in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§830) that the creation of ideas *ex nihilo* is possible in the case of God, as well as finite spirits in imagining; however, he states in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§831), that the cause of every idea is a will, which is an active principle. I believe that Berkeley's discussion of the volitional activity of the will in *Principles* (§28) likewise reveals that the cause of all ideas must be a will.

³¹ As regards Berkeley's argument against the absolute existence of a *substratum* by means of its relation to objects *via* resemblance see *Principles* (§8). Berkeley's argument against the absolute existence of a *substratum* by means of causation is expressed in *Principles* (§25): "A little attention will discover to us that the very being of an idea implies passiveness and inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an idea to do any thing, or, strictly speaking, to be the cause of any thing: neither can it be the resemblance or pattern of any active being, as is evident from *Sect.* 8. Whence it plainly follows that extension, figure and motion cannot be the cause of our sensations. To say therefore, that these are the effects of powers resulting from the configuration, number, motion, and size of corpuscles, must certainly be false."

and conserved in their regularity by the benevolence of the divine will, and those connections are neither necessary, nor need they imply to the mind the relation of cause and effect.³² Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§25) that from the observation of one's ideas, one cannot perceive any power or activity intrinsic to those ideas which would render them causally efficacious. This is because the entirety of every idea exists in the mind—that is, by way of perception—so that whatever exists in an idea must be perceptible to the spirit which perceives it.³³ Since one can perceive no power or active principle within an idea, and since to perceive an idea is to perceive every single part of that idea—as is expressed in *Principles* (§25)—it must be concluded that ideas are wholly passive in nature.³⁴ This is all that Berkeley wishes to prove in this section, for in doing so, he can then argue that if an idea is entirely passive, which one may know by the “bare observation” of those ideas, there must be some other entity that is causally efficacious. Berkeley argues exactly this in *Principles* (§26):

We perceive a continual succession of ideas, some are anew excited, others are changed or totally disappear. There is therefore some cause of these ideas whereon they depend, and which produces and changes them. That this cause cannot be any quality or idea or combination of ideas, is clear from the preceding section. It must therefore be a substance; but it has been shown there is no corporeal or material substance: it remains therefore that the cause of ideas is an incorporeal active substance or spirit.

The argument is fairly simple given Berkeley's ontological commitments as expressed in *Principles* (§§1-2). Experience informs one that change occurs in the world; ideas are entirely inert and passive, for one's perception of ideas reveals that they contain no causal power in themselves; Berkeley's ontology, therefore, leaves

³² Berkeley states in *Principles* (§65) that the relation that ideas of sense bear to one another is one of signification. Ideas of sense are signs exhibited by the divine will for the purpose of informing humanity about its environment: fire is a sign that forewarns one of the pain that will ensue upon approaching too close to an open flame. See Winkler (2005), McGowan (1982), King (1970), and Atherton (1990: ch. 11).

³³ The reader may compare this section with Malebranche's claim that an idea has no hidden essence in *Search after Truth* (I.xiv).

³⁴ Regarding Berkeley's assertion that observation of ideas reveals their impassivity, Jonathan Bennett writes in Bennett (2001, vol. 2: 159): “When we look at our ideas, Berkeley says, we do not find them to be active, and we cannot have overlooked any of their features—we are omniscient about our own present mental states. I cannot evaluate this, because I do not know what thought-experiment I am being invited to perform. How do I go about looking for activity in my ideas? Anyway, even granted that none of *my* ideas is *now* active, why should I infer that this holds for all ideas always?” I think Bennett correct in that one cannot properly evaluate the thought-experiment which is proposed by Berkeley, but rather than illustrating a defect in Berkeley's argumentation in *Principles* (§25), I believe that Bennett's statement is precisely the response that Berkeley would have wished to elicit from his reader: that it is impossible to evaluate the thought that ideas have any activity or power internal to themselves, for one simply cannot search for activity in one's ideas.

spirits as the only possible alternative wherein causal power may be located, which is precisely what he argues in *Principles* (§26): that all ideas are created and affected by some “incorporeal active substance or spirit.”³⁵

Philonous employs the same argumentative strategy against Hylas’ claim in *Three Dialogues* (II: 216-218) that the latter finds himself passive in regards to the ideas which he perceives; and, knowing that he is not their immediate cause, nor are the ideas themselves causes—since at this point in the *Three Dialogues* Hylas has accepted that ideas are not efficacious—Hylas claims that those ideas must have a cause which is distinct from himself. This cause he ultimately concludes is *matter*, some unknown *substratum* which is the causal support of those ideas.³⁶ Philonous’ argument against this claim draws heavily upon what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§25) regarding the inactivity of any existent that is not a spirit. Given that the term *matter* signifies an unthinking and inactive substance, how is it possible for some thing which lacks any degree of activity or power to be the cause of the ideas which one perceives? Philonous expresses exactly this point in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217):

Now I desire to know in the first place, whether motion being allowed to be no action, you can conceive any action besides volition: and, in the second place, whether to say something and conceive nothing be not to talk nonsense: and, lastly, whether having considered the premises, you do not perceive that to suppose any efficient or active cause of our ideas other than *spirit*, is highly absurd and unreasonable?

Berkeley’s main point in this passage is quite clear: experience informs one that volition alone is the cause of any action, for one is unable to conceive of any action that is entirely distinct from volition. Volition is an active principle belonging solely to spirits, as *Three Dialogues* (III: 239) makes clear; and, the application of an active principle to that which is not a spirit, such as inactive matter or an inactive *substratum*, is to render the term *cause* utterly meaningless, or to engage in the mistaken misapplication of the term to some entity or being other than a spirit.³⁷ This

³⁵ As regards this point, see also *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239-240) and *De Motu* (§§30-32).

³⁶ See also *Three Dialogues* (I: 197-200) and *Principles* (§§16-17).

³⁷ That Berkeley was focused about the extent to which he ascribed volition as the cause of the genesis, motion, and ordering of ideas in finite spirits, as well as the infinite spirit, may be seen as early as his *Philosophical Commentaries* (§461, §499, §548, §562, §§611-613, §699, §712, §780, §829, §850, & §§855-856). Given that the principal aim of Berkeley in his *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* is the wholesale rejection of matter, rather than a sustained inquiry into the nature of spirits, this fact renders it somewhat difficult to accurately estimate whether Berkeley was indeed troubled in his ascription of volition as the sole cause of one’s ideas, and if so, to what precise extent. I am of the belief that Berkeley did hold that all causal activity is volitional in nature, nor do I believe myself alone in this view, but there is the very real problem for Berkeley in how he would be able to maintain his

is precisely what Berkeley understands to be the foremost difficulty with the materialist philosophy.

What *Principles* (§26), as well as Philonous' rejection of Hylas' *substratum* as the cause of one's ideas, does not address is the extent to which finite spirits can affect the multitude of ideas which compose the natural world. Berkeley naturally focuses upon these issues in the subsequent sections to *Principles* (§26), asserting in *Principles* (§28) the particular types of ideas finite spirits are able to affect through the volitional activity of their own wills—as well as much later in *Principles* (§147)—and in *Principles* (§§29-31) as to the causal influence of the divine will upon the creation and regularity of nature. The extent to which finite spirits and God are able to causally affect ideas will be the focus of the next two sections respectively. I wish to conclude this section by stating briefly that the fact that the *esse* is *percipi* thesis does not of itself provide an argument for the claim that spirits alone are substances in *Principles* (§7) does not hinder the further Berkeleyan claim that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes. That self-reflection upon the will reveals that finite spirits are genuine causal powers is vastly important to Berkeley's natural religion, especially to the claim that God is causally efficacious. The remainder of this chapter will focus upon the manner in which Berkeley argues, contrary to Malebranche, that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes. The great importance of this claim to Berkeley's natural religion will become evident as this dissertation progresses.

7. Berkeley on the limitations of finite spirits

According to what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§28), finite spirits are active on account of the power they exert over their own ideas of imagination: in their ability to create, destroy, and alter such ideas *via* volition. However, from the sections which immediately follow, it is quite clear that Berkeley's main intention in *Principles* (§28) is not simply to offer his reader a list of mental activities that denominate a finite

ontological distinction between active spirits and passive ideas in holding the type of volitional theory of action that he maintains in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842). I shall treat this worry, as well as his identification of causal activity with volitional activity, in more detail in ch. 2, sect. 2. For further discussion of this point concerning the relation of volition as cause of ideas and sensations, see Muehlmann (1992: 77-97), Winkler (1989: 207-216), Tipton (1974: 302-320), and Loeb (1981: 241-248).

spirit active. Rather, Berkeley sets the framework for a distinction between finite spirits and the one infinite spirit, a distinction which he draws explicitly in *Principles* (§29), and which is founded upon the influence that a finite spirit is able to exercise over its own ideas of imagination, as opposed to ideas of sense, which as *Principles* (§146) asserts, the greater part of which are not dependent upon the wills of finite spirits. Since the creation and constancy of the vast majority of ideas of sensation are not dependent upon the volitional activity of finite wills, there must be another spirit, greater in power than finite wills, which is responsible for their creation and continual conservation.³⁸ Berkeley again here uses his *esse is percipi* thesis as an implicit argument—just as he did in *Principles* (§7) in regards to classifying spirit as the only substance—as to the need for the existence of some other “more powerful spirit” upon which ideas of sense depend for their creation and the far greater degree of constancy that they display to finite perceivers.

The existence of an infinite spirit, which Berkeley concludes in *Principles* (§30), is therefore the natural consequence of Berkeley’s reasoning in *Principles* (§§7-17) against classifying ideas as substances and against the existence of a supposed material *substratum*, as well as his argument that ideas are passive and lack an active internal power in *Principles* (§25). These claims, taken in conjunction with his argument that spirits are the only active beings, and therefore, the only causes in *Principles* (§§26-27), and his argument in *Principles* (§29) that the creation and conservation of ideas of sense does not depend upon the volitional activity of finite wills, yields the conclusion of *Principles* (§30): God is that spirit whose volitional activity is responsible for the creation of ideas of sense and the conservation of the regularity exhibited in the laws of nature. This particular argument is developed in far greater detail in *Alciphron* (IV. 7-15); however, even in the barer form found in the *Principles*, the precise role Berkeley envisions for God never wavers: the divine is a providential governor who is intimately concerned with the welfare of the human species.

³⁸ Berkeley appears to permit finite spirits some influence over certain ideas of sense in *Principles* (§§146-147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237), though this influence is limited to the production of motion in the limbs of one’s own body, which may extend to the production of motion in certain external objects, though not to the production of motion in the perceptions of finite spirits. The divine will is solely responsible for the latter ability. There is the further question of how other sensible ideas, such as pain, are actually produced, as they could not be produced by the divine will without affecting the perfection of God. Berkeley might find an acceptable solution in the fact that God does not perceive pain in the same manner as finite spirits—that is, sensorily—but pain does exist in the mind of God as an idea devoid of sensation.

Thus far, I have focused upon *Principles* (§28) as providing its reader with the groundwork to establish the boundaries that limit the power of finite spirits, and thereby, the need to postulate a “more powerful spirit” that is not subject to the same limitations. However, *Principles* (§28) also supplies the reader with the types of mental activities that designate a finite spirit active: the power to create, to annihilate, and to alter ideas of imagination.³⁹ At first glance, these three abilities appear to illustrate just how limited a finite spirit truly is in its activity: if activity is founded upon the ability to call ideas to mind and “vary and shift the scene” as one thinks appropriate, this appears to be a rather narrow definition of activity ascribed to finite spirits. It is not surprising, however, to see a rather attenuated list of mental activities, for Berkeley’s chief aim in *Principles* (§28) is to use the limitations of finite wills not only to distinguish finite spirits from God, but to conclude that the latter must exist since the steadiness and order of ideas of sense cannot be accounted for by means of the activity of finite wills—a distinction which serves as a premise in Berkeley’s causal argument for the existence of God. Furthermore, the sparse treatment that Berkeley devotes to the various activities that denominate finite spirits active in the *Principles* can be understood given that the aim of the entire work is the rejection of materialism and its postulation of an unperceiving *substratum* that acts as the support of one’s ideas. It is clear that Berkeley understood the materialist philosophy as leading to skepticism and atheism, and the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* both reflect a desire to cure humankind of that philosophical position. Thus, it should not be surprising that the *Principles* reveals no sustained inquiry pertaining to the nature of spirits on the part of Berkeley, especially as this was to be the topic of the intended second part.

³⁹ What is omitted from his discussion of activity in *Principles* (§28), and what is only stated later in *Principles* (§147), is the ability of finite spirits to produce motion in the limbs of their bodies by means of volitional activity. That finite spirits have this ability is slightly problematic for Berkeley, since bodily limbs are composed of sensible ideas, the greater part of which are not dependent upon finite wills, and since, as he writes in *Principles* (§147), only the divine will can excite an idea of motion in the perceptions of other finite spirits. Furthermore, what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§147) is subject to vast interpretative problems as regards Berkeley’s stated rejection of occasionalism in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548) and *Three Dialogues* (II: 214-217). I shall leave such interpretative questions aside at present, for an adequate response will carry this section beyond the main focus of this chapter as a whole; however, I shall provide further discussion of this supposed problem within Berkeley’s philosophy in ch. 4, sect. 3. What is particularly important at present is that in *Principles* (§28) Berkeley states that the activity of exciting ideas exclusive of volition is unthinkable.

8. *The essence and existence of spirits*

Experience provides ample evidence for Berkeley that certain effects are produced by the volitional activity of the will: one is immediately conscious of the influence that one's will has over ideas of imagination and one's bodily movements. However, experience is never able to provide evidence that something non-mental can causally affect an idea for Berkeley. Acquaintance with oneself as an active spirit is acquired through awareness of the fact that one is willing at a particular moment: when one thinks or wills for Berkeley, one is in immediate contact with the act of thinking or willing.⁴⁰ As Berkeley maintains in *Principles* (§89), one is immediately conscious of the operations of the mind through an "inward feeling or reflexion."⁴¹ However, given the fact that Berkeley understands representation to be established *via* resemblance—a consequence of his *likeness principle* expressed in *Principles* (§8)—an idea can only represent another idea; thus, whatever this "inward feeling or reflexion" discerns in experience, it cannot be represented by an idea: that is, it cannot be known ideationally.⁴²

What Berkeley understands to distinguish knowledge of spiritual substance from that of material substance is the immediate awareness one has of the former—that is, the experience of oneself as a willing agent. That an act of inward reflection reveals oneself to be an active spirit is of the utmost importance to Berkeley, for although causal efficacy alone may not be enough to serve as the sole defining characteristic of the activity of spirits, that spirits are causal powers is an essential

⁴⁰ In reference to this specific point within Berkeley's philosophy, see Atherton (1983: 394-397).

⁴¹ As regards Berkeley's claim that an individual has an intuitive and immediate knowledge of the self as an active being—that is, knowledge which is acquired through a consciousness awareness that one is active—see *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-234), *De Motu* (§21 & §30), and *Alciphron* (VII. 19). Malebranche likewise asserts that one has an immediate acquaintance with the self, or mind, through consciousness in *Search after Truth* (III.ii.7), as well as in his discussion of the four methods by which one acquires knowledge in *Search after Truth* (III.ii.1-6). Furthermore, see Browne (1728: 66-67 & 95-97) in reference to this specific point regarding the self.

⁴² It appears that it was the confusion in the usage of the term *idea* that led Berkeley to provide further clarification of his position by making a terminological distinction between *ideas* and *notions* in the 1734 edition of the *Principles*. Further to the change in terminology in the 1734 edition of the *Principles*, further mention of notions in Berkeley's writings occurs in the 1734 edition of the *Three Dialogues*, as well as the 1752 edition of the *Alciphron*. For a further discussion of this point, see Woozley (1985). I am in full agreement with Woozley that Berkeley did not substantially alter his philosophy by incorporating the term *notion* into his philosophical system; rather, Berkeley simply utilized a term that he understood to be broad enough to serve his ends in defining one's knowledge of spirits and the active operations of the mind. The term *idea* in Berkeley's philosophy was then relegated to its narrower usage—a usage that is better able to capture Berkeley's principal meaning of the term as that which is passive and inert, and incapable of representing anything but another passive idea by means of resemblance. In reference to this point, see also Adams (1973).

element in Berkeley's natural religion. However, there exists a worry in Berkeley's treatment of spiritual and material substance which Hylas exploits at some length in *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-235), arguing that Philonous' denial of material substance should be extended to the denial of spiritual substance. Philonous responds that his position does not fall victim to the charge of inconsistency brought forward by Hylas, for his assertion that one cannot know that material substance exists immediately by means of intuition, or mediately through one's senses, actions, or ideas, cannot be utilized against the existence of spiritual substance. Philonous states this in *Three Dialogues* (III: 233):

I say secondly, that although we believe things to exist which we do not perceive; yet we may not believe that any particular thing exists, without some reason for such belief: but I have no reason for believing the existence of matter. I have no immediate intuition thereof: neither can I mediately from my sensations, ideas, notions, actions or passions, infer an unthinking, unperceiving, inactive substance, either by probable deduction, or necessary consequence. Whereas the being of my self, that is, my own soul, mind or thinking principle, I evidently know by reflexion.

Philonous' point is naturally to state that he does not deny the existence of matter solely on the basis that he has no notion of the term *matter*; rather, it is due to the fact that the notion is contradictory and inconsistent. The inconsistency arises in the very idea that an unperceiving material substance can serve as the support of ideas by means of inherence or perception. Berkeley rejects inherence as a means of support in *Principles* (§§16-17 & §49) on account of its opaqueness, arguing instead that ideas exist in the mind by way of perception. But matter is not active for Berkeley, and therefore, is unable to perceive ideas. Thus, if matter were the support of ideas, as Hylas maintains, it would mean that ideas exist in an unperceiving substance by way of perception, which is contradictory.

However, unlike the contradictory notion of a material *substratum* existing as the support of ideas, the notion of a spiritual substance, which is itself a perceiving being, is not contradictory in a similar manner for Berkeley. Regarding this point Philonous states the following in *Three Dialogues* (III: 233):

In the very notion or definition of material substance, there is included a manifest repugnance and inconsistency. But this cannot be said of the notion of spirit. That ideas should exist in what doth not perceive, or be produced by what doth not act, is repugnant. But it is no repugnancy to say, that a perceiving thing should be the subject of ideas, or an active thing the cause of them.

Philonous ultimately concludes that because one's experience informs one that one is an active willing being, which can causally affect particular ideas, there exists "no

parity of case between spirit and matter.”⁴³ Acquaintance with one’s own being as an active spirit is established through reflection upon the act of thinking or willing: when one wills, one is consciously aware that one is the willing agent. There is no distinction between the act of willing or thinking and the mind—the two are synonymous for Berkeley.⁴⁴ However, as *Principles* (§27) states, one cannot formulate an idea of the mind by means of this act of reflection. Granted, one can acquire ideas of the effects that the will produces by means of its volitional activity, but given Berkeley’s adherence to the *likeness principle* in *Principles* (§8), it is impossible to derive an idea of the intrinsic activity or power of the will from the effects which are produced by that power or activity.

This appears to add credence to the assertion that Berkeley’s additions to the 1734 edition of the *Principles* were based primarily upon his use of the term *idea* to refer to that which is perceptible and itself inert, as well as his need to retain some avenue by which one can acquire knowledge of the mind which is still grounded in experience. What Berkeley states in *Principles* (§27) is that one is immediately aware of oneself as an active being *via* the perceivable effects that are produced by volition.⁴⁵ *Principles* (§89) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 233-234) reveal that this immediate awareness is also the product of self-reflection. Furthermore, Berkeley argues that all knowledge of relations is notional in *Principles* (§142). Because all relations include an act of mind, for it is the mind which connects and formulates the relations among ideas, relations themselves involve an active component that cannot

⁴³ *Three Dialogues* (III: 234). Locke argues in the *Essay* (Bk. II. ch. xxiii. §5) that the concepts of material substance and spiritual substance were equally problematic in regards to the prospects of obtaining a proper knowledge concerning either of them. Locke, as with Hume after him, advocates caution in those ideas and concepts which exceed human comprehension in *Essay* (Bk. I. ch. i. §4). Such caution as regards spiritual substance would not have been an acceptable position for Berkeley.

⁴⁴ There is a further issue concerning whether Berkeley’s idealism forces him to reject the act-object distinction within his theory of perception. A discussion of the above point may be found in Muehlmann (1992: 69-76 & 189-204), as well as in Muehlmann (1978). See Winkler (1989: 3-14 & 290-312) for a different reading of Berkeley’s treatment of intentionality and the act-object distinction from that which Muehlmann advances in his own work. See also Cummins (1975). I shall not address this distinction in Berkeley’s writings in great depth, as the main focus of this chapter is upon Berkeley’s claim that spirits are genuine secondary causes in regards to his natural religion—that is, Berkeley’s desire to secure his natural religion from potential worries that he foresaw in Malebranche’s definition of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection—rather than in specific reference to the act-object distinction within his theory of perception. I shall only state that what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§§1-2) would appear to force him to accept the act-object relation in perception.

⁴⁵ This is Jessop’s reading of Berkeley main point in *Principles* (§27). Jessop understands Berkeley’s statement that one knows the nature of spirit through the effects which it produces as referring to the operations of the mind, though the two are not identical, so that one is consciously aware of one’s mind through the mind’s operations. See *Works* (II: 52) for this interpretation put forth by Jessop in his editorial footnote to *Principles* (§27).

be represented by an idea; and, it appears that it is for this reason that Berkeley required the further clarification that minds and their operations can only be known notionally. It is upon this foundation that Berkeley asserts that one has a direct awareness of oneself as an active being, capable of causally affecting ideas through an act of will; it is a foundation which is imperative for Berkeley's assertion that the knowledge acquired through self-reflection permits one to infer the existence of other finite spirits, and even more importantly, the existence of God.

In response to Hylas' complaint that the idealist principles espoused by Philonous appear to create a world in which there are free floating ideas that are not anchored to any substance to support them, Philonous states in *Three Dialogues* (III: 233-234):

How often must I repeat, that I know or am conscious of my own being; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds: that a colour cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a colour: that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound; and, for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas. But I am not in like manner conscious either of the existence or essence of matter. On the contrary, I know that nothing inconsistent can exist, and that the existence of matter implies an inconsistency. Farther, I know what I mean, when I affirm that there is a spiritual substance or support of ideas, that is, that a spirit knows and perceives ideas.

The principal thrust of Hylas' complaint is drawn from Philonous' own argument that the term *matter* is meaningless. Hylas argues that if Philonous is able to argue that the term *material substance* is meaningless, then why cannot one utilize this very same argument against the term *spiritual substance*? Philonous' answer is clear in the passage: he does indeed know what he means in his use of the term *spiritual substance* in relation to its supporting ideas, for it is that which perceives ideas, an activity which no unperceiving material substance could perform itself. One has a conscious awareness of oneself as a willing agent, and it is this direct experiential knowledge that blocks the charge of inconsistency that may be raised against Berkeley's treatment of material and spiritual substance.⁴⁶ Introspection discovers a notion of oneself as an active being that wills, thinks, and perceives, and is wholly distinct from the ideas which one perceives, or which one wills, or at which one directs one's thoughts.

⁴⁶ For a detailed explication of why Berkeley does not fall victim to the parity argument proposed by Hylas in the *Three Dialogues* see Atherton (1983). Similarly, see Adams (1973) for an argument that Berkeley espouses two types of awareness regarding knowledge of one's own mind. For a helpful discussion concerning Berkeley's distinction and use of positive and relative notions, see Flage (1985).

Berkeley's argument that spirits alone are causes, follows from the inertness and passiveness of ideas, as well as Berkeley's belief that ideas are entirely transparent, and that "there is nothing in them but what is perceived."⁴⁷ Experience informs one that there is no power or activity internal to ideas; however, though experience reveals no such power in ideas, self-reflection does inform finite spirits that they are able to exercise volitional control over certain ideas, and therefore, that they are causally efficacious. Even if Berkeley had provided an argument to prove his assertion in *Principles* (§7) that spirits are the only substances—for since his *esse* is *percipi* thesis merely divides his ontology into perceivers and perceived, it does not supply an argument that spirits are substances—the argument that spirits are causally efficacious would not be dependent upon the claim that spirits are substances. That spirits are causal powers is owed entirely to their volitional activity; and, as Berkeley identifies all causal activity with volitional activity, there exist no causes which are not volitions.

9. Concluding remarks

The primary aim of this chapter was to supply the reader with the historical background I believe is necessary to understand the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Berkeley and Hume both respond to the absolute necessitation model of causation in their own discussions of causal power and necessary connection, though to very different purposes. I believe that each philosopher's response was in reference to their mutual recognition regarding the manner in which such a model of causal necessitation could be employed to the detriment of natural religion: to the causal efficacy of the divine will and finite wills. That Berkeley must secure the causal efficacy of finite spirits for his natural religion will become readily apparent as this dissertation progresses, and the vital importance of this claim to the whole of Berkeley's philosophy is the principal reason for the discussion concerning his argument for that claim in this chapter.

The focus of the second chapter will be upon explicating why Berkeley rejects the absolute necessitation model and the manner in which he defined causal power in his own writings—which I shall argue is in terms of the capacity of a spirit to causally

⁴⁷ *Principles* (§25).

affect those ideas which fall within the power of the volitional activity of its will. In doing so, Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields knowledge that finite spirits can causally affect certain ideas—that is, ideas of imagination and their own bodies—through their volitional activity, which will be the focus of the fourth chapter, permits him to conclude that spirits are genuine causal powers; and, by analogy, that God is a causal power. This is precisely what Hume's argument against knowledge of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) threatens: the experiential basis upon which Berkeley builds his natural religion. Malebranche's negative arguments against the causal efficacy of finite wills provided a template for Hume by which the latter could extend those very same arguments to the theatre of natural religion and deny the causal efficacy of the divine. I believe that Berkeley foresaw this specific threat in the absolute necessitation model of causation, and it is this line of argumentation that he sought to preempt, by rejecting Malebranche's modeling of causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation, in order to secure his claim that self-reflection yields knowledge of oneself as a causal power.

CHAPTER II

Berkeley, Causal Power, and the Absolute Necessitation Model of Causation

1. Introduction

Berkeley's argument that spirits are the only causes reveals what I believe to be a desire on his part to distance his own philosophy from two central claims of Malebranche's occasionalism: the definition of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection (i.e., absolute necessitation) and the negative claim that finite wills are causally impotent. I shall argue in this chapter that Berkeley had foresight enough to recognize the potential harm that Malebranche's definition of a genuine cause as involving a logically necessary connection posed to natural religion—a harm that Hume would expose to great effect in his negative account of causal power—and in order to shield his natural religion from the criticisms which were to be raised by Hume, Berkeley defined causal power not in terms of absolute necessity, as did Malebranche, but in terms of the capacity to influence ideas by means of volitional activity. I believe Berkeley recognized that by defining causal power in this manner, he could save his own natural religion from the potential threats it faced when a genuine cause or power was defined in terms absolute necessitation model. I suggest that a prime motive in Berkeley's defining causal power in terms of the act of willing was a desire to weaken the restrictive nature of the absolute necessitation model of causation, exemplified by Malebranche. In rejecting that particular model of causation and defining causal power in terms of willing—that is, in terms of the ability to influence ideas through volitional activity—Berkeley is able to argue that the act of introspection provides one with the experiential basis to claim that one is an active willing spirit; and therefore, a genuine causal power.

My aim in this chapter is two-fold: firstly, I shall argue that Berkeley understands all causal activity to be essentially volitional in nature; secondly, I shall argue that in understanding causation as essentially volitional, coupled with a desire to maintain the causal efficacy of finite wills—as this is required for Berkeley's analogical argument that God is a causal power—Berkeley was forced to reject the absolute necessitation model of causation and define causal power in terms of a spirit's capacity to affect ideas by means of volitional activity. The immediate

difficulty which would face Berkeley in accepting Malebranche's emphasis upon absolute necessitation would be that it would render finite wills completely impotent, which is on account of the fact that the volitional activity of finite wills does not necessitate its effects by means of a logically necessary connection. Berkeley requires the causal efficacy of finite wills as the basis for his further claim in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that God is a causal power. Therefore, he was forced to define causal power in such a way that the defining characteristic was not the absolute necessity maintained by Malebranche, but a spirit's capacity to exercise volitional control over its ideas. In so doing, Berkeley's definition permits him to assert that any being that possesses such a capacity may be called a genuine power, whether that being is finite or infinite. More importantly for Berkeley's purposes, his definition of causal power allows for the experiential claim that introspection upon the will and its operations reveals that finite spirits do have the capacity to create and affect ideas of imagination and cause movement in their bodily limbs; and, as a result, can be said to be genuine causal powers. As I have stated, this single claim provides the experiential basis for the foundational claim upon which Berkeley erects the entirety of his philosophical system: that the divine will is that power responsible for creating the ideas of sensation which constitute the natural world and conserving the regularity observed in the laws of nature, which the human species is so dependent upon for its preservation and continued happiness.¹

2. Berkeley's identification of causation with volition

Berkeley explicitly denies any connection to Malebranche in his philosophy in *Three Dialogues* (II: 214), and then continues to assert that finite spirits are genuine causes, ultimately concluding in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239) that there exists no causes other than volitions: that is, the only causes that exist are spirits that are able to create or affect ideas through volition. Berkeley had argued the same point in his discussion of the mind's activity in *Principles* (§28), and though I believe Berkeley's main objective in this section—that is, understood within his broader objectives of *Principles* (§§25-33)—is to illustrate the limitations of finite wills in order to reveal

¹ Berkeley states in *Alciphron* (IV. 14) that God is a "provident Governor" who informs humanity as to how to regulate its conduct in the affairs of life *via* a divine visual language.

the need for some other “more powerful spirit” to account for the greater regularity and constancy exhibited in ideas of sense and the laws of nature, it also appears from Berkeley’s language that he wishes to express the phenomenological fact that a finite spirit is active in creating and varying ideas of imagination, as well as the primary role of volition in that power. It is clear from the final sentence of *Principles* (§28) that Berkeley believes it to be meaningless to comprehend the power to create and affect ideas as possessed by material objects—that is, exclusive of volitional activity. I believe this to be imperative to Berkeley’s account of causation, for I believe that it reveals a desire on his part to identify causal activity with volition—a desire which Berkeley states more explicitly in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239-240).

However, the principal problem that plagues understanding Berkeley as holding volition as the paradigm of causal activity, with his ultimate aim being the identification of the two, is that the textual evidence to establish this identification appears, at first glance, too thin. Moreover, Berkeley does not provide his reader with a reason as to why all other activities and mental operations performed by spirits should be subsumed under volition. Even with this in mind, I believe that Berkeley wishes to illustrate in *Principles* (§28) that the mind is active in its power to excite and influence ideas of imagination, and that these mental operations cannot be thought or conceived of apart from volition; and, I believe this same thought is at the heart of what Philonous states in *Three Dialogues* (III: 239-240) and Berkeley’s account of human agency in *Principles* (§147).

Louis Loeb argues that *Principles* (§28) does not provide a basis for attributing to Berkeley an argument meant to prove that volition is the paradigm of causal activity, or furthermore, that it is the experiential source of one’s idea of causal activity.² I agree with Loeb’s discussion to the extent that Berkeley’s primary objective in *Principles* (§28) is to distinguish between the extent of power exhibited by the divine will and finite wills in order to prove the need for the former as regards the creation and the constancy of ideas of sense. However, I disagree with Loeb in that I believe Berkeley does argue that volitional activity—in this instance, the mind’s ability to create and alter ideas of imagination—supplies, as the paradigm of causal activity, the source of one’s concept of causation. When *Principles* (§28) is considered with reference to Berkeley’s discussion of causal activity in *Three*

² See Loeb (1981: 263-268).

Dialogues (II: 217 & III: 239-240), I believe that these specific passages reveal that Berkeley understood causation to be volitional—that is, all causal activity is reducible to volition—even though Berkeley came to realize that he could not formulate such an argument on account of the negative impact it would have upon his ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in *Principles* (§§1-2 & §102), which was of greater importance on account of the theological objectives of his philosophy.

Berkeley's appeal to experience in *Principles* (§28) is meant to provide empirical support for the claim that reflection upon the mind's activities reveals that one has the power to excite ideas that have been previously perceived and "vary and shift the scene" as often as one pleases—a power that denominates the mind as active. Berkeley clearly states in the final sentence of *Principles* (§28) that reflection upon the mental operation of exciting ideas cannot be thought of exclusive of volition, which indicates that Berkeley understood the notion of an active mind in terms of volitional activity—that is, in terms of the effects which such activity produces. Underlying this discussion is Berkeley's claim in *Principles* (§26) that the cause of all ideas is some active incorporeal spirit: a claim that is grounded in the fact that Berkeley's ontology is comprised of two existents, spirits and ideas, and the causal inefficacy of the latter. What *Principles* (§28) provides is the further assertion that the activity of this "incorporeal active substance or spirit" is volitional in nature; and furthermore, to speak of the creation or influencing of an idea without reference to the volitional activity of some will is to "amuse our selves with words." *Principles* (§§29-33) assert that those ideas of sense which are independent of finite wills are the creations of the will of a "more powerful spirit." However, the activity of this spirit is volitional, just as is the power possessed by finite spirits to excite and vary ideas of imagination. The chief difference between the two is naturally the greater power and breadth of the divine will; however, one cannot conceive or think of the divine will as creating or affecting ideas exclusive of volition any more than one is able to conceive of finite wills creating and influencing ideas by means of volition.

Berkeley illustrates a similar desire to express action in terms of volition in his formulation of Philonous' question to Hylas in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217):

Now I desire to know in the first place, whether motion being allowed to be no action, you can conceive any action besides volition: and in the second place, whether to say something and conceive nothing be not to talk nonsense: and lastly, whether having considered the premises, you do not perceive that to suppose any efficient or active cause of our ideas, other than *spirit*, is highly absurd and unreasonable?

Philonous reiterates this very same point in defending his verbal attribution of activity to spirits, or to an unextended active being, as well as the claim that volitions exist in spirits alone, in *Three Dialogues* (III: 239):

My reason is this: because I have a mind to have some notion or meaning in what I say; but I have no notion of any action distinct from volition, neither can I conceive volition to be any where but in a spirit: therefore, when I speak of an active being, I am obliged to mean a spirit.

I believe the scope of these passages from the *Three Dialogues* to be broader than what is found in *Principles* (§28), for Berkeley is concerned with action construed more broadly than merely the mental ability to create and alter ideas through an act of will. However, in all cases, Berkeley continually argues that all action, including causal activity, cannot be conceived to be any thing other than volitions; and, since one cannot conceive of volitions, which are active, to exist in any thing but in the will of a spirit, spirits alone are genuine causes.³ Berkeley's central claim in all his discussions of activity—causal or otherwise—in his published works remains consistent: volition is the only conceivable cause, and since volitions exist only in the will of some spirit, either finite or infinite, spirits are the only causes in existence for Berkeley.

The emphasis of Philonous' argument, as well as that of *Principles* (§28), appeals to the mental ability to conceive of any action besides volition—an ability that Berkeley understands will ultimately fail. Spirits alone are real causes due to their power to affect ideas through volition, and one is obliged to speak of activity as pertaining solely to spirits for two reasons. Firstly, because reflection upon the act of willing and the effects produced by that activity yields the experiential knowledge that the will is active in its power to create and affect ideas of imagination and, as Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237), their bodily limbs—the latter of which are ideas of sense which are conserved in their regular course by the divine will.⁴ Secondly, as Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§25), because experience informs one that ideas lack the power necessary to affect themselves or other ideas; and given Berkeley's ontological commitments, spirits, as the only other existent, are active beings that have the power to causally affect ideas. It is not merely that volition is the paradigm of causal activity and supplies the experiential

³ As to the claim that volitions are causes of action, see also *PC* (§155, §461, §499, & §699).

⁴ Berkeley's argument that finite spirits are the immediate causes of motion in their own bodies will be addressed in far more detail in ch. 4, sect. 3.

source for the idea of causation, although I believe this is what Berkeley does argue in *Principles* (§28); it is that all activity is volitional. When one speaks of genuine causes for Berkeley, one can only mean volitions; and, for one to speak otherwise would be to speak without meaning.

Even if Berkeley does attempt to argue that experience reveals that a finite spirit is active in its power to excite ideas in the mind and vary those ideas as often as the imaginer wishes, a power that cannot be thought of apart from volition, there are serious concerns with Berkeley's argument that causal activity is tantamount to volition. In both *Principles* (§28) and *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239-240), the arguments which are employed by Berkeley are simply too weak to permit him to conclude that causal activity is reducible to volition, for his argument has not supplied any reason to conclude that there are no other activities performed by spirits that can be said to be genuine causes besides volition. Berkeley's division of the "objects of human knowledge" in *Principles* (§§1-2) into the ideas which are perceived by the mind and the various operations and passions of the mind appears to indicate that a spirit may engage in actions that may not be restricted solely to volition.⁵ In order to argue that all activity—and most especially the power to causally affect one's ideas of imagination and bodily limbs—is volitional in nature, Berkeley needs to supply a further argument that all the various mental operations in which spirits engage can be reduced to volition. Although such an argument is lacking from Berkeley's published works, there is evidence in the *Philosophical Commentaries* that Berkeley had sought to formulate just such an argument: that is, to conclude that the act of perceiving intimately involves volitional activity. Berkeley's attempt to illustrate the dependence of perception upon volition may be understood from what he writes in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§672a):

There is somewhat active in most perceptions i.e such as ensue upon our Volitions, such as we can prevent & stop v.g I turn my eyes toward the Sun I open them all this is active.

⁵ Louis Loeb recognizes the rather interesting fact that unlike other philosophers of the early modern period, Berkeley makes no attempt to classify the various mental operations of the mind. He writes in Loeb (1981: 265): "It is interesting that whereas Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Locke, and Hume at the very least take care to provide inventories and classifications of mental operations, and generally produce a considerable body of doctrine about the passions and other mental operations, such material is not to be found in Berkeley. He chooses to ignore further candidates for causally efficacious entities, rather than to proliferate unconvincing arguments and distinctions required to sustain his desired position." See Garrett (1997: 11-25) for a discussion of the classification of mental operations in early modern philosophy.

The same point is reiterated by Berkeley in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§833):

It seems there can be no perception, no Idea without Will, being there are no Ideas so indifferent but one would rather Have them than annihilation, or annihilation than them.⁶

I believe that these two entries reveal that Berkeley sought to argue that volition, or the will, is required for perception, for the latter cannot exist without the former. Although the above two entries reveal a strain in Berkeley's thought that I believe illustrates an attempt to ground the very possibility of perception in the act of willing, *Philosophical Commentaries* (§646 & §674) reveal an opposite mindset in Berkeley's thinking—one which emphasizes the fact that there can be perception without volition, or alternatively, that volitional activity itself cannot exist entirely distinct from the act of perception.⁷

The relevant entries in the *Philosophical Commentaries* appear to indicate that Berkeley was unsure as to the exact relationship between perception and volition, and whether the two in truth did depend upon one another. In any event, Berkeley refrained from providing an explicit argument that perception cannot exist without volition in his published works, that is, at least in the specific manner formulated in the *Philosophical Commentaries*. It is the act of perceiving which defines the essence of a spirit in the *Principles*.⁸ The role of the will within perception is stated only in reference to the creation of ideas—that is, images—that the mind perceives in *Principles* (§28). The dependency of perception upon volition is not overtly stated. When Berkeley invokes the will in reference to perception in *Three Dialogues* (I: 195-197) and in his letter to Samuel Johnson in *Works* (II: 293), it is in reference to the distinction between the activity and passivity of finite wills in perception. Berkeley had made this distinction as early as *Philosophical Commentaries* (§672a), where volition is emphasized in the mind's ability to exert control over the organs of sensory perception: one may close one's eyes to avoid perceiving the sun. Finite spirits have no power in the creation or conservation of the sun—an idea of sense that is exhibited to finite minds by the divine will—and in that sense are completely passive, but finite spirits have the power to control whether they choose to perceive the sun by closing their eyes. In the latter sense, finite wills are active in perception,

⁶ See also *Philosophical Commentaries* (§674, §791, & §§841-842).

⁷ This may be compared with what Spinoza writes in *Ethics* (Part II).

⁸ In particular, see *Principles* (§139).

and this activity is volitional for Berkeley. However, this particular line of reasoning is simply too weak to serve as the basis for Berkeley's claim that all activity is volitional. Berkeley still has not said enough to warrant the reduction of all activity, including perceptual, to volition. The same weakness strikes at the heart of Berkeley's experiential appeal in *Principles* (§28) and Philonous' assertion in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239) that no action besides volition is conceivable.

Spirits are causes because they can exercise volitional control over ideas; and, in the case of the divine, that control and influence is far greater in power and scope than that of its finite counterpart. However, the sparse and often problematic treatment of causation Berkeley provides appears to arise directly out of a desire to identify causation with volition, and a knowledge of the problems associated with such an identification. The problem with Berkeley's treatment of causation becomes readily apparent in his attempt to maintain the ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of the activity of the former and the passivity of the latter. Berkeley maintains that volitions, which are active and cannot be represented by inert ideas, can causally affect ideas—a claim that is evidenced by what he writes in *Principles* (§28 & §147) and in *Three Dialogues* (II: 215-17 & III: 239-240).⁹ When Berkeley discusses volitional activity it is in terms of the power to recall, alter, and destroy ideas of imagination, as well as in terms of the power to produce motion in one's bodily limbs; and these activities, which denominate a spirit active, are to be understood as the effects of the volitional activity of a spirit. There is no discussion by Berkeley in his published works concerning the relation that volitions and ideas bear to one another, which is an issue that he had first broached in the *Philosophical Commentaries*.

Berkeley states in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842) that volitions cannot be severed from ideas, and that both mutually depend upon the other for existence, although no one particular idea is essential in volition. However, this idea regarding the mutual dependence of volitions and ideas is entirely lacking in Berkeley's discussions of volition in the relevant passages in both the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues*. As I have stated, I find in the aforementioned works a desire on Berkeley's part to identify causal activity with volition, and thereby conclude that since inward reflection reveals that finite spirits engage in the latter, they may be said

⁹ See also *De Motu* (§25) and *Siris* (§161).

to be genuine causal powers. The fact that Berkeley does not consider mental activities other than volition to be possible alternatives for efficacious causes—coupled with the fact that no argument to this purpose is found in his published works—would seem to indicate that the concerns inherent in any argument attempting to reduce all activity to volition, as I understand Berkeley's aim to be in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§672a, §833, & §§841-842), proved too large a problem for Berkeley to solve adequately.¹⁰ Furthermore, I believe the potential problems that would have been raised in maintaining the belief that volitions cannot be severed from ideas—and therefore, that the two have a mutual dependence on one another—limited Berkeley in exactly what he was able to state in reference to his assertion that all causal activity is essentially volitional in nature. This particular worry appears to have limited Berkeley in such a way as to prevent him from treating this issue in greater depth in his published works.

Louis Loeb recognizes that Berkeley's assertion that volitions cannot be severed from ideas poses a palpable threat to his argument in *Principles* (§25) that the passiveness of ideas renders them causally inefficacious, and therefore, to the fundamental basis of his ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of activity and passivity. The defense of the latter claim would have been a foremost concern of Berkeley's given the religious commitments and aims of his philosophical thought. As regards this point, Loeb writes the following:

This doctrine that volition requires ideas in turn threatens Berkeley's position on causation. For if volitions require ideas, this at the least raises the suspicion that ideas are causally necessary for the realization of what is willed. For example, suppose that having a volition to move a limb requires having an idea of that limb moving. Is not the idea, partly constitutive of the volition, a likely candidate for a partial cause of the limb's moving? At this point, Berkeley needs to produce an elaborate account of the precise connection between volitions and ideas. No such account is forthcoming in the systematic works, and there is at best a handful of relevant entries in the *Philosophical Commentaries*.¹¹

I believe Loeb has supplied a good reason for understanding why Berkeley is silent in his published works regarding these issues in his account of causation and volitional activity. As Loeb recognizes, Berkeley needs to supply an argument that maintains

¹⁰ This fact would likewise seem to best explain why Berkeley failed to publish his intended second part of the *Principles*, which was to discuss the nature of spirits. Berkeley's claim in his letter to Samuel Johnson, in *Works* (II: 282), that his reason for not publishing this intended second part was on account of his unwillingness to do something so disagreeable as write on the same topic twice seems hollow, as Berkeley did write upon the same topics in both the *New Theory of Vision* and the *Principles* in later publications.

¹¹ Loeb (1981: 267).

the distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of activity and passivity, while likewise establishing the manner by which volitions are connected to ideas. Berkeley was able to maintain the ontological distinction expressed in *Principles* (§§1-2) by his argument in *Principles* (§49) that spirits and ideas are connected through perception: ideas are said to exist in the mind by way of perception. There is no similar argument to describe the manner in which the volitions of spirits are connected to ideas in Berkeley's published works, and the issues that Loeb exposes supply, I believe, a very probable reason as to why Berkeley does not explicitly address the considerations first voiced in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842) in greater depth in the *Principles* or *Three Dialogues*. However, I believe Loeb's discussion overlooks one key point: that is, Berkeley's failure to formulate an argument that would reduce all activity to volition is best explained by Berkeley's desire to maintain the primacy of his religious beliefs and the religious aims of his philosophy.

Berkeley's account of causation is sparse indeed; however, the claim that spirits are genuine causes, and that this is known through inward reflection—that is, reflection reveals one to be a willing agent, capable of influencing one's ideas through volition—is of such vast importance to the theological considerations of Berkeley's philosophy that it is strange that Berkeley merely asserts the fact that volitions are the only conceivable causes in the manner that he does in his published works. What the relevant entries of the *Philosophical Commentaries* reveal is that any argument Berkeley might have formulated in terms of the relationship of volitions and ideas would have had a negative impact on the ontological distinction he maintains between spirits and ideas. As I have argued, in order to argue that causation is tantamount to volition, Berkeley needs to supply an argument that would establish the connection between ideas and volitions. However, as has been argued previously, the argument by which Berkeley attempts to accomplish this in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842) also appears to reveal that an idea is at least partially responsible for the movement of a bodily limb, and therefore, muddles the claim that spirits are the sole true causal agents and distinct from ideas, which are inert.

Berkeley's writings reveal a strong desire to exclude causal power from the realm of ideas, and I believe this stems from the theological importance that he placed upon maintaining the belief that spirits are the only genuine causes, and that ideas are passive and inefficacious—a belief born of the same desire to combat idolatry that motivated Malebranche in the *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) to rob the physical world of

all active power and assert that the divine will is the only true causal power. What is particularly striking about Berkeley is the role that his religious beliefs played in all aspects of his life and philosophical aims, and it seems perfectly consistent with his religious character that he would sacrifice philosophical argument for the benefit of the religious considerations of his philosophy.

The great importance of Berkeley's religious beliefs to his philosophical aims cannot be understated and is quite clear in what he writes in *Principles* (§156):

For after all, what deserves first place in our studies is the consideration of GOD, and our *duty*; which to promote, as it was the main drift and design of my labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if by what I have said I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the presence of God: and having shown the falseness or vanity of those barren speculations, which make the chief employment of learned men, the better dispose them to reverence and embrace the salutary truths of the GOSPEL, which to know and to practise is the highest perfection of human nature.

It is my belief that any proper understanding of Berkeley's philosophy must take into consideration his religious beliefs, and I believe that the problem which Loeb exposes in Berkeley's attempt to establish a viable connection between volitions and ideas in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842) must be viewed in the same light. It is the theological import of Berkeley's distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of the former's activity which prevents him from formulating an argument that would reduce causal activity to volition. The claim that spirits are the only efficacious beings, and subsequently that ideas are inert, was of greater importance to Berkeley than establishing the connection between volitions and ideas. Berkeley's primary objective in his philosophy was to combat the idolatry that he saw in materialism and Aristotelian natural philosophy, both of which attributed causal powers to material bodies in nature.

Nicholas Jolley writes regarding the theological importance of the application of causal power to spirits alone in Berkeley's philosophy:

To ascribe causal powers to bodies, and thus to treat them as endowed with god-like properties, is, then, a thesis which encourages idolatry. By contrast, for Berkeley, no idolatry is involved in ascribing such god-like causal powers to human minds or finite spirits; indeed, far from being impious, such an attitude is actually required by the Christian religion; for according to Genesis, man is made in the image of God.¹²

Jolley rightly recognizes that the desire to place activity in the will is a foremost concern for Berkeley, as it had been for Malebranche. However, unlike Malebranche,

¹² Jolley (1990: 236). As for the theological importance of maintaining the ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in Berkeley's philosophy, see Jolley (1990: 234-242).

Berkeley did not feel the same compulsion to place all activity in the divine will alone; however, the desire to combat the growth of idolatry was as strong in Berkeley as in Malebranche, and understood that such idolatry arose in the granting of active powers to objects other than spirits. Berkeley and Malebranche alike found the belief that nature consisted of objects endowed with causal powers as theologically unpalatable, for as Malebranche writes in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3), such a belief encourages individuals to honor the likes of leeks and onions. *Philosophical Commentaries* (§17) reveals Berkeley's worry about the "rise of idolatry" in modern philosophy, which he associated with materialism, and more particularly with the metaphysical realism espoused by Locke, since it endowed matter with the power to causally affect minds.

There is good reason to think that it is Berkeley's religious beliefs and his desire to combat idolatry that prevented him from establishing a connection between volitions and ideas in the manner that he did between perception and ideas in *Principles* (§49). Berkeley, in denying matter, sought to cure humanity of a belief he understood to lead to atheism and skepticism. The belief that matter is endowed with real causal power posed as much of a danger to Berkeley as it had to Malebranche. Berkeley's desire to place all activity in spirits has its roots, I believe, in his religious beliefs and I think that the claim that ideas, in general, are essential to volition, as neither can possibly exist without the other, which Berkeley writes in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§§841-842), appears to maintain that ideas are in some sense active, as they are essential to volition and at least partly responsible for the production of some effect—precisely what Loeb recognizes in his own discussion of this particular issue. I believe that recognizing the large extent to which Berkeley's religious beliefs influenced his philosophy offers the best explanation as to why he abandoned any attempt to formulate an argument that would reduce causation, and all further activity, to volition. It was far more important for Berkeley's religious beliefs and sentiments to retain his ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of the activity of the former, even at the cost of abandoning further argumentation for the reduction of all causal activity to volition.

3. Berkeley's rejection of the absolute necessitation model of causation

What I shall elucidate in the remainder of this chapter is the fact that Berkeley understood the conception of causation in terms of a logically necessary connection (i.e., absolute necessitation) espoused by Malebranche as too stringent, for it leaves finite wills in the precarious position of complete impotence. Although Berkeley could accept the claim that the actions of the divine will are governed by absolute necessity, as Malebranche had argued, and that it could not fail to produce the intended effect of its volitional activity—though he does not state this explicitly in his writings, and as such, it is unclear whether Berkeley connects causation with absolute necessity in the context of the divine will—Berkeley could not accept the causal impotence of finite spirits. In fact, Berkeley is forced to reject such inefficacy since one's knowledge of the divine being as a willing agent is a direct consequence of the introspective knowledge that oneself is a willing agent, and therefore, a causal power.¹³ I believe that Berkeley's reaction to the absolute necessitation model is due to his recognition of the potential problems that Malebranche's account of causation in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) posed to natural religion. Likewise, it is my belief that Berkeley foresaw that this particular model of causation ultimately proved unsatisfactory in asserting the causal efficacy of both finite wills and the divine will; and therefore, Malebranche's understanding of a genuine causal power proved unsatisfactory not only for his natural religion, but his metaphysics as a whole.

Berkeley would have been quite desirous to minimize such problems in his own account of natural religion, and I believe he sought to do precisely this by rejecting the absolute necessitation model. I suggest that Berkeley realized that in order to secure the causal efficacy of spirits, both finite and God, and therefore his own natural religion from the potential threats which he understood to be inherent in Malebranche's modeling of causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation, he would require a new definition of causal power: a definition that did not define power in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and its effect. Whereas Berkeley could perhaps accept the attribution of absolute necessity to the divine will by Malebranche, given its perfection and omnipotence, such necessity would be too strict a criterion for experience to satisfy in denominating finite spirits causal powers. Thus, Berkeley could not define causal power in the same manner as

¹³ See *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232).

the absolute necessitation model—that is, the defining characteristic of his definition could not be in terms of a logically necessary connection. What I shall argue in the remainder of this chapter is that Berkeley defines causal power in terms of volitional activity; or more precisely, in terms of the capacity of a spirit to causally affect or exercise some degree of volitional control over those ideas within its power, which for a finite spirit consists entirely in the creation and variation of ideas of imagination, as *Principles* (§28) makes clear, as well as the production of motion in the limbs of a finite spirit's body, which Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237).

4. Berkeley's definition of wisdom in *A New Letter*

The claim that Berkeley's definition of causal power is expressed in terms of the capacity of a spirit to causally affect those ideas within its power by means of volitional activity is reminiscent of the manner in which Berkeley defined wisdom in *A New Letter*, for it is in this private letter to Peter Browne that the former defines wisdom as a capacity through which a being is able to regulate its conduct so as to choose those means that will bring about ends that are commendable and desirable. In defining wisdom in this specific manner, Berkeley argues that any being that exhibits the capacity to regulate its conduct through choosing those particular means which will obtain desirable and commendable ends can be said to be wise, whether that being is human or divine. Berkeley writes concerning this in *A New Letter* (391):

To use your Lordship's own description, when we regulate our conduct by just notions in choosing proper means to obtain a commendable end, we call that *wisdom*; may we not therefore when we find another being regulate its conduct so as to choose proper means to obtain a commendable end, call that *wisdom* also, and may not the word *wisdom* indeterminately stand for any power which that being, or any being, has of thus regulating its conduct, without becoming unintelligible. For my part, it is self evident to me, that if these words, a power of regulating its conduct, so as to choose proper means to obtain a commendable end, convey any notion in one case, they must do it in all others, and that my intention is as plain and equally conceivable when I ascribe such a power to an angel, as when I affirm it of a man.

The above passage makes two crucial points: first, wisdom is presented by Berkeley as a faculty which has as its ultimate purpose the setting of means which are necessary to the pursuance of good and desirable ends; and second, that if the term *wisdom* is taken in the more extensive meaning which Berkeley's definition provides,

one is able to “speak with the same propriety of *divine wisdom*, as of *human*,” and thus, avoid defining wisdom as nothing more than a “mere human power” as does Browne in his discussion of divine analogy. Berkeley argues that one can know that God is possessed of great wisdom, in the same manner as one speaks of human wisdom, through the divine will’s capacity to regulate and choose those means that will bring about admirable ends, which is evidenced in the regularity that is exhibited in the natural laws; and, it is this specific faculty, which may be extended to any being that regulates its conduct in such a manner, that is properly termed *wisdom*. Furthermore, God’s wisdom has practical value for the human species, for as Berkeley states in *Principles* (§31), as well as in the *New Theory of Vision* (§147) and the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§§7-8), the divine visual language of *Alciphron* (IV. 7-15) instructs humanity so that its actions are directed towards securing that knowledge which is necessary for its own well-being, as well as prohibiting those actions which would ultimately prove harmful.

In defining wisdom in this way, Berkeley can likewise extend its province beyond the human sphere. If wisdom is a faculty or power by which a being is able to regulate its conduct through the selection of means that will produce good and desirable ends, then any being that possesses such a faculty can be said to be wise. This definition of wisdom can be extended to humanity, as human beings certainly regulate their conduct in such a manner as to secure those ends which are deemed desirable and good for one, just as it can likewise be extended to the conduct of the divine being in its selection of means. This particular definition of wisdom may be extended to the divine being on account of the divine visual language through which Berkeley’s God literally speaks to humanity, for Berkeley writes that “there are in the creation proofs evident enough of regular contrivance, instances abundantly sufficient to conclude upon, that the Author of my being did design the best of ends, and most suitably pursue them; that of course he can do both, and has an attribute, faculty, or power of so doing.”¹⁴ That Berkeley understood the term *wisdom* in precisely these terms is revealed by what he writes to Browne in *A New Letter* (391):

For my part, it is self evident to me, that if these words, a power of regulating its conduct, so as to choose proper means to obtain a commendable end, convey any notion in one case, they must do it in all others, and that my intention is as plain and equally conceivable when I ascribe such a power to an angel, as when I affirm it of a man. I may, indeed connect my notions inconsistently, put things together that have

¹⁴ *A New Letter* (392).

no relation, and affirm *wisdom* of an oyster; but then the proper reproof to such an error is not to tell me, as your Lordship does, that I have no meaning to my words, can neither understand my self or convey to others any conception by them, but that the conception *wisdom* is not applicable to an oyster, and the proposition false.

Berkeley's principal point is that his definition of wisdom, as opposed to that proposed by Browne—that analogy with objects and qualities in the natural world provides an intermediate sense of meaning between literal and metaphorical by which one may know that God is wise, given that wisdom is a commendable and desirable quality in human beings—can be extended to humans, angels, and the divine being alike: God in this sense is wise in the same manner as a human is said to be wise, though to a far greater extent. Berkeley's words also speak to the personal nature of his disagreement with Browne, in the latter's reproof of Berkeley in the eighth chapter of the *Divine Analogy*, where Browne asserts that Berkeley's use of terms and attributes pertaining to the divine nature is incomprehensible to Berkeley, and by extension, to his reader.¹⁵ Berkeley in the above passage states that not only does his definition of wisdom permit him to ascribe a literal rendering of wisdom to the divine being, but furthermore, Berkeley claims that he does indeed know his own meaning of the term *wisdom* when it is applied to God, angels, or even to human beings: wisdom is the capacity or faculty to set suitable means in order to produce ends which are commendable and desirable, which secure the well-being of the individual who sets them, and in the case of the divine will, the well-being of humanity.

Berkeley's chief issue is with Browne's claim that the former's definition lacks meaning—that is, it is entirely incomprehensible when applied to the nature of the divine. Berkeley's clear dissatisfaction with this manner of response is evident in *A New Letter* (390-391). A proper reproof, as Berkeley states, must state that the term *wisdom* is not applicable to the divine nature, which thereby renders the "proposition false." Berkeley seizes upon this very line of criticism in his rejection of Browne's analogical meaning as incomprehensible, realizing all that remains for Browne is to claim that God's wisdom is metaphorical, given that the latter will not permit a literal ascription. Berkeley writes that if Browne maintains his emphasis upon analogical meaning, and is unwilling to ascribe wisdom to God in a literal sense, then the latter will be forced to maintain that God does not design good ends; it is to this purpose that Berkeley writes in *A New Letter* (391):

¹⁵ In particular, see Browne (1733: 383-386).

This, methinks, brings the controversy to a point, and I call upon your Lordship to speak out, and either own to the glory of your Maker, that he is properly and literally wise, or plainly tell mankind, that the Being they adore does not design good ends, nor use consistent methods to attain them. Between these, there is no medium, God has ends in view, or he has not; if he has, they are either good, or otherwise—suitably pursued, or improperly attempted. To assert the first is the intent of those who ascribe *wisdom* to him, and to insinuate the latter of necessity must be (I won't say the design, because I believe it not, but I am sure) the consequence of denying him that attribute.

Berkeley argues that wisdom cannot be ascribed to the divine nature through analogy with things in the world as Browne suggests, and this is due to the fact that if one were to maintain that the correspondence which exists between literal and analogical wisdom is genuinely real, as Browne argues, that correspondence would ultimately resolve itself into inconsistency and absurdity.¹⁶ Berkeley argues that according to the analogical sense of meaning espoused by Browne, the human intellect, as literally wise, and the divine intellect, as analogically wise, would differ essentially, and yet the correspondence between analogical wisdom and literal wisdom would still remain real and substantial for Browne.¹⁷ Therefore, wisdom must either be ascribed literally or metaphorically—there is no medium between these two senses of meaning. The aim of Berkeley's *A New Letter* is to prove the former, that by defining wisdom in the specific way that he has done, as a power or capacity to produce good and desirable ends, Berkeley's definition permits wisdom to be attributed to the divine being in a literal sense—that is, as one would attribute it to a human being. This is precisely Berkeley's point when he writes the following in *A New Letter* (391):

To use your Lordship's own description, when we regulate our conduct by just notions in choosing proper means to obtain a commendable end, we call that *wisdom*; may we not therefore when we find another being regulate its conduct so as to choose proper means to obtain a commendable end, call that *wisdom* also, and may not the

¹⁶ Browne argues that the only manner by which one can acquire knowledge of the divine nature is through analogical meaning, which is an intermediary sense of meaning that falls between literal and metaphorical, though this analogical representation can never supply one with actual knowledge of the divine nature as it exists in itself. One can only acquire an imperfect knowledge of the divine nature that cannot in any manner represent the perfections of the divine. In particular, see Browne (1697: 36-40 & 50-52; 1728: 85-86; 1733: 102-104). For an overview of Browne's position, see Berman (2005: Part II).

¹⁷ See *A New Letter* (387-388). It is in reference to this form of argumentation that Berkeley writes the following in *A New Letter* (388): "Good my Lord, have some mercy on poor reason, must it necessarily digest these contradictions, admit a real correspondency in essentials between things wholly different in essentials, a similitude of nature consistent with an entire disparity of nature, at its first entrance in religion? Is there no way to the acknowledgement of the Supreme Being, but through such glaring inconsistencies? And must the clearest conceptions we can frame of any faculties in him be ultimately resolvable into this, that they are and they are not similar in nature to our own?"

word *wisdom* indeterminately stand for any power which that being, or any being, has of thus regulating its conduct, without becoming unintelligible.

In defining wisdom as a faculty which is concerned with the setting of means that are suitable for the attainment of desirable and good ends, Berkeley concludes that the human mind and the divine mind share in this faculty; and therefore, the two differ only in the extent of their respective capacities to select specific means, as well as the scale by which each being is able to institute those particular means. The difference between the two intellects is one of degree or as regards the extent of each respective mind; it is not a difference in essence or in kind according to Berkeley's definition of wisdom.

5. Berkeley's definition of causal power in terms of willing

It is my belief that Berkeley defines causal power in a manner similar to how he defines wisdom in *A New Letter*: causal power is defined in reference to a being's capacity to causally affect an idea within its power, either sensory or imaginative, and any being endowed with this capacity can be said to be a genuine causal power. The appeal of defining causal power in this manner to Berkeley seems quite clear, for causal efficacy is therefore not restricted to the divine will alone, as it is in Malebranche's occasionalism. As with his definition of wisdom in *A New Letter*, Berkeley is able to argue that since introspection reveals the experiential knowledge that one has the capacity to affect one's ideas of imagination and produce motion in the limbs of one's body through volitional activity, one can therefore denominate finite spirits causal powers. Once this experiential fact is established, Berkeley can then argue that God too is a causal power by means of the analogical argument he formulates in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) and *Principles* (§140 & §§145-148), as well as the need for some "more powerful spirit" in *Principles* (§§29-33) to account for the order and steadiness that is exhibited in the laws of nature, as well as the creation of ideas of sense.

Further to this point, the main argument of *A New Letter* focuses upon Berkeley's claim that one may acquire knowledge of a power by the effects it produces, even though its internal activity is completely unknown: the fact that one is not directly acquainted with the internal activity of some power does not prevent one

from forming a notion of that power itself. Experience informs one as to those effects which are produced by volition, such as the creation or alteration of an idea of imagination, or the movement of a bodily limb. One infers that a power, or its internal activity, actually exists from one's experience of the effects which that power produces—a style of argument that Berkeley employs in regard to the volitional activity of finite spirits in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239-240), *Principles* (§§28-33 & §§145-149), *De Motu* (§25), as well as the claim that an individual can acquire knowledge of an otherwise unknown power by means of the effects that are produced by its activity in *Alciphron* (VII. 7-10).¹⁸ As Berkeley writes in his letter to Browne, if knowledge of a power were only possible by knowing the essence or intrinsic nature of that specific power, all powers alike, divine and human, would be absolutely inexplicable to the human intellect. Berkeley expresses this exact worry in *A New Letter* (392):

For if a power, only described by its effects, be perfectly unknown, till its intrinsic nature be found out, all powers either divine or humane are, to use your Lordship's words, involved in mid-night darkness. Impulse is as much a secret as the power of creation, and human *wisdom* as unsearchable a mystery as even that of God.

Berkeley argues that if one rejects knowledge of a power, which in the context of *A New Letter* concerns the literal wisdom of the divine mind, solely on the basis that one has an acquaintance with the effects alone and not the essence or “intrinsic nature” of a given power, then all powers will be said to be unknowable—an assertion that Berkeley most certainly understood as having the potential to lead to skepticism and atheism.

Berkeley argues in *A New Letter* that it is one's knowledge of certain effects that permits one to infer the existence of a literally wise God: from the steadiness and order exhibited in the laws of nature one may infer the existence of an infinitely more powerful spirit that is responsible for the creation and continual conservation of the regularities in nature. Knowledge of the effects is enough to permit the inference to the existence of an active cause, and to deny this manner of argumentation would shroud all knowledge of power in “mid-night darkness.” That Berkeley understood

¹⁸ I shall provide a fuller discussion of this point in ch. 4, sect. 4. I argue that Berkeley has two arguments for his conclusion that the will is active, and therefore, a genuine causal power: firstly, by means of the effects that are produced by the act of willing—that is, through volitional activity; and secondly, that one directly experiences the will as active *per se*. The argument that Berkeley advances in *A New Letter* is of the first type; however, both arguments stress that it is by an act of reflection that the will is known to be active.

this style of inference—that is, from observed effects to the existence of an active power—to be a manner of argumentation essential to his philosophy, as well as his debate with Browne concerning divine analogy, may be seen by what he writes in *A New Letter* (392):

But so confident I am of the assertion, that I readily will trust the whole debate upon this issue. Let your Lordship but explain one single power in the whole creation, independently of its effects, and by its true internal nature, and I am a convert to *analogy*.

Although Berkeley's argument in *A New Letter* is that one may conclude that God is literally wise from the natural effects that are exhibited by the divine will in the minds of finite spirits, I believe that the style of argumentation utilized by Berkeley in *A New Letter* can be applied equally to his assertion that spirits are causal powers. Therefore, Berkeley can argue that one need not have acquaintance with all aspects of the internal activity of a power, nor have ideational knowledge of that power—since this is impossible within Berkeley's distinction between active powers, which cannot be represented ideationally, and ideas.

According to Berkeley's argument, an individual need only have acquaintance with the effects produced by a particular power, and from those effects one can infer the existence and active nature of that power. Furthermore, that those effects are *necessarily connected*—that is, in terms of the necessity essential to the absolute necessitation model of causation—with a particular cause or power is not an essential feature of the definition of causal power that I have attributed to Berkeley; in fact, in the case of finite wills such absolute necessitation is impossible. The observation of certain effects, such as the creation of an idea of imagination or the movement of a bodily limb, permits the inference to an active power that is the cause of those effects, just as the steadiness and coherence observed in the laws of nature permit one to infer the existence and wisdom of some “more powerful spirit” that is responsible for the greater degree of order exhibited therein. What the latter requires, however, is the conclusion that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, which is revealed from inward reflection upon the will itself and the effects that are produced by that will: effects which are at bottom caused by the volitional activity of some spirit.¹⁹

¹⁹ The manner of inference Berkeley employs would be illegitimate for Hume, since the inference from observed effect to unobserved cause must have its foundation in the constantly observed conjunction of two species of objects and can extend no further. Since experience never reveals an impression of that power said to necessitate causal relations for Hume, the inference Berkeley draws from the observation of certain effects, said to be caused by the volitional activity of a spirit, to the

6. Berkeley's understanding of necessary connection

In equating causal activity with volitional activity, Berkeley effectively reduces natural causation, by which I mean the supposed causal interactions that exist between ideas of sense, to occasions upon which the will of some spirit, either finite or infinite, acts. What distinguishes Berkeley from Malebranche's occasionalism is that the former understands the volitional activity of a finite will to be the immediate cause of the creation of an idea in the mind or the movement of a bodily limb.²⁰ In the identification of all causal activity with the volitional activity of an active spirit, such that there are no causes which are not volitions—a claim which Berkeley states in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239)—and combining that claim with the further assertion in *Three Dialogues* (III: 239-240) that volitions can only subsist in the will of a spirit—the result of the ontological distinction that Berkeley establishes in *Principles* (§§1-2)—Berkeley draws a very strict distinction between causal powers and causal events, which are the various effects produced by the volitional activity of spirits. However, it is my belief that Berkeley realized that in equating causation with volition, and concluding that volitions subsist in active spirits alone, he could not identify causal power with the absolute necessitation inherent in Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause, for this would have forced Berkeley to reject the claim that finite wills are genuine causal powers on account of their non-omnipotence and imperfection. In short, Berkeley would have been led to the very same negative arguments that were employed by Malebranche in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3 & Elucidation 15) to argue for the causal inefficacy of finite spirits.

When Berkeley writes concerning the idea of necessary connection in relation to causal power, such as is found in his response to an anonymous critic in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§§28-30 & §§39-42), the idea of necessary connection is understood in terms of the rationalist belief that such a connection licenses *a priori* inference into the relations that exist between objects—in the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* Berkeley's discussion of the idea of is in reference to the connection that

conclusion that spirits are causal powers is unwarranted; and, this is a direct result of Hume's defining causal power in terms of absolute necessitation. Again, I believe that it is Berkeley's defining causal power in terms of willing, and not in terms of logical or absolute necessity, that permits Berkeley to draw this type of inference. Furthermore, Hume could question how it is that one actually knows there exists a single power as opposed to a series of differing perceptions rapidly succeeding one another without any single uniting power; an argument that is reminiscent of his discussion of personal identity in *Treatise* (I.IV.6).

²⁰ See McCracken (1983: 244-246) in reference to this point.

exists between visible ideas and tangible ideas.²¹ Berkeley's discussion of the idea of necessary connection in this work appears to indicate that he understood that idea in terms of the necessitation that is inherent in the absolute necessitation model. It is this understanding which I believe forced Berkeley to reject the belief that the idea of necessary connection in causation—that is, in reference to that power in objects said to actuate and necessitate the connections between visual and tangible ideas—involves a logically necessary connection between a cause and its effects. Thus, the idea of necessary connections governing causation is modeled on the necessity which is said to govern mathematical laws and certain axioms, as that of *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§42): that is, the absolute necessity that is said to license *a priori* inference into the nature of causal relations, and which human reason (i.e., the pure intellect) can acquire knowledge of through the discovery of a cause's essence or nature. Given that Berkeley understands the idea of necessary connection in this specific manner, he lacks the idea of necessary connection which Hume formulates in his positive account of causation in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-168) and *Enquiry* (VII: 73-79): that the idea of necessary connection, so essential to causation, is derived from a felt determination of the mind to infer, upon observation of the constant conjunction of two species of objects, a cause from its regularly conjoined effect or *vice versa*.

Hume's account of causation indicates that he understood the idea of necessity as an essential part of causation; it is just that such causal necessity is not equatable with absolute necessitation, as Malebranche had maintained in modeling the former upon the latter. Hume states that this particular conception of causal necessity is unsatisfactory in explaining how the idea of necessary connection in causation is formulated, for it extends beyond the scope of human understanding. However, the natural necessity that Hume's positive account of causation advances is not an available option for Berkeley, for the latter's treatment of necessary connection in relation to causality, and in particular, to that power said to effect such connections, reveals that he understood that idea in terms of the absolute necessitation which is said to license *a priori* inference into the nature of causal relations. That Berkeley understood the idea of necessary connection in this manner is further evidenced, I believe, by the fact that the connections in nature are arbitrary for Berkeley—a point he expresses in his discussion of the relations that exist between the laws of nature in

²¹ I shall discuss this particular point in greater depth in ch. 4, sect. 2.

Principles (§31, §65, & §§105-109), even going so far in *Principles* (§31) to explicitly deny that the various connections that exist among natural phenomena are necessary. *Principles* (§65) reveals that Berkeley understands the connections which exist between natural phenomena to be instituted by the benevolence of the divine will. The connections existing between natural phenomena are not governed by the relation of cause and effect, but stand in a relation of signification where one idea stands as a sign or mark that signifies another idea: water is the mark which forewarns one as to the danger of drowning. Natural phenomena—that is, ideas of sensation—cannot stand in a relation of cause and effect for Berkeley given the complete inertness of ideas. It must be an active spirit which is directly responsible for instituting the relations that exist between natural phenomena; and in the case of the natural world, that active spirit is God.

Given that Berkeley's discussion of the idea of necessary connection in causation reveals an understanding of that idea in terms of a logically necessary connection which licenses *a priori* inference into the structure of causal relations, it is not surprising that he rejects absolute necessitation as the defining feature of knowledge of causal power, since, as Malebranche had already argued, the imperfection and non-omnipotence of finite wills bars them from being true causal powers according to the absolute necessitation model. I suggest that Berkeley defines causal power in terms of the capacity to affect those ideas, through volitional activity, which fall within the scope of a particular will; and, that this definition is the direct result of Berkeley understanding the idea of necessary connection in terms of a logically necessary connection that licenses *a priori* inference and his belief that finite spirits are genuine secondary causes. However, the consequence of such an understanding appears to be that Berkeley must accept that certain causes, mainly finite wills, do not necessitate their effects. Given that Berkeley's discussions of the idea of necessary connection in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§§28-30 & §§39-42) reveal that he understands that idea in terms of the absolute necessity that permits *a priori* inference, Berkeley cannot assert that the connections between the volitional activity of finite wills and the effects produced by that activity are necessarily connected, since experience reveals that the volitions of finite spirits do not always produce their intended effects.

The difficulty concerns the basis upon which one is able to infer that the volitional activity of a spirit (a causal power) produces its intended effect, and how

one is able to account for the psychological belief that a particular cause, such as the volitional activity of a finite will, necessitates its effect? Hume's discussion of causality recognizes that it is psychologically unsatisfactory to maintain that a particular cause does not necessitate its effect, and even contrary to the nature of causation, for as Hume writes in *Treatise* (I.III.2), the idea of necessary connection is of greater importance to causation than the relations of contiguity and succession. Human beings are naturally disposed to believe that a particular cause necessitates its effect. This natural inclination must be accounted for according to Hume, and it is precisely this which leads to Hume's worry concerning the belief that causation involves absolute necessitation: that the absolute necessitation model cannot account for the natural belief that causes necessitate their effects, since the type of necessity which is said to govern causal relations according to that model extends beyond the capacities of human understanding, for it requires human understanding to know that a particular cause is inseparable from its usual effect. Hume accounts for the inclination to believe that a particular cause necessitates its effect by asserting that the idea of necessary connection in causation is derived from a felt determination of the mind to infer a cause from its regularly conjoined effect and *vice versa*. Berkeley had no such alternate way of understanding the idea of necessary connection, for his discussion of the idea in the aforementioned works is always in terms of the rationalist belief that such connections license *a priori* inference, such that one could know, in discovering the inner nature or essential properties of a cause, what effect will necessarily be produced.

I suggest that because Berkeley understands necessary connection in terms of the absolute necessity that licenses *a priori* inference into the nature of causal relations, he realized that he could not define causal power in Malebranchean terms—that is, in terms of a logically necessary connection—and still retain the causal efficacy of finite spirits. This is a direct result of the limited power of finite wills, for such wills fail to absolutely necessitate their intended effects; and, left without any other type of necessitation in reference to causal relations, such as Hume had formulated in his positive account of causation, Berkeley sought to define causal power in terms of the capacity to causally affect ideas through volitional activity, and the degree to which that power is exercised by a particular will is inconsequential to the definition of causal power. I believe that Berkeley's overarching aim in defining causal power in this manner was to secure the claim that the divine will is a causal

power, as well as finite wills, from the potential threats he understood to arise from Malebranche's conception of a genuine causal power: that the absolute necessitation model places far too strong a criterion upon knowledge of causal power, for it requires such knowledge to reveal that a cause is inseparable from its attendant effect.

The main concern regarding the absolute necessitation model of causation, and one which Hume was to elucidate and exploit at some length, is that it renders human understanding incapable of acquiring knowledge of causal power. Although Berkeley could in theory maintain that absolute necessitation is a feature of the divine will, as Malebranche had maintained, it is not a defining characteristic of causal power itself; the inseparability of a cause and effect need not be applied to finite wills, which are simply too weak to absolutely necessitate their intended effects. In defining causal power as synonymous with a spirit's capacity to causally affect ideas through an act of volition, Berkeley can argue that any will which is able to causally affect ideas through volition may be understood to be a causal power, no matter the extent of that particular will's power. Granted, the divine will is more powerful than finite wills and its power extends far beyond that of finite wills, but the absolute necessity of Malebranche's conception of a true cause is not the defining characteristic of a genuine causal power for Berkeley.

It is my belief that Berkeley's reasoning concerning the definition of causal power can be viewed in a similar light to his reasoning regarding his assertion that the divine being is literally wise in *A New Letter*. Berkeley states in his letter to Browne that in defining wisdom as a capacity to choose those means that will bring about the best ends, any being that fits this description, whether it be a human, an angel, or the divine, may be said to be literally wise. I suggest that Berkeley employs a similar style of argumentation in his claim that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, and that power is defined in terms of the act of willing: that is, the capacity to causally affect ideas through volitional activity. Thus, any spirit that is active, in that it is able to will and exert a degree of influence over those ideas that fall within its control, may be said to be a causal power. The limited degree of power exercised by a finite will in respect to its divine counterpart is of no consequence as regards labeling it a causally efficacious power according to Berkeley's definition.

7. Concluding remarks

I have sought primarily to illustrate two main points in this chapter. First, it is my belief that Berkeley recognizes that Malebranche's definition of a genuine cause in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) is too stringent and has the potential to be utilized by another thinker to deny the causal efficacy of the divine will by the same negative arguments which were employed by Malebranche against the causal efficacy of finite wills. Second, I believe that Berkeley sought to preempt these potential problems by defining causal power not in terms of a logically necessary connection (i.e., absolute necessitation), but in terms of the capacity to create and affect ideas by means of volitional activity. The benefit of defining causal power in this way is that Berkeley can maintain that any being, either finite or infinite, that has the ability to exercise a degree of volitional control over certain ideas could therefore be said to be a genuine causal power. Berkeley sought to establish a definition of causal power that would permit him to claim that finite spirits are powers.

That finite spirits are genuine powers is of the greatest importance to Berkeley's natural religion, for Berkeley states in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that knowledge of God is established by means of an analogy with oneself as an active willing agent; that is, by reflecting upon one's own soul and heightening its various powers one forms an "active thinking image of the Deity."²² Self-reflection reveals what observation of the world indicates: the laws of nature are maintained by the will of an infinitely powerful spirit, and this spirit conserves the uniformity of those laws by means of the same volitional activity that finite spirits engage in themselves in exciting an idea in the mind *ex nihilo* or in the production of movement in a bodily limb, as *Principles* (§28 & §147) argue respectively. It is the greater extent of power that the divine will is capable of exerting over ideas of sense that distinguishes the volitional activity of the divine will from that of finite wills; however, securing the causal efficacy of the latter is essential for Berkeley to claim the same volitional activity in the will of the divine. That Berkeley is successful in proving the causal efficacy of God through analogy with finite spirits is essential to the whole of his natural religion, and to the entirety of his philosophical system, for it is the divine will that is responsible for the creation of the laws of nature, as well as the conservation of

²² Such knowledge of God would of course be notional for Berkeley, since in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§782) and *Principles* (§142) Berkeley states, contrary to Descartes, that one has no idea of God.

their regularity.²³ The latter claim is vitally important within Berkeley's natural religion for the uniformity of the laws of nature is essential to the preservation and welfare of humanity. Had the divine will not established the laws of nature with the uniformity that they exhibit, human beings would exist in a state of utter confusion as regards the affairs of life.

The worry which I claim Berkeley foresaw in Malebranche's conception of a true cause—that such a conception could be exploited to the detriment of natural religion—would be insisted upon in great detail in the philosophy of David Hume. I believe that Berkeley realized precisely what Hume did shortly thereafter in exposing the problematic nature of Malebranche's conception of a genuine power in terms of a logically necessary connection: that the absolute necessitation model is far too strict to allow humanity to acquire knowledge of causal power, for the criterion that is placed upon such knowledge presents too great an obstacle for human thought to surmount. Hume famously applies Malebranche's negative arguments against knowledge of causal power in the *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3 & Elucidation 15) to the relations that exist between objects in the external world, as well as the relations internal to the mind.²⁴ Hume ultimately concludes that in all acts of willing, experience reveals no acquaintance with that causal power said to necessitate volitions and their effects absolutely. However, unlike Malebranche, Hume finds no reason to demarcate the will of the divine a genuine cause or power—that is, one that brings about its intended effect through a logically necessary connection—any more than finite wills: the supposed power equally escapes one's comprehension in both cases. Hume's acceptance of the absolute necessitation model of causation from Malebranche is precisely the danger that I believe Berkeley foresaw, and it is why I believe he rejected that particular model and sought to formulate a new definition of causal power.

²³ As regards this point, see Berkeley's letter to Samuel Johnson in *Works* (II: 280-281).

²⁴ See *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) and *Treatise* (I.III.14 & Appendix: 632-633).

CHAPTER III

Hume on Causal Power and Necessary Connection

1. Introduction

In a letter written to Michael Ramsey, dated the 31st of August 1737, Hume advises his friend that in order to understand the metaphysical elements of his *Treatise*, he should familiarize himself with, amongst other philosophical works, Malebranche's *Search after Truth* and Berkeley's *Principles*.¹ That Hume owed a large debt to Malebranche in his treatment of causal power is seen clearly from the negative arguments that are employed by the former in the *Treatise* (I.III.14) and *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69). Malebranche's *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3 & Elucidation 15) provided Hume with a blueprint for arguing that direct acquaintance with causal power is beyond the reach of human thought. However, where the religious sentiments of Malebranche led him to place all efficacy in the divine will alone, Hume was brazen enough to apply those very same arguments to the will of the divine and argue that one has no idea of that power said to necessitate a cause and its effect in the divine will any more than one is said to have an idea of that power in finite wills. Hume's negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) should be seen, I believe, as the continuation of Malebranche's arguments against the causal efficacy of finite wills. In drawing upon the latter's conception of a genuine cause as involving the perception of a logically necessary connection, Hume extends that conception and directs it against the causal efficacy of God. It is this extension of Malebranche's conception of a true causal power to the causal efficacy of the divine will on the part of Hume which, I suggest, Berkeley foresaw, and which he took precautionary measures against in order to secure his own experiential argument that reflection reveals spirits to be genuine causal powers—and with that claim, his natural religion.

What I shall argue in this chapter is that Hume adopts the absolute necessitation model of causation—which holds that a genuine causal power must logically necessitate its effect—in order to undermine Berkeley's argument that

¹ The letter is reproduced in Popkin (1964: 774-775). Hume likewise suggests that Ramsay read Bayle's *Dictionary* and Descartes' *Meditations* to acquire a proper understanding of the metaphysical parts of his *Treatise*, though he remarks that Ramsay may find difficulty in acquiring the latter.

reflection upon the will, as well as the effects produced by that will's volitional activity, reveals spirits to be genuine causal powers. Hume places a condition of inseparability upon knowledge of causal power, such that to acquire knowledge of that power which is said to necessitate causal relations, one would require knowledge of the inseparability of a cause from its effect: that the intrinsic nature or essence of a cause absolutely necessitates the effects produced. Thus, in the case of Berkeley's claim that the will is a power, according to the absolute necessitation model, to know that the will is that power which necessitates the regular conjunctions that one perceives would require one to know the total extent to which the will is able to influence ideas and the body, and that its influence will continue in a uniform manner.² However, as Hume argues, this supposed power in the will is no more intelligible than that power said to be possessed by external objects, nor is either more explicable in its influence than any other power. The condition of inseparability which Hume places upon knowledge of power, the result of his adoption of Malebranche's modeling of causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation, proves to be far too strong a criterion for finite minds to comprehend; and, as a result, neither finite wills, nor their divine counterpart, can be said to be causal powers. Further, and of greater significance to the central issue of this chapter, the absolute necessitation model stipulates too strong a criterion for knowledge of power to permit Berkeley to conclude that reflection yields knowledge of oneself as a causal power, which can be extended *via* analogy to the causal efficacy of the divine will.

A chief aim of Hume's negative account of causation in both the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry* is to illustrate the misconceived belief of rationalist philosophers in idealizing human reason and equating causal necessity with the absolute necessitation

² Hume does argue in *Enquiry* (VIII: 82-87) that history and experience reveal that human motives causally necessitate certain actions, such that ambition, avarice, and generosity are the sources of specific human actions, which are revealed to be their source. Furthermore, in arguing that Hume adopts the absolute necessitation model in order to illustrate that it is too strong in reference to the acquisition of knowledge of causal power, my interpretation can support his claim in *Enquiry* (VIII: 82-87), as well as his claim in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-169) and *Enquiry* (VII: 75-79), that the idea of necessity involved in causation is produced by the determination of the mind to connect a cause that experience reveals to be constantly conjoined with an effect. As I understand it, Hume's manner of argumentation is two-fold: first, to adopt the absolute necessitation model in order to expose that it exceeds the scope of human understanding through the negative argumentation of *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69)—that the absolute necessity involved in that specific model cannot be adequately explained *a priori* or *a posteriori*—and secondly, to advance the positive claim that the idea of necessary connection is explained by means of a natural determination of the mind to connect a cause and effect that experience reveals to be regularly conjoined. I shall discuss this particular point in further depth in the fourth section of this chapter.

which they understand to govern mathematical laws or the divine will. The causal necessity of the absolute necessitation model is beyond the scope of human reason. If such absolute necessitation in causation were known, it would provide reason with an infallible guide to the causal structure of the natural world. Hume's negative arguments in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) pose a significant threat to the causal efficacy of both finite wills and the divine will, and in consequence, to natural religion. Furthermore, given that the efficacy of the divine will is essential to Berkeley's philosophical system—for it is the divine will that conserves the uniformity exhibited in the natural laws, which is imperative to the survival of the human species—Hume's argument has the potential to undermine a belief that is essential to Berkeley's entire philosophy.

If Hume can illustrate that Berkeley is unable to utilize reflection as a means to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers—that is, to argue that the volitional activity of finite spirits provides one with the type of experiential evidence required to prove that spirits are causal powers—then the causal efficacy of the divine will is threatened as well. This is a substantial threat to the overall purpose of Berkeley's philosophical endeavors, and the severity and force of this threat is on account of the fact that Berkeley, in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232), argues that the causal efficacy of the divine will is established by means of analogy: one forms a notion of God through the experiential knowledge that finite wills are causal powers on account of their volitional activity, and then heightening one's own active power and removing the various imperfections which plague finite wills. The importance of Berkeley's claim that self-reflection reveals oneself to be an active being—established through the act of willing—and therefore, a causal power, to his natural religion is paramount; and, given the extensive role that Berkeley assigns to God within his philosophy, the potential harm that this particular line of argumentation espoused by Hume poses to Berkeley's entire philosophical system is quite palpable.

Hume's main point of attack in the seventh section of the *Enquiry* focuses upon the inability of human understanding to acquire knowledge of power through experience of the will. Berkeley's assertion that the will is a power fails to appreciate an essential feature as regards the nature of causal power for Hume: power concerns the essence or intrinsic nature of a cause. In understanding power in terms of essence, there exists no alternate manner in which one could understand the type of necessity involved in power than as absolute for Hume; and for that matter, Malebranche.

Absolute necessitation was that form of necessitation that captured the defining characteristic that provided knowledge of the essence of a cause. Berkeley's rejection of absolute necessitation as an essential feature of causal power fails to understand what the correct conception of power entails. The fault that Hume finds in Berkeley's treatment of causal power is the belief that one can know a power without a complete knowledge of the entirety of its influence, as well as the effects that it necessitates absolutely. The fact that power is directly concerned with the essence of a cause requires that nothing pertaining to that cause remains hidden; however, as the fourth section of the *Enquiry* reveals, the essences of objects and causes are precisely that which remain hidden from the reaches of human reasoning, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*.

2. Hume's skepticism and the science of human nature

Hume's aim in his philosophy is more modest in scope than either Malebranche or Berkeley. Hume's philosophical aim is not to argue that human beings are the little gods of Leibniz, who living under the dominion of the one great God, have been created in the image of the divine, but to return humanity to its rightful place in the natural world: human beings are governed by the same principles of association which operate throughout the animal kingdom. Hume attempts to strike a killing blow against the early modern belief that reason provides humanity with a perfect knowledge that is on par with the divine mind.³ The limitations of human understanding render it entirely unsuitable for the more abstruse reasoning of metaphysicians; the human intellect should limit itself to the dictates of experience and observation of the world: to the *science of human nature*.⁴ Hume asserts in the *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xix) that the ultimate aim of the methodology he employs is to render the principles of human nature as universal as is possible, although this desire for universality cannot be extended beyond the limits of one's previous

³ As regards this point, see Craig (1987: chs. 1-2) and Beebee (2006: ch. 1).

⁴ See Owen (1999: 64-66) for an enlightening discussion of Hume's desire to limit the methodology of his *science of human nature* to experience and correct experimentation. See also Owen's footnote on page 65 of the same work for a very helpful point on the definition of the term *experiment* in the early 18th century, quoted from the annotations to Hume's *Treatise* in Norton (2000). Experiment in the 18th century often meant nothing more than the observation of human behavior; this definition takes on a special importance in reference to Hume's treatment of the passions in the second book of the *Treatise*, as well as his moral philosophy.

experience, such that one may pretend to reveal the secret qualities which guide human nature. Regarding this point, Hume writes in *Treatise* (Introduction: xvii):

And tho' we must endeavour to render all our principles as universal as possible, by tracing up our experiments to the utmost, and explaining all effects from the simplest and fewest causes, 'tis certain we cannot go beyond experience; and any hypothesis, that pretends to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, ought at first to be rejected as presumptuous and chimerical.

Hume's desire to restrict his method to experience and "careful and exact experiments" in the *Treatise* places strict limitations on his attempt to introduce an experimental method of reasoning into his treatment of human nature. In limiting his *science of human nature* to the sphere of experience and experimentation, Hume would have satisfied his attempt to approach human nature from a methodology similar to the scientific method employed by Newton. David Owen correctly recognizes that Hume, like Newton in his *Principia*, must abandon the search for the explanatory principles which lie beyond the boundaries of human experience—a sacrifice that Hume is willing to accept in his own philosophy in order to avoid the errors and chimeras which he understands to plague the writings of dogmatic metaphysicians.⁵

That Hume understands the method of inquiry employed by metaphysicians to be fruitless is clear. In limiting the scope of his inquiry to experience, Hume likewise limits all subjects of human inquiry to the same experiential boundaries; the rules regarding the formulation of correct judgments must likewise limit causal judgments to the sphere of experience, which is precisely what Hume expresses in *Treatise* (I.III.15). Correct causal judgments must be limited to the realm of experience and exact experiments, and cannot go beyond those limits in inferring the existence of the original and unknown principles that Hume so often derides metaphysicians for doing in extending their inquiry into the chimerical. Hume's central claim in *Enquiry* (VII:

⁵ Hume's desire to avoid such errors and limit his own philosophy to experience is clearly illustrated in what he writes in the *Treatise* (Introduction: xvii-xviii): "I do not think a philosopher, who would apply himself so earnestly to the explaining the ultimate principles of the soul, would show himself a great master in that very science of human nature, which he pretends to explain, or very knowing in what is naturally satisfactory to the mind of man. For nothing is more certain, than that despair has almost the same effect upon us with enjoyment, and that we are no sooner acquainted with the impossibility of satisfying any desire, than the desire itself vanishes. When we see, that we have arrived at the utmost extent of human reason, we sit down contented; tho' we be perfectly satisfied in the main of our ignorance, and perceive that we can give no reason for our most general and most refined principles, beside our experience of their reality; which is the reason of the mere vulgar, and what it required no study at first to have discovered for the most particular and most extraordinary phenomenon."

65-69) is that the Berkeleyan assertion that one may know oneself as a causal power on account of the experiential knowledge that one can create and affect certain ideas, including one's body, through volition is not warranted by experience. Experience only reveals that a certain effect regularly follows a volition; experience does not provide acquaintance with that power said to necessitate causal relations and render a cause inseparable from its effect: it cannot acquaint one with causal power itself. Hume's reason for concluding this fact is on account of his acceptance of Malebranche's belief that the nature of causal power involves absolute necessitation, which places a condition of inseparability on knowledge of that power said to actuate and necessitate causal relations; or more precisely, upon that characteristic, the acquaintance with which would constitute knowledge of causal power: the inseparability of a cause and effect. That it is impossible to satisfy this knowledge condition, given the limitations of human thought, reveals to Hume the misguided attempt of rationalist philosophers to raise human understanding to the level of the divine. In the search for an impression of power, human understanding must remain within the boundaries of experience and exact experimentation: this is the principal aim of the scientific methodology which Hume sought to apply in his inquiry into human nature.

3. *The Bare Thought and knowledge of causal power*

Hume's discussion of causal power and necessary connection as defined by the absolute necessitation model of causation in *Treatise* (I.III.14) and *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) is negative in tone.⁶ Hume's search for an impression of that power said to logically or absolutely necessitate causal relations yields no positive results, for the constant conjunction of resembling cause and effect relations, which is what one is presented with through perception, can provide no new impression of the type of necessitation that is required for the absolute necessitation model advocated by Malebranche. However, though the regular repetition of objects does not provide one with a new impression of causal power, the observation of resembling instances of regular conjunctions does produce a determination in the mind to pass from a cause to

⁶ Hume equates causal power with absolute necessitation in his writings in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 157 & I.IV.5: 248) and *Enquiry* (IV: 30-32 & VII: 63, 77).

its usual effect or *vice versa*; and, it is this felt determination of the mind to move from the one to the other that is the basis of the idea of necessary connection for Hume. It is merely that the necessitation involved in this determination of the mind is not the absolute necessitation by which Malebranche understands causality.

The necessity which unites a cause and its usual effect is a product of the mind for Hume, originating in the principle of custom acting upon the constant conjunction of two species of objects. The mind then projects that internal impression of necessity—the determination of the mind to infer a cause from an effect or *vice versa*—upon the objects and relations which exist in the world, both external and internal, and falsely attributes the idea of an objective necessary connection as existing between the objects themselves. *Treatise* (I.III.2) reveals that Hume understood the idea of necessary connection to be an essential element of the concept of causation; it is simply that Malebranche's equation of causal necessity with logical or absolute necessity places too stringent a condition upon knowledge of causal power, and upon causality more generally. Hume understands the failure to discover that power said to unite a cause with its effect, rendering the two inseparable, to reveal that the absolute necessitation model exceeds the capacity of human reason and perception. The failure to discover a logically necessary connection in the causal relations that one observes in the world leads Hume to locate the idea of necessity connection in the natural propensities of the mind itself, as well as in the mind's projection of that natural necessity onto the relations in the world.

However, I wish to make two points before I proceed further. First, though Hume recognizes that the absolute necessitation model places far too stringent a condition upon knowledge of causal power—that is, that it requires knowledge of the inseparability of a cause and its effect—he likewise recognizes that when applied to the theatre of natural religion, it could prove particularly useful in curtailing philosophers and theologians from formulating abstruse hypotheses concerning the original principles of natural religion and the nature of the divine—precisely what Hume's *science of human nature* is meant to limit. Second, I do not believe that the ultimate aim of Hume's negative treatment of causal power should be understood as meant to prove its non-existence, but concerned chiefly to illustrate the inadequacy of human cognitive faculties to discover that power, which according to the absolute necessitation model of causation, is said to render causal relations inseparable by a logically necessary connection. Thus, Hume writes in *Enquiry* (VII: 63):

From the first appearance of an object, we never can conjecture what effect will result from it. But were the power or energy of any cause discoverable by the mind, we could foresee the effect, even without experience; and might, at first, pronounce with certainty concerning it, by the mere dint of thought and reasoning.

The same point had been made by Hume in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 161-162):

Now nothing is more evident, than that the human mind cannot form such an idea of two objects, as to conceive any connexion betwixt them, or comprehend distinctly that power or efficacy, by which they are united. Such a connexion wou'd amount to a demonstration, and wou'd imply the absolute impossibility for the one object not to follow, or to be conceiv'd not to follow upon the other: Which kind of connexion has already been rejected in all cases.

And again, in reference to the act of willing, Hume writes in *Enquiry* (VII: 66):

We learn the influence of our will from experience alone. And experience only teaches us, how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the secret connexion, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable.

Hume states throughout his account of causation in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) that one is never conscious of any power in external objects or those internal to the mind which is said to necessitate causal relations absolutely. Experience reveals nothing more than that a given effect regularly follows from some cause, and the regular conjunction of any two species of objects establishes a propensity in the mind to infer the one from the other; and, this determination to infer an effect from a cause that it constantly attends is the basis for the idea of necessary connection in causal relations. However, although Hume's negative treatment of causal power focuses upon the fact that human understanding is too limited to acquire knowledge of causal power as conceived by the absolute necessitation model, what I understand to be of particular importance in Hume's account is that it provides one with that characteristic which, if acquainted with, would constitute knowledge of causal power: the inseparability of the cause from its effect, understood in terms of absolute necessitation. Though the experience of the constant conjunction of two objects leads the mind to infer a cause from an effect through force of habit, this natural necessitation established by the mind provides no insight into causal power; as previously stated, causal power requires the construal of such necessity in terms of absolute necessitation.

That Hume's negative discussion of causal power provides a glimpse into what knowledge of power would entail is recognized by Peter Kail; and, it is this characteristic of inseparability that Kail entitles the *Bare Thought*.⁷ Kail understands

⁷ See Kail (2007a: 83-90). See also Broughton (1987).

the Bare Thought as that feature of causal power, such that if one were acquainted with it, one would have knowledge of that power which necessitates causal relations. Kail writes the following concerning the Bare Thought:

We can specify uniquely that which we cannot understand (causal power) by saying that it is that feature that, were we acquainted with it, would yield *a priori* inference and render it inconceivable that the cause not be followed by its effect. This is the Bare Thought. The Bare Thought identifies that which we cannot understand as, precisely, causal necessity and thus avoiding the objection that talk of ‘unknown something’ is not sufficiently rich to allow for thought of causal power.⁸

The main point I wish to stress is that the Bare Thought is not equatable with the idea of necessity that one forms in the mental transition from two species of objects observed to be constantly conjoined with one another. The Bare Thought provides an individual with a hint as to what knowledge of causal power would entail: the inseparability of a cause and its effect, construed in terms of absolute necessitation. This is precisely the criterion that Malebranche had applied to knowledge of causal power, and that which Hume attempts at length to illustrate lies beyond the scope of human reason and experience, and therefore, beyond the scope of his *science of human nature*. The Bare Thought requires the further knowledge that the cause logically necessitates its effect, rendering the two inseparable. As Hume writes in *Enquiry* (VII: 63), the human mind’s penetration into the internal structure of the cause, if such penetration were possible, would permit one to know all aspects of the cause “by the mere dint of thought and reasoning.” The Bare Thought would permit one to foresee what effect will follow without recourse to experience of constant conjunction: in this sense, the Bare Thought would license *a priori* inference into the mechanism or power governing the causal relation itself.

Hume’s formulation of the Bare Thought likewise reveals an important aspect of his treatment of causal power: that power concerns the essence or intrinsic nature of a cause. The manner of conceiving causal relations, as expressed by the Bare Thought, is in terms of absolute necessitation; and, in treating the Bare Thought as the criterion for knowledge of power, Hume expresses a conception of causal power that entails a belief that a particular cause possesses that power essentially.⁹ The essential nature of a cause is intimately linked to the particular effects it necessitates, such that

⁸ Kail (2007a: 84).

⁹ See Kail (2007a: 85-92). See Ayers (1996) for a discussion of how this manner of conceiving power as essence was understood in early modern philosophy, especially in relation to those philosopher whose writings would have directly influenced Hume’s own treatment of power.

a cause must produce a particular effect without question. However, such penetration into the nature of causes is impossible for Hume. Even given this deficiency in human thought, the conception of power as involving absolute necessity permeates throughout Hume's discussions. Power concerns something more than mere regularity: it must provide knowledge of more than the constant conjunction of a cause and its attendant effect. What power concerns is the essence or intrinsic nature of a cause, and Hume draws this conception of causal power explicitly in *Treatise* (II.III.1: 400):

It has been observ'd already, that in no single instance the ultimate connexion of any objects is discoverable, either by our senses or reason, and that we can never penetrate so far into the essence and construction of bodies, as to perceive the principle, on which their mutual influence depends.

This passage reveals that Hume understood power in terms of the essence of a cause—an essence that is hidden given humanity's ignorance of the essences of bodies. This same line of argumentation is employed by Hume throughout the fourth section of the *Enquiry*. Knowledge of power requires knowledge of essences, but it is precisely this knowledge, as the fourth section of the *Enquiry* reveals, that human understanding cannot acquire by means of either *a priori* or *a posteriori* reasoning. As Hume writes in *Treatise* (I.II.5), sensory knowledge is limited by its impressions; and impressions only reveal the sensible qualities of an object, never the essence—that is, the power by which an object absolutely necessitates its effects.

However, though Hume argues that one has no direct epistemic acquaintance with the Bare Thought—the absolute necessitation by which a cause and effect are rendered inseparable—by means of either demonstrative reasoning or experiential reasoning, his argument against knowledge of causal power provides the essential characteristic that such knowledge would constitute: it would yield the knowledge that a cause and effect are inextricably linked, such that it is impossible that a cause could have any other effect than that which it does. The Bare Thought, therefore, appears to indicate that Hume's skeptical bent concerning knowledge of causal power is on account of the magnitude that such knowledge entails, extending beyond the capacity of humanity's cognitive faculties in their attempt to discover an impression of the logical necessity essential to knowledge of causal power. Leibnizian rationalism argues that had God endowed the human species with sharper intellectual and perceptual faculties—the gradual perfection of which is a genuine possibility in

Leibniz's philosophy—one could acquire knowledge of the internal structure of causal relations.¹⁰ However, this idealized view of reason is not Hume's own. Granted, had nature, or God, endowed the human species with better cognitive faculties the causal structure of the world might have been transparent to reason; however, nature has not seen fit to do so. In spite of this, Hume does assert that nature has endowed the human species with cognitive faculties which are adept at tracing and understanding the causal connections which exist in the world.

The rationalist ideal elevates human reason beyond its limitations: reason cannot acquire knowledge of the Bare Thought. Human understanding is not able to discover the absolute necessity that is an essential feature of knowledge of causal power through experience or demonstrative reasoning. This is what Kail recognizes when he writes:

The Bare Thought identifies that which we cannot understand as, precisely, causal necessity and thus avoiding the objection that talk of 'unknown somethings' is not sufficiently rich to allow for thought of causal power. This is not an idea of necessity. What we have absolutely no idea of is what kind of thing it is that could, through our detection of it, yield those consequences. That seems perfectly true: I can gain no conception of what kind of feature it is acquaintance with which would yield those cognitive consequences. So it is quite true that we have 'no idea of this connexion, nor even any distinct notion of what it is we desire to know, when we endeavour at a conception of it' (EHU 7.2.29; SNB 77). Nevertheless a thought of a kind is available, manifested in Hume's negative strategy, to specify that of which we have 'no distinct notion'. The thin notion is not itself an idea of causal power, but an understanding of what it would be to have such an idea.¹¹

Kail recognizes that Hume's negative treatment of power is not directly concerned with arguing that causal power does not exist; rather, Hume is desirous to illustrate that human reason cannot elevate itself to such heights as rationalist philosophers maintain. Human thought simply cannot know this characteristic of causal power: the Bare Thought. If human understanding were capable of acquainting itself with

¹⁰ Locke writes of his pessimism concerning the possibility of knowing the real essence of any object in *Essay* (Bk. III. ch. iii. §§15-17), as well as in *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. iii. §§25-26 & Bk. IV. ch. vi. §§7-9), which is on account of the doubts that plague *a posteriori* knowledge of real essences through the use of inductive reasoning. Locke appears to suggest in *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. iii. §25) that if human beings were equipped with finer sensory organs, such as if God had endowed humanity with microscopic eyes that permitted acquaintance with the real essence of objects, one could foretell the behavior of substances through an *a priori* physics. Locke's tone in *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. iii. §25 & Bk. IV. ch. iii. §29) suggests that he understood the impossibility of such an *a priori* physics in practice and in principle respectively. Louis Loeb appears to interpret Locke as maintaining the former, that is, that an *a priori* physics is impossible in practice; see Loeb (1981: 36-62). See also Mackie (1976: ch. 3) for a similar interpretation. Hume denies that such an *a priori* physics is possible in practice and in principle.

¹¹ Kail (2007a: 84).

this feature—the absolute necessitation that renders a cause and effect inseparable—one would know causal power. However, as it stands, human understanding knows only that necessitation born of a determination in the mind to infer a cause from an effect and *vice versa*; and it is this transition in the mind from which the idea of necessary connection springs. However, this is not an idea of causal power itself—as regards the latter, human thought can have no direct acquaintance. However, as Kail states, there is some thought that is available; it is not a thought of causal power itself, but a condition which would satisfy knowledge of such power: that is, the inseparability of a cause and effect. In placing this condition of inseparability upon knowledge of causal power, Hume conceives of a genuine cause in terms of the same absolute necessity as Malebranche in the *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3). Hume then proceeds to apply this conception to his search for causal power in the various activities of finite wills, as Malebranche had done previously, and discovering no such causal power in finite wills, proceeds where Malebranche had ceased in his own inquiry: to offer a potentially damaging criticism against the claim that God is a genuine causal power, as well as to any other religiously minded philosopher whose natural religion maintains the causal efficacy of the divine will: mainly, Berkeley.

4. *Hume and natural causal necessitation*

As I previously stated, I believe a chief aim of Hume's negative account of causal power is to reveal that rationalist philosophers are misguided in their attempt to elevate human reason on a par with the divine, and the belief that causal necessity can be modeled upon the absolute necessitation that governs mathematics, or which Malebranche understands to govern the divine will. I believe that Hume ultimately thinks that knowledge of causal power is beyond the scope of human understanding due to the type of necessitation it involves; however, it is clear that Hume also believes that human beings understand the connections existing between external objects to be necessitated by the natural inclination of the mind to infer a cause from its attendant effect, the two of which experience reveals to be constantly conjoined. Hume also reveals an awareness that motives, such as greed, ambition, or generosity, causally necessitate human actions: greed is understood to necessitate theft, while generosity is regularly experienced to necessitate more charitable actions. Hume

argues that this form of causal necessity is borne out by experience and history in *Enquiry* (VIII: 83):

It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and that human nature remains the same, in its principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit: these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind. Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life of the Greeks and Romans? Study well the temper and actions of the French and English: You cannot be much mistaken in transferring to the former *most* of the observations which you have made with regard to the latter.

Experience and acquaintance with historical fact reveals that the actions of human beings are uniform—that is, without external constraints—such that in *Enquiry* (VIII: 84) Hume states that if a traveler, upon returning from a distant nation, brings an account of human actions that are completely foreign to what experience has consistently revealed to be the case, the falsehood and lies of that traveler should be at once detected.

Human actions remain uniform for Hume, but the necessitation that governs such uniformity has the same source as the idea of necessary connection that Hume develops in his positive account of causation. Custom establishes a necessary connection between human motives and the actions produced by those motives, which experience reveals to be constantly conjoined; and it is that constant conjunction which determines the mind to infer a felt connection between the two and render the motives necessarily connected to the actions. In this sense, one can know through experience that human actions are causally necessitated by the motives that produce them. Furthermore, that the actions of human beings, as well as the actions of external objects, are said to be necessarily connected in the manner that Hume describes is of great importance and advantage to the human species, for that connection informs humankind as to the rules by which the world is governed and directed; thus, Hume writes in *Enquiry* (VIII: 85):

But were there no uniformity in human actions, and were every experiment which we could form of this kind irregular and anomalous, it were impossible to collect any general observations concerning mankind; and no experience, however accurately digested by reflection, would ever serve to any purpose. Why is the aged husbandman more skilful in his calling than the young beginner but because there is a certain uniformity in the operation of the sun, rain, and earth towards the production of vegetables; and experience teaches the old practitioner the rules by which this operation is governed and directed?

In the same manner as Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§31) and *New Theory of Vision* (§147) that the natural laws inform the human species as to that information which is necessary for its survival—in procuring that which is beneficial to the affairs of life and avoiding that which is harmful—Hume argues that the natural inclination of the mind to necessarily connect human motives and actions, as well as the actions of external objects, provides great benefits to humanity. The key difference being that the foundation upon which those natural laws are grounded in Berkeley's philosophy is the volitional activity of a benevolent divine will.

Thus, Hume has a notion of natural causal necessity in his positive account of causation; however, it is clear from the outset that the source of this natural necessity is not an original power that necessitates causal relations, but a propensity of the mind. In fact, what Hume's negative account of causal power reveals is the idea of necessary connection, as expressed in Hume's positive account of causation, simply cannot have some original causal power as its source, which is a direct result of the absolute necessity that is involved in the conception of causal power inherited from Malebranche. As I argued previously, the only available idea of necessary connection to Hume is the idea formed by the felt determination of the mind in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-169) and *Enquiry* (VII: 73-79). However, I do not believe that the fact that Hume permits this type of necessity is problematic to the reading of Hume's discussion of causality which I have presented, since I believe that my interpretation can incorporate the type of causal necessitation that one finds in Hume's positive account. Hume, in illustrating that the absolute necessitation model of causality exceeds the breadth of human understanding, for such absolute necessity cannot be known by means of experience or demonstration, is left to discover the source of the idea of necessary connection in the mind; it is this type of causal necessity alone that is left for Hume to discover in his search for an impression of a necessary connection.

My aim in the previous three sections has been to argue that Hume approaches his discussion of causality in a two-fold manner. Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model as expressing what knowledge of causal power would entail—that is, in terms of a logically necessary connection and the condition of inseparability which results—but recognizes that the condition it places upon knowledge of causal power is too extensive for human thought to satisfy. Hume provides insight as to what knowledge of causal power would require—the Bare Thought—but his negative account of power shows that the standard has been set far too high by rationalist

philosophers and extends beyond the natural limits of experience. Having illustrated that human understanding is not able to discover that power which is said to necessitate causal relations absolutely, Hume's positive account of causation discovers an idea of necessary connection, which has its source in the natural inclination of the mind to infer a cause from an effect and *vice versa*, based upon the constant conjunction of the two in experience.¹² What Hume uncovers in his search is an idea of necessary connection that does not require the insurmountable obstacle of acquaintance with the type of necessity inherent in the absolute necessitation model, and provides him with a basis upon which he can ground the necessitation that one experiences in the actions of human beings and the actions of external objects.

I believe that Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model as revealing what knowledge of causal power would entail: that causal relations are rendered inseparable by absolute necessitation. It is simply that such knowledge is beyond the scope of human thought. In the remaining sections of this chapter I shall elucidate the manner in which Hume adopts and employs Malebranche's conception of causal power against Berkeley's argument that experience of the will and the effects of its volitional activity reveals that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, which is the basis for his further claim that the divine will is a causal power in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232).

5. Introspection and knowledge of causal power

Berkeley's assertion that spirits are causal powers is fostered by an act of introspection upon the various activities that denominate a spirit active and the experiential knowledge that the effects of those operations are produced by volitional activity. The capacity to engage in volitional activity and causally affect certain ideas by means of that activity is how I believe Berkeley understands causal power; and since experience reveals that finite wills engage in precisely this capacity, the causal power of spirits is secured for Berkeley upon an experiential foundation. What I shall argue in the remainder of this chapter is that Hume's negative arguments against

¹² Hume's use of the term *experience* does not mean sensory perception *per se*, but the observable patterns that are comprised of sensory perceptions connected over time. In this Hume and Aristotle find agreement; what Hume denies is the Aristotelian notion that experience provides insight into the essences of objects, as well as the necessity that governs the relations in which those objects exist. See *Enquiry* (IV: 32-39).

causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) are aimed at the experiential foundation that Berkeley utilizes in his argument that finite spirits are causal powers. In essence, Hume's negative arguments have the potential to undermine the experiential basis upon which Berkeley builds his natural religion. The threat that Hume's negative account of causal power poses to Berkeley is therefore quite severe, for if Hume is able to illustrate that introspection upon the act of willing does not reveal an intuitive awareness of oneself as a causal power—that is, some power beyond the mere constant conjunction of two species of objects—then Hume appears to be able to provide a viable objection which would undermine the experiential support for Berkeley's claim that finite spirits are genuine causal powers.

Furthermore, a consequence of undermining Berkeley's experiential foundation would be that Hume's negative account of power would therefore bear an equal weight against the claim that God is a causal power. In short, if one cannot know that finite spirits are causal powers by an act of introspection, and if one acquires knowledge of God's existence by reflecting upon oneself as an active being, which Berkeley argues in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232), then if the initial act of self-reflection fails to discover oneself as a causal power, that failure may be utilized equally against the claim that God is that power which creates and regulates the ideas of sense which constitute the world: to remove the foundation would bring down the edifice. Therefore, Hume's criticisms in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) provide a further criticism against Berkeley's natural religion; and, given the extent of the power that is wielded by the divine will in Berkeley's philosophy, Hume's criticisms have the potential to undermine the greater part of Berkeley's natural religion, and therefore, much of his philosophical agenda. The belief that self-reflection provides one with the experiential knowledge that spirits are causal powers is the central point of dispute between Berkeley and Hume, and therefore, it will be the central focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Hume states in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) that an individual is intimately acquainted with volition as an act of the mind, and furthermore, that one is consciously aware that bodily movements regularly follow volitional activity. However, experience informs one only that the formation of a certain volition, which once performed by an act of will, is constantly conjoined with a certain effect: experience does not reveal the power that is said to be responsible for effecting and necessitating the causal relation. Experience does not reveal an internal impression of

causal power in the activities of the mind or the will, just as one has no external impression of that causal power said to unite objects causally in the external world.¹³

Hume states precisely this in *Treatise* (Appendix: 632-633):

Some have asserted, that we feel an energy, or power, in our own mind; and that having in this manner acquir'd the idea of power, we transfer that quality to matter, where we are not able immediately to discover it. The motions of our body, and the thoughts and sentiments of our mind, (say they) obey the will; nor do we seek any farther to acquire a just notion of force or power. But to convince us how fallacious this reasoning is, we need only consider, that the will being here consider'd as a cause, has no more a discoverable connexion with its effects, than any material cause has with its proper effect. So far from perceiving the connexion betwixt an act of volition, and a motion of the body; 'tis allowed that no effect is more inexplicable from the powers and essence of thought and matter. Nor is the empire of the will over our mind more intelligible. The effect is there distinguishable and separable from the cause, and cou'd not be foreseen without the experience of their constant conjunction. We have command over our mind to a certain degree, but beyond *that* lose all empire over it: And 'tis evidently impossible to fix any precise bounds to our authority, where we consult not experience. In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have. Since, therefore, matter is confess'd by philosophers to operate by an unknown force, we shou'd in vain hope to attain an idea of force by consulting our own minds.¹⁴

What Hume permits is the regular production of an effect from an act of will, which is regularly conjoined in experience; however, this is all Hume appears willing to allow one to know *via* experience—though the idea of necessary connection which has its source in the mind's inclination to infer a cause from a regularly conjoined effect and *vice versa* is established by means of this experience. What Hume explicitly denies is the claim that one is able to reason beyond the constant conjunction of an act of will and the bodily movement that regularly follows that act to the inference that the will is a genuine causal power. Hume does not permit one to draw the type of inference that Berkeley draws: that one can reason beyond constant conjunction and assert that finite spirits are causal powers based upon one's ability to exercise control over one's

¹³ See *Treatise* (I.III.14: 160-161) and *Enquiry* (VII: 60-64).

¹⁴ The phrasing of this passage is most assuredly directed against Locke's account of active power in *Essay* (Bk. II. ch. xxi) rather than being directed exclusively at Berkeley. In fact, I do not believe that Hume has Berkeley in mind in this particular passage. However, the manner of argumentation employed by Hume in this passage is equally effective against Berkeley's claim that self-reflection upon the will and its activities yields a conscious awareness that one is a causal power, as it is to Locke's treatment of active power in *Essay* (Bk. II. ch. xxi), and can therefore be applied to Berkeley's argument. Hume's discussion of this issue in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) reveals that Berkeley is his primary target, which is evidence by the greater emphasis Hume places upon volition and the act of self-reflection upon the will. I shall offer what I believe to be a reasonable explanation for Hume's expanded treatment in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) against Berkeley's claim that self-reflection yields awareness of oneself as a causal power in ch. 5, sect. 2.

ideas of imagination and the movement of one's bodily limbs by means of volitional activity.

Berkeley's claim that spirits are causal powers draws heavily upon his argument in *Principles* (§25) that ideas cannot be genuine causes. Ideas are entirely transparent: there is nothing existent in an idea other than what one perceives in that idea.¹⁵ Berkeley continues along this line of reasoning to argue that since one cannot perceive a power or active principle intrinsic to ideas, bare observation reveals ideas to be entirely passive. Thus, given that Berkeley's ontology is divided into spirits and ideas, spirits alone are genuine causes—a conclusion founded upon the experiential knowledge that one's will is able to exercise a degree of volitional control over those ideas that fall within the scope of its power. Hume appears to use the same style of reasoning in the above passage as does Berkeley in the latter's argument against the causal efficacy of ideas in *Principles* (§25): that is, Hume argues that observation reveals that there is no one internal impression of the mind that "has an apparent energy, more than external objects have." One has an immediate awareness of the command that one's will is able to exert over the "thoughts and sentiments" of the mind and the movement of the body, but that the experience of this ability in the will could produce an impression of that power behind the regular conjunction of the will and such motions—a power that absolutely necessitates the will and its effects—or ground an inference that spirits are that power, is explicitly denied by Hume in *Treatise* (Appendix: 632-633).¹⁶

Hume is more explicit in his argumentation that one has no conscious awareness of causal power in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*.¹⁷ Hume's inquiry originates in the search for an impression of causal power from which the idea is derived. Concluding that one is unable to discover an impression that could supply one with the idea of causal power or a absolutely necessary connection in the material world, which is no different than what Berkeley concludes himself regarding material

¹⁵ See ch. 1, sect. 6.

¹⁶ See also *Enquiry* (VII: 65-67).

¹⁷ Hume does not deny that one is consciously aware that volitions may affect one's ideas, or that a volition may produce motion in one's bodily limbs. What Hume does deny is that one's conscious awareness of the will's influence over the body, or the creative act involved in raising a new idea out of nothing, extends to some *original power* that absolutely necessitates those relations. Hume accepts that consciousness reveals the will's influence over the body and ideas in the mind, but explicitly denies the inference from such activities to the will's being a genuine causal power: introspection does not reveal absolute necessitation to be a feature of the will's activity any more than experience of external objects reveals such necessitation in their relations.

causation, Hume then turns his inquiry inwards to inquire whether this idea of power can be “derived from reflection on the operations of our own minds, and be copied from any internal impression.”¹⁸ The search for the idea of causal power is directly tied to the search for an internal impression in the mind, which Hume seeks to locate in either the mind’s ability to create and control its ideas, or in the influence of the will in its ability to cause movement in the body. Thus, Hume writes the following in *Enquiry* (VII: 66):

We learn the influence of our will from experience alone. And experience only teaches us, how one event constantly follows another; without instructing us in the secret connexion, which binds them together, and renders them inseparable.

And once again in *Enquiry* (VII: 68):

But do we pretend to be acquainted with the nature of the human soul and the nature of an idea, or the aptitude of the one to produce the other? This is a real creation; a production of something out of nothing: Which implies a power so great, that it may seem, at first sight, beyond the reach of any being, less than infinite. At least it must be owned, that such a power is not felt, nor known, nor even conceivable by the mind. We only feel the event, namely, the existence of an idea, consequent to a command of the will: But the manner, in which this operation is performed, the power by which it is produced, is entirely beyond our comprehension.

The thrust of Hume’s argument in the above passages is that experience informs one only as to the existence of certain regularities among phenomena: one observes that one event is regularly followed by a second event. But the power that necessarily connects the two events and thereby “renders them inseparable” is not discoverable through experience.

In Hume’s language, one only *feels* the mental event, that is, the determination of the mind to pass from the cause to its effect, or an effect to its cause—a determination that is founded upon the regularly observed fact that the command of the will is often followed by the production of motion in the body. This mental feeling of the transition from cause to effect is crucial in Hume’s treatment of causation in the *Treatise*.¹⁹ The necessity that appears to render events inseparable for Hume is an internal impression of the mind, which is produced by the natural transition from one event to another, and is then projected onto the events themselves. It is the mind’s projection of this transition, originating in the imagination, which is the genesis for one’s belief that the two events are necessarily related to one another causally. However, as Hume states in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165), the feeling that is

¹⁸ *Enquiry* (VII: 64).

¹⁹ In particular, see *Treatise* (I.III.14: 163-166).

produced by the determination of the mind to connect a cause that is constantly conjoined with an effect is not causal power as construed by the absolute necessitation model of causation favored by Malebranche; it is not that which is said to render two objects inseparable through an absolutely necessary connection. Hume writes concerning this point in *Enquiry* (VII: 66):

But if the original power were felt, it must be known: Were it known, its effect must also be known; since all power is relative to its effect.

Causal power, however, is not felt itself; rather, it is the determination of the mind to pass from a cause to its regularly observed effect which one feels. If one did feel the original power that unites a cause and effect, binding them inseparably, then the effect would also be known to follow from its supposed cause by the same absolute necessitation which Malebranche understood to govern the volitional activity of the divine will and mathematics. However, experience is incapable of revealing such awareness of this particular conception of causal power, for once again, the standard set by the absolute necessitation model is too great. Human understanding cannot have an entire knowledge of the near infinite number of effects that are produced in the mind and animal spirits by the first volition, ultimately resolving in the final effect: whether it is the movement of a certain bodily limb or the creation of an idea *ex nihilo*.

The condition of inseparability that Hume places on knowledge of power—that feature acquaintance with which would constitute such knowledge—requires experience to reveal a degree of acquaintance with the influence of the will that appears impossible to human understanding, for to know that a cause is rendered inseparable from its effect by absolute necessitation would require one to know not only that the will has a direct influence over certain bodily organs, but likewise to know why it does not possess an equal influence over other organs.²⁰ Thus, knowledge of causal power requires one to know all aspects of the relation that is effected by that power; and, in treating causal power as involving a logically necessary connection—that is, as involving absolute necessitation as opposed to the necessitation involved in the determination of the mind to infer a cause from its usual effect and *vice versa*—which Hume does in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 157 & I.IV.5: 248), as well as in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-66 & 77), knowledge of power would require a level of

²⁰ The reader may compare this with the way in which Malebranche conceives of a genuine cause in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 448-450 & Elucidation 15: 669-671).

knowledge regarding the relation of cause and effect that far exceeds the capability of any finite mind. Hume writes precisely this in *Enquiry* (VII: 65):

Secondly, We are not able to move all the organs of the body with a like authority; though we cannot assign any reason besides experience, for so remarkable a difference between one and the other. Why has the will an influence over the tongue and fingers, not over the heart and liver? This question would never embarrass us, were we conscious of a power in the former case, not in the latter. We should then perceive, independent of experience, why the authority of will over the organs of the body is circumscribed within such particular limits. Being in that case fully acquainted with the power or force, by which it operates, we should also know, why its influence reaches precisely to such boundaries, and no farther.

The passage indicates that Hume thought that if one were consciously aware of oneself as a causal power, that conscious awareness would extend to the knowledge of why the will has the precise boundaries that it does. Why does the will have an influence over certain bodily organs, yet remain completely impotent in reference to others? Thus, awareness of causal power must reveal all aspects which pertain to that power: one must have a complete knowledge of the connection existing between the body and the soul, the natures of both substances, and the method by which the latter acts upon the former.²¹

Hume's retainment of the absolute necessitation model of causality throughout his negative account of causal power places a condition upon knowledge of power that human reason and experience cannot satisfy due to the extensiveness such knowledge requires. Hume's application of such a strict requirement to knowledge of causal power, as expressed in the absolute necessitation of the Bare Thought, poses a threat to Berkeley's assertion that finite spirits can be said to be genuine causal powers, given that they have the ability to causally affect ideas by means of volitional activity. Therefore, given such a condition of inseparability, in order to assert that one has knowledge of causal power, one must have an entire knowledge regarding the will's ability to influence certain bodily movements and mental operations, as well as why the influence of the will does not extend to the involuntary motions of the organs of the body, such as the beating of the heart and the processes of the liver.

In contrast, it is my belief that Berkeley's definition of causal power in terms of the act of willing—that is, the capacity to create and affect those ideas that fall within a will's power through volitional activity—requires a less stringent criterion of knowledge than the absolute necessitation that is inherent in the conception espoused

²¹ See *Enquiry* (VII: 65).

by Hume and Malebranche.²² Whereas Hume maintains the absolute necessitation inherent in Malebranche's conception of causality in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3: 449-450) as regards the nature of causal power, Berkeley weakens that necessity in order to accommodate his claim that finite spirits are genuine causal powers. The fact that one does not know the full extent of the influence of the will does not constitute a reason under Berkeley's definition to deny that finite spirits are genuine causal powers. I believe that Berkeley understands knowledge of causal power to be ascertained by evidence that is less stringent in nature than Hume is clearly willing to allow: at the most basic level, as expressed in *Principles* (§28 & §147), I suggest that all Berkeley requires to declare that spirits are causal powers is the ability for a spirit, in this case a finite spirit, to create and affect its ideas of imagination, as well as produce motion in its bodily limbs, through volitional activity. However, it is clear from what Hume writes in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) that this ability of the will does not satisfy the strict criterion that Hume establishes in his search for that power which effects and necessitates the relations that exist between the actions of the mind and the actions of matter.²³

²² See ch. 2, sect. 5.

²³ Berkeley's account of agency in *Principles* (§§146-147) could permit him to ground the uniformity of the volitional activity of finite spirits in the concurrent assistance of the divine will, which being omnipotent, its volitional activity cannot fail to produce its intended effect. This is because in *Principles* (§147) Berkeley argues that it is the divine will alone that causally affects the perceptions of other finite spirits. Though a finite spirit can cause movement in its body through an act of volition, that such motion is perceived by another finite spirit is wholly dependent upon the "will of the Creator." Thus, in acting in accordance with the volitions of finite spirits, the omnipotence of the divine will could provide assurance that the volitions of finite spirits will continue uniformly in the future. However, I find a problem with this reading in that experience reveals that the volitions of finite spirits fail to be actualized on occasion. Thus, if the divine will, which is omnipotent, concurs in the volitions of finite spirits, then the experiential fact that volitions can fail to bring about their intended effects would seem to be impossible. There seems to be two options available to Berkeley to counter this problem: first, Berkeley could distinguish volitions into actualized or failed, and account for the occurrence of the latter by means of the non-omnipotence and imperfection of finite wills; second, Berkeley could assert that any failed volition is, in truth, not a volition at all—that a volition to cause the movement of one's arm, if not directly followed by that motion, was never a volition. As to which option Berkeley would choose, I am unsure; nor do I believe that Berkeley's writings provide a hint as to which option he would himself choose if he were to be presented with this problem. The tension then, as I understand it, directly concerns Berkeley's suspected denial of blind agency in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§812 & §§841-842) and his claim in *Principles* (§147) that finite spirits are genuine causal powers in that they are the direct causes of their own bodily movements; it is the public nature of the latter action that I understand to be the chief problem. If Berkeley accepts the denial of blind agency, as did many of his contemporaries, and that doctrine requires that one have full knowledge of an effect or state of affairs prior to willing that effect or state of affairs, then it would seem that both God and finite spirits would need to have knowledge of all the possible ways an idea of sense can appear to the perception of another finite spirit. Although the extent of such knowledge in reference to the divine may not be problematic to Berkeley, it appears to extend the knowledge of finite spirits well beyond their limited capacities. That is because the doctrine of the denial of blind agency requires that all volitional activity, and therefore for Berkeley, all causal activity, be intelligible—that

Hume applies the same line of argumentation—that knowledge of causal power would entail knowing the entire influence of a given power, such as the will's influence over the body—to the control the mind is able to exert over its own ideas. Hume writes regarding this exact point in *Enquiry* (VII: 69):

Volition is surely an act of the mind, with which we are sufficiently acquainted. Reflect upon it. Consider it on all sides. Do you find anything in it like this creative power, by which it raises from nothing a new idea, and with a kind of *Fiat*, imitates the omnipotence of its Maker, if I may be allowed so to speak, who called forth into existence all the various scenes of nature? So far from being conscious of this energy in the will, it requires as certain experience as that of which we are possessed, to convince us that such extraordinary effects do ever result from a simple act of volition.

It is immediately clear that Hume's principal target in the above passage is the idea that causal activity is tantamount to creation—an idea which is prevalent in Malebranche's negative arguments against the efficacy of finite wills in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) and *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (VII. 7-8). Hume's chief point is that acquaintance with the volitional activity of the mind does not provide an evidential basis which would permit one to claim acquaintance with causal power—that is, with the power to raise an idea from nothing by an act of will that imitates the power of the divine will. Experience of volitional activity cannot account for such extraordinary effects, or even for the belief that the mind is able to engage in the type of creative process that is involved in the production of a new idea *ex nihilo*.

Berkeley appears committed to understanding the act of imagining a new idea by means of volitional activity as creative in *Principles* (§28); in this sense, to imagine is to create images for Berkeley. With this in mind, the passage from *Enquiry* (VII: 69) seems to weigh against the Berkeleyan idea that a spirit's ability to create and change its ideas of imagination by means of volitional activity denominates that spirit a causal power. Hume's negative arguments in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) are meant to illustrate that neither experience nor reason provide an adequate foundation for acquaintance with that power which is said to create a new idea from nothing through an act of will resembling the power of the divine—a power which Hume

is, that volitional activity be directed to a particular state of affairs or effect which one has an exact idea of prior to the act of willing. Thus, it would appear that finite spirits in producing motion in their bodies would need to have knowledge of the state of affairs which their volitional activity would cause in the perceptions of all other finite spirits. There are two problems, however: firstly, such knowledge is impossible given the limited capacities of finite spirits; and secondly, Berkeley explicitly denies in *Principles* (§147) that a finite spirit can causally affect the perceptions of another spirit—the divine will alone can do this. For issues that arise in attributing the denial of blind agency to Berkeley's account of human agency see McDonough (2008: 588-589).

proceeds in *Enquiry* (VII: 70-73) to argue cannot be ascribed to the divine will either—or the knowledge of why the influence of the will extends to its precise boundaries and no farther. Hume indicates in *Enquiry* (VII: 69) that experience of volitional activity reveals the limitations of finite wills. Reflection upon volition as an act of the mind produces no assurance that the volitional activity of the mind is that power which can create new ideas; rather, such reflection reveals, for Hume, the utter impossibility that “such extraordinary effects do ever result from a simple act of volition.”

It is my belief that Hume’s chief aim in his negative account of power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) is to undermine the belief that one has an immediate awareness of oneself as a causal power by means of reflection upon one’s own volitional activity: the capacity to exert an influence, by means of volition, over those ideas that are within the scope of a specific type of will. That this is the manner in which Berkeley defines causal power has been argued.²⁴ The primary fault that Hume finds in the manner in which Berkeley defines causal power—that is, his rejection of the absolute necessitation model and his formulation of a far weaker criterion for knowledge of power—is the latter’s failure to appreciate two important points regarding the nature of power. First, that knowledge of power involves absolute necessitation, and as such, would yield *a priori* knowledge as to what effects are necessitated by a particular cause absolutely: that is, one could know, without recourse to experience, what effects will be produced by some cause. Second, the reason that power concerns absolute necessity is on account of the fact that power is possessed by a cause essentially: Hume conceives of power as essence. It is because Hume understands power as essence that knowledge of causal power is beyond the scope of human understanding, for knowledge of the “essence and construction of bodies” is impossible in principle and practice for Hume: humankind’s cognitive faculties are not composed so as to permit them to penetrate into the intrinsic nature or essence of a cause. *A posteriori* reasoning cannot acquire knowledge of the essences of objects, which would permit knowledge of the causes which underlie the manifest regularities in nature, as Hume argues in *Enquiry* (IV: 32-39); nor is human reason so blessed, as Hume argues in *Enquiry* (IV: 25-32), that it is able to discover the essential properties of objects through a non-representational faculty of the mind,

²⁴ See ch. 2, sects. 3-5.

as rationalist philosophers maintain. Nature retains her secrets. Hume writes exactly this in *Enquiry* (V: 55):

As nature has taught us the use of our limbs, without giving us the knowledge of the muscles and nerves, by which they are actuated; so has she implanted in us an instinct, which carries forward the thought in a correspondent course to that which she has established among external objects; though we are ignorant of those powers and forces, on which this regular course and succession of objects totally depends.

Essences remain hidden from human reason and experience; and, since knowledge of power concerns essences, those “powers and forces” upon which the manifest regularities observed in nature depend, remain equally hidden to the inquiries of human understanding.

Berkeley's manner of argument in *A New Letter* and *Alciphron* (VII. 7-10) reveals that he thought the claim that knowledge of power involves direct acquaintance with its intrinsic nature or essence, and by extension, the entirety of its influence, has the rather disastrous potential of leaving all knowledge of power in complete darkness. Hume had no similar concerns, especially those of a theological nature, and sought to illustrate that human understanding can acquire no idea of causal power as conceived of by the absolute necessitation model. Berkeley understands activity, both perceptual and volitional, to be the defining characteristic of spirits: the essence of any spirit is activity. However, the fact that one does not have a complete knowledge of the essence of a cause, as one can only acquire notional knowledge concerning spirits and their activities for Berkeley, is not detrimental to Berkeley's claim that self-reflection yields awareness of oneself as a causal power. The inference from observed effects to the existence of an active power is possible in Berkeley's treatment of power given that he removes absolute necessitation as the defining feature of power; and, it is this that Hume believes Berkeley's definition of power fails to appreciate. The correct conception of causal power for Hume must reveal the entire extent of that power's influence, as well as the *a priori* knowledge that a certain effect will follow from its cause by absolute necessity, such that one could not conceive of one apart from the other. This fact is on account of the fact that the absolute necessity expressed in the Bare thought is concerned with the essence or the internal nature of a cause. Thus, to know power is to know the absolute necessity by which a cause acts; and to know the absolute necessity by which a cause produces its effects, which is knowable *a priori*, is to know the intrinsic nature or essence of that cause, and thereby, the entirety of its

influence. In Hume's eyes, the failure of Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields knowledge of oneself as a power is due to the latter's incorrect conception as to the nature of causal power and what type of knowledge it entails.

What I shall explicate in further detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter is the manner in which Hume endeavors to undermine Berkeley's argument that reflection generates knowledge of power, as well as reveal the unsatisfactory nature of the absolute necessitation model as regards the nature of causation and the type of necessitation which is involved in causality. Hume seeks to procure these particular ends through adopting and espousing Malebranche's unique conception of causation, which maintains absolute necessitation as the defining characteristic of knowledge of that power which is said to link causal relations inextricably. The outcome of maintaining the absolute necessitation model is easily understood from the negative arguments Hume employs in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69): in order to acquire knowledge of causal power, or have a conscious awareness of such power, one must know the nature of the cause, such that one knows not merely the effects it necessitates, but also the entirety of its influence. Moreover, if causation is said to be tantamount to creation, such awareness must likewise reveal acquaintance with that power necessary for the creation of an idea *ex nihilo*. In short, the absolute necessity that is inherent in the Bare Thought places a condition upon knowledge of causal power that exceeds the reach of human thought. Berkeley's search for an instance of causal power in the operations of the will seems destined to fail from the outset.

What Hume does essentially is to adopt Malebranche's particular conception of causation to conclude that human understanding cannot acquire any idea of causal power through demonstrative reasoning or experience; and, lacking the religious sentiments of Malebranche, Hume had little concern in applying Malebranche's negative arguments against the causal efficacy of finite wills in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) and *Discourse on Metaphysics* (VII. 7-10) to the divine. Furthermore, since the same line of argumentation applies equally well to the will of the divine, it cannot in truth be called a causal power any more than its finite counterpart. Hume's claim that knowledge of power requires knowledge of that characteristic which would render a cause inseparable from its effect establishes a strict requirement on such knowledge that requires far more than just the observation of the constant conjunction of a cause and its effect. Experience reveals only the constant and resembling repetition of two objects which have been observed to be conjoined; what knowledge

of causal power—that is, the Bare Thought—requires is the inseparability of a cause and effect: that a cause and its effect are governed by absolute necessitation. It is this condition of inseparability that Hume places upon knowledge of causal power that renders human understanding wholly incapable of acquiring such knowledge through the act of reflection—that is, the conscious awareness of oneself as a causal power through one's own volitional activity.

6. *The causal structure of the world and the Image of God doctrine*

It appears clear that the dispute between Berkeley and Hume expressed in the previous section revolves primarily around each philosopher's understanding of the term *causal power*—that is, what is the criterion by which one may be said to acquire knowledge of such power. As I stated previously, in his negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69), Hume's conception of power is in terms of essence, and therefore, absolute necessitation: to know that power which binds cause and effect relations and renders the two inseparable would require one to have knowledge that a particular effect will be the necessary consequent of a cause. However, understood in this way, causation would appear to concern the *a priori* relation of two ideas, and as such, would be a matter of demonstrative reasoning for Hume that would involve a necessary relation concerning the agreement or disagreement of the ideas constituting the relation. This is precisely what Hume asserts in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 161):

If we be possest, therefore, of any idea of power in general, we must also be able to conceive some particular species of it; and as power cannot subsist alone, but is always regarded as an attribute of some being or existence, we must be able to place this power in some particular being, and conceive that being endow'd with a real force and energy, by which such a particular effect necessarily results from its operation. We must distinctly and particularly conceive the connexion betwixt the cause and effect, and be able to pronounce, from a simple view of the one, that it must be follow'd or preceded by the other.

Similarly, Hume writes the following in *Enquiry* (VII: 63):

From the first appearance of an object, we never can conjecture what effect will result from it. But were the power or energy of any cause discoverable by the mind, we could foresee the effect, even without experience; and might, at first, pronounce with certainty concerning it, by the mere dint of thought and reasoning.²⁵

²⁵ See also *Enquiry* (IV: 29-33; V: 55; & VII: 67-68), *Treatise* (I.III.6: 86 & II.III.1: 400), and *Dialogues* (VI: 76 & IX: 93).

Therefore, according to Hume, if an individual were to acquire knowledge of the power that is said to necessitate the relation of cause and effect, such knowledge would license an *a priori* inference from a particular cause to its necessary effect.²⁶

Galen Strawson argues that Hume's discussion of causality involves precisely this type of *a priori* inference, and knowledge of causal power would permit an individual to infer *a priori* that a certain effect must necessarily follow a cause, given the nature of that power. Knowledge of causal power would render a given cause inseparable from its effect by absolute necessity, and as such, knowledge of power would involve a relation between ideas which is identical to that in mathematical knowledge. Strawson writes the following regarding this point:

I will say that on Hume's view Causation has the 'a-priori-inference-licensing property', or 'AP property', for short: that is, it has the property that genuine detection of it brings with it the possibility of making *a priori certain causal inferences*. Note that the AP property is defined in essentially epistemological terms. Note also that Hume's idea is not in fact just that the causal inference from C to E (or from E to C) would have to have the same *degree of certainty* as paradigmatically a priori inferences like mathematical inferences; it would itself be a priori inference, in the sense that it would be possible to make it prior to any experience of events of type E following from events of type C.²⁷

Strawson has uncovered a rather important aspect of Hume's adoption of the rationalist belief that causal necessitation should be modeled on absolute or mathematical necessity. Hume's point in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 161) and *Enquiry* (VII: 63) is that conceiving causality in the manner of the absolute necessitation model, which promotes the belief that the internal nature of causal relations licenses *a priori* inference into the relation of cause and effect itself, requires a degree of knowledge that is too great for human understanding to comprehend. Where the model of causation in terms of licensing *a priori* inference into the causal structure of the natural world was employed by rationalist philosophers of the early modern era to

²⁶ J. L. Mackie speaks of two types of necessitation within Hume's philosophy in Mackie (1974: ch. 1). Mackie distinguishes between what he calls necessity₁ and necessity₂ in Hume's treatment of causation, the latter of which pertains to the *a priori* knowledge of necessary connections that I have discussed in this section. Mackie, however, rightly argues that necessity₂ is only one aspect of Hume's treatment of causal relations. Edward Craig uses this form of necessity in Hume's account of causation to argue that Hume is endorsing this version of causal necessity to argue against the prevailing notion of causation in the 18th century, as espoused by early modern rationalists, which holds that causal relations are intelligible in that they concern the *a priori* relation of two ideas. This belief that causation must be intelligible is an important aspect in Craig's *Image of God* doctrine, which he understands as the central belief of the modern period. As regards this point, see Craig (1987: 37-44).

²⁷ Strawson (1989: 111). Strawson's use of the term *Causation* as opposed to *causation* reflects the type of logical necessity that is entailed by knowledge of causal power. Strawson understands the former term to concern causal relations which are logically necessitated through causal power, and therefore, involve more than the observation of regularities in nature.

illustrate the divinity of reason and argue that the ability to reason and engage in rational thought is evidence that humanity has been created in the image of the divine, Hume employs that particular model of causality to reveal the exact opposite. Reason does not reveal the causal structure of the world to be knowable *a priori*, since, as Hume's *science of human nature* is meant to illustrate, reason must remain within the experiential boundaries that such a conception of causation exceeds.

Hume's attack upon the belief that human reason can acquire *a priori* knowledge of the causal structure of the world must be viewed within the broader philosophical and intellectual climate of the early modern period—a historical age in which both Berkeley and Hume lived, and which heavily influenced each philosopher's respective writings. Edward Craig, in his *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*, presents a well-constructed framework by which one can understand the intellectual climate into which Berkeley and Hume were born, as well as a primary motivation for the widely held belief that causation must be intelligible, and that *a priori* knowledge and demonstrative reasoning places the human intellect on a par with the divine. Craig argues that the belief that the nature of causation provides *a priori* knowledge of the relations that exist in the natural world was common amongst the rationalist thinkers of the Enlightenment, and likewise that Hume's philosophical aim was to attack what Craig labels the *Image of God Doctrine*, especially as expressed in its epistemological formulation, the *Insight Ideal*.²⁸ The Insight Ideal asserts that the mind of God is similar to the human mind—the two differing in degree rather than essence—and that *a priori* reasoning raises the human mind to a level that is comparable to the divine intellect. However, Hume was no theist in this respect; rather, he aspired to reclaim human nature from the heavens and return it to the natural world. As Craig writes, Hume's aim was to illustrate “that where philosophers thought they saw the operations of reason, the divine spark at work in man, they were watching nothing more than a mundane mechanism and its natural effects in the mind.”²⁹

Given Hume's treatment of causal power in the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, it appears clear that he was familiar with the belief that causal necessity should be modeled upon absolute necessity, which fostered the belief that knowledge of causal

²⁸ See Craig (1987: chs. 1-2). See also Beebe (2006: 2-13) for a similar, though not identical, reading.

²⁹ Craig (1987: 85).

power licenses *a priori* inference into causal relations.³⁰ What Craig recognizes is that Hume's ultimate aim is nothing short of the dismantling of the biblical belief in *Genesis* (I: 26-28) that humanity was created in the likeness of the divine, which is perhaps nowhere better expressed than in Leibniz's claim that this world houses a vast number of little Gods who live and reason under the one great God.³¹ Hume adopted the conception of causation in terms of absolute necessitation, unique to Malebranche, in order to illustrate a definite worry in understanding the nature of causation as involving *a priori* relations.³² Hume believes that this manner of conceiving causation leaves knowledge of the original power that necessitates causal relations wholly inaccessible to human experience and reason, for to know that original power would be to "know that very circumstance in the cause, by which it is enabled to produce the effect: For these are supposed to be synonymous."³³

Hume's negative account of causal power denies that human understanding is able to acquire the type of necessity that the absolute necessitation model of causation espouses. Knowledge of absolute necessitation is neither intuitively nor demonstratively known, for human thought cannot acquire knowledge of this original power by the "mere dint of thought and reasoning." Similarly, one cannot acquire knowledge of causal power by means of experience, since neither inward reflection upon the activities of the will, nor observation of the causal relations which exist between external objects in the world, reveal that a cause and its effect are rendered inseparable by absolute necessitation. As I stated prior, the idea of necessary connection that Hume discovers in his search for an impression of power derives from

³⁰ This conception of causation as permitting *a priori* inference may be found in Malebranche's *Search After Truth* (VI.ii.3-4), as well as Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics* (XXXVI), *Monadology* (§7), *Principles of Nature and Grace* (§§14-15), as well as his letter to Antoine Arnauld, dated the 9th of October 1687. See also Spinoza's *Ethics* (Part I. Prop. III) in reference to this point.

³¹ See Leibniz (1956: 534).

³² Locke's scientific worldview held that necessary connections between events are genuinely existing features in the natural world, though those connections remain beyond the scope of human knowledge as they are known inferentially; thus, human beings cannot conceive of such necessary connections in the world. Locke's scientific realism appeals to the regularities in the natural world to provide an explanation as to why an event has occurred, given the specific conditions that surround that event. In this, Locke also differs from the rationalist conception of necessary connection in the early modern period, holding that an appeal to regularities provides a very weak inferential knowledge of necessary connection, though nonetheless, an inferential knowledge that provides assurance that necessary connections exist in the world. In particular, see *Essay* (Bk. IV. ch. iii. §25). Berkeley, on the other hand, does not accept that there are necessary connections or powers that exist beyond experience—that is, located at the micro-structural level. Experience and reflection provide an explanation of such terms for Berkeley, which is that spirits alone are causal powers.

³³ *Enquiry* (VII: 67-68).

a natural determination of the mind; the impression that Hume locates does not have its source in the necessitation inherent in the absolute necessitation model of causation.

7. Hume and Berkeley on necessity in causal relations

Adherence to the Image of God doctrine in some fashion was prevalent amongst many philosophers writing in the early modern period, and the belief that reason could acquire *a priori* knowledge of the causal structure of the natural world was one manifestation of the Genesis belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine. Hume's principal aim in his *science of human nature* is to return humanity to the natural, and Hume sought to foster this return by illustrating that the vast majority of the internal springs and mechanisms of nature were hidden from human knowledge.³⁴ Hume seeks to illustrate the error in the belief that causation licenses *a priori* inference by this same method: that is, by recourse to the absolute necessity that he places upon knowledge of causal power in the formulation of the Bare Thought. As Hume states in *Enquiry* (VII: 63) and *Treatise* (I.III.14: 161), were power discoverable by reason alone, one could, by means of *a priori* inference, foresee that a certain effect must necessarily follow from a cause on account of the essence of the cause itself. However, the inseparability of a cause and effect, which is founded upon the absolute necessitation inherent in the Bare Thought, cannot be established *a priori* through demonstrative reasoning: *a priori*, one can always think of a cause as separate from its usual effect, and conversely, an effect as separate from its cause. Hume expresses this precise point in *Enquiry* (XII: 164):

The existence, therefore, of any being can only be proved by arguments from its cause or its effect; and these arguments are founded entirely on experience. If we reason *a priori*, anything may appear able to produce anything. The falling of a pebble may, for aught we know, extinguish the sun; or the wish of a man control the planets in their orbit.

A priori knowledge of causal power would need to reveal that a cause is possessed of the power to produce its customary effect by means absolute necessity, and therefore, such knowledge must reveal a cause and effect to be inextricably united. If it were reason that prompted the mind, upon first sight of a given cause, to infer an effect,

³⁴ See *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xix) and *Enquiry* (IV: 32-33 & V: 55).

then this inference would amount to a demonstration, founded upon the comparison—that is, the agreement or disagreement—of two ideas. Hume writes exactly this in *Treatise* (Abstract: 650):

Were a man, such as *Adam*, created in the full vigour of understanding, without experience, he would never be able to infer motion in the second ball from the motion and impulse of the first. It is not any thing that reason sees in the cause, which makes us *infer* the effect. Such an inference, were it possible, would amount to a demonstration, as being founded merely on the comparison of ideas. But no inference from cause to effect amounts to a demonstration. Of which there is this evident proof. The mind can always *conceive* any effect to follow from any cause, and indeed any event to follow upon another: whatever we *conceive* is possible, at least in a metaphysical sense: but wherever demonstration takes place, the contrary is impossible, and implies a contradiction.

However, that such knowledge cannot be known *a priori* is precisely what Hume writes in *Treatise* (I.III.3: 79-80) and *Enquiry* (XII: 164): the separation of a cause from its effect is indeed possible in thought, and this separation is on account of the fact that such separation does not imply a contradiction.³⁵

In asserting that the inference involved in the relation of cause and effect cannot amount to a demonstration, Hume casts serious doubt upon the rationalist belief that *a priori* reasoning provides knowledge of the internal structure of causal relations: that the essence of a particular cause is inseparable from the effects which it necessitates. Furthermore, the claim that if one reasons *a priori*, one can assert that any thing may produce some effect, leads to the theologically unpalatable suggestion that *a priori*, a finite will may be said to be the productive cause of matter as easily as the divine will.³⁶ This disparagement of *a priori* reasoning as a possible means by which one can acquire knowledge of power leads Hume to seek for such knowledge in experience, but the criterion that is placed upon such knowledge does not change for Hume: knowledge of power is still established in terms of the inseparability of the cause and effect—that is, according to the absolute necessitation model.

Throughout his discussion of causality in *Treatise* (I.III.14) and *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69), Hume is concerned principally with the search for an impression of causal

³⁵ A fuller discussion of Hume's employment of his principle of separability throughout his philosophy, and especially in reference to causal relations, can be found in Garrett (1997: 64-66 & 105-106). See also Kail (2003a; 2007a: 92-98 & 129-143) and Lightner (1997) regarding this issue.

³⁶ Hume writes in *Enquiry* (XII: 164n): "That impious maxim of the ancient philosophy, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit*, by which the creation of matter was excluded, ceases to be a maxim, according to this philosophy. Not only the will of the supreme Being may create matter; but, for aught we know *a priori*, the will of any other being might create it, or any other cause, that the most whimsical imagination can assign."

power which may serve as the basis for one's idea. He begins his inquiry with those objects that exist in the physical realm, and failing to find an impression of power in the relations that exist between corporeal objects, Hume turns his gaze inwards to search for an internal impression of power by reflecting upon the influence of the will and operations of the mind. Though Berkeley's writings do not make use of the same epistemic language that Hume employs in his treatment of power, the former's search for power is directed along the same empirical lines as is Hume's own search: both philosophers' search for causal power is aimed at the observation of an instance of that power. Berkeley and Hume are in agreement that no instance of power is to be located in the relations which exist between external objects; Berkeley had said as much in his discussion of the passivity of ideas in *Principles* (§25). However, where Hume, of his own confession, had failed to discover an instance of causal power in the mental realm, Berkeley felt he succeeded in locating an instance of causal power in reflecting upon the volitional activity of the will. Berkeley finds the means to acquire knowledge of power through inward reflection; and, that act of reflection endows one with the notional knowledge that one is a willing power, which experience reveals through the ability to influence those ideas in one's power by means of volitional activity—the very criterion which I have previously suggested that Berkeley employs in his own definition of causal power.³⁷

Throughout his negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69), Hume maintains that self-reflection upon the operations of the will reveals only the constant and repetitious conjunction of volitions with their intended effects; it never reveals that power which is said to absolutely necessitate the relation. Hume writes concerning this point in *Enquiry* (VII: 67):

We may, therefore, conclude from the whole, I hope, without any temerity, though with assurance; that our idea of power is not copied from any sentiment or consciousness of power within ourselves, when we give rise to animal motion, or apply our limbs to their proper use and office. That their motion follows the command of the will is a matter of common experience, like other natural events: But the power or energy by which this is effected, like that in other natural events, is unknown and inconceivable.

³⁷ Berkeley does argue that one may learn of the existence of other spirits by means of the effects which those spirits produce, but the inference that is drawn from those effects to the existence of an active cause is only possible by means of the self-knowledge that one is an active being capable of willing, thinking, and perceiving. The observation of the regularities which exist in the natural world may lead one to the knowledge that there is a divine being responsible for the creation of the world, and with less certainty, that there exists other finite spirits, but the knowledge that such beings are active agents is formed from the introspective knowledge that one is an active being, though in respect to God, a being imparted with lesser powers and a greater share of imperfections.

Hume expresses the same point in the *Treatise* (Appendix: 633):

In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have.

Given the fact that, for Hume, the act of reflection fails to locate any impression of causal power beyond regular conjunctions, what is it that enables Berkeley to infer from the observational fact that certain effects are regularly conjoined with volitional activity the conclusion that spirits are genuine causal powers? I believe the answer is to be found in the structure of Berkeley's ontology. Ideas are passive and inert, and no more than the "bare observation" of one's own ideas satisfies one of the truth of this statement. If perception cannot discover any power or principle of activity residing in ideas, which Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§25 & §102), then given that immediate perception for Berkeley is infallible and certain, one can be certain that ideas are entirely passive; and, if experience cannot discover any active power in ideas, such power must reside in the only other existent in Berkeley's ontology: spirits.

However, it is not enough to answer that it is Berkeley's ontology, along with the passiveness of ideas, which is the basis for the claim that spirits alone are causal powers. Rather, Berkeley displays an inclination in *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-234 & 239-240) to understand finite spirits as powers through an awareness of oneself as an active being that can create and affect those ideas within its control through volitional activity.³⁸ Although one is not able to form an *idea* of causal power through reflection, that activity provides one with the reflective knowledge that the will is active *per se*, as well as experiential knowledge of those effects said to result from a spirit's volitional activity. It is through the activities of willing, thinking, and perceiving, as well as the effects those activities produce, that one acquires knowledge of the self as an active being that is wholly distinct from the ideas it is able to affect: in other words, as a causal power. I believe that this is Berkeley's main point in the verbal exchanges between Philonous and Hylas in *Three Dialogues* (III: 233-234 & 239-240). It is in the first exchange that Philonous states that in contrast to matter, one has an "immediate intuition" of oneself as an active being with the power to will, perceive, and act upon ideas: activities which are at base volitional in

³⁸ As regards this claim, see also *Principles* (§28, §89, & §147), *Three Dialogues* (II: 215-217), and *De Motu* (§25).

nature and distinguish a spirit from an idea. I believe that the volitional activity of spirits, which is revealed though self-reflection, is that piece of experiential evidence which Berkeley requires for his conclusion that spirits are genuine causal powers: volition provides Berkeley with the evidential basis to infer that spirits are causal powers, though not similarly for Hume. I suggest that what enables Berkeley to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers through their volitional activity, and which prevents Hume from drawing the same conclusion, is Berkeley's rejection of the absolute necessitation model of causation espoused by Malebranche and his defining causal power in terms of a spirit's capacity to exercise a degree of volitional control over those ideas, whether imaginative or sensitive, that fall within the power of that spirit's will.

Berkeley, upon finding volitional activity as the experiential basis upon which he could assert the active nature of spirits—through the effects of that volitional activity or through directly experiencing the will as active *per se*—felt he succeeded in discovering an instance of causal power by means of the manner of inference he employs to draw the conclusion that spirits are genuine powers.³⁹ Berkeley argues in both the *Alciphron* (VII. 7-10) and *A New Letter* (391-392) that one is able to acquire knowledge of the existence of an otherwise unknown power by means of the effects it is said to produce, and to state otherwise would be to render all knowledge of power incomprehensible.⁴⁰ Berkeley expresses this point in *A New Letter* (392):

For if a power, only described by its effects, be perfectly unknown, till its intrinsic nature be found out, all powers either divine or humane are, to use your Lordship's words, involved in mid-night darkness.

The definition of causal power I have attributed to Berkeley allows for the acquisition of knowledge of power by means of the observation of those effects said to be produced by that power, and which reveal its influence, as well as the act of willing itself. Thus, if one knows by means of self-reflection that one's ideas can be influenced by a command of the mind, or that the movement of some bodily limb is the result of the influence of the will, then this capacity to exercise such volitional

³⁹ I shall discuss this point in further depth in ch. 4, sect. 4.

⁴⁰ In the case of *Alciphron* (VII. 7-10), Berkeley's main point is that forces such as gravity or *vis inertiae* have great benefit to the natural sciences and mechanics, though the internal active force by which they operate is completely unknown to human understanding, much in the same way that religious mysteries such as the Trinity, the existence of a future state, and divine grace are powers that are known only by the good effects which they produce in the behavior of individuals. In reference to this specific point, see also Berkeley's first draft of the Introduction to the *Principles* in *Works* (II: 137-140).

control would denominate a spirit a causal power for Berkeley. Hume's adoption of the absolute necessitation model from Malebranche does not permit him to make use of the inferential step that Berkeley does in inferring a power from the effects of that supposed power's volitional activity. According to the notion of power espoused by Hume, to infer a power by means of its effects, it must be shown that those effects are inseparable from their cause. Berkeley's claim in *A New Letter* that one can have knowledge of the cause by means of its effects, although the "intrinsic nature" of that power remains unknown, would not satisfy the condition of inseparability that Hume places upon knowledge of causal power. Hume's criterion for knowledge of power requires that reflection provide evidence that a cause is inextricably united with an effect, such that the one could never be observed without the other.

Hume permits the inference from an effect to an unseen cause in causal reasoning, but only insofar as it is founded upon the constant conjunction of a cause and effect and does not extend beyond that experiential limitation. Causal reasoning alone permits one to move beyond immediate experience and infer the existence of a cause that is not perceptible. Hume writes concerning this specific point in *Treatise* (I.III.2: 74):

Here then it appears, that of those three relations, which depend not upon the mere ideas, the only one, that can be trac'd beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is *causation*.⁴¹

However, the inference to the existence of an imperceptible cause cannot extend beyond constant conjunction; it cannot extend its province to the original powers said to govern nature. The employment of this inference to argue that spirits are causal powers would be illegitimate for Hume, and this is due to the fact that he defines causal power in terms of the absolute necessity expressed in the Bare Thought. Experience certainly informs one that volition is an act of the will, and that certain effects tend to follow volitions with regularity, as Hume states in *Enquiry* (VII: 67-69), but this observational fact provides evidence of their constant conjunction alone for Hume. It does not provide an adequate basis for the further assertion that the will is that power which necessitates the effects of its volitional activity absolutely, just as experience does not permit one to draw the same inference as applied to the relations that exist among external objects. As Hume writes in *Treatise* (Appendix: 633), there is no single "internal impression" that is possessed of "an apparent energy, more than

⁴¹ See also *Treatise* (I.III.6: 87 & I.IV.2: 212) and *Enquiry* (IV: 26-27).

external objects have.” The cases of the will and external objects are perfectly parallel in this respect: reflection does not reveal absolute necessity to be a feature of the will’s activity any more than observation of the relations that exist between external objects reveals those relations to be governed by absolute necessity.

8. *Concluding remarks*

My principal aim in this chapter has been to illustrate that although Hume accepts the Malebranchean belief that knowledge of causal power involves absolute necessitation, he adopts the absolute necessitation model in order to illustrate that it places far too strong a criterion on knowledge of causal power for human understanding to satisfy. One is able to acquire an idea of necessary connection through the determination of the mind to infer, by a natural inclination a cause from an effect, or an effect from a cause, through experience of their regular conjunction. However, the necessitation that is involved in this particular idea is not that which is required for one to have knowledge of causal power as construed by the absolute necessitation model, for the latter conception requires knowledge of the essence of a particular cause, and therefore, that it necessitates its effect absolutely; and as such, the two must be linked inextricably. This outcome of Hume’s negative treatment of causal power is directly pertinent to Berkeley’s natural religion, for in conceiving of causal power in terms of the absolute necessitation of the Bare Thought, Hume’s negative arguments in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) supply him with an objection against the Berkeleyan assertion that experience reveals oneself to be a causal power by means of the knowledge that is fostered through reflection upon the will. In adopting the absolute necessitation model of causation from Malebranche, I believe Hume understood that the particular conception of power inherent in that model could be employed against any argument that claims to acquire knowledge of the will as a power by means of reflection. In arguing that experience cannot reveal such knowledge in finite wills, Hume likewise realized that this manner of argumentation can be extended to deny the causal efficacy of the divine will, and therefore, to Berkeley’s natural religion.

In order to secure his natural religion, Berkeley must provide a viable answer to Hume’s argument that finite wills are not causal powers given that experience ultimately fails to satisfy the criterion upon which knowledge of power is established.

That Berkeley's natural religion depends upon supplying an adequate response to this problem will be shown, for he must first secure the causal power of finite spirits in arguing that reflection upon the will and its activities provides one with the experiential knowledge that one is a causal power, if his analogical argument that God is a causal power is to be upheld. Therefore, the fourth chapter will focus upon Berkeley's argument that self-reflection upon the will yields knowledge that finite spirits are powers; and, having treated Berkeley's argument for this claim in reference to Hume's negative account of power, I shall elucidate the manner in which Berkeley argues that the divine is that original power which maintains the natural laws in the uniformity exhibited to the perceptions of finite spirits.

CHAPTER IV

Berkeley on Causal Power and the Volitional Activity of Spirits

1. Introduction

I have sought, in the preceding chapters, to establish the influence that Malebranche's unique conception of causation had upon the philosophical writings of Berkeley and Hume. In the previous chapter I argued that Hume adopts the absolute necessitation model of causation in order to illustrate its chief deficiency: the emphasis which it places upon the belief that causal relations are governed by absolute necessitation, and therefore, that knowledge of the nature of causal relations and the causal structure of the world is transparent to reason and is acquirable through *a priori* reasoning. Where rationalist philosophers sought to elevate reason to the heavens in its capacity for *a priori* reasoning and the infallible knowledge such reasoning acquired—a consequence of the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine—Hume sought to return humanity to the natural realm, where the vast store of human actions and beliefs are governed by a principle of habituation and the same associationist mechanisms that rule the animal kingdom. Hume's *science of human nature* places great emphasis upon the importance of human knowledge remaining within the confines of experience; it strives to reveal the dangers to knowledge in permitting human imagination to chase itself to the heavens and the limits of the universe in which it inhabits. This fault is expressed in its greatest degree for Hume in the sphere of natural religion, for it carries its subject of inquiry and beliefs beyond the limits of experience, wherein human thought should reside, to the nature of the divine being, its disposition towards humanity, and the latter's duties towards the divine.

Although a chief aim of Hume's negative account of causal power is to illustrate the deficiencies in the absolute necessitation model of causation, he likewise recognizes that this particular model could be employed against the type of experiential argument which Berkeley utilizes to argue that self-reflection provides one with the experiential knowledge to conclude that one is a causal power—knowledge that may be extended and applied to all other spirits, including the divine. Hume sought to undermine Berkeley's experiential argument by accepting and

exploiting Malebranche's conception of a true cause in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) to illustrate that the type of experiential knowledge which Berkeley claimed to have discovered—an instance of power in the volitional activity of the will—does not provide Berkeley with the experiential basis that he requires to argue that spirits are powers. This was the central claim of the third chapter. The foremost objective of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, I shall provide an elucidation of Berkeley's argument that reflection reveals finite spirits to be causal powers through their ability to excite and alter ideas of imagination in their minds through volition, as is expressed in *Principles* (§28), as well as their ability to cause the motion of their own bodies through volition, as expressed in *Principles* (§147) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 237). Secondly, that Berkeley's argument should be understood as not only a response to Malebranche's unique conception of a genuine cause in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3), as well as his claim that finite wills are causally impotent, but also a preemptive measure taken by Berkeley to ensure that if another philosopher were to adopt and employ the negative arguments formulated by Malebranche to deny the causal efficacy of finite wills and the divine will, his own natural religion would be secure from this particular line of objection—one which I have elucidated in the discussion of Hume's negative account of causal power in the preceding chapter.

The explication of the first point is of particular importance for Berkeley's natural religion, for as I shall argue in the fifth section of this chapter, Berkeley's argument that the divine will is a causal power is founded upon his experiential argument that inward reflection upon the will and its activities reveals oneself to be a genuine causal power. The importance of the latter claim concerning the causal efficacy of the divine will to the whole of Berkeley's philosophical system, and in particular, his overarching ambitions in the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues*, cannot be overstated. Berkeley's aim is to prove the existence of a providential governor who has an intimate interest in the welfare of the human species and informs humankind as to that knowledge which is necessary for its continued preservation and happiness. It is the structure of Berkeley's argument in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that renders Hume's negative arguments in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) with the potential to be so destructive to the former's natural religion, for if Hume is successful in undermining the claim that self-reflection yields a conscious awareness that one is a causal power on account of one's volitional activity, then what becomes readily apparent is that the causal efficacy of the divine will is threatened as well—if

not, denied entirely. As Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§89), one comprehends one's own existence by means of an "inward feeling," and that of other spirits through analogical reasoning; however, knowledge of the latter, including that of the divine, is entirely dependent upon the former.

My aim in this chapter, therefore, is to elucidate the manner of argumentation that Berkeley employs to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers: that finite spirits are able to create and affect ideas of imagination and produce movement in their bodies through the volitional activity of their wills. That Berkeley is able to argue that reflection upon the will and its various activities enables one to denominate spirits causal powers is due to his rejection of the condition of inseparability that the absolute necessitation model places upon knowledge of causal power: to know that the will is a causal power requires one to know the entire extent of the will's influence over the body and ideas. The manner in which Berkeley defines causal power does not require as stringent a condition to be placed upon knowledge of power; and it is this, I shall argue, that permits Berkeley to locate an instance of causal power in the activity of the will.

2. Berkeley, volitions, and necessary connections

Although I believe that Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model of causation, and therefore, the particular criterion for what knowledge of causal power would entail—the Bare Thought—he ultimately rejects that model as misguided and exceeding the reach of human understanding. The absolute necessitation model of causation sets a condition upon knowledge of causal power which human thought cannot satisfy; neither reason nor experience is able to discover an impression of that power which is said to necessitate its effects absolutely—that is, by a logically necessary connection. Berkeley discusses the idea of necessary connection in relation to his theory of vision in *New Theory of Vision* (§45, §58, §§62-64, & §§103-107) and *Principles* (§§43-44), but his discussion is in reference to the geometrical necessity of the Cartesian account of vision. It is in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§30 & §§39-42, §58, & §§61-63) that Berkeley addresses the idea of necessary connection in reference to causation; or more precisely, to that power in objects said to actuate and necessitate the connections which exist between visual and tangible ideas. Berkeley

also addresses the idea of necessary connection in relation to causation in his discussion of the laws of nature in *Principles* (§31, §65, & §107).¹ These sections reveal an awareness on the part of Berkeley with the belief that causation involves the idea of necessary connection, an idea which is understood in terms of the absolute necessitation that governs mathematical relations and certain axioms, such as that expressed in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§42). It is this model of causation, the absolute necessitation model inherited from Malebranche, that forced Berkeley to reject the idea of necessary connection as the defining feature of causality.

Berkeley's response to an anonymous objector in his *Theory of Vision Vindicated* illustrates, I believe, Berkeley's familiarity with the belief that the idea of necessary connection in causality involves absolute necessitation; and, as such, it licenses *a priori* inference into the nature of causal relations. Berkeley's anonymous objector argues that the relation of cause and effect which exists between an object, which the objector views as material in nature, and the visual and tangible ideas which are caused by the internal structure of that object, involves a necessary connection such that one can know what visual idea will be produced by acquaintance with the tactile ideas produced by the object.² Concerning this point, the objector writes the following:

The ideas I have of distance and magnitude by feeling are widely different from the ideas I have of them by seeing; but that something without which is the cause of all the variety of ideas within, in one sense, is the cause also of the variety in the other; and, as they have a necessary connexion with it, we very justly demonstrate from our ideas of feeling of the same object what will be our ideas of seeing.³

Berkeley's objector argues that there is some object which is the "cause of all the variety of ideas" that one entertains, and the ideas that are produced by that object, what the objector refers to as "that something without which," are necessarily connected to the aforementioned object such that one could "justly demonstrate" from one's tactile ideas what precise visual idea will result: knowledge that is acquirable from the nature of the object. Berkeley's subsequent response follows his standard immaterialist objections to metaphysical realism. The objector's "cause of all the variety of ideas" is completely unknown, though its purported effects are known through experience: how then is the objector able to know that a cause, which is

¹ See also *Philosophical Commentaries* (§181, §246, & §256) and *Alciphron* (IV. 7-9) in relation to the divine visual language.

² See *Works* (I: 277-279).

³ *Works* (I: 278-279).

utterly unknown, brings about those specific effects either necessarily or arbitrarily? Granted one may infer from certain effects that a cause is required, but this provides no knowledge as to the nature of the connection between the cause and the effects it is said to produce—especially as to whether the two are necessarily connected.⁴ The connections between the ideas themselves do not reveal that the objector's "cause of all the variety of ideas" institutes the relations in which visual and tangible ideas exist by means of a logically necessary connection: the causal structure of the world is not transparent in the sense that the objector wishes to maintain.

Given the fact that Berkeley holds that ideas of sense are the effects of the divine will, which is itself free, the absolute necessitation that the objector wishes to establish in regards to the connections between visual ideas and tangible ideas is not available within Berkeley's treatment of causality. The divine is omnipotent for Berkeley, but it is not clear that Berkeley expresses this omnipotence in terms of absolute necessitation: that the volitional activity of the divine will (as a cause) must necessitate its intended effects by means of a logically necessary connection, which renders divine volitions inseparable from their intended effects. Malebranche attributes such absolute necessity to the divine will in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) and *Dialogues on Metaphysics* (VII. 9-10). However, even if one were to maintain that Berkeley understands the divine will to act by means of absolute necessitation—and again, Berkeley's philosophical writings do not provide clear enough evidence for one to state definitively his belief as regards this particular issue—that fact alone would not license the absolute necessitation that his anonymous objector believes inherent in the connections that exist between visual and tangible ideas: the connections between ideas of sensation are not necessary in the manner Berkeley's anonymous objector believes.

Berkeley's account of science in *Principles* (§§60-65) reveals that the various connections which exist between ideas of sense are instituted by the benevolence of the divine will, and furthermore, that those connections are not necessary. Instead, Berkeley understands the connections between ideas in terms of signification: ideas should be understood as signs which signify other ideas, or in the case of the divine visual language, the wisdom and benevolence of God. Berkeley states precisely this in his answer to an individual who might object to his immaterialism by arguing that

⁴ See *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§§26-30).

if the connections which exist between ideas of sense are not necessary, then to what purpose have those connections been established? Berkeley responds to this potential objection in *Principles* (§65):

To all which my answer is, first, that the connexion of ideas does not imply the relation of *cause* and *effect*, but only of a mark or *sign* with the thing *signified*. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it. In like manner, the noise that I hear is not the effect of this or that motion or collision of the ambient bodies, but the sign thereof.⁵

Berkeley's rejection of a necessary connection between ideas of sense becomes clearer in light of what he states in the above passage. The divine will establishes the connections that one observes in the laws of nature, and as *Principles* (§31) states, those connections are not governed by absolute necessity; rather, the laws of nature are established through the benevolence of the divine will and exist in a relation of sign and signified.⁶

An awareness on the part of Berkeley concerning the Malebranchean conception of a genuine causal power as involving a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect may similarly be understood, I believe, from what Berkeley writes in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§42):

We infer causes from effects, effects from causes, and properties one from another, where the connection is necessary.

However, as I have already stated, the connections which are instituted between ideas, including visual and tangible ideas, are not necessary for Berkeley—and certainly not necessary in the manner that Berkeley's anonymous objector argues. Such connections are contingent upon the benevolence of the divine will. Were the connection between a cause and effect one of absolute necessitation (i.e., established by means of a logically necessary connection) one would be able to infer what properties will be possessed by the effect given those possessed by the cause, or even

⁵ See also *Principles* (§108).

⁶ In grounding the laws of nature in the benevolence of the divine will, Berkeley is in agreement with both Malebranche and Leibniz, who also argue that the laws of nature are grounded in the benevolence of the divine will. Descartes, in contrast to Berkeley and Malebranche, grounds the laws of nature in the immutability of the divine will in *Principles of Philosophy* (II: 36-37), and in doing so, Descartes sharply distinguishes between the moral sphere and the physical sphere. Descartes rejects all final causes in the natural sciences in *Principles of Philosophy* (I: 28) and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (IV), arguing that natural philosophers are unable to discern the plans of the divine; Spinoza similarly rejects final causes in *Ethics* (I: Appendix). The reader may compare this with what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§107). In reference to the role that various early modern philosophers ascribed to the divine will in the formation and the conservation of the laws of nature, see Des Chene (2006: 67-94). Similar discussions of this topic may be found in Nadler (1993), Clatterbaugh (1999), and Ott (2009).

that an effect must exist given that its cause exists.⁷ Berkeley's dispute with his anonymous objector illustrates the former's familiarity with the absolute necessitation model of causation: the Malebranchean belief that causation concerns a logically necessary connection that licenses *a priori* inference into the structure of the causal relation. However, Berkeley's response in the *Theory of Vision Vindicated* indicates that he was unwilling to apply absolute necessitation to the connections that exist between visual ideas and tangible ideas; and, as is revealed by what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§31 & §65), he was certainly unwilling to assert that the so-called causal connections that exist between ideas in the world are necessary and knowable *a priori*. It is my belief that Berkeley's response to his objector, as well as his discussions concerning the idea of necessary connection more generally, reveal that he understood that idea in terms of absolute necessitation: that is, in terms of a logically necessary connection that is a matter of demonstrative reasoning.

As I have suggested, I believe that it is Berkeley's identification of causal activity with volitional activity, as well as his desire to assert the causal efficacy of finite wills, that prevents him from accepting the absolute necessitation inherent in either Hume's Bare Thought, or the necessary connections of his anonymous objector. I believe that what Berkeley's writes in *Theory of Vision Vindicated* (§§28-30 & §§39-42) reveals that he is quite reticent to define causation, and most especially, the power said to effect and necessitate causal relations, in terms of absolute necessity. Berkeley's authorship also reveals that he was familiar with the belief that the relation of cause and effect involves a logically necessary connection that licenses *a priori* inference into the relation itself, as well as the causal structure of nature. However, whereas Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model, arguing that knowledge of power would reveal the inseparability of a cause and its effect on account of the absolute necessitation essential to the Bare Thought, Berkeley rejects absolute necessity as a defining characteristic of causal power.

As I have stated previously, I believe that Berkeley, in contrast to the absolute necessitation model, understands the defining characteristic of power to be the ability to exert volitional control over those ideas within a spirit's power. I have suggested that this rejection on Berkeley's part is the result of his recognition of precisely that which Hume recognized: the necessity that is involved in the absolute necessitation

⁷ See Winkler (1989: 117-129) in reference to this point.

model is simply too strong when applied to the relations between external objects, and more importantly for the theological concerns of Berkeley's philosophy, between the volitional activity of finite spirits and the effects produced by that activity. Of course, Hume had no such similar theological concerns, and was therefore free to employ the absolute necessitation model of causation in order to illustrate a chief deficiency of that particular model—that is, in placing a condition of inseparability upon knowledge of causal power it extends such knowledge beyond the capacities of human understanding—as well as the far more damaging use against Berkeley's natural religion: the fact that experience does not reveal an immediate awareness as oneself as a causal power, and by extension, that the divine will cannot be said to be a genuine causal power either.

Introspection reveals that finite spirits can influence ideas of imagination or cause the motion of bodily limbs through an act of volition for Berkeley; and, if Berkeley were to accept that causal power involves the absolute necessity which is expressed in Hume's formulation of the Bare Thought—for Hume holds that power concerns the essences or intrinsic natures of causes—he would be forced to accept that knowledge that spirits are causal powers requires one to possess a complete knowledge of the innermost nature of the cause: what effects are necessitated by their cause absolutely. However, experience reveals that the volitions of finite spirits are not necessarily connected with their intended effects, for finite spirits are not omnipotent and often times the volitions of finite spirits fail to produce their effects. Thus, if the connections between volitions and their effects, the basis upon which Berkeley grounds the causal power of spirits, were necessitated absolutely—a conception of necessary connection that would have been very familiar to both Berkeley and Hume in their reading of Malebranche—the effect must necessarily be produced so as to render the cause and effect inextricably united. Furthermore, one would likewise require knowledge of why any effect, such as the creation or alteration of an idea of imagination, or the movement of some limb or organ of the body, failed to materialize upon the formulation of a particular volition. This is precisely Hume's point in *Enquiry* (VII: 65):

Why has the will an influence over the tongue and fingers, not over the heart and liver? This question would never embarrass us, were we conscious of a power in the former case, not in the latter. We should then perceive, independent of experience, why the authority of will over the organs of the body is circumscribed within such particular limits. Being in that case fully acquainted with the power or force, by

which it operates, we should also know, why its influence reaches precisely to such boundaries, and no farther.

I believe Hume's endorsement of the absolute necessitation model of causation, which renders a cause inextricably linked with its effect, is understood from this passage. Given the criterion expressed in the passage, knowledge of causal power would require one to know why the influence of the will extends to the precise boundaries that it does and not any farther. Thus, causal power concerns a degree of knowledge that extends beyond the *science of human nature* for Hume, and therefore, beyond the comprehension of finite human minds.

My belief is that Berkeley understood that if knowledge of causal power involved the absolute necessitation that Hume states in the formulation of the Bare Thought, he would lose the experiential basis for claiming that spirits are causal powers by means of experience of their volitional activity. In losing this experiential basis, Berkeley would likewise lose his foundation for the further claim that God is that power that creates ideas of sense and conserves the regularity that is exhibited in the physical laws. In response to this fact, I believe that Berkeley stipulated a weaker requirement for the discovery of an instance of causal power than did Hume. Berkeley argues that it is in one's ability to will that is the basis for denominating oneself a causal power, and by analogy, other spirits as causal powers: inward reflection reveals one to be an active being that is capable of activities such as thinking, perceiving, and above all, willing—a being capable of producing certain effects by means of the activity of willing. A finite spirit can create and affect those ideas that lie within its power, which *Principles* (§28 & §147) reveal to be ideas of imagination and the limbs of one's body respectively. Willing is the key mental action in Berkeley's philosophy; it is the volitional activity of spirits that accounts for all causal activity.

3. Berkeley, human agency, and the influence of the divine will

Berkeley's account of agency provides further evidence that he understood causal activity as essentially volitional in nature, and that finite spirits are genuine causal powers in their ability to cause motion in their bodily limbs by means of volition. There are three places in Berkeley's writings where I believe he attributes to finite

spirits the power to produce motion in their bodies: the first place is located in *Principles* (§§146-147); the second is located in *Three Dialogues* (III: 237); and the third is to be found in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548).⁸ I believe Berkeley indicates in these three places a willingness to extend the volitional activity of finite spirits beyond the rather limited scope expressed in *Principles* (§28): that is, to the creation and manipulation of ideas of imagination. The vividness and steadiness of ideas of sense, which Berkeley asserts in *Principles* (§30 & §107), reveal the existence of a more powerful will that is responsible for their creation and constancy. However, Berkeley elsewhere asserts that finite spirits are able to cause motion in their own bodily limbs, which are ideas of sense, and unlike the vast majority of such ideas, fall within the power of a finite spirit's volitional activity. Berkeley leaves open this possibility, though limited in scope, in what he writes in *Principles* (§146):

But though there be some things which convince us, human agents are concerned in producing them; yet it is evident to every one that those things which are called the works of nature, that is, the far greater part of the ideas or sensations perceived by us, are not produced by or dependent on the wills of men.

Berkeley's statement that "the far greater part of the ideas of sensation perceived by us" are in no way dependent upon finite wills seems entirely consistent with the possibility that finite spirits can causally affect certain ideas of sense, though the far greater part of those ideas remain completely independent of the volitional activity of finite wills. Unfortunately, Berkeley does not further expound upon this particular thought, so it is difficult to state precisely what he has in mind. However, the fact that Berkeley explicitly addresses the case of finite spirits producing motion in their bodily limbs in the following section, *Principles* (§147), seems to indicate that the lesser part of ideas of sense that Berkeley has in mind are most likely the bodies of finite spirits. Given Berkeley's commitment to the causal efficacy of finite spirits, as well as his claim in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548) that finite spirits move their own legs, this appears to me the most likely reading.⁹

⁸ There is an issue with Berkeley's philosophy as to how successful he is in separating his own account of causal agency from the occasionalism endorsed by Malebranche. In *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548), Berkeley addresses the latter by name directly, arguing that finite wills have the power to will movement in the limbs of their bodies. That Berkeley's account continued to sound French in tone to his contemporaries after the publication of his major early philosophical works is evidenced in the additions which Berkeley incorporated to the 1734 edition of his *Three Dialogues* (II: 213-214), where he attempts to illustrate the difference between his own thought and the Malebranchean doctrine of "seeing all things in God."

⁹ One could also interpret *Principles* (§146) as an attempt by Berkeley to reiterate the causal power finite spirits have over their ideas of imagination, which he had previously addressed in *Principles*

However, even if finite spirits do have the power to cause the movement of their bodily limbs, or causally affect other ideas of sensation by causing some change in their position or appearance, Berkeley appears unwilling to allow the volitional activity of finite spirits the further ability to directly produce that motion in the perceptions of other finite minds. Berkeley is quite clear that the ability to causally affect the perceptions of finite spirits is possessed by the divine will alone, and he writes precisely this in *Principles* (§147):

For it is evident, that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever, distinct from our selves. We may even assert, that the existence of God is far more evidently perceived than the existence of men; because the effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to human agents. There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect produced by him, which doth not more strongly evince the being of that spirit who is the *Author of Nature*. For it is evident that in affecting other persons, the will of man hath no other object, than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator. He alone it is who *upholding all things by the Word of his Power*, maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear light which enlightens every one, is itself invisible.

The passage demarcates the extent of a finite spirit's power to affect other finite spirits, which involves only the production of motion in that particular spirit's bodily limbs by means of an act of will—though this probably is extendable to a finite spirit's ability to produce motion, or an alteration, in other ideas of sense, such as rocks or trees. What is particularly interesting about this section is that it explicitly states which ideas of sense fall within the influence of finite wills and in what exactly the causal power of such wills consists: principally the production of movement in the limbs of one's own body.

Berkeley likewise asserts the causal efficacy of finite spirits in reference to the movement of their bodies and the determination of their wills in Philonous' response to Hylas' worry that the philosophical beliefs of the former will render the divine being the author of sin. Berkeley writes in *Three Dialogues* (III: 237):

Lastly, I have no where said that God is the only agent who produces all the motions in bodies. It is true, I have denied there are any other agents besides spirits: but this is very consistent with allowing to thinking rational beings, in the production of motions, the use of limited powers, ultimately indeed derived from God, but

(§28), and further distinguish finite spirits from God and the need for the latter. However, for the reasons I provide above, I do not believe that Berkeley's focus is directed towards the mind's ability to create and alter ideas of imagination in *Principles* (§146), but upon the ability of finite spirits to be the direct and immediate causes of motion in the limbs of their bodies.

immediately under the direction of their own wills, which is sufficient to entitle them to all the guilt of their actions.

In order to secure the moral perfection of God, Philonous states that God is not the sole spirit that is capable of producing movement in bodies, as Malebranche's occasionalism had maintained. Although Berkeley does not specify explicitly that he has finite spirits in mind, the fact that his ontology allows no active beings besides spirits, and given that the discussion concerns the divine will having a share of the responsibility in the sins committed by human wills, it appears clear that finite spirits are those other agents of which Philonous speaks. Though the power that finite spirits are able to exert over their own bodies, as well as by which they are able to perform other actions, derives from the use of "limited powers" that ultimately spring from the divine will, the direction and use of such powers to produce motion in one's bodily limbs, or to excite or vary an idea in the mind, is under the direct influence of the volitional activity of finite wills.¹⁰

Berkeley likewise asserts that finite spirits have a power to produce motion in their bodily limbs in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217):

I agree with you. And indeed it is very plain, that when I stir my finger, it remains passive; but my will which produced the motion, is active.

The materialist Hylas speaks in the above passage, but that he expresses his agreement with Philonous on this matter can, I believe, be taken as an endorsement by Berkeley of what Hylas states: that one is able to produce motion in one's finger by means of the volitional activity of the will. The passage, however, is only in reference to the active and passive distinction which is so critical to Berkeley's ontological distinction between spirits and ideas; the principal concern is not upon the manner in which the motion of Hylas' finger is conveyed to the mind of Philonous, or even to Hylas himself. *Principles* (§147) reveals that the perception of such motion is exhibited in finite minds by the will of the divine. However, the above passage is consistent with Berkeley's desire to assert the causal efficacy of finite spirits over their bodily limbs; and, given the placement of the passage, and the context of the discussion between Philonous and Hylas upon the distinction between the activity of the will and passivity of ideas, it would seem highly unlikely that Berkeley would

¹⁰ Berkeley's most explicit statement that finite spirits have the power to causally affect their own bodies is found in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548): "We move our Legs our selves. 'tis we that will their movement. Herein I differ from Malbranch."

have felt the need to add a further claim concerning the assistance of the divine will in such action.

What *Principles* (§147) reveals, and what the discussion of moral evil in *Three Dialogues* (III: 237) omits, is the extent to which God's assistance is required when finite spirits causally affect their own bodily limbs by an act of volition. Berkeley's discussion of volitional activity in *Principles* (§28) and *Three Dialogues* (II: 215-217 & III: 239-240), and particularly in Philonous' discussion of moral evil in *Three Dialogues* (III: 236-237), indicates that Berkeley understood finite spirits as capable of determining their own wills—that is, finite spirits are entirely free in the determination of their wills. However, I believe that Berkeley is willing to extend the causal efficacy of finite wills beyond the mere determination of the will in the creation and alteration of ideas of imagination to the production of bodily movements; and, I think that this willingness to extend this specific power to finite spirits is reflected in what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§147), as well as what Philonous asserts in *Three Dialogues* (III: 237)—a power which is entirely foreign to the occasionalism of Malebranche.

Charles McCracken recognizes that the willingness Berkeley shows to extend to finite spirits a power to create and influence their ideas of imagination, as well as to be the primary causes of their bodily movements—though, as *Principles* (§147) argues, this power in finite spirits cannot be extended to the perceptions of such bodily motions—distinguishes him from the occasionalism that Malebranche espouses in the *Search after Truth*. Regarding this point, McCracken writes the following:

But while Berkeley was thus an Occasionalist about *natural* phenomena, he rejected *complete* Occasionalism—the theory that God is the sole cause of *every* event. *All* spirits are capable of voluntary acts and so are *true* causal agents, Berkeley held. We human beings cause the motion of our own limbs.¹¹

McCracken states that Berkeley's belief that finite spirits are genuine causes amounts to two distinct contentions concerning the nature of their activity—both of which would have been particularly important for Berkeley in securing the moral perfection of God. Firstly, finite spirits have the ability to determine their own choices in willing a particular action; and secondly, finite spirits have the power to cause motion in their bodies. McCracken writes further regarding these two contentions:

¹¹ McCracken (1983: 245).

These contentions are logically independent: we might determine our wills, yet God move our limbs in conformity with our choices. Or our volition might be determined by God, yet we cause our limbs to move in conformity with that volition. Malebranche believed that God causes *both* the ‘movement’ of our wills and the movement of our limbs. Berkeley denied that God causes either.¹²

I believe McCracken to be correct. Berkeley maintains that finite spirits are genuine causal powers in both the determination of their wills and the production of movement in their bodies. However, the second conjunct requires further elucidation, for although the production of bodily motion is the direct result of the volitional activity of a finite spirit, such activity “cannot excite any idea in the mind of another,” as *Principles* (§147) makes clear. What is required for Berkeley is the assistance of the divine will in exhibiting such motion in the perceptions of finite spirits, for it is God who “maintains that intercourse between spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other.”

When Berkeley first wrote about the impotence of human wills in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§107), he may have been thinking of the complete causal impotence of finite wills, but it need not be taken as such, and may even be compatible with Berkeley’s rejection of occasionalism in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548). Berkeley could have maintained the belief, as early as the former entry, that the impotence of human wills is found solely in their inability to causally affect the perceptions of other finite spirits—the very same impotence that *Principles* (§147) asserts affects finite spirits. However, even if what Berkeley writes in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§107) does reflect an acceptance of Malebranche’s occasionalism prior to the *Principles*, it can still support the emphasis Berkeley places upon the assistance of the divine will in the production of bodily motion by a finite spirit in *Principles* (§147).¹³ The exact extent of the divine will’s influence in

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ This is precisely what Jeffery K. McDonough argues: that Berkeley is best understood as a concurrentist in his account of agency. See McDonough (2008). McDonough argues that concurrentism was a viable position for any religiously minded philosopher to adopt in the early modern period—as it had proponents in Medieval Christian philosophers such as Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Suarez, and Luis de Molina—and appears to resolve the seemingly contradictory statements which Berkeley makes concerning agency in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§107 & §548). Both entries are entirely compatible with a concurrentist interpretation: finite spirits may be said to be genuine causes, such that their volitional activity is directly responsible for the motion of their legs, but that such motion causally affects the perceptions of other finite spirits depends upon God’s will; and thus, finite spirits remain in a state of impotence as regards causing motion in the perceptions of other finite spirits without the concurrent assistance of the divine will. The volitions of finite spirits in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§107) are “unperformed” and lack power because their performance requires the concurrent assistance of the divine will. McDonough provides good textual evidence in

Berkeley's account of agency is not my primary concern in this chapter, nor is it whether Berkeley is best understood as a concurrentist or occasionalist in his account of human agency. Rather, my concern is to illustrate that Berkeley does certainly believe that finite spirits are the immediate causes of their own bodily movement; and, that this movement is for Berkeley the effect of a finite spirit's volitional activity, and provides experiential evidence that finite spirits are causal powers in their ability to causally affect their bodies by means of their own volitional activity.

4. *Finite spirits, causal efficacy, and the volitional activity of the will*

Berkeley understands the causal power of finite spirits to be displayed in their ability to create and alter ideas through volition, as *Principles* (§28) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 239-240) illustrate, as well as in their ability to cause movement in their bodily limbs, which I believe is illustrated in what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§147), *Three Dialogues* (III: 237), and *Philosophical Commentaries* (§548). What is apparent in all these passages is the limited role that the volitional activity of finite spirits has in producing certain effects, such as the creation of an idea in the mind or the motion of a bodily limb. Berkeley's preemptive response to the negative arguments advanced by Hume in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*—arguments which are directed against the Berkeleyan claim that inward reflection upon the will and its activities reveals finite spirits to be causal powers—as I understand it, is to reject the absolute necessitation which is inherent in the condition of inseparability that Hume places upon knowledge of power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69): that is, for one to be aware of oneself as a causal power, one must know the entire influence of the

the third section of his article to suggest that Berkeley was aware of concurrentism as an option in what he writes in *Principles* (§66 & §145), *Three Dialogues* (II: 217), and in his discussion of the mere conservationism of William Durandus in his letter to Samuel Johnson in *Works* (II: 282); the philosophical case for Berkeley's concurrentism is best reflected in what he writes in *Principles* (§147). Concurrentism maintains three central assertions: first, that God's activity is necessary to create and conserve the world in existence; second, that finite wills are endowed with active and passive powers, which they exercise in causal interactions; and third, though finite wills are endowed with such powers, no finite will could be causally efficacious without the concurrent assistance of the divine. For an overview of the concurrentist position, see Fredosso (1991), Quinn (1981), and Schmaltz (2008: ch. 1). As regards the claim that one should read Berkeley as adhering to some form of occasionalism, see Bennett (2001, vol. 2: 165-169) and Pitcher (1981: 221-227). For the claim that Berkeley's account of agency is inconsistent, see Jolley (1990) and Mckim (1984). Charles McCracken interprets Berkeley as holding that natural causation between ideas is always occasional, but states that Berkeley rejects the occasionalism advanced by Malebranche. McCracken never identifies Berkeley as a concurrentist in his interpretation, but the partial occasionalist reading he advances appears amenable to McDonough's reading. See McCracken (1983: 242-247).

will and know why that influence extends to the precise boundaries that it does. I believe that Berkeley's criterion for knowledge of causal power is weaker than Hume's condition of inseparability—that is, direct acquaintance with the Bare Thought—and it is my belief that this less stringent condition is reflected in the manner which Berkeley defines causal power: the capacity to affect those ideas which fall within the volitional control of a particular spirit's will. Berkeley most certainly understands action in terms of efficacious willing, and has Hylas state as much in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217):

I agree with you. And indeed it is very plain, that when I stir my finger, it remains passive; but my will which produced the motion, is active.

In the discussion leading to this pronouncement by Hylas, Philonous argues that motion is an inert idea which is to be distinguished from the activity of spirits; or more precisely, a spirit is active because it can produce an effect, such as motion, by means of volition. The ontological distinction between spirits and ideas in terms of the activity of spirits is fundamental to Berkeley's philosophy, and that all activity should be understood volitionally is the crux of Philonous' subsequent statement in *Three Dialogues* (II: 217):

Now I desire to know in the first place, whether motion being allowed to be no action, you can conceive any action besides volition: and in the second place, whether to say something and conceive nothing be not to talk nonsense: and lastly, whether having considered the premises, you do not perceive that to suppose any efficient or active cause of our ideas, other than *spirit*, is highly absurd and unreasonable?

Hylas acquiesces to the point that Philonous asserts in the exchange, but only in reference to the question of whether matter can be a cause of one's ideas; what is left unstated, at least explicitly in their discussion, is the former question of whether Hylas is able to conceive of any action besides volition. In denying that matter is active, and therefore, that it is a genuine cause, the reader is meant to understand Hylas' implicit agreement with Philonous' claim that the only action that is conceivable is volition—a claim that is only strengthened by what Philonous asserts in *Three Dialogues* (III: 239), for it is here that Berkeley write that one has “no notion of any action distinct from volition,” and that all volitional activity is the product of some spirit.

In distinguishing the activity of the will from the passiveness of ideas, Berkeley has two possible ways by which he can argue that experience reveals the

will to be active. The first is by means of a will's ability to produce certain effects by volitional activity—effects that illustrate the activity of their cause. That Berkeley understood this argument to provide one with evidence of the will's activity can be seen in what Berkeley writes in *Principles* (§§28-33 & §§145-149), *Three Dialogues* (II: 217 & III: 239-240), *De Motu* (§25), as well as the claim that one can acquire knowledge of an otherwise unknown power by means of the effects that are produced by its activity in *Alciphron* (VII. 7-10) and in *A New Letter*. Reflection upon the activities of the will—or mind, as Berkeley equates the two in *Principles* (§27) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 231)—reveals the effects of those active operations of a spirit, such as the creation of an idea of imagination, or the production of motion in the body; and, since one may know from the naked observation of those ideas that they lack any power or activity—in combination with the ontological division Berkeley draws in *Principles* (§§1-2 & §102)—it must be the volitional activity of some will which is the cause of the effects that are produced. This is exactly what Philonous states in *Three Dialogues* (III: 240):

From the effects I see produced, I conclude there are actions; and because actions, volitions; and because there are volitions, there must be a will.

Philonous' utterance is in reference to the existence of a divine will, which is active by means of the volitional activity in which it engages. Philonous' earlier assertion that all action is volitional in nature, founded upon the fact that one is unable to conceive of any action besides volition, leads him to conclude that whenever he speaks of an active being he is compelled to mean a spirit. As the above passage indicates, the activity of a will is known through the effects it produces; those effects are proportionate to the will that produces them; thus, in the case of the divine, the effects of its volitions must display its perfection—precisely what Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§§30-33).

Secondly, Berkeley argues that the will is active *per se*, and that direct experience of willing reveals it as such. This is the experiential evidence for the activity of the will which Berkeley locates in his discussion concerning the inward act of reflection in the *Three Dialogues* (III: 231):

As to your first question; I own I have properly no idea, either of God or any other spirit; for these being active, cannot be represented by things perfectly inert, as our ideas are. I do nevertheless know, that I who am a spirit or thinking substance, exist as certainly, as I know my ideas exist. Farther, I know what I mean by the terms *I* and *myself*; and I know this immediately, or intuitively, though I do not perceive it as

I perceive a triangle, a colour, or a sound. The mind, spirit or soul, is that indivisible unextended thing, which thinks, acts, and perceives.¹⁴

Philonous reiterates this same point to Hylas in the *Three Dialogues* (III: 233-234):

How often must I repeat, that I know or am conscious of my own being; and that I myself am not my ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that perceives, knows, wills, and operates about ideas. I know that I, one and the same self, perceive both colours and sounds: that a colour cannot perceive a sound, nor a sound a colour: that I am therefore one individual principle, distinct from colour and sound; and, for the same reason, from all other sensible things and inert ideas.

Reflection, therefore, provides an individual with an immediate and intuitive knowledge of oneself as an active being through direct experience of the will's activity—of some being that is distinct from the ideas of sensible qualities that one perceives, and which is active on account of the mental operations of perceiving and willing. As Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§89), one comprehends one's own existence by means of an "inward feeling or reflexion," and the existence of other spirits through reasoning. This inward reflection is directed towards the activities of perception and willing themselves rather than towards the effects of such activity; and, the direct experiential acquaintance with the act of perception, which, Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§139), the existence of a spirit consists in, reveals an immediate and intuitive knowledge that finite spirits are active in their ability to will and perceive.

At the foundational level, Berkeley is drawing upon his ontological distinction between the passivity of ideas and the activity of willing spirits. Whether the activity of the will is established through knowledge of the effects it is said to produce, or through the direct experience of oneself as a willing agent, the knowledge that ideas are passive and cannot therefore be causal powers illustrates that spirits, as the remaining entity in Berkeley's ontology, must be genuine causes; and therefore, must be active powers. This knowledge is grounded in reflection upon the will and the bare observation of ideas. However, as Hume states in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69), though the regular conjunction of effects and volitions may reveal the will to be active in its ability to produce certain effects, the experiential fact that the will is active by means of the regular conjunction of volitions and their effects does not permit one to infer that such activity denominates the will a causal power any more than observation of the manifest regularities in nature provide evidence of that power which is said to

¹⁴ See also *Principles* (§89) and *De Motu* (§21).

effect and necessitate causal relations in the material world. Hume states precisely this in *Treatise* (Appendix: 632-633):

We have command over our mind to a certain degree, but beyond *that* lose all empire over it: And 'tis evidently impossible to fix any precise bounds to our authority, where we consult not experience. In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have.

Hume's response to Berkeley's claim that the will is known to be active through direct experience is along the very same lines; for Hume, the fact that reflection reveals that one is a willing agent might indicate that one is active in willing—that is, experience reveals that the command of the will does have an influence over one's ideas and certain bodily limbs and organs—but self-reflection can reveal nothing more than the constant conjunction of volitional activity and the effects which are understood to be produced by that activity. Hume writes concerning the impossibility of an immediate awareness of causal power by means of self-reflection in *Enquiry* (VII: 65):

The motion of our body follows upon the command of our will. Of this we are every moment conscious. But the means, by which this is effected; the energy, by which the will performs so extraordinary an operation; of this we are so far from being immediately conscious, that it must for ever escape our most diligent enquiry.

That reflection reveals only the experiential knowledge that certain effects tend to follow certain volitions with regularity, and not any power in the will that necessitates those regular conjunctions, is due to Hume's understanding of power in terms of the absolute necessitation expressed in the Bare Thought: the inseparability of a cause and effect.

That Berkeley's definition of causal power does not apply the same strict criterion for knowledge of power as does Hume in his acceptance of the absolute necessitation model permits Berkeley to conclude that spirits are powers on account of the influence they are able to exert over those ideas which fall within the scope of their wills—even if that control is on account of a finite spirit's "limited powers." In all cases, will's activity must be expressed volitionally for Berkeley, and I think that Berkeley's endorsement of this claim is reflected in what he writes in *Three Dialogues* (II: 215-217 & III: 239-240) and *Principles* (§28). These passages reveal that Berkeley thought that all activity is best understood in terms of volition, and I think that the most promising interpretation of Berkeley's treatment of causation is

one where Berkeley is said to understand causal activity in terms of willing.¹⁵ It appears clear given Berkeley's fundamental distinction between spirits and ideas in his ontology, as well as what he writes in *Three Dialogues* (II: 215-218), that he understands causal activity in terms of mental efficacy—that is, volitions are the only conceivable causes of action; and, as *Three Dialogues* (III: 239) asserts, one cannot conceive of a volition subsisting in any other existent than a spirit.¹⁶

That Berkeley establishes the claim that one learns of oneself as an active being through reflection is vastly important to what is perhaps the central claim of Berkeley's natural religion: God is that power which creates ideas of sense and conserves the natural laws which govern those ideas in a uniform course. Berkeley extends the scope of the experiential argument that is expressed in *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-234), that one knows oneself as an active being by means of one's own volitional activity, to serve as the basis for the further argument that it is by amplifying the powers of finite spirits and removing their imperfections that one forms an active notion or image of God. Naturally, one of those powers to be amplified is the ability to create and affect ideas through volitional activity. When this power is heightened—and the various imperfections which plague finite spirits removed—in the divine will, along with the recognition that the ideas of sense which constitute the world have been created by the act of an infinitely powerful will, those ideas are understood to be the effects of divine volition.

However, as I stressed before, Berkeley is not able to accept the assertion that volitional activity—and therefore, causal activity—involves the absolute necessitation of Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause, which Hume adopts and employs in his negative account of causal power to argue that one is unable to acquire knowledge of that power said to be responsible for necessitating causal relations. The absolute necessitation that binds divine volitions and their effects in Malebranche's occasionalism is based upon the fact that the divine will could not form a volition that did not produce its intended effect. However, this is far different in the case of the volitional activity of finite spirits, and recognizing this fact, Malebranche concludes

¹⁵ This point is likewise expressed in *Principles* (§28), where Berkeley writes that to speak of the ability of the mind to recall and alter ideas in a way that is exclusive of all volition is to merely amuse oneself with words; or more precisely, is to speak without any meaning affixed to one's words.

¹⁶ For an interpretation which argues against the attribution of a volitional account of agency to Berkeley, see Hornsby (1980: 50-53). Against Hornsby's reading that Berkeley does not espouse a volitional account of agency, see Stoneham (2002: ch. 6).

that finite wills are causally impotent since their wills lack the power to necessitate their effects absolutely. Berkeley similarly recognizes this weakness in finite wills, but wishing to preserve the causal power of finite spirits, reveals no similar emphasis upon absolute necessity as the defining characteristic of a genuine causal power. As I have stated, knowledge of power for Berkeley does not require that such a strong criterion as Hume's condition of inseparability be placed upon such knowledge; rather, it is the will's capacity to affect those ideas which fall within its power that denominates a spirit a genuine power: absolute necessitation is not a defining characteristic of causal power according to Berkeley's definition.

5. *Hume's skepticism regarding power and the efficacy of the divine will*

The success of Hume's denial that one experiences a conscious awareness of oneself as a causal power through self-reflection is based upon the claim that if one were to know such power, one could know the effects that a particular cause will necessitate absolutely. However, as Hume argues in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-67), experience can never reveal the entire extent of the will's influence, which is precisely what knowledge of causal power would require—this requirement is the natural consequence of defining causal power in terms of the inseparability of a cause and effect. I believe this consequence is that which Berkeley recognized in Malebranche's definition of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection, and it is that which leads Berkeley to reject absolute necessitation as the defining characteristic of causation, which as I have argued prior, is essentially volitional in nature for Berkeley. I believe that Berkeley's rejection of the absolute necessitation model provides him with the means to shelter his assertion that finite spirits are causal powers from the line of attack advanced by Hume in his negative account of power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69). The importance of sheltering this experiential claim for Berkeley is perhaps one of the most important aims for his natural religion, and his philosophy as a whole. This is on account of the style of argument that Berkeley employs to conclude that God is that power which creates ideas of sense and which conserves the uniformity in the laws of nature which govern those ideas. If Hume is successful in undermining Berkeley's experiential claim that reflection upon the will reveals oneself to be a causal power, then not only has Hume denied Berkeley's foundation for claiming that

finite spirits are causal powers, but in effect, Hume has also denied Berkeley's basis for claiming that God, as the sole infinite spirit, is that original power which creates ideas of sense and maintains the regularity of the physical laws upon which humankind is so dependent for its continued survival. The importance of this claim to the religious aims of Berkeley's philosophy is easily discernable from what he writes regarding knowledge of the fixed laws of nature in *Principles* (§31):

This gives us a sort of foresight, which enables us to regulate our actions for the benefit of life. And without this we should be eternally at a loss: we could not know how to act any thing that might procure us the least pleasure, or remove the least pain of sense. That food nourishes, sleep refreshes, and fire warms us; that to sow in the seed-time is the way to reap in the harvest, and, in general, that to obtain such or such ends, such or such means are conducive, all this we know, not by discovering any necessary connexion between our ideas, but only by the observation of the settled laws of Nature, without which we should be all in uncertainty and confusion, and a grown man no more know how to manage himself in the affairs of life, than an infant just born.

Furthermore, without the causal power of the divine will to create and regulate ideas of sense and the uniformity of the natural laws, Berkeley's divine visual language, which I understand to be a principal thought within Berkeley's natural religion, would be razed to the ground.

Philonous, in his attempt to convince Hylas that one does have knowledge of oneself as an active entity in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231)—whereas one does not have knowledge, either ideational or notional, of matter—argues that although one has no ideational knowledge of one's soul, it does not follow that one cannot acquire any knowledge of one's soul. Rather, one may learn of one's existence as an active spirit through introspection; and, it is through this act of introspection that the mind is able to form an "image or likeness of God, though indeed extremely inadequate." The notion that one forms of God is derived through the same reflective act by which one becomes consciously aware of oneself as a willing and perceiving being; Philonous states exactly this point in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232):

However, taking the word *idea* in a large sense, my soul may be said to furnish me with an idea, that is, an image, or likeness of God, though indeed extremely inadequate. For all the notion I have of God, is obtained by reflecting on my own soul heightening its powers, and removing its imperfections. I have therefore, though not an inactive idea, yet in myself some sort of an active thinking image of the Deity. And though I perceive Him not by sense, yet I have a notion of Him, or know Him by reflexion and reasoning. My own mind and my own ideas I have an immediate knowledge of; and by the help of these, do mediately apprehend the possibility of the existence of other spirits and ideas. Farther, from my own being, and from the dependency I find in my self and my ideas, I do by an act of reason, necessarily infer the existence of a God, and of all created things in the mind of God.

It is therefore in the heightening of one's own active powers, combined with the removal of all the imperfections to which finite spirits are subject, that one forms an image of the divine; and, since it is the capacity to create and causally affect ideas through volitional activity by which spirits are denominated causal powers, the heightening of this capacity as found in finite spirits in the divine provides Berkeley with a basis to assert that God is a genuine causal power, just as are finite spirits. This basis is founded upon Berkeley's discussion of the limitations of the volitional activity of finite spirits, as well as the need for a more powerful spirit to explain the greater degree of order and coherence displayed in ideas of sense and the laws of nature in *Principles* (§§28-33). Furthermore, since all actions are caused by some volition, it is the volitional activity of the divine will which is responsible for such effects in the natural world. Naturally, this power in the divine will is heightened exponentially in order to match the omnipotence and omniscience of the divine being: the extent and power of the causal efficacy of the divine will is far greater than that of any finite spirit, and its influence extends over the creation and continual regulation of all ideas of sense.

Underpinning Berkeley's claim in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that one's own soul furnishes one with an image or likeness of God—that is, one forms a notion of God by reflecting upon the various activities of one's own soul—is Berkeley's argument in *Principles* (§140):

In a large sense indeed, we may be said to have an idea, or rather a notion of *spirit*, that is, we understand the meaning of the word, otherwise we could not affirm or deny any thing of it. Moreover, as we conceive the ideas that are in the minds of other spirits by means of our own, which we suppose to be resemblances of them: so we know other spirits by means of our own soul, which in that sense is the image or idea of them, it having a like respect to other spirits, that blueness or heat by me perceived hath to those ideas perceived by another.

The argument is analogical in nature: one's knowledge of the existence of other spirits is akin to one's knowledge of the ideas of sensible qualities that exist in other minds. Thus, in the same manner that a perception of heat or of the color blue provides a basis for the representation of other ideas of heat or blue, such as those that are perceived by another finite spirit, the awareness of oneself as an active spirit, the support of those sensible qualities *via* perception, can provide the experiential basis for conceiving the existence of other finite spirits as similar to oneself. The argument is stated in terms of resemblance, which Berkeley argues in *Principles* (§8) is that which representation is grounded upon. Berkeley's *likeness principle*, which is

expressed in *Principles* (§8), states that an idea can only represent another idea because an idea can only resemble another idea. The application of this principle in *Principles* (§140) is to active entities: that is, spirits. The act of self-reflection reveals an immediate awareness of one as capable of activities such as willing; and, once one becomes aware of this, one may extend this same activity to other finite spirits and, as *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) argues, to God.

The importance of self-awareness as allowing for the conception of other spirits is found throughout the 1734 editions of both the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues*, and in the latter it is explicitly utilized to argue that upon becoming aware of oneself as an active being, one may extend this same activity *via* analogy to conceive of the divine will as an active power that can causally affect ideas. The inference to the existence and causal efficacy of God is naturally different from that to other finite spirits, for the power and enormity of the divine nature is far greater than that of any finite spirit, such that one can only conceive of God by heightening the powers of finite spirits and purging the divine nature of the imperfections which afflict the former. The analogical reasoning employed by Berkeley in *Principles* (§140) is again at the forefront of the argument which he formulates in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232). The importance of Berkeley's experiential argument that finite spirits are active beings that have the capacity to create and affect those ideas within the power of their volitional activity—and therefore, are true causal powers—to the inference that God is a causal power by analogy to his entire natural religion cannot be understated. That the divine will is that original causal power which maintains the regularity displayed in the physical laws and the constancy of ideas of sense is of the greatest importance to Berkeley's natural religion, and this is abundantly clear from what Berkeley writes in *New Theory of Vision* (§147), *Principles* (§31), and lastly, though perhaps most clearly, in *Alciphron* (IV. 14).

What renders Hume's negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) so worrying to Berkeley's natural religion is its potential to undermine the efficacy of the divine will. Hume's negative account of power provides an argument against Berkeley's experiential argument that self-reflection reveals an intuitive and immediate awareness of oneself as a willing agent, capable of creating and affecting certain ideas; thus, Hume's negative account has the potential not only to undermine the claim that finite spirits are causal powers, but also the claim that God is a causal power. Thus, Berkeley's natural religion faces a serious threat in Hume's denial of

the claim that self-reflection produces a conscious awareness that one is causally efficacious in terms of one's volitional activity in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69). If self-reflection reveals only the rather basic knowledge that certain effects tend to regularly follow volitional activity, such as that the raising of one's arm constantly attends the volition to raise one's arm, Hume's principal argument is that one can never reason beyond the observation of such regular conjunctions to assert that Berkeleyan spirits are genuine causal powers. This is exactly what Hume expresses in the *Treatise* (Appendix: 633):

In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have.

As I previously stated, the inference to the causal power of God in Berkeley's argument in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) requires that the efficacy of finite spirits be established first through an act of introspection, for it is only after such knowledge has been firmly established by reflecting upon the act of willing, as well as the will's influence upon ideas of imagination and the body, that one is able to form an image or likeness of the divine by reflecting upon one's own soul, and then heightening its powers and removing its imperfections.¹⁷

The reflective knowledge of oneself as an active power provides the necessary evidential basis to infer not only the existence of the divine, but that the divine will is that causal power responsible for the creation of ideas of sensation and the uniformity which is exhibited in the laws of nature, as the manner of argumentation in *Principles* (§§25-33) makes clear.¹⁸ However, if Hume is correct in his negative assessment of causal power, and reflection upon the operations of the will does not reveal that finite spirits are causal powers, then there exists no power that can be heightened and applied to the divine will in the manner that Berkeley does in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232). The natural result of Hume's line of argumentation, therefore, would be

¹⁷ The reader may compare Berkeley's assertion that the existence of God is proved reflectively, that is, through self-awareness of oneself, with what Locke writes in *Essay* (Bk. II. ch. xxiii. §§33-35 & Bk. IV. ch. ix. §§6-7). See also Descartes (1985, vol. 2: 32-35 & 132-133) as regards this specific point.

¹⁸ That one must first acquire introspective knowledge of the extent to which one can create and affect certain ideas before inferring the existence of a far more powerful spirit is expressed in the structure of Berkeley's argument in *Principles* (§§25-31). In these sections of the *Principles*, Berkeley's reasoning reveals that it is only by first reflecting upon the limitations of finite spirits in *Principles* (§28), that is, as to which ideas a finite spirit can create and affect, that one infers the existence of a more powerful spirit in *Principles* (§§29-31). Thus, reflection upon one's own active nature, as well as the limited extent of the power of one's own will in reference to the vast majority of ideas of sense, is required in order to infer the existence of God.

the denial that the divine will is causally efficacious. This is what Hume argues in *Enquiry* (VII: 72):

We have no idea of the Supreme Being but what we learn from reflection on our own faculties. Were our ignorance, therefore, a good reason for rejecting any thing, we should be led into that principle of denying all energy in the Supreme Being as much as in the grossest matter. We surely comprehend as little the operations of one as of the other.

All one is able to experience in the natural world for Hume is the constant conjunction of two species of objects—the experiential fact that an effect tends to follow what is labeled its cause, without knowledge of the original power which is said to absolutely necessitate causal relations. Human understanding has access solely to the idea of necessity that is produced by the determination of the mind to infer a cause from an effect and *vice versa*, from the observation of the constant conjunction of the two. Humanity’s ignorance of causal power extends to both the operations of the will and material objects, and as such, human understanding cannot affirm the causal power of the divine will any more than it can affirm such a power in finite wills or the “grossest matter.”

In reference to the acquisition of knowledge of causal power, a skeptical bent of mind is most becoming for Hume; and such a mindset is even more advantageous within the province of natural religion, where human inquiry moves beyond human affairs to those of the divine. Hume expresses this worry in *Dialogues* (I: 36-37):

But when we look beyond human affairs and the properties of the surrounding bodies: When we carry our speculations into the two eternities, before and after the present state of things; into the creation and formation of the universe; the existence and properties of spirits; the powers and operations of one universal spirit, existing without beginning and without end; omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, infinite, and incomprehensible: We must be far removed from the smallest tendency to scepticism not to be apprehensive, that we have here got quite beyond the reach of our faculties. So long as we confine our speculations to trade, or morals, or politics, or criticism, we make appeals, every moment, to common sense and experience, which strengthen our philosophical conclusions, and remove (at least, in part) the suspicion, which we so justly entertain with regard to every reasoning that is very subtle and refined. But in theological reasonings, we have not this advantage; while at the same time we are employed upon objects, which, we must be sensible, are too large for our grasp, and of all others, require most to be familiarised to our apprehension.

The warning which Hume has Philo voice to Cleanthes regarding any inquiry directed into the original principles of natural religion would seem to apply with equal force to the Berkeleyan argument that self-reflection yields an immediate awareness of oneself as a causal power, and by extension, the further claim that the divine will is a genuine causal power as well.

6. Farther reflections upon Berkeley's response to Hume

The central aim of this chapter has been to elucidate Berkeley's argument that finite spirits are causal powers on account of their ability to causally affect ideas of imagination and cause movement in their bodily limbs through volitional activity. It is my belief that Berkeley's definition of causal power in terms of volitional activity should be understood as a preemptive step to shield his experiential argument that spirits are genuine causes from the negative arguments that he foresaw as a consequence of Malebranche's belief that causal necessity should be modeled on absolute necessitation—a consequence which I believe Hume likewise foresaw and employed in his negative account of causal power. Hume's inability to discover an impression of power is a direct result of his acceptance of Malebranche's conception of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection, which is expressed in Hume's formulation of the Bare Thought. Power concerns essence for Hume, and knowledge of causal power would entail knowledge of the essence of a particular cause, such that one could know *a priori*, that is, from penetration of the nature of that cause, what effect must necessarily follow given the essential nature of the cause, as well as to know the entire scope of the influence of that power. Berkeley's response, as I have argued, is to lessen the restrictive criterion that Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause places upon knowledge of power, and define of causal power in terms of willing: as the capacity to exercise some degree of control over those ideas that can be directly influenced by a will through its volitional activity. This is a significant benefit of Berkeley's definition of power, since any being said to have the capacity affect ideas by means of volitional activity can be said to be a genuine causal power. That a will does not act according to the absolute necessitation inherent in Malebranche's conception of a true cause is not a reason to deny that it is known to be a power for Berkeley. The defining characteristic of Berkeley's conception of power is not the absolute necessity of Malebranche's absolute necessitation model—that is, in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect—but in terms of the capacity to affect those ideas within the power of a particular type of will.

The manner in which Berkeley argues for this claim has been the focus of the present chapter: self-reflection reveals the will to be active in the influence it is able to exert, by means of volition, over ideas of imagination and the body. It is my belief that this conception of causal power was particularly appealing to Berkeley in that he

believed it avoided the principal thrust of the style of objection championed by Hume: the notion that any genuine cause must involve absolute necessity, for power concerns that essential feature of a cause which yields knowledge as to what precise effects are necessitated by that cause. That experience informs one that finite wills fail to absolutely necessitate the intended effects of their volitional activity does not discount finite wills from being denominated genuine causal powers for Berkeley; rather, it is that finite spirits have the capacity to engage in volitional activity, as well as exert control over those ideas which fall within the scope of their power by an act of volition, that permits one to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers, and by analogy, God. Furthermore, the manner in which Berkeley defines causal power can allow for varying degrees of that power in respect to the “limited powers” of finite wills and the divine will, which his reasoning in *Principles* (§§27-31) indicates: the power to influence the vast majority of ideas of sensation falls beyond the limited range and breadth of finite wills, though as *Principles* (§§146-147) asserts, certain ideas of sensation—mainly the bodies of finite spirits—fall within the influence of finite wills; and, as *Principles* (§28) argues, so too do ideas of imagination.

The dialectical situation which arises between Berkeley and Hume concerns the correct conception of causal power. In maintaining that power concerns the essences of causes, and that the essence of a cause dictates what effects will follow from it by means of absolute necessitation, Hume argues that Berkeley’s own conception of power fails to appreciate just what is involved in the nature of power. To know causal power is to know the essence of a cause; and to know the essence of some cause, is to know what effects are inextricably bound with that cause, without recourse to past experience, as well as the entire extent of that cause’s influence. Thus, to know causal power would entail knowing that a cause possesses a power to produce certain effects essentially: the essence or the unique identity of a cause is inseparable from the effects it necessitates absolutely. Hume understood such knowledge to be impossible in principle, and this is a direct result of the specific manner in which he conceived of power—that is, the Malebranchean conception of power as essence, and therefore, as intimately involving absolute necessity. Berkeley dissociated power from absolute necessity and it was this dissociation that underlies his argument that one can acquire knowledge of an active power, even though its intrinsic nature or essence remains hidden, by means of the effects it produces. Hume thought this style of argument untenable on account of the fact that it does not

recognize that essence intimately concerns absolute necessity, since if power did not concern absolute necessity, it would ultimately be reduced to physical regularities. Power concerns more than such brute regularities. This is what both Hume and Malebranche recognized; both understood that the only form of necessity available to prevent the reduction of power to physical regularities is absolute necessity. What Malebranche failed to appreciate in formulating the absolute necessitation model of causation was the danger that conceiving of power as essence posed to natural religion, which is precisely what I believe Berkeley and Hume both recognized.

Throughout this dissertation I have sought to elucidate that Berkeley's rejection of the absolute necessitation model of causation is best explained in terms of his religious convictions: the desire to secure his natural religion—that is, the causal efficacy of God and finite spirits—from the threats which I believe he foresaw in the emphasis which Malebranche placed upon absolute necessitation in the latter's conception of a genuine cause. Hume, on the other hand, had no aspirations towards the divine in his philosophy. Hume's chief aim was to return humanity to the natural by illustrating the deficiencies in the thought of rationalist philosophers—in their belief that humankind has been created in the image of the divine and the various strains of thought produced by this belief—and the primacy of his associationist principles in nature: that human beings are governed by the same non-rational mechanisms as all animal life. Because Hume's philosophy is not erected upon a religious foundation, he could accept the absolute necessitation model of causation as involving a logically necessary connection with an ease of manner that was not similarly available to the devoutly religious character of Berkeley.

The lack of concern that Hume reveals regarding the causal efficacy of the divine will in *Enquiry* (VII: 69-73) permits him to follow the absolute necessitation model to its natural consequences, which would have been completely unpalatable for a religiously minded thinker such as Berkeley: the denial that human thought can acquire knowledge of causal power, and consequently, the denial that the divine will is a genuine power. Hume did not share the same concerns that Berkeley held in identifying knowledge of causal power with absolute necessitation, for the overall aims of the former's philosophy is precisely what this conflation would inevitably beget: the restraint of human reason in its desire to penetrate the heavens and acquire knowledge of the divine nature and thereby bring about the destruction of the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine. Knowledge of that

causal power said to necessitate causal relations, and therefore license *a priori* inference into the structure of causal relations, exceeds the boundaries of human experience and reason. Humanity must limit its inquiries to such experiential boundaries, and in doing so, observation of the relations that exist between objects in the world, both external and internal to the mind, does not reveal those objects to be inextricably united. Hume is that particular philosopher against whom Berkeley's precautionary steps, which were necessary to secure the causal efficacy of finite spirits, and thus, his natural religion, were directed. An individual who recognized, just as Berkeley had himself recognized, the threat that the absolute necessitation model posed to natural religion, though a philosopher who would apply that model's conception of a true cause to its natural consequence, even to the detriment of God's causal efficacy and natural religion as a whole.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion: Hume's Philosophical Reformation of Causation

1. *Hume's motivation in his negative account of causal power*

The belief that humanity has been created in the likeness of the divine manifested itself in various respects during the early modern period. One of these manifestations was the belief that human reason resembles the divine intellect in the former's capacity for *a priori* reasoning and the certain knowledge that such reasoning produces. This capacity for *a priori* thought led to the belief that causal relations are governed the same necessity that governs mathematical laws, and therefore, the inner structure of such causal relations could be known *a priori*: from the initial appearance of a cause one could know, without recourse to experience, what effect must necessarily follow from that cause. What I have sought to elucidate in the preceding chapters is the extent to which Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause (i.e., the absolute necessitation model) influenced the philosophical writings of Berkeley and Hume within the narrower context of each philosopher's discussion of natural religion. I argued in the third chapter that it is this model of causation that Hume accepts as revealing what knowledge of power would ultimately entail: the Bare Thought, which is governed by absolute necessity and renders a cause and effect inseparable. However, though Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model as correctly identifying the specific criterion that knowledge of causal power would demand of human understanding, he similarly realizes that this particular model is deficient in that the standard by which one is said to acquire knowledge of causal power is too great: the criterion of inseparability cannot be satisfied by human perception or reason, for such knowledge lies beyond the boundaries of human inquiry.

Furthermore, I likewise argued in the third chapter that Hume also found in the absolute necessitation model a tailor-made objection against the causal efficacy of finite wills and the divine will; and therefore, an objection that could serve against the central argument of Berkeley's natural religion: that reflection upon the will yields a conscious awareness of oneself as a causal power, and this awareness serves as the experiential basis for the further claim that God is a causal power in *Three Dialogues*

(III: 231-232). Because Berkeley assigns such a large role to God within his philosophy, and the causal efficacy of the divine will is of such vital importance in satisfying that particular role, Hume's argument in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) that self-reflection reveals only the constant conjunction of a cause and effect, and not the power said to absolutely necessitate that relation, has the potential to be quite damaging to Berkeley's entire philosophical system.

The exact motivation behind Hume's negative account of causal power in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69) avails itself of numerous interpretations, and I have sought to establish an interpretation that focuses upon Hume's negative account of causal power as a within the context of 18th century religious thought. Firstly, I sought to illustrate Hume's account as a response to Berkeley's natural religion; or more precisely, to the Berkeleyan assertion that reflection upon the will provides one with the experiential evidence necessary to conclude that finite spirits are causal powers, which permits the inference to the causal efficacy of the divine. Secondly, as a response to the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine and the various manifestations of that belief in 18th century philosophical thought—most prominently, the belief that the human mind, in its capacity for *a priori* thought, resembles the divine intellect. Both philosophers were aware of and influenced by the rationalist modeling of causal necessitation upon absolute necessitation, and both would certainly have been acquainted with this belief regarding the nature of causation in their studies of Malebranche, with Hume making explicit reference to Malebranche's discussion of causal power in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 158n).¹

Moreover, it is my belief that both philosophers recognized the threat that the absolute necessitation model of causation posed to natural religion, that is, if carried to its natural consequence. I argued in the second and fourth chapters that Berkeley sought to shield his own natural religion from the threat posed by Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause by rejecting absolute necessity as the defining characteristic of a genuine power and defining causal power in terms of willing, or a spirit's capacity to affect those ideas within its power by means of volition. Hume, in his application of the absolute necessitation model to Berkeley's experiential

¹ Charles McCracken recognizes the similarities between Hume's discussion of causation and causal power and that of Malebranche, asserting that Hume at times appears to be translating Malebranche's writings into English, or at the very least, had the *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3) open while writing his negative account of causation for consultation. See McCracken (1983: 257-269).

argument that reflection yields knowledge that finite spirits are causal powers, sought to deny Berkeley the very experiential basis his argument requires. Knowledge of causal power requires experience to reveal that a cause and its effect are inextricably united for Hume; and, this is a type of knowledge that experience is simply not able to supply to human understanding. All experience is able to reveal to human understanding is the constant conjunction of two species of objects; it never reveals acquaintance with that power which is said to absolutely necessitate causal relations between volitional activity and the effects of that activity: the creation of an idea *ex nihilo*, or the movement of one's bodily limbs.

Berkeley's conclusion that finite spirits are causal powers moves beyond the mere observation of the regular conjunctions of volitions and their intended effects—a manner of inference which Hume declares illegitimate in *Treatise* (Appendix: 633). Berkeley's inference from the volitional activity of finite spirits—knowledge that is derived from experience of the effects of that activity, as well as the introspective knowledge that the will is active *per se*—to the conclusion that finite spirits are causal powers, as well as the further inference that the divine will is also a causal power *via* analogy, moves beyond the experiential boundaries which Hume applies to the various disciplines of human inquiry in his *science of human nature*. It is this manner of argumentation, employed by Berkeley, which Hume chastises so readily in the *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xvii), and which the latter's experimental methodology is meant to curtail: those arguments that are meant to discover the ultimate original principles of nature, both human and divine.

It is my belief that understanding religion as the chief motivating factor behind Berkeley's argument that self-reflection yields knowledge that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, as well as behind Hume's response in his negative account of causation in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69), especially within the context of the Genesis belief that humankind has been created in the image of the divine, more adequately represents the aims which Berkeley and Hume sought in their respective discussions concerning the causal power of the will. I also believe that such an interpretation is more sensitive to the intellectual climate which prevailed during the early modern period, and one that certainly would have had a considerable influence upon Berkeley's primary intention in writing both the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues*. I think that such an interpretation also explains Hume's overarching desire in the formulation of his *science of human nature*: to demolish the idealized view of human

reason espoused by rationalist philosophers, and return human understanding to its rightful place in the natural world by a methodology similar to that which Newton employed in his natural philosophy. Hume, I believe, recognized that Berkeley's principal objective in his philosophy had been to prove the existence of a providential governor who takes an intimate concern in the welfare of humankind. Given Hume's desire to establish certain experiential limitations upon any inquiry into the original principles that govern nature, including that power said to absolutely necessitate causal relations, as well as those original principles which govern the actions of human nature, as well as the nature of the divine—in short, into the sphere of natural religion—Hume would certainly have seen in Berkeley's philosophy a proponent of exactly the type of argumentation his *science of human nature* is meant to restrain.

In a private letter written to Gilbert Elliot, which is dated the 10th of March 1751, Hume writes that before his twentieth year he had written a manuscript which expressed the gradual progress of his thoughts regarding the nature of religion. Hume admits that it was not long before composing his letter to Elliot that he burned this manuscript, though it is certainly reasonable to think that much of what he wrote was to take central place in his thoughts in composing the *Dialogues*, as well as in his various discussions concerning religion and the nature of religious belief located throughout the *Treatise*, *Enquiry*, and numerous other works and essays which he composed throughout his lifetime. What the entire *corpus* of Hume's philosophical writings reveals is the extent to which Hume was interested in the various questions and issues concerning religion in the early modern period, as well as his awareness of the various arguments and religious debates of his time.² I believe that Hume's large interest in religion, and the vast amount of ink which he devoted to the topic, adds credence to understanding Hume's negative account of causal power in the seventh section of the *Enquiry* as a response to Berkeley's natural religion—that is, to the latter's experiential argument that spirits are known to be causal powers through self-

² As regards the extent to which the religious beliefs of his day influenced Hume's philosophical thought, see Gaskin (1988), Penelhum (1983), and Flew (1961). There is an interesting story, of more historical interest than philosophical, concerning Hume's connection with Philip Skelton, who was a religiously minded Irish philosopher during the 18th century, whose dialogue *Ophiomaches* outlined the various religious arguments of the era, including those of freethinkers and believers alike. The story is related by David Berman in Skelton (1990: v-vii), and states that it was Hume himself who recommended publication of Skelton's *Ophiomaches* after reviewing the manuscript for Andrew Millar, their mutual publisher in London. Though Skelton's work is not overly original in relating the more prevalent arguments of his day, it certainly would have supplied Hume with an overview of the more pressing issues of 18th century religious thought.

reflection—as well as Hume's desire to dismantle the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine. A belief that spawned the idealization of reason by rationalist philosophers, the modeling of causal necessity upon absolute necessitation, and the anthropomorphism of the divine intellect—a conception of the divine mind which Hume subjects to a great deal of criticism in *Dialogues* (IV-VIII).

2. A further reflection upon Hume's negative account of causality

Hume's discussion of the nature of causation in *Treatise* (I.III.14) is noticeably different than that which one finds in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*. Simon Blackburn points out the very interesting fact that Hume's negative account of causal power in the seventh section of the *Enquiry* has no real correspondent in Hume's discussion of causal power in *Treatise* (I.III.14), with exception to a brief statement in *Treatise* (Appendix: 632-633) that one feels an impression of causal power in the activities and operations of the mind, and it is from this feeling that one is able to formulate an idea of power. Blackburn writes the following regarding the fuller treatment which Hume provides in the seventh section of the *Enquiry* regarding the belief that self-reflection upon the will supplies one with an idea of causal power:

An interesting scholarly question, to which I do not know the answer, is why he took such elaborate care in the *Enquiry* §7 to distinguish his theory from Berkeley's, when the *Treatise* contains no corresponding passages. It is one of the very few cases where the *Enquiry* is fuller than the *Treatise*. Did some review or correspondence make the need evident to him?³

As Blackburn recognizes, Hume took great care to distinguish his own account from that of Berkeley in the discussion of the nature of causality which is located in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*, and in doing so, he provides a fuller account of why one cannot acquire knowledge of causal power than is found in *Treatise* (I.III.14). It is clear that Hume is responding in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) to the Berkeleyan argument that reflection yields an immediate awareness of oneself as that power which has the ability to create and influence ideas of imagination, as well as cause movement in one's bodily limbs, by means of volitional activity; however, the motivating factor which prompted Hume to provide the extended discussion which is found in the seventh section of the *Enquiry* is less clear.

³ See Blackburn (2007: 112, n14).

Hume's private letter to Michael Ramsay, dated the 31st of August 1737, reveals that Hume had read Berkeley's *Principles*, as well as other philosophical works that influenced his thought, but Hume does not make explicit mention as to what edition of the *Principles* he had read himself, nor does it mention any acquaintance with the *Three Dialogues*.⁴ I suggest that if Hume had a copy of the first edition of the *Principles*, which was published in 1710, with him in France while he composed the *Treatise*, then Hume's failure to address the Berkeleyan idea that self-reflection yields a conscious awareness of oneself as a genuine causal power in *Treatise* (I.III.14) may be explained by the fact that Berkeley's argument to that effect is located almost exclusively in the 1734 editions of *Principles* (§89) and *Three Dialogues* (III: 232-234). Had Hume possessed only the first edition of the *Principles* while composing the *Treatise*, Berkeley's argument that one has a conscious awareness of one's existence as a willing spirit, and therefore, as a genuine causal power would have been absent—at least, in the more explicit and fuller form that Berkeley presents in the 1734 editions of those two works. The acquisition of the 1734 editions of the *Principles* and *Three Dialogues* by Hume, especially the latter work, after composing the *Treatise* while in La Flèche, might provide a possible and reasonable explanation for the expanded treatment which Hume provides in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) against Berkeley's argument that reflection upon the activities of the will provides one with the experiential evidence that is required to conclude that finite spirits are genuine causal powers, and subsequently, that the divine will is a genuine causal power.

According to the suggestion I have tendered, Hume would have only realized the extent of Berkeley's experiential argument upon reading the supplemental additions that Berkeley added to the 1734 editions of both the *Principles* and the *Three Dialogues*. Furthermore, given Hume's clear interest in the religious thought of his era, and his desire to limit inquiries into natural religion to experience, Hume's expanded treatment on the issue is not surprising. The fact that Berkeley's argument is meant ultimately to prove that all spirits, including God, are causal powers, which Hume understood to be an original principle beyond the breadth of human inquiry, would certainly have led Hume to take a rather keen interest in curtailing Berkeley's argument, especially as it sought to extend its reach to the heavens: to instruct the

⁴ See Popkin (1964).

human species as to the nature of the divine; the disposition of the latter towards the former; and, the former's duties to the divine being. These were claims that extended well beyond the limits of experience to Hume.

3. Hume's philosophical reformation of causality

The interpretation of Hume's negative account of causation which I have advanced in the third chapter of this work argues that Hume believes that the absolute necessitation model of causation, which models causal necessity upon the absolute necessity of mathematics, correctly reveals what knowledge of causal power would in fact entail: the Bare Thought, which if known, would reveal the inseparability of a cause and effect. In this sense, my interpretation argues that Hume does not reject the rationalist notion of the Bare Thought as conceptually bankrupt, but understands that notion to reveal that characteristic of causal power, the acquaintance with which would constitute knowledge of that power said to effect and necessitate causal relations in the natural world. What I sought to stress in my discussion of Hume's negative account of causal power is that Hume understands the Bare Thought to exceed the reach of human understanding. The belief that causal necessity is equatable with absolute necessity extends human thought, in its capacity for *a priori* reasoning, beyond its natural capabilities; and therefore, in its veneration of human reason as divine, given the certain and infallible evidence it yields, the absolute necessitation model of causation is unable to serve as an adequate source of the idea of necessary connection.

The Malebranchean conception of necessary connection, that is, within causation, maintains that the connection between a cause and effect is one of absolute necessity; and, as such, it can be said to license *a priori* inference into the nature of causal relations, such that one could know that a particular cause will absolutely necessitate a certain effect through the agreement or disagreement of the ideas which are constitutive of that relation. It is this conception of necessary connection that Hume illustrates is unavailable to human understanding in *Treatise* (Abstract: 650): one cannot acquire knowledge of those connections said to be necessitated by causal power, for the condition that is placed upon such knowledge, the inseparability of a cause and effect, cannot be satisfied by means of either demonstrative reasoning or

experience. I argued in the third chapter that in his negative account of causality in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69), Hume recognizes that the absolute necessitation model of causation has two major flaws: first, it cannot serve as the origin for the idea of necessary connection that is an essential aspect of the nature of causation for Hume, as *Treatise* (I.III.2 & I.III.14) clearly indicate; secondly, because the absolute necessitation inherent in Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause exceeds the breadth of human experience, the absolute necessitation model is unable to provide an adequate account of the source of the natural propensity that humanity has in its belief that causal relations are necessarily connected: that a particular cause necessitates its effect. Hume's discussion of the nature of causality in both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry* reveals that to believe that a cause does not necessitate its effect would be contrary to the nature of causation; and, since the absolute necessitation of Malebranche's conception of a genuine cause exceeds the reach of the human intellect, the idea must originate in some other source. Hume's inquiry into the nature of causation ultimately locates the source of the idea of necessary connection in a felt determination of the mind to infer either a cause or effect which are regularly conjoined in experience; however, I do not think this fact leads Hume to understand the Bare Thought as being conceptually bankrupt. As I have argued previously, it is my belief that the absolute necessitation model supplies Hume with what he believes to be the correct criterion for knowledge of causal power: the inseparability of a cause and effect.

James O'Shea has pointed out to me an interesting and potentially problematic issue with the interpretation I have advanced regarding what he understands as Hume's philosophical reformation of the idea of necessary connection in revealing the true source and content of that specific idea.⁵ O'Shea argues that Hume rejects the Bare Thought and argues it is conceptually bankrupt, proceeding to explain causal necessity in terms of the determination of the mind to infer a cause from an effect or *vice versa*, which observation reveals to be constantly conjoined—an explanation that Hume ultimately justifies pragmatically: that is, in his positive account of causation in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-168) and *Enquiry* (VII: 73-79 & VIII: 82-87). Although my interpretation differs in that I believe Hume understands causal power in terms of absolute necessity, and therefore, he accepts the Bare Thought as defining what

⁵ I would like to take this opportunity to thank James O'Shea for bringing this issue to my attention.

knowledge of causal power would entail—such that to know causal power would be to know that absolute necessity which renders a cause and effect inseparable—I still believe that Hume aims to reform the concept of causal necessitation in arguing that human understanding has access solely to the internal impression of a felt determination of the mind to infer a cause from an effect and *vice versa*.

Hume's philosophical reformation of causality, as I understand it, has its origin in his recognition that the absolute necessitation model is not satisfactory in locating the source of the idea of necessary connection. Even though the absolute necessitation model provides the blueprint for what knowledge of causal power would entail, it extends the human intellect beyond its natural province; and given the experiential limits that must be placed upon knowledge, that model cannot account for the idea of necessary connection which the human mind is naturally inclined to formulate upon observing the various connections in the world. The failure to discover an impression of causal power in the volitional activity of the will, or in the control the mind is able to exert over ideas, according to the criterion established by the absolute necessitation model—a result of the fact that the absolute necessity said to render a cause and effect inseparable cannot be known through experience or *a priori* reasoning—forces Hume to search for a source of the idea of necessary connection which does not demand acquaintance with absolute necessitation. Hume discovers an instance of causal necessity in the mental transition to necessarily connect a cause with an effect and *vice versa*, which observation reveals to be constantly conjoined. The only adequate notion of necessary connection that is available to human inquiry is that which has its source in this transition of the mind. However, the form of natural necessity that Hume discovers in his positive account of causation is not knowledge of that power which is said to necessitate causal relations. As regards causal power—or more precisely, the essential characteristic which would constitute knowledge of causal power—human thought remains in a state of complete ignorance.

In this sense, I believe that my interpretation can account for the type of natural causal necessity that Hume advances in his positive account of causality; and likewise maintain the belief, which I believe to be correct, that Hume sought in his positive account of causation to philosophically reform that idea—by which I mean, he sought to reveal the actual source from which the idea of necessary connection is derived, since his negative account of causality is meant to illustrate that its source

cannot be the absolute necessitation inherent in Malebranche's conception. In this respect my interpretation is in full agreement with the claim that Hume sought to philosophically reform causation: first in clearing away the idea of the absolute necessitation model as the source of the idea of necessary connection in causation and then building his own account of the source of that idea upon the internal impression that arises in the mind from the determination to infer an effect from a cause or *vice versa*, from experience of their constant conjunction. I find the difference between my own interpretation and that advanced by James O'Shea to be rather subtle, but ultimately it resolves itself to the question of whether Hume thought the Bare Thought to be conceptually bankrupt, or whether he truly believed that the Bare Thought establishes the criterion which would constitute knowledge of causal power: that is, the inseparability of a cause and effect. It should be clear at this point that I accept the latter; and, more importantly, I do not think my acceptance of this point poses a threat to maintaining the correct belief that Hume sought to philosophically reform the idea of causation—that is, to locate the actual source of the idea of necessary connection that is so imperative to the nature of causation, as well as the psychological belief that a particular cause necessitates its attendant effect.

What I wish to stress in particular is that I do not believe that Hume rejects the Bare Thought outright, for according to the interpretation I have advanced throughout this dissertation, he does believe that the Bare Thought supplies the requirements which would constitute what it would be for one to acquire knowledge of causal power. It is simply that such knowledge is impossible, and that impossibility is a direct result of the type of necessitation that Malebranche employs in modeling causal necessitation upon the absolute necessitation of mathematics. Human understanding has access only to the natural causal necessitation which has its source in the felt determination of the mind that Hume writes of in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 165-168 & Abstract: 653-654) and *Enquiry* (VII: 73-79). Hume's philosophical reformation of causation is therefore in line with the whole of his philosophical agenda, as stated in *Treatise* (Introduction: xv-xix), which is to limit the scope of human inquiry to that evidence which is acquired through experience or exact experimentation. The type of necessity inherent in the absolute necessitation model of causation cannot be acquired through either means; it is the result of human intellect and imagination chasing its quarry to the heavens and placing human reasoning—that is, the mind's capacity for *a priori* reasoning—on a par with the divine intellect.

Hume sought the philosophical reformation of causation by replacing the idea of necessary connection, which in the hands of certain rationalist philosophers had been understood to license *a priori* inference into the internal structure of causal relations, with the idea he formulated in his positive account of causation: the feeling of necessity which arises in the mind upon observation of the constant conjunction of a cause and effect. The absolute necessitation model may provide the criterion for knowledge of causal power, but it cannot account for the natural inclination that one feels in believing that a particular cause, such as a volition, necessitates its effect, such as the movement of one's arm; and, a feeling of complete indifference to this psychological belief that a particular cause necessitates its effect stands in direct opposition to the very nature of causation for Hume. Hume's discussion of the relation of cause and effect in *Treatise* (I.III.2) asserts that the idea of necessary connection is the single most important element involved in the relation; and therefore, this idea must be accounted for in any inquiry into the nature of causation, though the evidence discovered and employed in that inquiry cannot extend beyond the limits of experience.

In concluding this section, I wish to make brief mention of the fact that there is a further issue regarding Hume's discussion of causation, which has led to much debate in Hume scholarship over the last three decades. The issue is not simply whether Hume believes that the absolute necessitation model correctly establishes the criterion which would constitute knowledge of power, and whether the Bare Thought is conceptually bankrupt, but concerns the further question as to whether Hume believes in the *real* existence of causal power in the natural world, though that power ultimately lies beyond the experiential boundaries of human understanding. The *skeptical realist* interpretation of Hume's account of causation provides an affirmative answer to the latter question: it maintains that Hume believes in the real existence of power, though Hume advocates skepticism as regards knowledge of causal power. I shall address the relevance of the skeptical realist reading to the interpretation I have advanced in this dissertation in the subsequent section, as well as the question of whether my interpretation, in arguing that Hume accepts the absolute necessitation model of causation as providing the criterion which knowledge of causal power would entail, is forced to accept the skeptical realist reading of Hume.

4. The skeptical realist interpretation

The focus of this section will center upon an additional issue that is involved in Hume's treatment of causation, and one which is open to a far greater degree of contention among Hume scholars: whether Hume believed in the real existence of causal power in the natural world. It is this claim that provides the fundamental assertion for the skeptical realist interpretation of Hume's account of causation.⁶ The varieties within the skeptical realist interpretation find common agreement in holding that Hume believes in the real existence of some power or energy that effects and necessitates causal relations in the world, though humankind is completely ignorant as to the nature of that power, as it lies beyond the limits of human experience. In this sense, skepticism is the best attitude to adopt regarding the acquisition of knowledge of causal power, though such power truly exists in nature and governs the connections observed throughout the world. Therefore, the skeptical realist interpretation appears to endorse not only that Hume is committed to accepting that there is some notion, however thin, which establishes the criterion which would constitute knowledge of power (i.e., the Bare Thought) but the further claim that causal power does indeed exist in reality; it is simply that human thought cannot acquire such knowledge.⁷

In this sense, the skeptical realist interpretation extends beyond the interpretation I have advanced in the third chapter to assert that Hume genuinely

⁶ There is much in the scholarly literature on Hume that centers upon the plausibility of reading Hume as a skeptical realist about causal power. There are a number of publications which advocate a skeptical realist interpretation of Hume, which include, but are not limited to, Wright (1983; 2007), Craig (1987; 2007), Strawson (1989), Buckle (2001), and Kail (2007a; 2007d). Blackburn (2007), Winkler (1991), Millican (2007), and Waxman (1994: 191-199) argue against attributing the skeptical realist interpretation to Hume's discussion of the nature of causation. A good collection of articles devoted to this particular issue can be found in Read (2007), which provides a very helpful overview of the issue from both sides of the debate. There exists a great deal of variation in the individual positions that proponents of the skeptical realist interpretation espouse, which is to be expected given the contentious nature of the issue. For example, Galen Strawson argues that Hume believes causal power to be a natural belief that commands one's assent by virtue of the belief's psychological necessity. John Wright argues that Hume does believe in real causal power. Wright argues that the belief in causal power is automatically generated by the inferential practices of the associative mechanism of the mind, and therefore, is a natural belief; however, this generated belief represents nature in an imperfect manner. Wright asserts that the idea of necessary connection in causal power is an inadequate idea of the *a priori* inference that it is meant to represent—that is, the *AP property* of Strawson's reading of Hume's account of causation. Stephen Buckle understands the belief in causal power to be generated by the associative mechanism of the mind, though these mechanisms are the underlying natures of objects that license *a priori* inference into the intrinsic nature of a given cause which human thought cannot grasp. Thus, for Buckle, Hume does believe in the real existence of causal power, and that power is the mechanisms in nature. Buckle understands this to be central to Hume's "science of man," and therefore understands Hume's treatment of causal power as a continuation of the Newtonian mechanistic world-view.

⁷ In particular, see Kail (2007a: 83-90).

believes in the existence of causal power. What I have sought to argue for in my interpretation is a lesser claim than that advanced by the skeptical realist: that Hume accepts the rationalist notion of the Bare Thought as establishing that feature of causal power, which, if known by means of experience or *a priori* reasoning, would constitute knowledge—an acceptance which I believe is reflected in key passages of Hume's negative account of causality in *Enquiry* (VII: 63-69), as well as in *Treatise* (I.III.14: 161-162 & Abstract: 650-651). However, the standard for the acquisition of knowledge of causal power which is set by the absolute necessitation model of causation is beyond the reach of human reason and perception: human beings are not the little gods of Leibniz for Hume, but are animals whose actions are governed by the same associative principles that are found throughout nature. The interpretation that I have proposed in this dissertation asserts that Hume accepts the Bare Thought as expressing the criterion for knowledge of causal power. My interpretation does not proffer an argument either for or against the further claim as to whether Hume believes in the real existence of power—which I understand to be a far more contentious and divisive issue.

I believe that this fact greatly benefits the interpretation I have advanced, for it is able to stand in isolation from the far more divisive debate concerning Hume's supposed causal realism. In addition, I believe that a further benefit of my interpretation is that while it not need directly engage with the skeptical realist debate itself, it is able to accommodate the skeptical realist position, as well as that advanced by those scholars who oppose the former interpretation, such as Blackburn and Winkler. I believe that both factions are fully able to accept my interpretation on account of the fact that Hume's acceptance of the Bare Thought—that is, as correctly articulating the criterion which knowledge of power would entail—need not force Hume to assert the real existence of causal power: the Bare Thought provides only the criterion, the acquaintance with which, would constitute knowledge of causal power, such that to know causal power one would need to satisfy a condition of inseparability. There is no reason to think that any such acceptance on Hume's part, in the manner my interpretation advances, entails the further belief in the real existence of causal power. Hume may state what the criterion for knowledge of causal power would demand of human understanding without having to assert the real existence of such power. However, it is also the case that nothing prevents my interpretation from accommodating the skeptical realist reading of Hume's account of

causation; the skeptical realist can easily endorse the reading I have advanced and expand upon it to argue for the real existence of power.⁸ It is simply that my interpretation, as it stands, need not endorse the further claim, espoused by skeptical realists, that Hume believed in the real existence of causal power.

It is my belief that the ability of my interpretation to stand in isolation from the skeptical realist debate provides it with a particular advantage: my interpretation can be accepted by proponents of the skeptical realist interpretation, as well as its detractors, without having an adverse effect upon my reading concerning Hume's acceptance of the absolute necessitation model, as well as his motivation for writing his negative account of power in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*. As I have stated, I believe the latter was to combat Berkeley's natural religion—in particular, his argument that reflection yields a conscious awareness that one is a causal power, and therefore, by analogy, that God is a causal power—and the wide-spread biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of the divine, evidenced by its capacity for *a priori* reasoning.

My chief aim in this section has not been to enter into the debate concerning Hume's supposed causal realism and argue for or against a skeptical realist reading of his account of causation. The sheer number of variants within the interpretation, as well as the amount of literature which is devoted to this particular issue, would require a far greater treatment than I am able to provide in this final chapter.⁹ Rather, my overall aim is to attempt to illustrate what I understand to be an advantage of my interpretation in that it need not enter into that debate and can be accepted by both parties; and on account of this fact, the debate does not adversely affect my own interpretation. However, I am aware that my interpretation asserts the positive claim that Hume accepts the Bare Thought as correctly establishing the criterion which knowledge of causal power would demand of human understanding, and therefore, the Bare Thought is not conceptually bankrupt or devoid of meaning for Hume. As I stated in the previous section, I believe this to be the principal issue of contention concerning my interpretation, and the one which is perhaps most amenable to assault.

⁸ This is precisely the manner of argumentation that Peter Kail espouses in his own argument for Hume's causal realism. See Kail (2007a: Part II). The difference I wish to stress is that my reading of why Hume accepts the Bare Thought does not seek to offer an argument for the real existence of causal power, since to enter into this debate would have added a dimension that is neither necessary for the thesis of this dissertation, nor practical, given the limitations placed upon its length.

⁹ For a very helpful overview of the skeptical realist interpretation of Hume, including the variations within that interpretation, see Beebe (2006: ch. 7).

However, what I have sought to illustrate in the present section is that this particular issue need not enter into the further and more contentious debate concerning Hume's supposed causal realism.

5. Conclusion

My discussion of causal power in this dissertation has been principally concerned with the reactions of Berkeley and Hume to the absolute necessitation model of causation as expressed by Malebranche in *Search after Truth* (VI.ii.3), within the narrower context of each philosopher's treatment of natural religion. According to the interpretation I have advanced, Berkeley and Hume both perceived the potential dangers to the causal efficacy of God that Malebranche's particular conception of a genuine cause posed; the difference of course was that Berkeley wished to shelter the causal efficacy of the divine will from those dangers, while Hume wished to expose them to the detriment of the divine will and natural religion as a whole. I suggested that Berkeley was an astute enough thinker not only to comprehend the potential problems inherent in the absolute necessitation model, but also to foresee that a philosopher such as Hume could utilize that model to deny the efficacy of finite wills, which Malebranche himself had denied in his occasionalism, and then apply that model of causation to deny the causal efficacy of the divine will. Given that Berkeley argues that one infers that God is efficacious through the experiential knowledge that oneself is a causal power, Berkeley would have been conscious of the need to reject Malebranche's conception of causal power in terms of a logically necessary connection (i.e., absolute necessitation) and formulate a new definition in order to shield his argument that finite spirits are causal powers. Securing the latter claim would have been of great importance for Berkeley, for it is this claim which serves as the foundation for his argument in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-232) that the divine will is that power which creates ideas of sense and maintains the uniformity which is exhibited in the laws of nature.

The vital role which Berkeley assigns to God in his philosophical system requires the efficaciousness of the divine will. If Hume's argument were to prove that inward reflection reveals nothing more than that the volitions are constantly conjoined with their effects, and therefore, that experience does not reveal finite wills to be

causal powers—that is, since the volitional activity of finite wills does not necessitate its intended effects absolutely—his negative account of causality in *Enquiry* (VII: 65-69) would cast serious doubt on Berkeley's argument concerning the causal efficacy of the divine will. The divine will could not be said to be a causal power any more than finite wills or matter could be said to be genuine powers. As I argued, the effect that this conclusion would have upon Berkeley's natural religion would be quite severe, for the practical knowledge which humankind acquires from the divine visual language of *Alciphron* (IV. 7-15)—a language which depends upon the belief that God is that power which is responsible for the creation of ideas of sensation, which constitute the words of this divine language, and the conservation of the regularity displayed in the laws of nature, which testify to the wisdom and benevolence of the divine—would have its very foundations uprooted and be left without any support to bear its weight.

The central claim that I have argued for concerning Hume's endorsement of the absolute necessitation model of causation is that it exceeds the experiential boundaries that Hume sets in his *science of human nature*. Furthermore, in illustrating this, Hume also sought to argue that any argument meant to prove acquaintance with an instance causal power, such as Berkeley thought the activity of the will presented, likewise extends human thought beyond its experiential limits: that is, beyond the constant conjunction of a cause and effect. Hume writes concerning the need for human inquiry to remain firmly within such experiential boundaries in *Treatise* (Introduction: xv):

'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation, greater or less, to human nature; and that however wide any of them may seem to run from it, they still return back by one passage or another. Even *Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural Religion*, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judged of by their powers and faculties. 'Tis impossible to tell what changes and improvements we might make in these sciences were we thoroughly acquainted with the extent and force of human understanding, and cou'd explain the nature of the ideas we employ, and of the operations we perform in our reasonings. And these improvements are the more to be hoped for in natural religion, as it is not content with instructing us in the nature of superior powers, but carries it views farther, to their disposition towards us, and our duties towards them; and consequently we ourselves are not only the beings, that reason, but also one of the objects, concerning which we reason.

All sciences are under the "cognizance" of the "science of MAN" for Hume, and natural religion is no different; however, the subjects of natural religion prompt human thought to carry its views on the subject beyond the boundaries of experience,

or attribute abilities to human understanding that go beyond its capabilities—precisely what the Image of God doctrine does in the case of *a priori* reasoning. I think that in this sense, Hume's negative treatment of causal power in the *Enquiry* should be viewed along similar lines: as an attempt to limit Berkeley's experiential argument that inward reflection upon one's own will ultimately reveals oneself to be a causal power, which can be extended to the divine. I believe Hume understood that the absolute necessitation model of causation, in claiming that knowledge of causal power would entail a logically necessary connection between a cause and effect, places too severe a condition upon such knowledge; and that such a condition could be employed effectively against the style of argumentation employed by Berkeley in *Three Dialogues* (III: 231-234) and *Principles* (§89), or any philosopher who argues along similar experiential lines to conclude that one is immediately acquainted with oneself as a causal power through consciousness.

Charles J. McCracken states what I believe is perhaps the finest manifestation of Hume's philosophical acumen when he writes:

That Hume was a thinker of great originality and power is obvious. What may be less obvious is the precise character of his originality. Much in the *Treatise* is in fact borrowed; yet, for all that, it remains a work of exceptional originality. The reason for this is not hard to discover: Hume had a gift for seeing in the ideas of others possibilities that were not always apparent to their originators. Again and again, he took over ideas and arguments from his sources and pressed from them more far-reaching consequences than had their initial proponents—consequences, indeed, that the authors of those ideas would often have disavowed.¹⁰

As with McCracken, it is this gift to see alternate possibilities in the ideas of others that I find most impressive in Hume's writings. It is both his ability to comprehend another's idea, seeing the consequences of that idea which the original author was unable to see, or simply chose to ignore, as well as the fearlessness that Hume illustrates in following that idea to its natural consequences, which often their original author would have declared to be unpalatable. The third chapter has been nothing more than the elucidation of this gift in Hume as regards his acceptance of Malebranche's definition of causal power in terms of a logically necessary connection between a cause and its effect. Hume recognized in Malebranche's negative arguments against the causal efficacy of finite wills what the latter had perhaps failed to appreciate: that those same arguments could be utilized to cast doubt upon the efficacy of the divine will—an idea that would have been an unthinkable to the

¹⁰ McCracken (1983: 255).

devoutly catholic Malebranche. However, the same may be said of Berkeley, who I believe recognized the same consequences in the absolute necessitation model of causation, even before Hume, and sought to secure the causal efficacy of finite wills and the divine will—the latter being the foundation upon which he erected his philosophical system and the natural world—from the style of argumentation Hume was to employ in his negative account of causation in the seventh section of the *Enquiry*.

I believe that Berkeley was clever enough to foresee the potential consequences of Malebranche's unique conception of a true cause—that is, what knowledge of power would entail—and realizing that another thinker might comprehend those consequences as well, though perhaps one who did not share the same religious convictions as himself or Malebranche, Berkeley sought to secure his natural religion in the manner that I have argued in the second and fourth chapters: through the rejection of the criterion by which the absolute necessitation model defined power (i.e., the absolute necessitation that is the result of conceiving power as essence) and defining causal power in terms of a spirit's capacity to affect those ideas which fall within the scope of its power by means of volitional activity. The main advantage of this particular definition for Berkeley is that it permits varying degrees of causal power; and as a result, the imperfection or weakness of finite wills proves no argument against the denomination of such wills as causal powers, as it had proved in the occasionalism of Malebranche. The disagreement between Berkeley and Hume resolves itself into the fundamental question of whether reflection provides one with experience of an instance of causal power, such as in the influence the will exerts over ideas and the body, which exists beyond the mere constant conjunction of two species of objects. What I hope has become clear at this point is that Berkeley discovered such a power in the volitional activity of the will, whereas Hume discovered no such power upon turning his inquiry inward. That the whole of the issue which arises between the two philosophers revolves around each philosopher's search for an instance of power, and that Berkeley and Hume differ in such a fundamental way as regards the will's suspected causal power, so as not to permit any degree of agreement, I believe is clear. The difference between the two philosophers as regards this particular point is so fundamental that it appears one can do nothing more than point it out and stress the vital role of each philosopher's response to the absolute necessitation model of causation in their disagreement.

There existed a devout confidence in reason and its capabilities in rationalist philosophers of the early modern period: a belief that reason could acquire knowledge of the powers or essences which were said to actuate and govern the manifest regularities in nature. Rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment deified reason; it was that aspect of humanity that elevated human beings from the natural world to the heavens, for through reason and the *a priori* knowledge that resulted, humanity resembled the divine intellect. This was the intellectual heritage common to both Berkeley and Hume, and one that I believe drastically influenced the course of their philosophical thought. There are times when individual philosophers appear more interested in engaging with certain lines of thought which comprise the intellectual culture of an epoch, and it appears to me that this is precisely the manner of philosophy in which Hume and Berkeley are engaging: they are responding in their writings to a shared intellectual heritage—one which believed that humanity has been created in the image of the divine.

The manner in which Enlightenment philosophers understood causal power and causal necessity differed significantly between individual thinkers. This dissertation has focused upon a particular conception of causal power that is unique to Malebranche, and the manner in which Berkeley and Hume responded to this particular conception (i.e., the absolute necessitation model). I argued that Berkeley rejected the absolute necessitation model in order to save his natural religion from the potential problems which he foresaw in Malebranche's conception of a true cause in terms of a logically necessary connection. In this, Berkeley appears to be not only wonderfully astute, but also shows a willingness to break from key aspects of the intellectual climate in which he was born for the benefit of his religious convictions, such as the emphasis philosophers placed upon necessity in causation, whether that necessity was understood as absolute or physical in nature.¹¹ The chief issue for one who wishes to seriously engage with such thinkers is that they are often responding to the intellectual climate of their time, and that when it appears that such thinkers are arguing past one another, they are in truth arguing against the backdrop of an

¹¹ This striving or willingness to embrace an intellectual individualism, which is so prominent in the philosophical writings of Berkeley, is beautifully expressed by him in *Philosophical Commentaries* (§465), where he states that he does not pin his faith upon the writings or ideas of any great thinker on account of the reputation of that particular thinker. That Berkeley understood his philosophy as novel is illustrated in the Preface to his *Principles*, where he cautions his reader not to hastily reject the principles expressed in that work on account of the "novelty and singularity," which they may at first glance appear to display.

inherited intellectual culture. Hume sought to lay siege to the fortifications which natural religion and the biblical belief that humanity has been created in the image of God had built in the early modern period and raze those fortifications to the ground; Berkeley stood upon the ramparts of those very fortifications, seeking to defend and strengthen them against the attacks of men such as Hume.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Literature

- Baxter, A. 1745. *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul* (London: printed by J. Bettenham for A Millar).
- Berkeley, George. 1901. *The Works of George Berkeley D.D., formerly Bishop of Cloyne*, 4 vols., ed. A.C. Frasier (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 1993. *Alciphron: in Focus*, ed. D. Berman (London: Routledge).
- Manuscript Introduction* (Trinity College Dublin Library, Manuscripts Department).
- Browne Peter. 1697. *A Letter in Answer to a Book Entitled Christianity not Mysterious* (Dublin).
- 1716. *Faith Distinguished from Opinion and Science* (Dublin).
- 1728. *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (London).
- 1733. *Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (London).
- Collins, Anthony. 1709. *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, the Evidence Whereof Depends upon Human Testimony* (London).
- 1713. *A Discourse of Free-thinking, occasioned by the Rise and Growth of a Sect Called Free-thinkers* (London).
- 1724. *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London).
- Descartes, R. 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3 vols., trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothof, and D. Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hume, D. 1954. *New Letters of David Hume*, ed. E.C. Mossner (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 1987. *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. E.F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics).
- 1999. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. T.L. Beauchamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 2000. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, eds. D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- King, W. 1727. *Divine Predestination and Fore-knowledge, Consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will* (Dublin).
- 1739. *An Essay on the Origin of Evil* (Cambridge).
- Leibniz, G.W. 1956. *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2 vols., ed. L.E. Loemaker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
- 1973. *Philosophical Writings*, trans. M. Morris, revised by G.H.R. Parkinson (London: Dent).
- 1996. *New Essays on Human Understanding*, eds. P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Mill, J.S. 1998. *Three Essays on Religion* (Amherst: Prometheus Books).
- Reid, T. 1872. *The Works of Thomas Reid, D.D.*, 2 vols., 7th edn, ed. W. Hamilton (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart).

- 2010. *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, eds. K. Haakonssen and J. Harris (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- Skelton, P. 1990. *Ophiomaches: or Deism Revealed*, 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes).
- Spinoza, B. 2000. *Ethics*, trans. G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 2002. *The Complete Works*, ed. M.L. Morgan, trans. S. Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing).

Secondary Literature

- Adams, R.M. 1973. "Berkeley's 'Notion' of Spiritual Substance," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 55: 47-69.
- Allaire, E.B. 1982. "Berkeley's Idealism Revisited," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 197-206.
- Armstrong, R.L. 1969. "Berkeley's Theory of Signification," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 7, no. 2: 163-169.
- Atherton, M. 1983. "The Coherence of Berkeley's Theory of Mind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 43, no. 3: 389-399.
- 1990. *Berkeley's Revolution in Vision* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- Ayers, M.R. 1984. "Berkeley and Hume: A Question of Influence," in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, eds. R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 303-328.
- 1991. *Locke* (London: Routledge).
- 1996. "Natures and Laws from Descartes to Hume," in *The Philosophical Canon in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Essays in Honour of John W. Yolton*, eds. G.A.J. Rogers and S. Tomaselli (Rochester: University of Rochester Press): 83-108.
- 2005. "Was Berkeley an Empiricist or Rationalist," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. K. Winkler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 34-62.
- Baier, A. 1990. "Real Humean Causes," in *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. J.A. Cover and M. Kulstad (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.): 245-272.
- 1991. *A Progress of Sentiments: Reflections on Hume's Treatise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Beardsley, W. 2001. "Berkeley on Spirit and Its Unity," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 18: 259-277.
- Beauchamp, T., ed. 1974. *Philosophical Problems of Causation* (Encino: Dickenson).
- Beauchamp, T. and Rosenberg, A. 1981. *Hume and the Problem of Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Beebe, H. 2006. *Hume on Causation* (London: Routledge).
- Bell, M. 2007. "Sceptical Doubts Concerning Hume's Causal Realism," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 122-137.
- Bennett, J. 1971. *Berkeley, Locke, Hume: Central Themes*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 2001. *Learning from Six Philosophers*, 2 vols., (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Berman, D., 1988. *A History of Atheism in Britain: from Hobbes to Russell* (London: Croom Helm).
- ed. 1989. *George Berkeley: Eighteenth-Century Responses* (New York: Garland).
- 1993. "Cognitive Theology and Emotive Mysteries in Berkeley's *Alciphron*," in *Alciphron: in Focus*, ed. D. Berman (London: Routledge): 200-213.
- 1996. *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).
- 2005. *Berkeley and Irish Philosophy* (London: Thoemmes Continuum).
- Blackburn, S. 1984. *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 1993. "Hume on the Mezzanine Level," *Hume Studies* vol. 19, no. 2: 273-288.
- 2007. "Hume and Thick Connexions," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 100-112.
- Bracken, H.M. 1974. *Berkeley* (London: Macmillan).
- Broackes, J. 1993. "Did Hume Hold a Regularity Theory of Causation?" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1: 99-114.
- Brook, R.J. 1973. *Berkeley's Philosophy of Science* (The Hague: Nijhoff).
- Broughton, J. 1987. "Hume's Ideas about Necessary Connection," *Hume Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2: 217-244.
- Buckle, S. 2001. *Hume's Enlightenment Tract* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Burnyeat, M. 1982. "Idealism and Greek Philosophy: What Descartes Saw and Berkeley Missed," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 91, no. 1: 3-40.
- Capaldi, N. 1992. "The Dogmatic Slumber of Hume Scholarship," *Hume Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2: 117-135.
- Chappell, V.C. 1966. *Hume* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press).
- Clatterbaugh, K. 1999. *The Causation Debate in Early Modern Philosophy: 1637-1739*. (New York: Routledge).
- Colie, R.L. 1959. "Spinoza and the Early English Deists," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 20: 23-46.
- 1963. "Spinoza in England, 1665-1730," in *Proceedings from the American Philosophical Society*, cvii: 183-219.
- Costa, M.J. 1989. "Hume and Causal Realism," *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 67: 172-190.
- Craig, E. 1987. *The Mind of God and the Works of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 2006. "The Idea of Necessary Connexion," in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding: Essays on the First Enquiry*, ed. P. Millican (Oxford: Clarendon Press): 211-230.
- 2007. "Hume on Causality: Projectivist and Realist?" in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 113-121.
- Creery, W.E. 1972. "Berkeley's Argument for a Divine Visual Language," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 3, no. 4: 212-222.
- Cummins, P.D. 1975. "Berkeley's Ideas of Sense," *Nous*, vol. 9, no. 1: 55-72.
- 1982. "Hylas' Parity Argument," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 283-294.
- 1990. "Berkeley's Manifest Qualities Thesis," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 28, no. 3: 385-401.
- 2005. "Berkeley on Minds and Agency," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley*, ed. K. Winkler, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 190-229.
- Dancy, J. 1987. *Berkeley: An Introduction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

- Des Chene, D. 2006. "From Natural Philosophy to Natural Science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. D. Rutherford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 67-94.
- Dicker, G. 1982. "The Concept of Immediate Perception in Berkeley's Immaterialism," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 48-66.
- 1998. *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics: An Introduction* (London: Routledge).
- Falkenstein, L. 1997. "Naturalism, Normativity, and Scepticism in Hume's Account of Belief," *Hume Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1: 29-72.
- Flage, D.E. 1985. "Berkeley's Notions," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 45, no. 3: 407-426.
- 1987. *Berkeley's Doctrine of Notions: A Reconstruction Based on His Theory of Meaning* (London: Croom Helm).
- Fleming, P. 2006. "Berkeley's Immaterialist Account of Action," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 44, no. 3:415-429.
- Flew, A. 1961. *Hume's Philosophy of Belief: A Study of his First 'Inquiry'* (New York: The Humanities Press).
- 1986. *David Hume: Philosopher of Moral Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).
- 1993. "Was Berkeley a Precursor of Wittgenstein," in *Alciphron: in Focus*, ed. D. Berman (London: Routledge): 214-226.
- Fogelin, R. 1985. *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Freddoso, A.J. 1991. "God's General Concurrence with Secondary Causes: Why Conservation is not Enough," *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 5, Philosophy of Religion: 553-585.
- Garber, D. and Ayers, M.R. 1998. *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-century Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Garrett, D. 1997. *Cognition and Commitment in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 1998. "Ideas, Reason and Skepticism: Replies to my Critics," *Hume Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1: 171-194.
- Gaskin, J.C.A. 1974. "God, Hume, and Natural Belief," *Philosophy*, vol. 49: 281-294.
- 1988. *Hume's Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan).
- Graham, J. 1997. "Common Sense and Berkeley's Perception by Suggestion," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 5: 397-423.
- Grave, S.A. 1962. "A note on Berkeley's Conception of the Mind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 22, No. 4: 574-576.
- 1976. "Hume's Criticisms of the Argument from Design," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. 30: 64-78.
- Harrison, P. 1990. *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hicks, G.D. 1932. *Berkeley* (London: E. Benn).
- Hooker, M. 1982. "Berkeley's Argument from Design," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 261-270.
- Hornsby, J. 1980. *Actions* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Israel, J. 2001. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Jacobson, A.J. 2007. "From Cognitive Science to a post-Cartesian Text: What did Hume Really Say?" in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 156-166.
- Jakapi, R. 2002. "Emotive Meaning and Christian Mysteries in Berkeley's *Alciphron*," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 10: 401-411.
- Jolley, N. 1990. "Berkeley and Malebranche on Causality and Volition," in *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. J.A. Cover and M. Kulstad (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.): 227-244.
- 1996. "Berkeley, Malebranche, and Vision in God," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 34, no. 4: 535-548.
- Kail, P.J.E. 2001. "Projection and necessity in Hume," *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 9: 24-54.
- 2003a. "A Lemma in an Argument in Defence of Skeptical Realism," *Hume Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1: 43-61.
- 2003b. "Is Hume a causal realist?" *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* vol. 11: 509-520.
- 2007a. *Projection and Realism in Hume's Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 2007b. "Berkeley, the Ends of Language, and the *Principles of Human Knowledge*," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. XVII, part 3: 265-278.
- 2007c. "Understanding Hume's Natural History of Religion," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 227: 190-211.
- 2007d. "How to Understand Hume's Realism," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 253-269.
- Kemp Smith, N. 1905. "The Naturalism of Hume I," *Mind*, vol. 14, no. 54: 149-173.
- 1941. *The Philosophy of David Hume* (London: Macmillan).
- King, W. 1970 "Language, Berkeley, and God," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, no. 2: 112-123.
- Kline, D.A. 1993. "Berkeley's Divine Visual Language," in *Alciphron: in Focus*, ed. D. Berman (London: Routledge): 185-199.
- Laird, J. 1931. *Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Dutton).
- Leslie, S. 1991. *A History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (Bristol: Thoemmes).
- Levy, K. 2000. "Hume, the New Hume, and Causal Connections," *Hume Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1: 41-75.
- Lightner, D.T. 1997 "Hume on Conceivability and Inconceivability," *Hume Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1: 113-132.
- Loeb, L.E. 1981. *From Descartes to Hume: Continental Metaphysics and the Development of Early Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- 1995. "Hume on Stability, Justification, and Unphilosophical Probability," *Hume Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1: 101-132.
- 2002. *Stability and Justification in Hume's Treatise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- 2006. "Psychology, Epistemology, and Skepticism in Hume's Argument About Induction," *Synthese*, vol. 152, no. 3: 321-338.
- 2010. *Reflection and the Stability of Belief: Essays on Descartes, Hume, and Reid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Luce, A.A. 1945. *Berkeley's Immaterialism: A Commentary on his 'A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge'* (London: Nelson).

- 1967. *Berkeley and Malebranche: A Study in the Origins of Berkeley's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 1992. *The Life of George Berkeley* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press).
- Mackie, J.L. 1974. *The Cement of the Universe* (London: Oxford University Press).
- 1976. *Problems from Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Mabbott, J.D. 1970. "The Place of God in Berkeley's Philosophy," in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, with Critical Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill): 201-219.
- McCormick, M. 1993. "Hume on Natural Belief and Original Principles," *Hume Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1: 103-116.
- McCracken, C.J. 1983 *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 1986. "Berkeley's Notion of Spirit," *History of European Ideas*, vol. 7: 597-602.
- 1988. "Berkeley's Cartesian Conception of Mind," *Monist*, vol. 71: 596-611.
- McDonough, J. 2008. "Berkeley, Human Agency and Divine Concurrentism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 4: 567-590.
- McGowan, William. 1982. "Berkeley's Doctrine of Signs," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 231-246.
- Mckim, R. 1984. "Berkeley on Human Agency," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 2: 181-194.
- 1989. "Berkeley's Active Mind," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 71: 335-343.
- Millican, P. 2006. "Hume's Sceptical Doubts Concerning Induction," in *Reading Hume on Human Understanding: Essays on the First Enquiry*, ed. P. Millican (Oxford: Clarendon Press): 107-174.
- 2007. "Against the 'New Hume'," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 211-252.
- Mirarchi, L.A. 1982. "Dynamical Implications of Berkeley's Doctrine of Heterogeneity: A Note on the Language Model of Nature," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 247-260.
- Mossner, E.C. 1936. "The Enigma of Hume," *Mind*, vol. 45, no. 179: 334-349.
- 1980. *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Muehlmann, Robert, 1978. "Berkeley's Ontology and the Epistemology of Idealism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 8: 89-111.
- 1992. *Berkeley's Ontology* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).
- Nadler, S., ed. 1993. *Causation in Early Modern Philosophy* (University Park: Penn State University Press).
- 2000. "Malebranche on Causation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Malebranche*, ed. S. Nadler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 112-128.
- Norton, D.F. 1982. *David Hume: Common-Sense Moralist, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Ott, W. 2009. *Causation and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Owen, D. 1999. *Hume's Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Pappas, G.S. 1982. "Berkeley, Perception, and Common Sense," in *Berkeley: Critical and Interpretative Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press): 3-21.
- 1985. "Abstract Ideas and the *Esse is Percipi* thesis," *Hermathena* 139: 47-62.

- 2000. *Berkeley's Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- Passmore, J. 1952. *Hume's Intentions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Pears, D. 1990. *Hume's System: An Examination of Book I of his Treatise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Penelhum, T. 1983. *God and Skepticism: A Study in Skepticism and Fideism* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company).
- 1979. "Hume's Skepticism in the *Dialogues*," in *McGill Hume Studies*, eds. D.F. Norton, N. Capaldi, and W.L. Robinson (San Diego: Austin Hill Press): 253-278.
- Pitcher, G. 1981. "Berkeley on the Mind's Activity," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 3: 221-227.
- Popkin, R. 1964. "So, Hume did Read Berkeley," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 61, no. 24: 773-778.
- 1979. *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- 1980. *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego: Austin Hill Press).
- Quinn, P. 1988. "Divine Conservation, Secondary Causes, and Occasionalism," in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. T.V. Morris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press): 50-73.
- Read, R. and Richman, K., eds. 2007. *The New Hume Debate* (London: Routledge).
- Roberts, J. 2007. *A Metaphysics for the Mob: The Philosophy of George Berkeley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Robison, W. 1977. "Hume's Causal Scepticism," in *David Hume: Bicentenary Papers*, ed. G.P. Novice (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press): 156-166.
- Schmaltz, T.M. 1995. "Malebranche on Cartesianism and Lockean Colors," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 12: 387-403.
- 1996. *Malebranche's Theory of the Soul* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- 2008. *Descartes on Causation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Sleigh, R.C. Jr. 1990. "Leibniz on Malebranche on Causality," *Central Themes in Early Modern Philosophy*, eds. J.A. Cover and M. Kulstad (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.): 161-194.
- Stanford, K.P. 2002. "The Manifest Connection: Causation, Meaning, and David Hume," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 40, no. 3: 339-360.
- Stoneham, T. 2002. *Berkeley's World: An Examination of the Three Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Strawson, G. 1987. "Realism and Causation," *Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 37: 253-277.
- 1989. *The Secret Connexion: Causation, Realism, and David Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 2007. "David Hume: Objects and Power," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 31-51.
- Stroud, B. 1977. *Hume* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- 2007. "'Gilding or Staining' the World with 'Sentiments' and 'Phantasms'," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 16-30.
- Sullivan, R. 1982. *John Toland and the Deist Controversy: A Study in Adaptations* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982).
- Thomas, G.H. 1976. "Berkeley's God Does Not Perceive," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 2: 163-168.
- Tipton, I.C. 1974. *Berkeley: The Philosophy of Immaterialism* (London: Methuen).
- Turbayne, C.M. 1959. "Berkeley's Two Concepts of Mind," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 20, No. 1: 85-92.

- 1962. "Berkeley's Two Concepts of Mind (Part II)," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 22, No. 4: 577-80.
- 1970. "Berkeley's Metaphysical Grammar," in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, with Critical Essays*, ed. C.M. Turbayne (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill): 3-36.
- Tweyman, S. 1986. *Scepticism and Belief in Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers).
- Urmson, J. 1982. *Berkeley*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Vailati, E. 2002. "Leibniz on Divine Concurrence with Secondary Causes," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, vol. 10: 209-230.
- Warnock, G.J. 1953. *Berkeley* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).
- Waxman, W. 1994. *Hume's Theory of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Wilson, M. 1985. *Descartes* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Winkler, K. 1989. *Berkeley: an Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- 1991. "The New Hume," *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 100, no. 4: 541-580.
- 2005. "Berkeley and the Doctrine of Signs," in *The Cambridge Companion to Berkeley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 125-165.
- Wright, J.P. 1983. *The Sceptical Realism of David Hume* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press).
- 2007. "Hume's Causal Realism: Recovering a Traditional Interpretation," in *The New Hume Debate*, eds. R. Read and K. Richman (London: Routledge): 88-99.
- Wolterstorff, N. 1994. "Locke's Philosophy of Religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, ed. V. Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press): 172-198.
- Woozley, A.D. 1985. "Berkeley on Action," *Philosophy*, vol. 60: 293-307.
- Yandell, K. 1976. "Hume on Religious Belief," in *Hume: A Re-Evaluation*, eds. D. Livingston and J. King (New York: Fordham University Press): 109-125.
- Yolton, J. 1984. *Perceptual Acquaintance from Descartes to Reid* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).