

I was perswaded that the Clamour of Scepticism,
Atheism, &c.

had been so often employ'd by the worst of Men
against the

best, that it had now lost all its Influence;
and should never

have thought of making any Remarks on these
main'd Excerpts,

if you had not laid your Commands on me, as a
piece of common

Justice to the Author, and for undeceiving some
well-meaning

People, on whom it seems the enormous Charge has
made

Impression. {4}

I shall insert the Accusation at full Length,
and then go

regularly through what is called the Sum of the
Charge;

because it is intended, I suppose, to contain
the Substance of

the whole. I shall also take notice of the
Specimen as I go
along.

Specimen of the Principles concerning Religion and
Morality, &c.

THE Author puts on his Title-page (Vol. I printed for J.
Noon, 1739) a

Passage of Tacitus to this Purpose; "Rare Happiness of
our Times, that

you may think as you will, and speak as you think."

He expresses his Deference to the Publick in
these Words

(Advertisement, p. 2.) The Approbation of the
Publick I

consider as the greatest Reward of my Labours;
but am
determined to regard its Judgment, whatever it
be, as my best
Instruction."

He gives us the summary View of his Philosophy
from p. 458. to
470. --

"I am confounded with that forlorn Solitude, in
which I am
placed in my Philosophy. {5} -- I have exposed
myself to the
Enmity of all Metaphysicians, Logicians,
Mathematicians, and
even Theologians. -- I have declared my
Disapprobations of
their Systems. -- When I turn my Eye inward, I
find nothing
but Doubt and Ignorance. All the World conspires
to oppose and
contradict me; tho' such is my Weakness, that I
feel all my
Opinions loosen and fall of themselves, when
unsupported by
the Approbation of others. -- Can I be sure,
that, in leaving
all established Opinions, I am following Truth?
and by what
Criterion shall I distinguish her, even if
Fortune should at
last guide me on her Footsteps? After the most
accurate and
exact of my Reasonings, I can give no Reason why
I should
assent to it; and feel nothing but a strong
Propensity to
consider Objects strongly in that View under
which they appear

to me. -- The Memory, Senses, and Understanding,
are all of
them founded on the Imagination. -- No Wonder a
Principle so
inconstant and fallacious should lead us into
Errors, when
implicitly followed (as it must be) in all its
Variations. --
I have already shown, that the Understanding,
when it acts
alone, and according to its most general
Principles, entirely
subverts itself, and leaves {6} not the lowest
Degree of
Evidence in any Proposition either in Philosophy
or common
Life. -- We have no Choice left, but betwixt a
false Reason
and none at all. -- Where am I, or what? From
what Causes do I
derive my Existence, and to what Condition shall
I return?
Whose Favour shall I court, and whose Anger must
I dread? What
Beings surround me? On whom have I any
Influence, or who have
any Influence on me? I am confounded with all
these Questions,
and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable
Condition
imaginable, invironed with the deepest Darkness,
and utterly
deprived of the Use of every Member and Faculty.
-- If I must
be a Fool, as all those who reason or believe
any Thing
certainly are, my Follies shall at least be
natural and
agreeable. -- In all the Incidents of Life, we
ought still to

preserve our Scepticism: If we believe that Fire
warms, or
Water refreshes, 'tis only because it costs us
too much Pains
to think otherwise; nay, if we are Philosophers,
it ought only
to be upon sceptical Principles. -- I cannot
forbear having a
Curiosity to be acquainted with the Principles
of moral Good
and Evil, &c. I am concerned for the Condition of
the learned
World, which lies under such a deplorable {7}
Ignorance in all
these Particulars. I feel an Ambition arise in
me of
contributing to the Instruction of Mankind, and
of acquiring a
Name by my Inventions and Discoveries. -- Should
I endeavour
to banish these Sentiments, I feel I should be a
Loser in
point of Pleasure; and this is the Origin of my
Philosophy."

Agreeable to this summary View, he tells us, p.
123.

"Let us fix our Attention out of ourselves as
much as
possible. -- We really never advance a Step
beyond
ourselves; nor can conceive any Kind of
Existence, but
these Perceptions which have appeared in that
narrow
Compass: This is the Universe of the
Imagination, nor have
we any Idea but what is there produced."

Accordingly,

"An Opinion or Belief may be most accurately defined,
A lively
Idea related or associated with a present Impression;
and is more
properly an Act of the sensitive than of the cognitive
Part of our
Natures."

And,

"Belief in general consists in nothing but the
Vivacity of an
Idea. Again, the Idea of Existence is the very same
with the Idea
of what we conceive to be existent. -- Any Idea we
please to form
is the Idea of a Being; and the Idea of a Being is any
Idea we
please to form. And as to the {8} Notion of an
external Existence,
when taken for something specifically different from
our
Perceptions, we have shown its absurdity: And what we
call a Mind
is nothing but a Heap or Collection of different
Perceptions
united together by certain Relations, and supposed,
tho' falsly,
to be endowed with a perfect Simplicity."

And,

"The only Existence, of which we are certain, are
Perceptions.
When I enter most intimately into what I call myself,
I always
stumble on some particular Perception or other. -- I
never can

catch myself at any Time without a Perception, and
never can
observe any Thing but the Perception. -- If any one
think he has a
different Notion of himself, I must confess I can
reason no longer
with him. -- I may venture to affirm of the rest of
Mankind, that
they are nothing but a Bundle of Perceptions, which
succeed each
other with an inconceivable Rapidity, and are in a
perpetual Flux
and Movement." --

And lest the Reader should forget to apply all this to
the Supreme
Mind, and the Existence of the First Cause, he has a
long Disquisition
concerning Causes and Effects, the Sum of which amounts
to this, That
all our Reasoning concerning Causes and Effects are
derived from
nothing but Custom: That {9}

"if any pretend to define a Cause by saying it is
something
productive of another, 'tis evident he would say
nothing; for what
does he mean by Production? That we may define a Cause
to be an
Object precedent and contiguous to another, and where
all the
Objects resembling the former are placed in like
Relations of
Precedency and Contiguity to these Objects that
resemble the
latter; or, a Cause is an Object precedent and
contiguous to
another, and so united with it, that the Idea of the
one

determines the Mind to form the Idea of the other, and the
Impression of the one to form a more lively Idea of the other."

From these clear and plain Definitions he infers,

"That all Causes are of the same Kind; and there is no Foundation
for the Distinction betwixt efficient Causes, and Causes sine qua
non; or betwixt efficient Causes, and formal and material, and
exemplary, and final Causes: And that there is but one Kind of
Necessity, and the common Distinction betwixt Moral and Physical
is without any Foundation in Nature: And that the Distinction we
often make betwixt Power, and the Exercise of it, is equally
without Foundation: And that the Necessity of a Cause to every
Beginning of Existence, is not founded on any Arguments
demonstrative {10} or intuitive: And in fine, That any Thing may
produce any Thing; Creation, Annihilation, Motion, Reason,
Volition; all these may arise from one another, or from any other
Object we can imagine."

The curious Nostrum he often repeats, p. 430, 434. Again he tells us,

"That when we talk of any Being, whether of a Superior or Inferior
Nature, as endowed with a Power or Force proportioned to any

Effect, -- We have really no distinct Meaning, and
make use only
of common Words, without any clear and determinate
Ideas. And if
we have really no Idea of Power or Efficacy in any
Object, or of
any real connection betwixt Causes and Effects, 'twill
be to
little Purpose to prove that an Efficacy is necessary
in all
Operations. We do not understand our own Meaning in
talking so,
but ignorantly confound Ideas which are intirely
distinct from
each other."

Again he says,

"The Efficacy or Energy of Causes is neither placed in
the Causes
is neither placed in the Causes themselves, nor in the
Deity, nor
in the Concurrence of these two Principles, but
belongs entirely
to the Soul (or the Bundle of Perceptions) which
considers the
Union of two or more Objects in all past Instances:
'Tis here that
the real Power of Causes is {11} placed, along with
their
Connection and Necessity. And in fine, we may observe
a
Conjunction or a Relation of Cause and Effect between
different
Perceptions, but can never observe it between
Perceptions and
Objects."

'Tis impossible therefore, that, from the Existence or
any of the

Qualities of the former, we can ever form any Conclusion concerning

the Existence of the latter, or ever satisfy our Reason in this

Particular with regard to the Existence of a Supreme Being. 'Tis well

known that this Principle, Whatever begins to exist must have a Cause

of Existence, is the first Step in the Argument for the Being of a

Supreme Cause; and that, without it, 'tis impossible to go one Step

further in that Argument. Now this Maxim he is at great Pains from

p.141. to explode, and to show, "That it is neither intuitively nor

demonstratively certain;" and he says,

"Reason can never satisfy us that the Existence of any Object does

ever imply that of another. So that, when we pass from the

Impression of one to the Idea and Belief of another, we are not

determined by Reason, but by Custom."

In a marginal Note on the preceeding Page he says,

"In that Proposition, God is, or indeed any other which regards

Existence, the Idea of Existence is no distinct Idea {12} which we

unite with that of the Object, and which is capable of forming a

compound Idea by the Union."

Concerning this Principle, That the Deity is the prime Mover of the

Universe, who first created Matter, and gave its original Impulse, and

likewise supports its Existence, and successively
bestows on it its
Motions; he says,

"This Opinion is certainly very curious, but it will
appear
superfluous to examine it in this Place. --For, if the
very Idea
be derived from an Impression, the Idea of a Deity
proceeds from
the same Origin; and, if no Impression implies any
Force or
Efficacy, 'tis equally impossible to discover, or even
imagine,
any such active Principle in the Deity. --Since
Philosophers
therefore have concluded, that Matter cannot be
endowed with any
efficacious Principle, because it is impossible to
discover in it
such a Principle; the same Course of Reasoning should
determine
them to exclude it from the Supreme Being: Or if they
esteem that
Opinion absurd and impious, as it really is, I shall
tell them how
they may avoid it, and that is, by concluding from the
very first,
that they have no adequate Idea of Power of Efficacy
in any
Object; since neither in Body nor Spirit, neither in
Superior nor
{13} Inferior Natures, are they able to discover one
single
Instance of it."

And says he, "We have no Idea of a Being endowed with
any Power, much
less of one endowed with any infinite Power."

Concerning the Immateriality of the Soul (from
which the
Argument is taken for its natural Immortality,
or that it
cannot perish by Dissolution as the Body) he
says,

"We certainly may conclude that Motion may be
and actually
is the Cause of Thought and Perception: And no
wonder, for
any Thing may be the Cause or Effect of any
Thing; which
evidently gives the Advantage to the
Materialists above
their Adversaries."

But yet more plainly,

"I assert, says he, that the Doctrine of the
Immateriality,
Simplicity, and Indivisibility of a thinking
Substance, is a true
Atheism, and will serve to justify all these
Sentiments for which
Spinoza is so universally infamous."

This hideous Hypothesis is almost the same with that of
the
Immateriality of the Soul, which has become so popular.
And again he
endeavours to prove, that all the Absurdities which have
been found in
the Systems of Spinoza, may likewise be discovered in
that of the
Theologians: And concludes, that

"We cannot advance one Step towards the establishing
the

Simplicity and Immateriality {14} of the Soul, without
preparing
the Way for a dangerous and irrecoverable Atheism."

The Author's Sentiments in Morality we have in
Vol. 3. printed
for T. Longman, 1740. He there tells us, that

"Reason has no Influence on our Passions and
Actions:
Actions may be laudable or blameable, but they
cannot be
reasonable or unreasonable. That all Beings in
the
Universe, considered in themselves, appear
entirely loose
and independent of each other; 'Tis only by
Experience we
learn their Influence and Connection, and this
Influence
we ought never to extend beyond Experience."

He takes great Pains to prove, from p.37. That
Justice is not
a natural, but an artificial Virtue; and gives
one pretty odd
Reason for it:

"We may conclude, that the Laws of Justice,
being
universal and perfectly inflexible, can never
be derived
from Nature. I suppose (says he) a Person to
have lent me
a Sum of Money, on Condition that it be
restored in a few
Days; and also suppose, that, after Expiration
of the Term
agreed on, he demands the Sum: I ask, What
Reason or

Motive have I to restore the Money? Publick
Interest is not naturally attach'd to the Observation of
the Rules of Justice, but {15} is only connected with it,
after an artificial Convention, for Establishment of
these Rules. Unless we will allow that Nature has
established a Sophistry, and rendered it necessary and
unavoidable; we must allow that the Sense of Justice and
Injustice is not derived from Nature, but arises artificially,
tho' necessarily, from Education and human
Conventions. Here is a Proposition which I think may be regarded as
certain, That it is only from the Selfishness and
confined Generosity of Men, along with the scanty
Provision Nature has made for his Wants, that Justice derives
its Origin. These Impressions, which give Rise to this
Sense of Justice, are not natural to the Mind of Man,
but arise from Artifice and human Conventions. Without
such a Convention, no one would ever have dreamed
that there was such a Virtue as Justice, or have been induced
to conform his Actions to it. Taking any single Act, my
Justice may be pernicious in every Respect: And 'tis only
upon the

Supposition that others are to imitate my
Example, that I
can be induced to embrace that Virtue; since
nothing but
the Combination can render Justice
advantageous, or afford
me any Motive to conform myself to its Rules.
{16} And in
general it may be affirmed, that there is no
such Passion
in human Minds, as the Love of Mankind merely
as such,
independent of personal Qualities, of Service
or of
Relation to ourself."

Mr. Hobbs, who was at Pains to shake loose all
other natural
Obligations, yet found it necessary to leave, or
pretended to
leave, the Obligation of Promises or Pactions;
but our Author
strikes a bolder Stroke:

"That the Rule of Morality (says he) which
enjoins the
Performance of Promises, is not natural, will
sufficiently
appear from these two Propositions, which I
proceed to
prove, viz. That a Promise would not be
intelligible
before humans Conventions had established it;
and that,
even if it were intelligible, it would not be
attended
with any moral Obligation."

And he concludes, "That Promises impose no natural
Obligation." And,

p.115.

"I shall further observe, That since every new Promise imposes a
new Obligation of Morality upon the Person who promises, and since
this new Obligation arises from his Will, it is one of the most
mysterious and incomprehensible Operations that can possible be
imagined, and may even be compared to Transubstantiation or Holy
Orders, where a certain Form of Words, along with a {17} certain
Intention, changes entirely the Nature of an external Object, and
even of a human Creature. In fine (says he) as Force is supposed
to invalidate all Contracts, such a Principle is a Proof that
Promises have no natural Obligation, and are mere artificial
Contrivances, for the Conveniency and Advantage of Society."

Sum of the Charge.

From the preceeding Specimen it will appear, that the Author
maintains,

1. Universal Scepticism. See his Assertions, p.458, --470.
where he doubts of every Thing (his own Existence excepted)
and maintains the Folly of pretending to believe any Thing
with Certainty.

2. Principles leading to downright Atheism, by denying the Doctrine of Causes and Effects, p.321, 138, 298, 300, 301, 303, 430, 434, 284. where he maintains, that the Necessity of a Cause to every Beginning of Existence is not founded on any Arguments demonstrative or intuitive.

3. Errors concerning the very Being and Existence of a God.
For Instance, Marginal Note, p.172. as to that Proposition,
God is, he says (or indeed as to any other Thing which regards Existence)

"The Idea {18} of Existence is no distinct Idea which we unite with that of the Object, and which is capable of forming a compound Idea by Union."

4. Errors concerning God's being the first Cause, and prime Mover of the Universe: For as to this Principle, That the Deity first created Matter, and gave it its original Impulse, and likewise supports its Existence, he says,

"This Opinion is certainly very curious, but it will appear superfluous to examine it in this Place, &c."

5. He is chargable with denying the Immateriality of the Soul,

and the Consequences flowing from this Denial,
p.431, 4, 418,
419, 423.

6. With sapping the Foundations of Morality, by
denying the
natural and essential Difference betwixt Right
and Wrong, Good
and Evil, Justice and Injustice; making the
Difference only
artificial, and to arise from human Conventions
and Compacts,
Vol. 2. p.5, 19, 128, 41, 43, 48, 69, 70, 73, 4,
44.

[Observations]

You see, Dear Sir, that I have concealed no Part
of the
Accusation, but have inserted the Specimen and
Charge, as
transmitted to me, without the smallest
Variation. I shall now
go regularly thro' what is called the Sum of the
Charge,
because it {19} is intended, I suppose, to
contain the
Substance of the whole; and shall take Notice of
the Specimen
as I go along.

1st, As to the Scepticism with which the Author
is charged, I
must observe, that the Doctrine of the
Pyrrhonians or
Scepticks have been regarded in all Ages as
Principles of mere
Curiosity, or a Kind of Feux d' esprit, without
any Influence

on a Man's steady Principles or Conduct in Life.
In Reality, a
Philosopher who affects to doubt of the Maxims
of common
Reason, and even of his Senses, declares
sufficiently that he
is not in earnest, and that he intends not to
advance an
Opinion which he would recommend as Standards of
Judgment and
Action. All he means by these Scruples is to
abate the Pride
of mere human Reasoners, by showing them, that
even with
regard to Principles which seem the clearest,
and which they
are necessitated from the strongest Instincts of
Nature to
embrace, they are not able to attain a full
Consistence and
absolute Certainty. Modesty then, and Humility,
with regard to
the Operations of our natural Faculties, is the
Result of
Scepticism; not an universal Doubt, which it is
impossible for
any Man to support, and which the first and most
trivial
Accident in Life must immediately disconcert and
destroy. {20}

How is such a Frame of Mind prejudicial to
Piety? And must not
a Man be ridiculous to assert that our Author
denies the
Principles of Religion, when he looks upon them
as equally
certain with the Objects of his Senses? If I be
as much

assured of these Principles, as that this Table
at which I now
write is before me; Can any Thing further be
desired by the
most rigorous Antagonist? 'Tis evident, that so
extravagant a
Doubt as that which Scepticism may seem to
recommend, by
destroying every Thing, really affects nothing,
and was never
intended to be understood seriously, but was
meant as a mere
Philosophical Amusement, or Trial of Wit and
Subtility.

This is a Construction suggested by the very
Nature of the
Subject; but he has not been contented with
that, but
expressly declared it. And all those Principles,
cited in the
Specimen as Proofs of his Scepticism, are
positively renounced
in a few Pages afterwards, and called the
Effects of
Philosophical Melancholy and Delusion. These are
his very
Words; and his Accuser's overlooking them may be
thought very
prudent, but is a Degree of Unfairness which
appears to me
altogether astonishing.

Were Authorities proper to be employed in any
Philosophical
Reasoning, I could cite you that of Socrates the
wisest and
{21} most religious of the Greek Philosophers,
as well as

Cicero among the Romans, who both of them carried their Philosophical Doubts to the highest Degree of Scepticism. All the antient Fathers, as well as our first Reformers, are copious in representing the Weakness and Uncertainty of mere human Reason. And Monsieur Huet the learned Bishop of Avaranches (so celebrated for his Demonstration Evangelique which contains all the great Proofs of the Christian Religion) wrote also a Book on this very Topick, wherein he endeavours to revive all the Doctrines of the antient Skepticks or Pyrrhonians.

In Reality, whence come all the various Tribes of Hereticks, the Arians, Socinians and Deists, but from too great a Confidence in mere human Reason, which they regard as the Standard of every Thing, and which they will not submit to the superior Light of Revelation? And can one do a more essential Service to Piety, than by showing them that this boasted Reason of theirs, so far from accounting for the great Mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, is not able fully to satisfy itself with regard to its own Operations, and must in some Measure fall into a Kind of implicate Faith, even in the

most obvious and familiar Principles?

II. The Author is charged with Opinions {22}
leading to downright Atheism, chiefly by denying this
Principle, That whatever begins to exist must have a Cause of
Existence. To give you a Notion of the Extravagance of this
Charge, I must enter into a little Detail. It is common for
Philosophers to distinguish the Kinds of Evidence into
intuitive, demonstrative, sensible, and moral; by which
they intend only to mark a Difference betwixt them, not to denote
a Superiority of one above another. Moral Certainty may reach
as high a Degree of Assurance as Mathematical; and our
Senses are surely to be comprised amongst the clearest and most
convincing of all Evidences. Now, it being the Author's
Purpose, in the Pages cited in the Specimen, to examine the
Grounds of that Proposition; he used the Freedom of disputing
the common Opinion, that it was founded on demonstrative or
intuitive Certainty; but asserts, that it is supported by
moral Evidence, and is followed by a Conviction of the same Kind
with these Truths, That all Men must die, and that the Sun
will rise To-morrow. Is this any Thing like denying the
Truth of that

Proposition, which indeed a Man must have lost
all common
Sense to doubt of?

But, granting that he had denied it, how is this
a Principle

that leads to Atheism? {23} It would be no
difficult Matter to
show, that the Arguments a posteriori from the
Order and

Course of Nature, these Arguments so sensible,
so convincing,

and so obvious, remain still in their full
Force; and that

nothing is affected by it but the metaphysical
Argument a

priori, which many Men of Learning cannot
comprehend, and

which many Men both of Piety and Learning show
no great Value

for. Bishop Tillotson has used a Degree of
Freedom on this

Head, which I would not willingly allow myself;
'tis in his

excellent Sermon concerning the Wisdom of being
religious,

where he says, That the Being of a God is not
capable of

Demonstration, but of moral Evidence. I hope
none will pretend

that pious Prelate intended by these Assertions
to weaken the

Evidences for a Divine Existence, but only to
distinguish

accurately its Species of Evidence.

I say further, that even the metaphysical
Arguments for a

Deity are not affected by a Denial of the
Proposition

above-mentioned. It is only Dr. Clark's Argument which can be supposed to be any way concerned. Many other Arguments of the same Kind still remain; Des Cartes's for Instance, which has always been esteemed as solid and convincing as the other. I shall add, that a great Distinction ought always to be {24} made betwixt a Man's positive and avowed Opinions, and the Inferences which it may please others to draw from them. Had the Author really denied the Truth of the foregoing Proposition, (which the most superficial Reader cannot think ever entered his Head) still he could not properly be charged as designing to invalidate any one Argument that any Philosopher has employed for a Divine Existence; that is only an Inference and Construction of others, which he may refuse if he thinks proper.

Thus you may judge of the Candor of the whole Charge, when you see the assigning of one Kind of Evidence for a Proposition, instead of another, is called denying that Proposition; that the invalidating only one Kind of Argument for the Divine Existence is called positive Atheism; nay, that the weakning only of one individual Argument of that Kind is called

rejecting that whole Species of Argument, and
the Inferences
of others are ascribed to the Author as his real
Opinion.

'Tis impossible ever to satisfy a captious
Adversary, but it
would be easy for me to convince the severest
Judge, that all
the solid Arguments for Natural Religion retain
their full
Force upon the Author's Principles concerning
Causes and
Effects and that there is no Necessity even for
altering {25}
the common Methods of expressing or conceiving
these
Arguments. The Author has indeed asserted, That
we can judge
only of the Operations of Causes by Experience,
and that,
reasoning a priori, any thing might appear able
to produce any
thing. We could not know that Stones would
descend, or fire
burn, had we not Experience of these Effects;
and indeed,
without such Experience, we could not certainly
infer the
Existence of one Thing from that of another.
This is no great
Paradox, but seems to have been the Opinion of
several
Philosophers, and seems the most obvious and
familiar
Sentiment on that Subject; but, tho' all
Inferences are noway
weakned by such an Assertion, but on the
contrary will be

found to acquire more Force, as long as Men are disposed to

trust to their Experience rather than to mere human Reasoning.

Wherever I see Order, I infer from Experience that there,

there hath been Design and Contrivance. And the same Principle

which leads me into this Inference, when I contemplate a

Building, regular and beautiful in its whole Frame and

Structure; the same Principle obliges me to infer an

infinitely perfect Architect, from the infinite Art and

Contrivance which is display'd in the whole {26} Fabrick of

the Universe. Is not this the Light in which this Argument

hath been placed by all Writers concerning Natural Religion?

III. The next Proof of Atheism is so unaccountable, that I

know not what to make of it. Our Author indeed asserts, after

the present pious and learned Bishop of Cloyne, That we have

no abstract or general Ideas, properly so speaking; and that

those Ideas, which are called general, are nothing but

particular Ideas affixed to general Terms. Thus, when I think

of a Horse in general, I must always conceive that Horse as

black or white, fat or lean, &c. and can form no Notion of a

Horse that is not of some particular Colour or Size. In Prosecution of the same Topick, the Author hath said, That we have no general Idea of Existence, distinct from every particular Existence. But a Man must have strange Sagacity, that could discover Atheism in so harmless a Proposition. This, in my Opinion, might be justified before the University of Salamanca, or a Spanish Inquisition. I do indeed believe, that, when we assert the Existence of a Deity, we do not form a general abstract Idea of Existence, which we unite with the Idea of God, and which is capable of forming a compound Idea by Union; but this is {27} the Case with regard to every Proposition concerning Existence. So that, by this Course of Reasoning, we must deny the Existence of every Thing, even of ourselves, of which at least even the Accuser himself will admit our Author is perswaded.

IV. Ere answering the fourth Charge, I must use the Freedom to deliver a short History of a particular Opinion in Philosophy. When Men considered the several Effects and Operations of Nature, they were led to examine into the Force or Power by which they were performed; and they divided into several

Opinions upon this Head, according as their
other Principles
were more or less favourable to Religion. The
Followers of
Epicurus and Strato asserted, That this Force
was original and
inherent in Matter, and, operating blindly,
produced all the
various Effects which we behold. The Platonick
and
Peripatetick Schools, perceiving the Absurdity
of this
Proposition, ascribed the Origin of all Force to
one primary
efficient Cause, who first bestowed it on
Matter, and
successively guided it in all its Operations.
But all the
antient Philosophers agreed, that there was a
real Force in
Matter, either original or derived; and that it
was really
Fire which burnt, and Food that nourished, when
we observed
any of these {28} Effects to follow upon the
Operations of
these Bodies: The Schoolmen supposed also a real
Power in
Matter, to whose Operations however the
continual Concurrence
of the Deity was requisite, as well as to the
Support of that
Existence which had been bestowed on Matter, and
which they
considered as a perpetual Creation. No one, till
Des Cartes
and Malbranche, ever entertained an Opinion that
Matter had no
Force either primary or secondary, and
independent or

concurrent, and could not so much as properly be
called an Instrument in the Hands of the Deity, to serve
any of the Purposes of Providence. These Philosophers last-
mentioned substituted the Notion of occasional Causes, by
which it was asserted that a Billiard Ball did not move
another by its Impulse, but was only the Occasion why the
Deity, in pursuance of general Laws, bestowed Motion on the second
Ball. But, tho' this Opinion be very innocent, it never gained
great Credit, especially in England, where it was considered
as too much contrary to received popular Opinions, and too
little supported by Philosophical Arguments, ever to be
admitted as any Thing but a mere Hypothesis. Cudworth, Lock
and Clark make little or no mention of it. Sir Isaac Newton
(tho' some of his Followers have taken {29} a different Turn of
thinking) plainly rejects it, by substituting the
Hypothesis of an AEtheral Fluid, not the immediate Volition of
the Deity, as the Cause of Attraction. And, in short, this has
been a Dispute left entirely to the Arguments of
Philosophers, and in which Religion has never been supposed to be in
the least concerned.

Now it is evidently concerning this Cartesian Doctrine, of secondary Causes, the Author is treating, when he says, (in the Passage referred to in the Charge) That it was a curious Opinion, but which it would appear superfluous to examine in that Place.

The Topick there handled is somewhat abstract: But I believe any Reader will easily perceive the Truth of this Assertion, and that the Author is far from pretending to deny (as asserted in the Charge) God's being the first Cause and prime Mover of the Universe. That the Author's Words could have no such Meaning as they stand connected, is to me so evident, that I could pledge on this Head, not only my small Credit as a Philosopher, but even all my Pretensions to Trust or Belief in the common Affairs of Life.

V. As to the fifth Article; The Author has not anywhere that I remember denied {30} the Immateriality of the Soul in the common Sense of the Word. He only says, That that Question did not admit of any distinct Meaning; because we had no distinct Idea of Substance. This Opinion may be found everywhere in Mr. Lock, as well as in Bishop Berkley.

VI. I come now to the last Charge, which,
according to the
prevalent Opinion of Philosophers in this Age,
will certainly
be regarded as the severest, viz. the Author's
destroying all
the Foundations of Morality.

He hath indeed denied the eternal Difference of
Right and
Wrong in the Sense in which Clark and Woolaston
maintained
them, viz.. That the Propositions of Morality
were of the same
Nature with the Truths of Mathematicks and the
abstract
Sciences, the Objects merely of Reason, not the
Feelings of
our internal Tastes and Sentiments. In this
Opinion he concurs
with all the antient Moralists, as well as with
Mr. Hutchison
Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University
of Glasgow,
who, with others, has revived the antient
Philosophical
Discourse, in order to throw an Odium on the
Author!

When the Author asserts that Justice is an
artificial not a
natural Virtue, he seems {31} sensible that he
employed Words
that admit of an invidious Construction; and
therefore makes
use of all proper Expedients, by Definitions and
Explanations,
to prevent it. But of these his Accuser takes no
Notice. By

the natural Virtues he plainly understands
Compassion and
Generosity, and such as we are immediately
carried to by a
natural Instinct, a certain Reflection on the
general
Interests of Human Society, and a Combination
with others. In
the same Sense, Sucking is an Action natural to
Man, and
Speech is artificial. But what is there in this
Doctrine that
can be supposed in the least pernicious? Has he
not expressly
asserted, That Justice, in another Sense of the
Word, is so
natural to Man, that no Society of Men, and even
no individual
Member of any Society, was ever entirely devoid
of all Sense
of it? Some Persons (tho' without any Reason, in
my Opinion)
are displeased with Mr. Hutchison's Philosophy,
in sounding
all the Virtues so much on Instinct, and
admitting so little
of Reason and Reflection. Those should be
pleased to find that
so considerable a Branch of the Moral Duties are
founded on
that Principle.

The Author has likewise taken care in {32}
positive Terms to
assert, That he does not maintain that Men ly
under no
Obligation to observe Contracts, independent of
Society; but
only, that they never would have formed
Contracts, and even

would not have understood the Meaning of them,
independent of
Society. And whereas it is observed in the
Specimen, That our
Author offers further to prove, that, suppose a
Promise was
intelligible before Human Conventions had
established it, it
would not be attended with any Moral Obligation.
The most
careless Reader must perceive that he does not
understand
Moral in such an extended Sense, as to deny the
Obligation of
Promises, independent of Society; seeing he not
only asserts
what is above-represented, but likewise that the
Laws of
Justice are universal, and perfectly inflexible.
It is
evident, that suppose Mankind, in some primitive
unconnected
State, should be some Means come to the
Knowledge of the
Nature of those Things which we call Contracts
and Promises;
that this Knowledge would have laid them under
no such actual
Obligation, if not placed in such Circumstances
as give rise
to these Contracts.

I am sorry I should be obliged to cite from my
Memory, and
cannot mention Page and Chapter so accurately as
the Accuser.
I came hither by Post, and brought no {33} Books
along with
me, and cannot now provide myself in the Country
with the Book

referred to.

This long Letter, with which I have troubled you, was composed in one Morning, that I might gratify your Demand of an immediate Answer to the heavy Charge brought against your Friend; and this, I hope, will excuse any Inaccuracies that may have crept into it. I am indeed of Opinion, that the Author had better delayed the publishing of that Book; not on account of any dangerous Principles contained in it, but because on more mature Consideration he might have rendered it much less imperfect by further Corrections and Revisals. I must not at the same Time omit observing, that nothing can be wrote so accurately or innocently, which may not be perverted by such Arts as have been imploied on this Occasion. No Man would undertake so invidious a Task as that of our Author's Accuser, who was not actuated by particular Interests; and you know how easy it is, by broken and partial Citations, to pervert any Discourse, much more one of so abstract a Nature, where it is difficult, or almost impossible, to justify one's self to the Publick. The Words which have been carefully pickt out from a large Volume will no doubt have a dangerous Aspect

to careless {34} Readers; and the Author, in my
Apprehension,
cannot fully defend himself without a particular
Detail, which
it is impossible for a careless Reader to enter
into. This
Advantage of the Ground has been trusted to by
his Accuser,
and surely never more abused than on the present
Occasion. But
he has one Advantage, I trust, which is worth a
Hundred of
what his Opposers can boast of, viz. that of
Innocence; and I
hope he has also another Advantage, viz. that of
Favour, if we
really live in a Country of Freedom, where
Informers and
Inquisitors are so deservedly held in universal
Detestation,
where Liberty, at least of Philosophy, is so
highly valu'd and
esteem'd. I am,

Sir,

Your most obedient

humble Servant.

May 8th 1745.

Notes

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