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AN

# Impartial Enquiry

Into the EXISTENCE and

## NATURE OF GOD:

Being a MODEST ESSAY towards a  
more INTELLIGIBLE ACCOUNT of the  
DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

With REMARKS on several AUTHORS  
both ANCIENT and MODERN; and  
Particularly on some Passages in Dr. CLARKE'S  
DEMONSTRATION OF THE  
BEING AND ATTRIBUTES  
OF GOD.

In TWO BOOKS.

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With an APPENDIX concerning the Nature of  
SPACE and DURATION.

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The THIRD EDITION.

With considerable Additions and Improvements, made partly  
with Regard to some OBJECTIONS of the Reverend  
Mr. JACKSON.

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By SAMUEL COLLIBER.

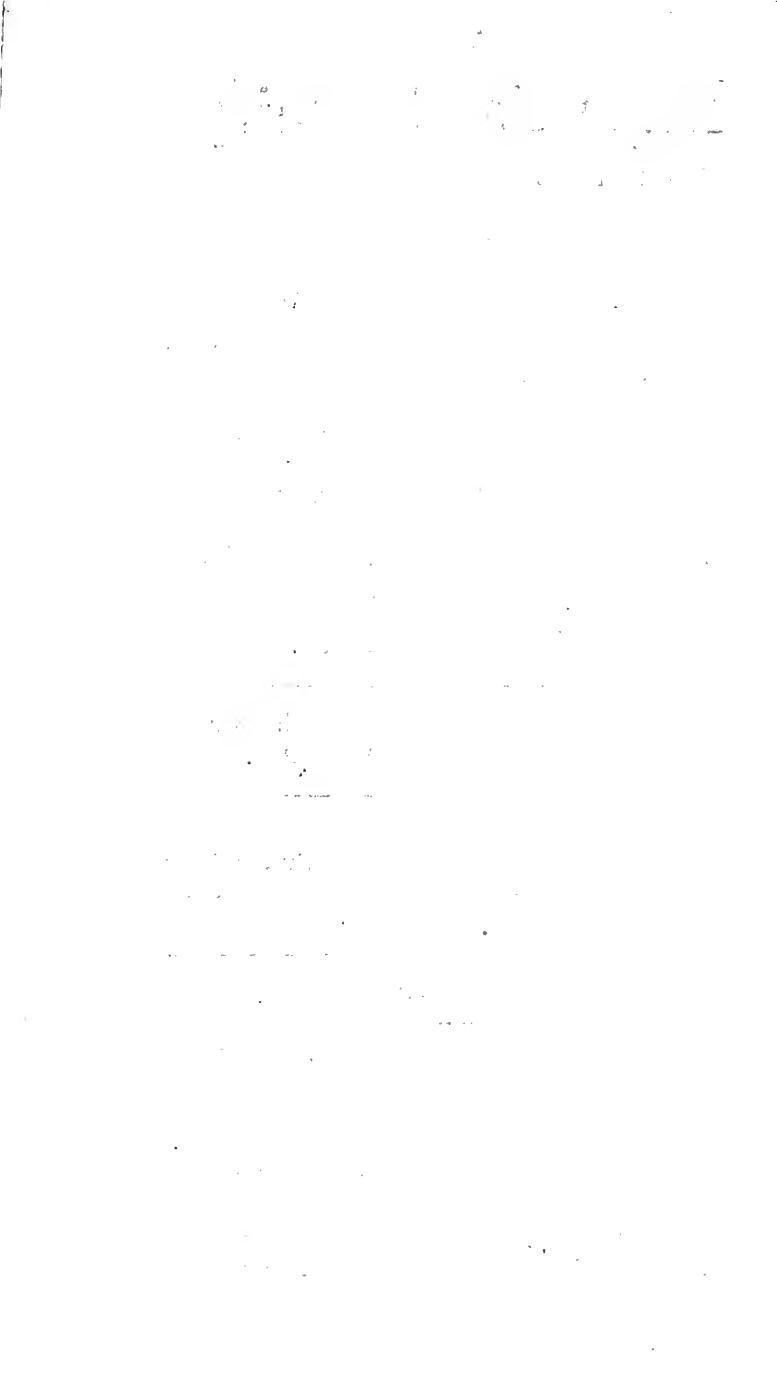
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*Sapientiam sibi adimunt, qui sine ullo Judicio Inventa Majorum  
probant. Sed hec eos fallit, quod Majorum nomine audito,  
non putant fieri posse ut aut ipsi plus sapiant, quia Minores  
vocantur, aut illi desipuerint, quia Majores nominantur.*

Lactantius Lib. 2. Divinarum Inst. Cap. 8.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.



THE general good Reception which this Essay has met with from Men of Learning and Impartiality, has given Occasion to another Edition; in which Care has been taken to make several Additions and Improvements.

What I have further to say by way of Preface, shall be comprized in few Words.

If the main Principles contained in this Enquiry are either self-evident, or else fully demonstrated; if the Hypotheses proposed for obviating Objections are agreeable to Reason, and not dis-

*The P R E F A C E.*

greeable to Scripture ; if by proceeding upon those Principles and Hypotheses, not only the great Truths of Religion have been established, but a Discovery has been made of the Grand Source of Error, which has for many Ages lain hid, like the Head of the *Nile*, and overwhelmed the Christian World with Disputes and Contentions (as some are inclined to think) I have sufficiently gain'd my End.

But if this should not be the Case, yet 'tis hoped this Effay may still be of Use, by giving Occasion to some abler Person to undertake the same most difficult and important Enquiry with Success.

In the mean time, I enjoy the Satisfaction of having, (in the midst of Discouragements) contributed my sincerest Endeavours towards promoting the Cause of Religion in general, without being bigoted to the particular Interest of any Sect or Party whatever.

S. COLLIBER.

T H E






T H E  
C O N T E N T S

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A N

# Impartial Enquiry

I N T O T H E

Existence and Nature of *G O D*.

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B O O K the F I R S T.

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C H A P. I.



THE human Mind is never so agreeably employ'd, as when it tries its Strength in Enquiries of this Sort : When it takes a View of the whole Frame of Nature, and discovers the mighty Spring which set it in Motion : When it pierces into the inmost Substance of Things to that invisible Cement which unites them : When it traces them back to their Original, and from the Nature of the Effects infers the Perfection of the Cause ; and when from a nearer Acquaintance with the Perfection of the First Cause, it proceeds to form Rules for its own Conduct,

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in order to a more exact Conformity to so noble a Pattern.

Some Thousands of Years have been already spent in these Enquiries, and considerable Discoveries have been made both from Scripture and Reason; sufficient at least for the Conduct of Life, and perhaps enough to have satisfied any Age less curious and philosophical than our own. But it has been our Fortune to visit the World, at a Time wherein as we have seen the Range and Compass of human Knowledge so nicely adjusted and determined,\* so we see daily Attempts towards the extending it to its utmost Limits. The Event, it is to be hop'd, may at last be, that the great Truths of Religion will be fix'd on their proper and natural Principles, and set in so clear a Light, that by a nearer Agreement in Opinion, human Nature may appear with more Uniformity, and Piety may be thought as necessary to complete the Character of a Man of Sense, as Libertinism and Immorality have been.

'Tis, I think, the Right and Duty of every capable Person to improve and employ his Faculties, and to take his own Measures in the Search of Truth. There must be a Judgment of Discretion with reference to the Scriptures, and a Liberty of Reasoning in all other Cases; provided they be exercised with Modesty, from a sincere Desire to discover and embrace the Truth, and with entire Submission to better Information.

I conceive, that whoever will undertake an Enquiry of this Nature, can't begin it better, than with an impartial Search into such Mistakes and Mismanagements as may have caus'd the ill Success of former Enquiries. Several of these we may be capable of detecting in the present Case: Which we shall briefly mention; not with Design to expose the Failings and Weaknesses of others, but purely to form such Cautions as may be of Use to ourselves.

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\* See Mr. *Locke* of Hum. Und. Book 4. Chap. 3.



The Occasions of any ill Success that hath attended former Enquiries, we shall find to have been either more general and common to all or most of the preceding Ages and Nations, or more particular and peculiar to some.

The more general will appear to have been,

1. *Interest and Design.* These were especially the Imperfections of the *Priests*. The first Lawgivers, or Founders of Civil Government among the *Pagans*, finding how difficult it was to infuse the Sentiments of Religion and Civility into the stupid unthinking Vulgar by Argument and Persuasion, did it most effectually by a Pretence of divine Enthusiasms and Revelations. By this Method they wisely serv'd themselves of the Principle of *Fear*, which is ever the strongest and most vigorous Spring of Action, and which we usually find to be most predominant in those who lie least open to the Methods of Conviction. Thus *Zamolxis* wrought the rude unpolish'd *Scythians* into a Belief that he received the Laws and Precepts of his Religion in a Den, where he said he convers'd with the Gods. *Numa*, the Founder of Religion and Civility among the *Romans*, is said to have conceal'd himself in a Wood, pretending to receive Instructions from the Goddess *Ægeria*. And *Mango Copac*, the Introducer of the *Peruvian* Superstition, is reported to have feign'd himself to have been sent on his Errand by his Parent the *Sun*.

To carry on the Design so successfully begun, we find that a certain Order of Men was every where instituted, whose peculiar Employment it was to instruct the People in the Duties of Religion. And to give the greater Reputation and Authority to the *Priesthood*, we find that Princes themselves thought it no Disparagement to unite the Mitre with the Crown, and at once to rule and teach their Subjects. Thus among the ancient *Egyptians*, the Kings were always invested with the High-Priesthood, and entrusted with

with the Mysteries of their Religion as well as Government. The like is reported of *Numa* among the *Romans*.

But though the Design of those primitive Lawgivers was good, yet since their Models of Religion were not sufficiently founded on Reason, but politickly fet together in such Manner as was most agreeable to the Humour and Relish of the People to whom they were prescrib'd, and most subservient to the present Intent of the Institutor ; they, in time, prov'd the Occasions of great Inconveniencies. For the Pretence of Revelation became an effectual Bar to future Improvements : The Priests fearing lest the Alteration of any Particular should tempt the People to suspect the whole, and call in question the pretended Revelation on which 'twas founded. And the Priesthood, which at first was so noble and useful an Institution, degenerating by Degrees into a Trade, and being taken up by most with no other View or Design but that of Gain, the Priests soon found it their Interest to discourage all such Speculations as tended to breed a Dislike of that Superstition which yielded them such great secular Emoluments.

In some Countries indeed we read, that the Priests were Philosophers too. But tho' we may believe that they themselves, by the Exercise of Reason, discover'd the Vanity of divers of those Methods of Religion that had been impos'd on the People ; yet they industriously conceal'd their Sentiments as *Mysteries* not to be imparted to the Vulgar, whose Ignorance was the chief Support of that profitable Devotion which Interest taught them to cherish and improve. At least, they were not perhaps inclinable to be at the Expence of much Pains in Matters of Speculation, while they observ'd the People might be treated at a far cheaper Rate with trifling Ceremonies and religious Pageantry. This is certain, that we find 'em, in the general, to have been so far from instructing the People either in  
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better Principles or Methods of Worship, that they rather added to the Imposture, by frequent Inventions of new and more gainful Fopperies.

2. Another considerable Obstruction to the Increase and Improvement of Divine Knowledge in the former Ages of the World, was *Pride* or *Vanity*. This seems to have been the epidemical Disease of the *Philosophers*. We may trace its Symptoms as well among the slovenly *Cynicks* of *Greece*, or the savage *Gymnosophists* of *Ethiopia*, as among the politer *Magi* of *Persia*, or *Brachmans* of *India*. This divided them into innumerable Factions, and often caused their Philosophy to degenerate into big Words and insignificant Sophistry; while almost every Man had a more passionate Concern for the Reputation of his Sect, than for the Interest of Truth. A remarkable Instance of this philosophical Pride is to be met with in the Life of *Apollonius Tyanæus*; who travelling into *India* to converse with the *Brachmans*, was told by them, that he might propose what Questions he pleased, since he was come to Men who knew all Things. And for ought appears, by their magical Jugglings, and a few quibbling Replies to his Questions, they at last so far impos'd on that Philosopher, as to work him into a Belief of this their pretended Omniscience. And certainly, when Men once arrive either at such a Pitch of Distraction as to imagine themselves ignorant of nothing, or at such a Degree of Folly as to believe it concerning others, we need not be surpriz'd if either the former Sort lay aside all Endeavours after further Improvement, or the latter neglect all other Methods, and depend entirely on the oracular Dictates of such Pretenders.

3. Another Hindrance to this Sort of Knowledge, was *Ignorant Zeal*. This was the general Unhappiness of the *Populace*, and was a Tool which their Priests very well knew how to use to their own Advantage. Thus when *Socrates* had divulg'd some Notions

tions tending to mar their Trade, they fail'd not to set the People against him, and never ceas'd till that great Man fell a Sacrifice to their Resentments. This, and divers other Instances of the like Nature, could not but be a very great Mischief, either by entirely discouraging Enquiries of this Sort, or at least by obliging Men to dissemble and disguise their Sentiments.

These appear to have been the general Causes of the little Progress of Divine Knowledge in the former Ages of the World. The more particular are to be deriv'd from the peculiar Genius and Constitutions of the several Nations and Sects which have distinguish'd themselves in this Sort of Philosophy. These were the *Eastern Pagans*, the *Greeks*, the *Romans*, the *Jews*, and the *Christians*.

1. The *Eastern Pagans*, such were the *Indians*, *Chaldeans*, *Persians*, *Phœnicians*, *Ethiopians*, and *Egyptians*. These appear to have been, in the general, of a light, desultory Wit, impatient of Thought, conceited of their Knowledge, scorning to borrow from others, and backward to communicate of their own. Their Divine Learning was preserv'd, or rather imprison'd, by certain particular Orders or Societies: Among the *Indians* by the *Brachmans*, among the *Chaldeans* and *Persians* by the *Zabii* and *Magi*, among the *Ethiopians* by the *Gymnosophists*, and among the *Egyptians* by their *Arsepedonaptæ* or *Priests*. It consisted of certain *Cabala's* or Rhapsodies of Traditional Opinions, neither clearly express'd, nor, perhaps, well understood. These they appear to have taken upon Trust, convinc'd by no other Argument so much as by the Reputation and Authority of their *Brabma*, *Zoroaster*, *Hermes*, and the other Introducers of their respective Superstitions. The Dictates of these they esteem'd as sacred and unimproveable; and thought they acquitted themselves sufficiently well, by barely transmitting them safe to their

their Posterities. Their Reputation for Wisdom in Divine Matters seems to have been owing chiefly to their magical Tricks and mystick Ceremonies and Hieroglyphicks : It being the general Weakness of Men most to admire what they least comprehend.

2. The *Greeks*. These learn'd the Rudiments of their divine Philosophy from the *Egyptians*. *Orpheus*, who first imported the *Egyptian* Mysteries into *Greece*, began that Commerce, which was carried on and improv'd by many of the succeeding Poets and Philosophers ; infomuch that it soon became a common Practice to travel into other Countries to traffick for Notions, and to pick up straggling Traditions, which when they came home they dress'd with a *Grecian* Air, and vended for their own. Yet these were generally the best of their Philosophers. For such who kept at home, and spun their Opinions out of their own Brains, (though divers of them Men of great Wit and Industry) were, for the most Part, too much troubled with the Itch of Innovation, and the Ambition of seeming considerable, by setting themselves at the Head of new Sects. Hence sprung perpetual Brawls\*, and a confus'd Medley of Opinions, till their Philosophy (their Morality excepted) either vanish'd in Scepticism, or to a great Degree degenerated into the most ridiculous Sophistry.

3. The *Romans*. These were at first a rude unpolish'd People, more addicted to Arms than Arts. 'Twas a considerable Time before they would admit the *Greek* Philosophy ; partly out of Pride, as scorning to be taught by Inferiors ; partly out of Policy, as fearing lest it should soften and debase their Spirits. But afterwards, we find they seldom conquer'd a Country, but they were very careful to introduce its Gods into the *Panttheon*, and its Arts and Sciences into their Academies. The first of the *Grecian* Arts that got Admission at *Rome*, and made

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\* *Vid.* Luciani Timon.

Way for the rest to follow, was *Rhetorick*. Though nothing seem'd better qualified to obtain a Welcome among those rough Mortals than the *Art of Persuasion* itself, yet its Success was not so much the Effect of its own Force, as of another Cause. *Rome* was at that time become an Enemy to the Name, as well as to the Power of Kings, and had moulded itself into the Form of a Common-wealth. The supreme Power resided in the People, and such as could best make their Court to them, stood the fairest Candidates on all Elections to Places of Honour and Profit. This made all who aspir'd to Commands in the Common-wealth, very fond of that Art which gain'd them so great Influence on the People, and taught them to govern their Superiors. Wherefore, we need not wonder that *Rhetorick* lost nothing, but rather improv'd by being transplanted to *Rome*, where no Culture was wanting to render it more flourishing than in its native Soil. But as for *Philosophy*, the Case was different. The Philosophers had wrangled themselves out of much of that Reputation they had formerly gain'd. They found but few *Dionysius's*, or *Alexanders*, even in *Greece*. Besides, the Bent of the *Roman* Genius was entirely turn'd upon Action. A People bred amidst the Noise of Arms, could find but little Convenience for Contemplation. And even afterwards, when *Philosophy* began to be more fashionable at *Rome*, we find but few that made it their Business. The Generality consider'd it chiefly as an agreeable Amusement in their Retreats from the Service of the Publick; content to strike in with some or other of the *Grecian* Sects, without attempting either to set up for themselves, or to improve on the ancient Stock.

4. The *Jews*. Their Theology appears to have been entirely founded on Divine Revelation. They reasoned but little upon it for a long Time, having less  
Temptation

Temptation than other Nations, as enjoying that Satisfaction by a long Series of Miracles and Predictions, which as effectually convinced them of the Truth of their Revelation, as the immediate Testimony of Reason could have done. Yet when Miracles and Predictions became less frequent, towards the Declination of the *Jewish* State, we find they began to philosophise after the Manner of their Neighbours, especially after their Conquest by *Antiochus Epiphanes*, who erected an Academy at *Jerusalem* to instruct them in the *Pythagorean*, *Platonick*, and *Epicurean* Philosophy. Thence sprung divers Sects, and Variety of absurd Opinions, which, in a great Degree continu'd, notwithstanding the severe Prohibition of the *Greek* Philosophy by the *Maccabees*. In general, they appear to have been no great Masters in the Art of Reasoning; both their ancient and modern Philosophy being little else but a Medley of ridiculous Apophthegms, and extravagant Conceits concerning their Law and their Traditions, which they prefer before it.

5. The *Christians*. These reasoned but little at first, chiefly from the same Cause with the ancient *Jews*, viz. on account of the frequent Miracles, which were more confirming to themselves, and convictive to their Adversaries than Arguments. When they began to dispute with the Heathens, they usually fought them with their own Weapons, and confuted them from their own Principles: For the most celebrated Fathers of the primitive Church were bred in *Plato's* School. Yet though the *Platonick* Philosophy did some Service against their Adversaries, it at last turn'd to the great Prejudice of themselves; for some of its Principles not well suiting with divers of the Doctrines of their Religion, produc'd endless Disputes, which not a little distracted their Thoughts, and prevented the Improvement of real Knowledge. In Time *Plato's* Philosophy grew out

of Reputation, and *Aristotle* (first introduced by *Boetius*) began to be ador'd. Then Learning was nothing else but an Insight into his Opinions, and that was always reputed Truth which he asserted. Soon after the *Papal* Hierarchy was established, chiefly by Means of the Ignorance and well-manag'd Superstition of the conquering *Barbarians*. Then Learning, such as it was, was confined to the Convents, and no Sin so zealously reprov'd and punish'd in the People as the Sin of *knowing too much*. Men of Parts were every where list'd to support a pretended Infallibility, and Reason was brib'd to vote in Favour of its two greatest Adversaries, Ignorance and implicit Credulity. At last, the *Reformation* commenc'd ; Ignorance and Credulity grew out of Reputation, and a generous Sense of Liberty began to revive. But the curious and inquisitive Part of Mankind, too timorous at first in the Use of the Liberty they had gain'd, instead of taking their own Measures in the Search of Truth, were careful only to restore the ancient Learning, and condemn'd themselves to dig in the Rubbish of Antiquity. By this Means they gave a Resurrection to an Infinity of Opinions, which perhaps had better lain buried as before ; and 'tis but of late that People have made an impartial Use of their Reason, and introduc'd a sort of *Free Philosophy*, which yields a better Prospect of Success than ever.

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## C H A P. II.

**B**Y what has been observed, it appears, that the ill Success, both of *Jews* and *Christians*, in Enquiries of this Nature, was chiefly owing to their too great Affectation of some of the *Grecian* Sects ; of whose Methods, though we could have given no Account from History, yet we might have found suf-



sufficient to have produc'd in us no great Opinion of their Discoveries by the Idea *Cicero* gives us of their divine Philosophy in his Book *De Natura Deorum*.

'Tis the general Observation of that learned *Roman*, that nothing can be imagined so silly and ridiculous which has not found a Patron among those Philosophers. And though they managed some of their Proofs of the Existence of a God with sufficient Evidence, yet when they came to treat of his Nature, he assures us he found them so absurd and various, that he thought it a fruitless Labour to reckon up their Opinions. For, it seems, they were many of them so fond of Variety, that they had too little Regard for Truth or Probability; and were so careful to disagree from each other, that they sometimes neglected to be consistent with themselves. Which Humour of Novelty and Contradiction has no less discover'd itself on other Occasions, but especially in their Disputes concerning the material Principle of the Universe, and concerning the *summum Bonum*, or supreme Good.

How malignant an Influence those Dissentions have had on an Age, which is still too generally inclin'd to limit the utmost Extent of Science by the Opinions of the Ancients, is evident. Multitudes are tempted to doubt of, and not a few to disbelieve what appears to have been so little understood by those mighty Pretenders. And even such who profess a confirm'd and settled Persuasion of the Existence of a God, are yet, for the most Part, disposed to lay aside all Enquiries into the Perfections of his Nature, as Things entirely above their Sphere and Capacity.

Yet, lest the Understandings of Men should appear with less Variety than in former Ages, we have another Sett of Gentlemen devoted to the *Cartesian Metaphysics*, who would persuade us, that the Deity is the plainest and most evident Thing in Nature.

That every Man brings into the World an *innate Idea* of a God, or a Confutation of Atheism, as it were, engraven on his own Mind. And that if we have not from thence a sufficiently clear and distinct Knowledge of our Maker, 'tis not for Want of Light and Perspicuity in the Object, but through a wilful Blindness, and the most culpable Inadvertency in ourselves.

As for the Gentlemen of the former Persuasion, it would, I conceive, be to little Purpose to go about to convince them of the Possibility of a satisfactory Knowledge of the Deity by Arguments, unless we could make the Experiment, and convince them by the Success of the following Essay.

And as for the latter Sort, I persuade my self, it would be alike impertinent, in this Place, to spend Time in arguing against their pretended *innate Idea*, when the whole succeeding Discourse will, 'tis hoped, be the best Confutation of it. For if it can be made appear, that God has given us the Ability of acquiring a sufficient Knowledge of Himself in the Way of Reasoning, it will, 'tis conceiv'd, be abundantly clear, how unnecessary it is to suppose any such *Epicurean Prolepsis*, or Anticipation of the Use of Reason, as is imply'd by the Opinion of an *innate Idea*. For as the late excellent Mr. *Locke* observed, 'twere impertinent to imagine the Ideas of Colours to be innate in any Being to whom God has given Sight.

Nor ought it to be objected, that because so many make so little Use of their Faculties, therefore we must have Recourse to an innate Idea, if we pretend to account for the Universality of the Belief of a God. For admitting the Idea of a Divine Being to be as universal as they suppose, how shall we be assur'd, that this suppos'd Universality is not owing to Tradition? As this Negative is impossible to be prov'd, so, on the contrary, it seems no difficult

Matter to make appear from the Testimony of former Ages, that there has actually been an ancient immemorial Tradition of the Formation of the World by a beneficent, wise, and most powerful Being: Which Tradition alone was sufficient to diffuse the Principles of Religion as universally as the pretended innate Idea is conceiv'd to have done.

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## C H A P. III.

**T**HOUGH the Authority of Tradition, if it appears to have been perpetual and uninterrupted, will ever have its due Weight with all considering Men, yet when a Thing is capable of other Proof, nothing is so grateful and convictive as the immediate Testimony of Reason. Wherefore, tho' by the Means of Education and Example, we have receiv'd a general traditional Notion of the Existence and Perfections of the Deity, and of the Precepts and Obligations of Religion, yet 'tis very fit, that in a Matter of so great Concern, we should make use of such Assistance as Reason is capable of yielding us. This is what I shall now attempt to do.

Tho' some too nice \* *Metaphysicians* have of late been teaching us to doubt of the very fundamental Principles of all Certainty, yet I persuade my self, none that is not dispos'd to trifle, will expect greater Evidence of any thing, than what immediately arises from the *Internal Consciousness* which we have of our own Existence, and the *concurrent Testimony of our external Senses*.

Now the Existence of a God, or *most perfect Being*, is a most direct and natural Consequence of that Consciousness which we have of our own Existence.

This may appear from the following Reflections.

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\* *Des Cartes* and his Followers.

As we have infallible Evidence that we ourselves are, so from thence we may have no less Assurance that something has ever been. For supposing that there once was nothing at all existing, we may be as sure that neither we, nor any other Being, could at all have been, as either that Nothing could not produce Something, or that Something could not produce itself.

'Twas therefore never doubted by any sober Reasoner, that some Being eternally was. The only Question has been concerning the Nature of an Eternal Being; which to discover will be the chief Design of the ensuing Enquiry.

Now, in the first Place 'tis evident, that an eternal Being was a *necessary* Being. The Reason is, because it was without Beginning. For 'tis as certain, that a Being which was without Beginning was necessary, as that there never was any Possibility of its not having been.

In the next Place, 'tis clear not only that an *original* eternal Being was necessary, or such as could not but have been; but likewise that it was an *absolutely necessary* Being, which by Consequence must ever continue to be.

By an *absolutely necessary Being*, I understand such a Being as ever contain'd a necessary *Reason* of its own Existence in its very Nature, without the least Dependence either on the free Election of its own Will, or on the Causality of any other Being.

That there could be no other Being on whose Causality such an eternal or necessary Being could depend, is self-evident. And that the free Election of its own Will could be no Reason of its necessary Existence, is no less manifest. Consequently, the Reason of its necessary Existence must have been either included in its very Nature, or else there must have been no Reason of it at all; which is absurd. But to include a necessary *Reason* of its Existence in

its very Nature, without the least Dependence either on its own free Will, or on the Causality of any other Being, is (as we before observ'd) to be absolutely necessary.

'Tis therefore clear, both that there is an eternal independent Being, and that such a Being cannot but be absolutely necessary. Our next Attempt must be to gain a more particular Knowledge of such a Being. To which End, it is conceiv'd, we need only to consider the Nature and Import of an *absolute Necessity of Existence*.

In the general, it must, I think, be confess'd, that there is something in the very Idea of an absolute Necessity of Existence which strikes a considerate Mind, and disposes it to believe that the Reason of such Necessity must be somewhat very wonderful: Therefore the most natural, as well as the most probable Method of acquiring a more particular Knowledge of an absolutely necessary Being, is to make some Enquiry into that *Reason* of necessary Existence, which we observ'd it to include and possess: To which End I shall proceed by Steps.

*First*, 'Tis, I conceive, demonstrable, that the Reason of an absolute Necessity of Existence, can import no less than *All actual Perfection*; or that there is no Kind or Degree of Perfection which is not included in the Nature of an absolutely necessary Being. For though we should suppose *divers* absolutely necessary Beings, yet it would be absurd to imagine any one of them should necessarily possess either more or greater Perfection than another; they being equally necessary or independent in Existence, and therefore not necessarily unequal in any Respect. And if not necessarily unequal, they could not but be necessarily equal. For the Inequality, if any, must have been absolutely necessary. But if we suppose but *One* absolutely necessary or independent Being, 'twill be yet more evident, that  
That

That Being must possess all actual Perfection, whether we conceive it (with the Atheist) to be the only Being, or (with the Theist) to be the Author of all other Beings. For that the Only Being must possess all actual Perfection, is no less than self-evident; and that the Author of all other Beings can himself want nothing of that Perfection which he has communicated to his Effects, is undeniable.

Again, 'tis, I conceive, equally certain, that the Reason of an absolute Necessity of Existence can import no less than *all possible Perfection*; and by Consequence, that no imaginable Accession of any Sort could have render'd an absolutely necessary Being more perfect than it actually is.

My Argument is this.

Nothing exists with an absolute or independent Necessity, but such a Being whose Nature absolutely excludes the very Possibility of ceasing to be.

But no Nature can absolutely exclude the very Possibility of ceasing to be, unless it absolutely excludes all possible Imperfection. The Reason is, because where-ever any Imperfection is, there it can be no absolute Impossibility (or Contradiction) for any other (even the utmost) Imperfection to be; and consequently there may be a Possibility of ceasing to be; which is the utmost Imperfection.

Therefore, since the very Nature of an absolutely necessary Being absolutely excludes the Possibility of ceasing to be, it can be for no other Reason, than because it absolutely excludes all possible Imperfection.

But that Being whose Nature absolutely excludes all possible Imperfection, cannot but possess or include all possible Perfection. The Reason, is, because the Want or Absence of any possible Perfection is an Imperfection.

Thus, in Opposition to the Assertors of the Eternity of *Matter* or Body, it may be firmly demonstrated

ted to be and to have been eternally an absolute Impossibility or Contradiction, that an original eternal Being should be other than most perfect, (which Matter, we are sure, is not) from the absolute Inconsistence that there is between the absolute Necessity of its Existence, and the least possible Imperfection.

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#### C H A P. IV.

**B**EING advanced thus far, we may, with the greatest Assurance, affirm that there is a G O D, i. e. *an eternal, independent, absolutely necessary, and most perfect Being*. Of this, I think, there can be no doubt, whatever Doubt there may be with Reference to some particular Notions of his Perfection.

In order to a more particular Discovery of the Nature of a Being, which we are assured possesses the highest possible Perfection, it will be necessary carefully to consider the general Idea of *Perfection*. For this, though perhaps not usually consider'd as it deserves, is the Standard whereby we are to form our particular Ideas of the Nature of an eternal independent Being in the ensuing Enquiry.

The Word *Perfect*, was first used with Reference to artificial Things, as signifying that which was finish'd, or fully suited to the End for which it was design'd by the Artist. But afterwards, we find it was adopted by the Philosophers, and used in more than one Sense in their Reasonings on Natural and Metaphysical Subjects.

In the general, that is said by Philosophers to be perfect, which contains whatever is included in the Idea which they have of its Nature. They conceive a Thing to be thus perfect, sometimes in an  
*absolute,*

*absolute*, sometimes in a *relative* Sense. In the *absolute* Sense, that only, say they, is *perfect*, whose Nature comprehends an absolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection. And in this Sense an eternal independent Nature is usually said to be perfect. In the *relative* Sense, any Being is denominated *perfect*, which wants nothing of that which belongs to its particular Nature.

But whether there is in reality any such Thing as an *absolute Perfection* in the Sense before explain'd, may well deserve our Enquiry.

That an eternal independent Nature cannot but have ever been most absolute, or exclusive of any proper Cause, is, it is confess'd, no less than self-evident. By Consequence, the Perfection which is necessary to such a Nature, must be allow'd to be most absolute in the same Sense. Yet it is humbly conceiv'd, this doth not hinder but that the utmost possible Perfection may not be absolute in the other Sense; or that it may not consist in an absolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees, but in an immutable determinate Relation to all capable Objects. To assert that it consists in an absolutely infinite Number of Kinds and Degrees, is, I conceive, to obscure its Idea by unnecessary and inexplicable Difficulties; for as much as the Idea of the utmost possible Perfection cannot possibly be form'd with an absolute Infinity of Number, but may very well be form'd without it.

This will easily appear from the Nature of *Number*.

If any Number (or Arithmetical Quantity) is absolutely or infinitely great, it can be for no other Reason, than because 'tis absolutely (or in its very Nature) incapable of Increase, without an absolute Contradiction. But the very Nature of all Quantity infers, on the contrary, a Necessity of Increase, on the Supposition of the least Addition. For all  
Quan-



Quantities (being of the same general Nature) must severally bear a Proportion to each other. *For Example*, That can be no Unit which, by the Addition of one Unit, will not become two. And by Parity of Reason, that is no Million which, by the Addition but of a single Unit, will not increase to the Greatness of a Million and an Unit. For if it be but a Million after the Addition of the Unit, 'tis plain, it must before that Addition, have been less than a Million by an Unit. The like may be said of all Quantity. But of this more at large hereafter.

These Reflections, which are self-evident, (or as plain as that three and two make five) are entirely destructive of the Supposition of an *absolute* Perfection consisting in an *absolutely infinite* Number of Kinds and Degrees. Whereas, on the contrary, nothing can be more easy and intelligible than the Notion of Perfection in the *relative* and *determinate* Sense. For in this Sense, Perfection is plainly the same with *Sufficiency*. According to which Notion of it, 'tis evident, that as among Inferior Beings, that only can be said to be perfect in its Kind, which possesses whatever is necessary to qualify it for attaining its particular End; so only such a Being can possess the utmost possible Perfection as is all-sufficient, or naturally and independently qualified for all fit and suitable Ends.

To explain this general Conclusion by particular Instances. The Perfection of effective Power may very well consist in its bearing an immutable Relation of Proportionateness to all fit and capable Objects of such Power in general, or in its being independently sufficient to effect or produce whatever is fit, and implies not a Contradiction: For to such Power, though we should imagine farther Degrees to be addible, yet since they would be in vain, or to no Purpose, they could not render it more perfect

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fect by their Accession. The like may be said of  
*Wisdom, Knowledge*, or any other Powers or Pro-  
perties; the Estimate of whose Perfection is, it is  
conceiv'd, no otherwise to be made than with re-  
lation to their Objects either actual or possible. \*

And as the Perfection of *Properties* or *Attributes*  
is to be understood to consist in a Relation of Pro-  
portionateness to all suitable and capable Objects,  
so the Perfection of *Substance*, (however we may con-  
ceive it) must, it seems, consist in a like Relation  
to its Properties. And thus, that must be the most  
perfect Substance which is the necessary Subject of  
the most excellent and perfect Properties.

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## C H A P. V.

**T**HE Necessity with which an original eternal  
Being exists, is, it seems, the Source of all  
the Knowledge we are directly capable of acquiring  
of its Nature. Therefore, since the Discovery of  
one Property of that Necessity (*viz.* its *Absoluteness*)  
has already led us to the Knowledge of the Su-  
preme Perfection or All-sufficiency of such a Being,  
it may not be amiss, before we proceed to a parti-  
cular Consideration of that Perfection, to enquire  
what other Property of original Necessity is dis-  
coverable by us.

When we reflect on the Necessity with which  
something ever existed, we find, that next to its  
*Absoluteness*, or *Independence*, nothing is more ob-  
vious to our Thoughts than its *Unity*.

That the mention'd Necessity of an original Be-  
ing was *One* as well as *Absolute*, is certain, because  
the internal Reason of it was *uniform*, and there-  
fore not necessary to more than one Being.

To

\* See Mr. *Locke* in the Beg. of his Chap. of *Infinity*.

To make this appear we need only to reflect, that though Something ever existed without a Cause, yet Nothing could exist without a *Reason* of its Existence ; and likewise that the Reason of the Existence and absolute Necessity of an eternal uncaus'd Being was ever included in its own Nature : Which Reason of absolutely necessary Existence, we have proved to be the utmost possible Perfection.

Now, that Perfection, which is the internal Reason of absolutely necessary Existence, is, and ever was uniform, and capable of existing in one and the same Being, and that therefore it could not be the absolutely necessary Reason of the Existence of more than one Being as its Subject, is certain. For there is no Inconsistence or Contrariety in Perfection. Perfection is only of Good ; of Evil there is no Perfection ; for Evil consists in Defect. Therefore an *Oromasdes* and *Arimanius* (which some have imagin'd to be two eternal Beings, who were the necessary Principles of Good and Evil) can have no Place in the Nature of Things.

It cannot indeed be denied, that the general Notion of Perfection includes Variety of Ideas, such as *Wisdom, Power, &c.* But then, this Variety, we may be assur'd, is uniform and consistent, and consequently could be no absolutely necessary Reason of the Existence of more than one eternal Being. Therefore to deify an *Apollo*, and an *Hercules*, or to make distinct Deities of *Wisdom* and *Power*, was to attempt to divide that Supreme Perfection, which was ever One and Undivided.

The Sum of the Argument is this :

Every Thing that exists must have a *Reason* (if not a *Cause*) of its Existence.

The Reason of the Existence of an eternal, absolutely necessary Being, is contained in its very Nature,

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ture, and is (as was proved) no less than the *utmost possible Perfection*.

Perfection is uniform, *i. e.* all possible Perfections agree in one common uniform Nature, or they agree in the general Nature and Notion of *Goodness*; which admits of no Inconsistence or Contrariety.

Since all possible Perfections agree in one common Nature, which admits of no Inconsistence or Contrariety, they could not necessarily require more than one original Subject; (or which is the same) they could not be an absolutely necessary Reason of the Existence of more than one eternal absolutely necessary Being.

Therefore to suppose more than one eternal absolutely necessary Being, is to suppose absolute Necessity of Existence, without an absolutely necessary Reason of it: Which is no less an Absurdity, than it would be to suppose an Effect without a Cause.

The Result of the whole is, that there is but one eternal absolute Necessity included in and founded on the utmost Perfection, and by Consequence but one eternal absolutely necessary Being, who is the Subject in which alone all possible Perfections and Degrees of Perfection are united, and from which all communicated Perfection flows.

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## C H A P. VI.

**B**Y discovering the Supreme Perfection of the one eternal independent Being in the general, we have laid a firm Foundation for some more particular Knowledge of that Super-eminent Nature. For since eternal absolute Necessity, being founded on Perfection, could not but admit of all the Variety included in the Nature of Perfection; as we cannot but ascribe to the eternal and most perfect Being, whatever Excellencies we are acquainted with,

with, so we are obliged to believe it may possess many others of which we have no Ideas. For certainly we need not imagine either our Natures or our Acquaintance with the World to be such, as to render our Ideas the adequate Measures of the Supreme Perfection. The utmost we are able to do, is to consider what Ideas compose the general Notion we have of Perfection, and in what Manner they are to be conceiv'd with reference to that Being which we are assured possesses the utmost possible Perfection.

But before we proceed to produce a Scheme of the particular Ideas which make up our general Notion of Perfection, it must be observ'd, that Perfection or Sufficiency may be consider'd, either with reference to the Being to which it belongs, or with respect to other Beings: Which will occasion a twofold Distribution of our Ideas of the Supreme or Divine Perfection.

I. Our Ideas of the Divine Perfection with reference to the Deity Himself, (or his *Self-sufficiency*) are of two Sorts, *viz.* either *Primary* or *Secondary*. Of the former Sort are,

1. *Self-activity*, or Vital Power.
2. *Intelligence*, or Self-Consciousness.
3. *Liberty*, or a free self-determining Power with regard to what is term'd External Action; in which it is the leading or first moving Principle.

These two last Ideas represent Powers which must be conceiv'd as founded on the vital Power or Self-activity.

'Tis, I confess, the usual Opinion, that the Divine Effective Power, in its full Latitude, is nothing else but a Power of Willing; or that to *will* and to *effect* are, with regard to the Deity, the very same. But with all due Submission, 'tis conceiv'd, that the Power of Willing, as it regards what is call'd External Action, includes an Ability not only of chu-

ing a particular Act, but likewise of determining some other Power to the Execution of it. And though we may, in certain Cases, have no other Idea of the Manner, of acting distinct from that of pure Willing or Chusing, yet Modesty will teach us to believe there may be more and more perfect Manners of Acting than we (who derive all our Ideas of Power from imperfect Agents) are acquainted with. And so much the rather, since our Idea of a mere Power of Willing or Chusing is too narrow to represent the Divine Effective Power; and consequently the Use of the Word *Will*, so as to signify either that Power or its Action, rather obscures than explains the Matter. For to us 'tis inconceivable how a pure Act of the Will can immediately produce or effect any thing. And accordingly *Vanimi* reckons it among the Absurdities which he says necessarily attend the Belief of a God, that we must, as usual, assert his Will and effective Power to be the same; but to proceed.

From these three primary Ideas of the Divine Perfection consider'd with regard to the Deity himself, result three others, which may be term'd *Secondary*.

1. *Spirituality*. Which is a complex Idea including the three primary ones.

2. *Constancy*, or Immutability. An Idea resulting from that of *Spirituality* consider'd as *Perfect*.

3. *Happiness*. An Idea necessarily resulting from the two last mentioned, and constituting, together with them, our Idea of the most perfect Being consider'd as he is in Himself.

II. The *Divine Perfection* or Sufficiency with regard to other Beings, may likewise be consider'd in a twofold Respect; with relation to Beings either merely *possible* or *actually existent*. In the former Respect it yields us three other Ideas, *viz.*

1. *Omnipotence* or Almighty Power. An Idea resulting chiefly from that of *Self-activity*.

2. *Wisdom*: Which Idea we derive from the Consideration of the Divine *Intelligence*.

3. *Omniscience*, or *Perfect Knowledge*. An Idea form'd chiefly by the Consideration of the Divine *Liberty*.

All these Ideas represent such Perfections as are usually term'd *natural*, as opposed to *moral*.

Correspondently to these three Ideas of the Divine Sufficiency with regard to other Beings consider'd as merely possible, there are three others which we derive from our considering it with regard to other Beings as actually existent, *viz.*

1. *Goodness* or *Benevolence*. An Idea chiefly resulting from the Consideration of the free Effects of *Omnipotence* in the *Creation* and *Sustentation* of the Universe.

2. *Government*. An Idea derived from our View both of the beautiful Order of the inanimate Parts of the World, and of the regular Frame and Management of the Irrational and Intelligent: Which are particularly consider'd as the Effects of Divine *Wisdom*. To this Idea are reducible those of *Holiness*, *Mercy*, *Justice*, and *Veracity*; as being Ideas derived from the Consideration of the Exercise of the Divine Wisdom in governing the World.

3. *Providence*, strictly so call'd. Which Idea we owe most immediately to the Exercise of *Omniscience*. I say most immediately; for the Wisdom and Power of the Eternal Being will appear to be likewise most brightly display'd in all his Acts of Providence.

These three last Ideas, with whatever Ideas they may include, denote no particular Perfections of the Divine Nature, but are Notions form'd in our Minds by the Consideration of the Exercise of the Divine Perfections with regard to the Creatures.

And these are the Ideas which represent such Attributes as are usually called *moral ones*.

From these three Ideas it is that we derive our Idea of the Divine *Omnipresence*; tho' most immediately from the first, *viz.* that of the Divine *Goodness* in creating and sustaining the World.

## C H A P. VII.

HAVING thus taken a View of our Ideas of the Supreme or Divine Perfection in such Order as they seem most naturally either to be comprehended in or to be deduced from the general Idea of Perfection, we may now proceed to consider them distinctly, and to the general Demonstration may add the Proofs of each in particular: Which will likewise be so many additional Proofs of the Existence of a God.

I. The first Idea included in our general Notion of Perfection, we observ'd to be *Self-activity*. Now, that the Eternal Being is vitally and independently active, appears not only from the general Notion or Idea of his Perfection, but had we form'd no such general Idea, would have been abundantly evident from the *Motion* we observe in the World.

If we believe our Senses, we cannot doubt of the Reality of Motion. But 'tis undeniable that the Motion we are sensible of, must have been either absolutely *uncaus'd*, or if caus'd, it must have been the *Effect* either of eternal Matter, or else of some eternal immaterial self-active Principle.

If absolutely *uncaus'd*, it must have been an eternal natural Property either of All Matter, or at least of some particular Portion or Portions of Matter.

If it was the *Effect* of *Eternal Matter*, it must have been either Temporal (or with Beginning,) or Eternal (or without Beginning.) If *Temporal*, it must



must have been begun by the Action of some free or indetermin'd elective Principle, essential either to the whole Mass of Matter, or at least to some particular Portion or Portions of it. If *Eternal*, it must have proceeded either from some Action of Matter bent towards some particular Point or Points, or else from some Action that was indifferent to every Side. All these Hypotheses will be comprehended and explained under the following Propositions.

1. *The Motion we perceive in the World was not absolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal natural Property either of all Matter, or of any of its Parts.*

By *Matter*, or *Body*, I understand the Substance of which all the Parts of the visible Universe consist. These we know to be made up of a Multitude of solid, moveable, and divisible Particles, having (as well as the greater Parts) an Aptitude to communicate Motion by Impulse. But whether any other Properties belong either to the whole Mass of Matter, or to any of its Parts, is disputed.

As for *Motion*, 'tis a simple Idea, and therefore neither needs nor admits Explanation.

That Motion was not absolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal natural Property of *All Matter*, may appear from the following Reflexions.

*First*, It has been already prov'd, that a Being that was eternal and absolutely uncaus'd, must have been absolutely necessary, or of such a Nature as render'd it an absolute Contradiction for it to cease to be. Now 'tis clear, that this both was and is equally true of whatever is positive and natural to such a Being; for as much as it cannot but *be* with the very same Necessity as is the Being to which it belongs. If then both the Motion of Matter and its Direction were natural to it and absolutely uncaus'd, it clearly follows that they ever had and ever will have an absolutely necessary Connection with Matter. Whereas on the contrary, though it

should be admitted that not a Particle in the Universe is absolutely at Rest, yet 'tis certain that Matter and Motion, and Motion and its particular Direction, have no such necessary or essential Connection with each other, as will be shewn under the third Proposition.

Again, if Motion was absolutely uncaus'd, or an eternal absolutely necessary natural Property of All Matter, it follows that it was necessary to every Particle of Matter in the same Degree without any Variety. For since there is nothing in Nature capable of inferring any Variety in original Necessity, but only Perfection, on which it was founded, and which likewise infers its Unity, 'tis clear that all the Particles of Matter, and their Properties, if suppos'd to have been uncaus'd, and to have existed by a Necessity not founded on Perfection, (which Necessity must have been not only One but absolutely Simple) must be asserted to have been without the least Variety.

But if Motion was necessary to every Particle of Matter in the same Degree without the least Variety, 'tis clear that every Particle must have moved alike. Both comparative Rest and Increase of Velocity must have been equally impossible. A constant Uniformity must have display'd itself throughout universal Nature ; and there could have been no Difference between the Motion of a Mote or Dust in the Sun beams and that of a Whirlwind.

And then as for the latter Part of this Proposition, *viz.* *That Motion was no eternal natural Property of any particular Part or Parts of Matter ;* 'tis no less manifest. For since original Necessity, whether conceiv'd as founded on Perfection or not, must, as we just now observ'd, be suppos'd to have been ever *one*, it follows,\* that if the Parts and Properties of Matter existed by one and the same Necessity, 'tis absurd to imagine any of those Parts to have necessarily possess'd a Property which another  
Part

Part as necessarily wanted. For this is to conceive the one eternal Necessity to have been different, even while it is supposed to have been the same.

2. *Motion was not a temporal Effect produced by eternal Matter by virtue of any free elective Principle essential either to the whole Mass of Matter, or to any of its Parts.*

That such a free Principle of Action (if any such) must have been essential to all Matter, or an absolutely necessary Property of the whole Mass, is manifest from the Principles already establish'd. For the one absolute eternal Necessity (however conceiv'd) could admit of no Difference of Properties in different Parts of Matter. This, by the Way, destroys the Supposition of an eternal material *Soul of the World*.

But though some Atheistical Materialists have thought fit to bestow the Property of Intelligence either on the whole Mass of Matter (as did *Spinoza*,) or on every distinct Particle of it (as Mr. *Hobbes* seems to have done,) yet none ever asserted either the Whole or any Part of it, to possess an essential Liberty or Freedom of Action; without which there could have been no Production or Beginning of Motion. And indeed, as we just now observ'd, had they been inclined to ascribe Freedom of Action but to any one Part of Matter, they would have been obliged to ascribe the same Freedom to all: Which had they done, they could not have fail'd of a Confutation from every Man's Experience.

3. *Motion was not an eternal Effect of Matter by virtue of any Action bent towards some particular Point or Points.*

That an eternal or necessary Action (if the Cause of Motion) could not but be invariably bent towards one particular Point, is clear. For since the Power from which the Action is supposed to have

eternally or necessarily proceeded, could not but act as well as exist with one and the same immutable Necessity, it follows that its Action could admit of no Difference or Change of Directions. This absolutely destroys the *Chance* of *Epicurus*.

And though any Man should suppose the imaginary eternal Matter to have been intelligent; yet this could have made no Difference. For if both the Action and its Direction were necessary or immutable, they could not but absolutely exclude a self-determining Power (or a Power of differently directing the Action) from their Subject; without which, Intelligence could effect nothing.

But I conceive 'tis sufficiently demonstrable, that there could be no such thing as a proper eternal Effect of any Cause. For since whatever was eternal, was necessary; and since the Necessity with which an original eternal Being existed was perfectly one and uniform, it follows that it could not admit of such an eternal or necessary Distinction as that of Cause and Effect. For whatever uniform Distinction or Variety was included in the Nature of Perfection, this we may be assured was not; both because Liberty is a Perfection, and to be an Effect, or to be essentially dependent, is a great Imperfection.

Notwithstanding this, some (who had no Notion of the Perfection of the original Being) have not fail'd to make Motion an eternal Effect of a suppos'd eternal Action of Matter immutably bent to descend, but with Variety of Inclinations or Directions. Such Action was the *Gravitation* of the *Epicureans*: Which we shall briefly consider.

'Tis well known to have been the Opinion of *Epicurus*, and other ancient and modern Materialists, that every Atom or Particle of Matter necessarily or immutably possesses a certain determinate Gravity or Weight independent of any other Being; which

which Gravity, by its Action of Gravitation, they supposed to have been the eternal or necessary Cause of Motion; though at the same time they absurdly imagin'd *Chance* to have been, as it were, the Director of Motion.

Concerning these Philosophers, we may, in the first place, observe, that whatever Order they suppos'd between Gravitation and Motion as Cause and Effect, they yet conceiv'd them to have been both necessary. Consequently, the Arguments produced under the first of these Propositions, against the Necessity of Motion, are of equal Force here. But because the *Epicurean* Hypothesis has formerly met with some Entertainment in the World, I shall give it a few Thoughts, and shall proceed to shew, in the first Place, that there is no such Principle as Gravity immutably and independently inherent in Matter or Bodies.

'Tis, I take it, past all Doubt, not only that the Gravitation of Bodies situate *without* the Surface of the Earth, decreases with respect to the *Center* in Proportion to the *Increase* of their Distance from the *Surface*, but likewise that, on the contrary, the Gravitation of Bodies placed *within* the *Surface*, decreases, in the same Respect, according to the *Decrease* of their Distance from the Center. From which, and divers other Observations, it is allow'd to be sufficiently clear.

*First*, That there is a mutual Gravitation, or Tendency, not only of all the Parts of the Earth, but of the nearest Heavenly Bodies; and by Consequence, as far as our Observation reaches, of all the Parts of Matter towards each other.

*Secondly*, That the Gravitation of Bodies is either more or less in an exact Proportion to their own real Quantity, and to the Quantity and Distance of the Bodies toward which they tend.

How different this Gravitation is from that necessary Tendency to *descend*, which *Epicurus* bestow'd on each of his Atoms, is evident.

According to these Principles, 'tis easy to conceive, that, contrary to the vulgar Opinion, supposing a Passage through the Diameter of the Earth, a Stone or other ponderous Body descending, would lose of its Velocity, or Swiftnes, in Proportion to its nearer Approach to the Center. And thus moving still slower, according to the Decrease of its Gravitation towards the Center, it would at last remain without any further predominant Tendency towards any particular Point; as being surrounded by an equal Quantity of Matter on all Sides. The like would happen to any lesser Body moving into the middle Space between two or more such Bodies as our Earth, consisting of equal Quantities of Matter; or into the Space between two or more such Bodies of unequal Quantities, fixed at a proportionable Inequality of Distance.

But if the Gravitation and Motion of Bodies be so variable through Variety of Situations, this is enough to demonstrate them not to have been eternal or necessary Effects of any Principle independently inherent in every Atom or Particle of Matter (for as much as such a Principle could not admit of Variety of Directions, but must have acted uniformly or alike in all Situations) but to be Effects entirely dependent on some other Cause.

But admitting (according to the *Epicurean* Hypothesis) that Gravity was a necessary independent Property of every Atom; yet it may be affirmed impossible it should have been the Cause of that Variety of Motions which we experience in Nature. For 'tis demonstrable that the Principle and Laws of Gravitation (whatever they may be) since they must be allow'd, if eternal, to be uniform and invariable, could never have been subject to *Chance*, so as to  
have

have become the Cause of various and contrary Motions ; such as may be observ'd in the present System of Things. For Instance, the projectile Motions of divers of the great Bodies of the Universe, tending to describe *Circles* or *Ellipses*, and the Central Motions of their several Parts, tending always to *Streight Lines*.

4. *Motion was not an eternal Effect of Matter produced by virtue of any Action that was indifferent to every Side.*

That such an indifferently determinable eternal Action cannot with Reason be supposed, even tho' Matter should be supposed to be intelligent, is clear from the Uniformity or Invariableness of eternal or necessary Action, already proved.

But supposing such an eternal Action of Matter as was and is indifferent to every Side, (and supposing the Agent (with the *Epicurean* Atheist) to have been *unintelligent*) how could this have been the Cause of the Motion we experience in the World ?

If we take a View of the Heavenly Bodies, we shall see with what an exact and constant Regularity they perform their respective Revolutions. Even the Motions of *Comets*, which, till of late, have seem'd the Extravagancies and Enormities of Nature, do now appear to be regular and reducible to such an *Ellipsis* whose Sides approach very near a *Parabola*. And the seemingly confus'd Positions of the *Planets* may be sufficiently accounted for from the different Wideness of their Orbits ; in describing which they all revolve the same Way with the greatest Exactness. But among these, the *Moon*, the most expos'd to our View, is particularly remarkable ; whose Revolutions about the Earth and her own *Axis* are so nicely adjusted, that they are both performed in the same Compass of Time. By which admirable Harmony of the two Motions, it happens that she always presents the same Side to our

our Eyes, while one Motion continually turns her *from* the Earth, and the other *towards* it, in the same Proportion.

And should we confine our Observation to the *Earth* which we inhabit, besides the several Motions of the entire Globe (which are no less exact and regular) we may observe its several Parts, as if animated by one common Soul, constantly and uniformly tending towards one common Center. But such Constancy and such Uniformity are as absolutely irreconcilable to the Opinion of a Principle of Motion which is unintelligent, and yet indifferent to every Side, as the former Instances of Variety and Contrariety (under the last Proposition) are to that of a Principle of Motion invariably determin'd to one Side.

If, after all, any Man should object, that perhaps Motion was neither absolutely uncaus'd, nor yet the Effect of any active Principle essential to Matter, but a mere *Passion* communicated from one Part of Matter to another in an eternal Circulation, as *Hobbes* and *Spinoza* imagin'd, this is certainly the most unreasonable Supposition of any.

To prove this Assertion, we shall not need to repeat what we observ'd when we shew'd the Impossibility of the Eternity of Motion. 'Twill be sufficient to add this one Observation, *viz.* That in the Case of such an eternal Circulation, there is neither any external Agent suppos'd, which might be the proper Cause of the Motion, nor any intrinsic Reason of it in the Bodies moved; but the Bodies are conceiv'd, in a manner purely passive, to transfer that Motion to each other, which none of them in particular either possess'd with an absolute Necessity in its own Nature, or derived from the Power of any proper Agent whatsoever. But what is this but to suppose Motion to exist without either a proper Cause, or so much as a Reason of its Existence; which is absurd to the last Degree.



If then the Motion of Matter be absolutely unaccountable by any of these Hypotheses, (which yet are all that the Enemies of Religion either have proposed or can propose or imagine) 'tis manifest that Matter is no original self-active Being, but that its Motion must have been begun by some Principle essentially distinct, or by some *immaterial Agent*, who is necessarily existent, and, as such, perfectly *self-active*. Of the Notion of an immaterial Being, we shall treat particularly in the *Appendix*.

II. The next Conception contain'd in the general Idea of the eternal Being, consider'd as He is in Himself, is *Intelligence* or *Self-consciousness*.

This Idea, as likewise the Idea of *Liberty*, or Free self-determining Power, we are naturally led to by the Consideration of the Idea of *Self-activity*. For Self-activity, or mere vital Power, could be no sufficient Principle of beginning external Action without Self-consciousness and Self-determination, *i. e.* without both *Intelligence* and *Liberty*.

By *Intelligence*, as natural to the eternal Being, and as importing no more than Self-consciousness, is meant a *perfect Perception* or *Knowledge of his own most perfect Nature*.

That the eternal Being was naturally or necessarily a perceptive or self-conscious Being, will more fully appear from the following Reasoning.

If Motion had a Beginning (as has been already demonstrated) 'tis evident that the original Cause of Motion was a thinking perceptive Being; for as much as nothing could immediately qualify him to begin to act but a free self-determining Principle included in his own Nature. For without such a self-determining Principle, if originally in any Respect unactive, he would necessarily or essentially have remained so. But Self-determination, which is the Result of such a self-determining Principle, could not be without a preceding *Perception* both of the

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the Power of Acting, and of the Difference of Acts ; since 'tis certain, that no Being can be said freely (or without Necessitation) to determine a Power which it knows nothing of, to an Act of which it has no Perception. But Perception necessarily implies *Intelligence* or *Self-consciousness*.

III. Another Conception included in the general Idea of the Eternal Being in Himself consider'd, is *Liberty* : By which is meant a *perfect Freedom of external Action*, or of such Action as regards other Beings.

In the general Notion of Liberty is comprehended a Power both of choosing and determining, exempt from all external irresistible Force, and internal invincible Defects.

Our Idea of the Divine Liberty in particular we are directed to form (as was hinted before) by the Consideration of the two preceding Ideas of the Divine Perfection. For as the Idea of perfect Self-activity excludes the Influence of all imaginable Force and Defects, so that of a perfect Intelligence not only includes a Power of Perceiving, but infers likewise a Power of Choosing and Determining accordingly : Without which neither Self-activity nor Intelligence could be a sufficient Principle of Action.

Thus, the Arguments by which we proved the Self-activity and Intelligence of the Eternal Being, are no less sufficient Proofs of his Liberty : Which will save us the Pains of adding any thing here upon this Head.

But because the Idea of Liberty admits of some accidental Variety, according to the Diversity of its Subjects and their several States ; and because 'tis no small Difficulty to determine how far its Notion may agree to particular Agents and Acts ; we shall here attempt an Explanation : And in so doing we shall, as on other Occasions, with all Submission, take our own Measures, without following any

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Track but that which we conceive is made by the Footsteps of Truth.

That we may the better apprehend the Nature of such Liberty as is agreeable to the most perfect of Beings, it cannot be amiss, first, to form a Notion of such as may agree to our selves, as far as it regards external Action. To which End it will perhaps be necessary to distinguish the several Acts of our Minds with reference to Liberty of external Action, in their natural Order.

*First* then, We perceive an Object, whether it be Thing or Action. Then we judge of its Agreeableness or Disagreeableness, Fitness or Unfitness. These are Acts of Understanding.

Then we either approve (or acquiesce in) our Judgment of it (*viz.* by an interveening Deliberation) or else disapprove it. These are mix'd Acts of the Understanding and Will.

In the next place, we either Chuse or Refuse, *i. e.* we either single out the Object in order to Practice, or else we reject it. And *lastly*, we either determine our Practice with reference to the Object, according to this Choice, or else we resolve to remain unactive: Which are all pure Acts of the Will.

Hence it appears, that tho' every Free Act includes Choice, yet what we here call *Choice*, is that particular Act only whereby we single out the Object for Practice.

By not well distinguishing these several Acts of the Mind, we are apt to bewilder our selves in our Enquiries into human Liberty; more especially by our considering the Approbation and the Choice of the Object, as also the Choice of the Object, and the Determination of the Practice accordingly, as inseparable.

These Things being premised, we shall endeavour an Account of Human Liberty in the following Propositions; by which not only its Reality,

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but its Distinction from that of the Deity, will, 'tis conceiv'd, sufficiently appear.

1. 'Tis plain that no Being can be denominated a Free Agent, but what is furnish'd not only with a Power of Perceiving, Judging, and Choosing, but likewise of Determining its consequent Acts (or Practice) according to its Perception, Judgment, and Choice.

2. In order to the completing of Liberty or Freedom, 'tis necessary that the Perception, Judgment, and Choice, as well as the consequent Acts, be exempt from the Immediate irresistible Influence of any External Force.

For though a Man can do whatever he wills or chooses to do, yet is he not compleatly free, unless he be as free to will or choose as he is to practise.

3. 'Tis further requisite to the completing of Liberty, that the Perception, Judgment, Choice, and consequent Acts, be exempt even from the Mediate, irresistible Influence of any such Force. For 'tis certain that all these may be exempt from the immediate Influence of any Force, and yet may, at the same Instant, be necessitated. Thus, if a Person of a deprav'd Imagination chuses to leap into a River, mistaking it for a beautiful Meadow, none, I suppose, will say he was compleatly free; since 'tis clear his Perception and Judgment were under the remote Influence of an external Force, viz. of the original Cause of his Distemper. And thus, a Malefactor, who has several Sorts of Death propos'd to his Choice, though his Choice be so far free as not to be immediately fix'd to any one Sort, yet there is still such an external Force, as effectually, though remotely, determines both his Choice and Practice.

4. Human Liberty can't yet be complete without a Freedom from the Invincible Byass of all internal mental Defects. For though the Perception, Judgment, Choice, and consequent Acts, be exempt from the  
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mediate as well as immediate irresistible Influence of any external Force, yet the Choice may be far from being completely free. Thus a Person of a mean Capacity, in a Case of Difficulty, wherein the *apparent Good* is clear and evident to Sense, but the *real Good* is the Object of Reason only, and no otherwise to be discovered than by an accurate Search and laborious Deduction; though he be not subject to the Influence of any external Force, and though he deliberately choose and determine his Action to the apparent Good, yet can't be said to have been completely free. For his Incapacity was as effectual an Impediment as an external Force could have been.

5. *The several Degrees of Liberty already mentioned, can't yet render Human Liberty complete, in our imperfect State and Circumstances, without the Accession of a Freedom of not Acting as well as of Acting, even after the clearest Perception, and the most deliberate and unbyass'd Choice.* For we find by Experience, that notwithstanding all the Requisites of Liberty, already mentioned, an imperfect Agent, like our selves, may be in such a State that he can't be reputed completely free. Thus a Person suddenly seiz'd with a Palsy, and chusing to remain where he is, though his Stay be voluntary, and the Result of such a Perception, Choice, and Self-determination, as no Force nor any Impediment influenc'd; yet 'tis clear, that being Paralytick, he was not free to remove.

This makes it appear, that a Power of *Acting* or *not Acting*, even after Choice, (by virtue of another intervening Choice) is that which is most essential to human Liberty in our present State, which we shall prove to be a State of Tryal, and that our Liberty does not entirely consist in a *Spontaneity*, or *Voluntariness*, as some imagin. For what is done voluntarily (or with Choice) may yet be as necessary, as

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what is done with the greatest Reluctance. The Choice may be irresistibly determin'd by an external Force, or effectually influenc'd by an internal Impediment. And supposing it free, yet it can't alone denominate the Agent free; whose consequent Action may still be necessitated or determin'd by some external Agent. Nor can a free Choice, join'd with a Liberty of Determining and Executing that only which happens to be in our Power, when the contrary was naturally as much in our Power, denominate us free; for if so, the Paralytick we lately mention'd might as well be reputed free, as a Person who has the Use of his Limbs. There must therefore be a self-determining Power capable of Acting or not Acting even after the clearest Perception and freest Choice, with reference to Things within the Capacities of Human Nature; *i. e.* there must still be a Power of refusing and chusing anew, capable of determining the Practice, either by exerting or not exerting an Ability to act according to that Refusal or Choice.

6. *Though a previous Determination and Necessity (as far as they extend) are ever inconsistent with Liberty, yet they are not always inconsistent with Perfection.* The Reason is, because Liberty, or Indetermination, is not, in every Case, a Perfection; and because Determination and Necessity may sometimes proceed from Perfection. For Instance, though in the Cases aforementioned, *viz.* either of an immediate or mediate Influence from somewhat extrinsical, or of internal Hindrance from Defects, the Determination and Necessity resulting from thence are Proofs of the Imperfection of the Subject, yet there is another Necessity in all intelligent Beings, proceeding from none of these Causes, but purely from the greater or lesser Perfection of their Natures: And by Consequence, an absolute Freedom from such Necessity (was it possible) would be an Imperfection.

fection. Thus, when I reflect upon what passes in my own Mind, I can't but observe a necessary Inclination to my own proper Good or Benefit in the general (as the End of all my Actions;) and when I set my self to consider any Good or Evil in particular, in order to obtain the one, or avoid the other, I find (if my Capacity and Means of Information be sufficient) I can't but necessarily judge of it as it is in Reality.

That such Necessity as is included in these Instances is no Imperfection, but rather a great Perfection, is, I think, too clear to be doubted. For 'tis the unavoidable Result of the Exercise of Reason; which is questionless a Perfection. And notwithstanding such Necessity, yet the antecedent Power we are conscious we have, in all ordinary Cases, either of determining or not determining our Thoughts to the Consideration of any particular Object in order to Practice, join'd with a subsequent Power of deliberating, and sometimes varying our Judgment in Cases not self-evident, as well as of suspending and varying our Approbation, Choice and Practice, even after the exactest Deliberation and truest Judgment, will sufficiently prove, that our Actions are under no universal fatal Determination, either from the Objects that affect us, or from any other Cause. I say we are conscious of these Powers within our selves. For I think I may appeal to any considering Man, whether he be not in all ordinary Cases, sensible of an Ability of darting his Thoughts upon any particular Object, even antecedently to any Deliberation; and then, whether after Deliberation about particular Objects, he can't reassume his Deliberation, and sometimes vary his Judgment; and whether, after the clearest Judgment, and most deliberate Choice of particular Things or Actions, he be not still conscious of a Power of suspending his Practice, of reassuming the Consideration of the Objects when-

ever he pleases, or of immediately chusing and practising the contrary. But we have no clearer Proof, even of our Existence, than Conscioufness : And I conceive we need not expect greater Evidence of any Thing, than we have of our Existence. So that if we duly reflect, we can't but find enough in our own Minds to convince us, that the proper Spring of Action is within our selves, and capable of exerting itself by its own native Force, though usually excited and sometimes determined by Things without us.

From what has been observ'd, it is manifest, that our Notion of Human Liberty, in the present State, is then only complete, when it includes a sufficient Perception and a Judgment determin'd only by the Nature and Circumstances of the Object, without the irresistible Influence either of external Force or internal Defects ; preceded by an indetermin'd Ability of considering and deliberating, and follow'd by a like indetermin'd Ability either of approving or not approving, chusing or not chusing, acting or not acting accordingly.

This Description of human Liberty reflects some Light upon the Nature of *Guilt*, or Obligation to Punishment, which hereby appears naturally to result from the Abuse of Liberty, either in our neglecting the possible and most conducive Means in order to our Information, antecedently to our Judgment of any Action ; or else from a like Abuse of Liberty consequent to our Judgment, in approving, chusing, or practising that or a different Action either rashly or obstinately. For as for the pure Act of Judging, since 'tis necessarily determin'd by the Object as it appears to us, 'tis clear we can't be culpable merely on that Account.

By this it likewise appears, that Human Liberty, in its full Latitude, is not the Attribute of any particular Act, Power or Faculty, but is the Property  
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of the Agent or Man. For though the Judgment, Approbation, Choice, and Determination to Action be exempt from the fatal Influence of any external Force or internal Defect, yet if the Agent be not capable of Not approving, Not chusing and executing even what is really best, as well as of approving, chusing and executing it, these mention'd Degrees of Liberty can be no sufficient Principle of Action in our imperfect State and Circumstances, or as we are subject to Laws as Trials of Obedience.

By the Consideration of such Liberty as is agreeable to ourselves in our particular State and Capacity, we shall now be the better qualify'd to form some Conception of that which is suitable to the Idea of the eternal Being. In order to which, I think we may lay it down for a Principle, *That the Nature of Liberty in all capable Beings is the same, allowing only for such accidental Diversity as may proceed from the different States and Perfection of its Subjects.*

Now to discover wherein the Perfection and peculiar State of the Eternal Being may have occasioned his Liberty to differ from that of our selves, and other imperfect Agents, we may here recollect what we before observ'd when we discours'd of Human Liberty, *viz.* That all Determination and Necessity is not inconsistent with Perfection, but that on the contrary, there is ever an immediate Determination both of the Agent to Good in general, and of the Judgment by the Nature and Circumstances of the Objects when duly perceiv'd (under the Notion of Good) in particular. To which we may add, what we likewise hinted before, *viz.* That the more constant and uniform the Determination even of the consequent Acts is to that which is really better, (proceeding from an internal Principle of Perfection, and not from any external Influence) the more

perfect is the Agent's Liberty, as may hereafter appear.

Agreeably to this, it will, 'tis conceiv'd, be manifest, that the Difference between the Liberty of the Eternal Being, and that of ourselves and other imperfect Agents, must chiefly consist in the Constancy and Uniformity of the Determination, not only of his Judgment, but of all his consequent Acts, to what is really better. This is the undoubted Result of the Supreme Perfection of his Nature. For as where the Understanding is never deceiv'd by false Colours and Appearances, there the Judgment can't but be always right ; so where no irregular Passions, nor any imaginable Impediments intervene between the Judgment, Choice, and Execution, there all the consequent Acts can't but be perpetually agreeable to the right Judgment.

The constant uniform Determination of the Deity with Reference to his consequent Action, must be conceiv'd to discover itself in two several Respects : Both in Respect to his *Manner of Acting*, and to certain of his *Acts*.

*First*, It can't but discover itself in his *Manner of Acting*. For Instance, the very Nature of the most perfect of Beings can't but immutably determine him when he acts, to act wisely and regularly. When he inclines to external Action, (*i. e.* to *Action* which has a Reference to other Beings) he can no more fail to chuse the best End, and to employ the fittest or most conducive Means, than he can to understand them. For that there is a Fitness and Unfitness in the Natures or Circumstances of Things and Actions, will be undeniably clear from what shall be observed hereafter.

This makes it appear how the Divine Action may, notwithstanding the most perfect Liberty, proceed from a Principle as constant and uniform as the suppos'd *Stoical* Fate it self. And this, by Consequence,

quence, shows the necessary Connexion of the moral Attributes of the Deity (such as Justice, Mercy, &c.) with the natural ones (his Self-activity, Intelligence, Liberty, &c.) in the present State of Things. For though these moral Attributes denote no particular Perfections of the Divine *Nature*, but only such relative Ideas of our Minds as result from the Consideration of the Divine *Actions* with Reference to ourselves and other Beings, as will be shewn; yet since the natural Perfections, which are the Principles of those Divine Acts, are immutable both in themselves and in their Manner of Acting, we may infallibly conclude, that whenever the Deity inclines to act, his Actions must constantly come under those Denominations.

'Tis to be confess'd, that in an Agent subject to Laws, and in a State of Tryal, such constant natural Determination to the best Method of chusing and practising, would, as we hinted before, be inconsistent with his State and Circumstances. For since such a State supposes a Possibility of the contrary Acts, *viz.* of Obedience and Disobedience, 'tis clear that the Liberty which agrees to it must, even after the Perception of the Obligation and Judgment of the Duty requir'd, still include an Indetermination with Reference to the consequent Acts. For without this, the Imposition of Laws as Trials of Obedience, would seem impertinent, and Rewards and Punishments could have no Place; since 'tis manifest, that where-ever Rewards and Punishments take Place, they must be dispens'd on account of somewhat which was originally in the Subject's Power either to do or omit.

But though such an Indetermination, with Reference to Acts consequent on the Judgment, be that which is essential to the Liberty of an Agent subject to a Trial of Obedience to the Laws of a superior Being,

Being, yet it is merely accidental to Liberty in general, and far from being in itself a Perfection.

*Again,* The constant uniform Determination of the Deity must be conceiv'd to discover itself not only with Respect to his Manner of Acting, but with reference to certain of his *Acts*. Thus for Instance: Since the Deity could not but be ever conscious of the Perfections of his adorable Nature (his Omnipotence, Wisdom, &c.) consequently, he could not but know it was fitter those Perfections should be exercis'd, than that they should eternally remain unemploy'd. Therefore, since (as was observ'd) his Choice cannot but follow his Perception of what is fitter, and his consequent Acts cannot but be ever agreeable to his Choice; it plainly follows that he could never be indetermin'd with Reference to external Action. Yet this could not hinder but that his external Action, though proceeding from such Determination, might still be in the most perfect Manner free: Inasmuch as it was no Determination from any external Force nor internal Defect, but the pure Result of his own essential Perfection, and executed when and in such Order as it pleas'd him. For that the Eternal Being might have created the World Millions of Ages sooner, (*i. e.* might have caus'd it to have been of a vastly longer Duration than it actually is) is undeniable. And that he, who was absolutely independent of the Creatures, might have observ'd a very different Order in some Respects, and yet in sufficient Consistence with his great Design, is not to be doubted; since in many Cases different Methods are equally suitable and conducive; and different Species of Creatures may be in all Respects of equal Fitness and Capacity. So that, with Reference to the Beginning, Order, and particular Acts and Objects of Creation, the Deity was ('tis humbly conceiv'd) under no original Determination; though  
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with Respect to the *Act of Creation in general*, he appears to have been ever determin'd by his own essential Perfection. But of this more will be said anon.

Besides, by some previous Act that was completely free, we may conceive him sometimes to contract a consequent immutable Determination to some particular future Act. For Example, in the Case of an absolute Promise, tho' the Engagement may be completely free, yet the Performance, with all its natural Consequences, can't but become necessary to the Deity. For that such Determination is very consistent with the divine Liberty, is manifest: Since so perfectly wise a Being, who is fully acquainted with the Relations and Dependencies of Things, can't be conceiv'd to oblige himself to the Performance of any thing without a particular Regard to all its natural and necessary Consequences. Which makes it evident, that in such a Case, these are no less the Effects of his Liberty, than the Engagement from whence they proceeded.

From what has been observ'd, we may now be assist'd to form some Idea of the Divine Perfection with Regard to *Liberty*, by concluding, *That though the most perfect of Beings was ever Free, or under no eternal Determination to any particular external Act, (since neither his own Nature, nor the Influence of any other Being appears to have occasioned such Determination; ) yet his essential Perfection may well be suppos'd to have ever determin'd him to external Action in general, and that in the fittest and most suitable Manner: And not only so, but that, in the present Scene of Things, a previous Act, to which he was in no Respect oblig'd or determin'd, may be conceiv'd sometimes to occasion a consequent Determination and Necessity with reference to other particular Acts, without Prejudice to his Liberty.*

'Tis easy to remark, that this Description of the divine Liberty cannot easily be reconcil'd with a certain current Opinion ; I mean that of *particular eternal Decrees*. 'Twill therefore be necessary to give it a few Thoughts.

I persuade my self, 'tis a Matter of no great Difficulty to make it appear, that this Opinion has no solid Foundation in *Scripture*. For as to those Texts which are usually produc'd to prove the Eternity of certain particular Decrees, they'll perhaps appear to be insufficient. Thus, the Texts which speak of *Election before the Foundation of the World*, can be of little weight to such who think it no necessary Article of Faith to believe that this inferior World was the earliest Work of the Eternal Omnipotent Being ; and who are convinc'd that either this or any other Part of the Universe, might have been of a much ancients Date than it actually is, without being Eternal. And as for that other Text which is usually produc'd, 2 *Tim.* i. 9, where *Grace* is said to have been given *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων*, *ante Tempora Seculorum*, or before the Times of Ages (as *Beza* renders it.) I suppose few will doubt, but that the natural Sense of the Phrase is that which our *English* Translation assigns it, *viz. before the World began* : The Times of Ages being properly no other than the Duration of this inferior World, which consists of a Succession of Ages and Generations. That this is the genuine Interpretation, may further appear by comparing *Rom.* xvi. 25. with *Col.* i. 26. In the former Text the Apostle speaking of the Mystery of the Gospel which was then revealed, informs us that it was hid *χρόνους αἰώνων*, *from the Times of Ages*, or *since the World began*, as the *English* renders it. Agreeably to which Interpretation, the same Apostle, in the latter Text, speaking of the same reveal'd Mystery, calls it *the Mystery which was hid from Ages and Generations*, i. e. from the Beginning

ning of Ages and Generations ; or, which is the same, *since the World began*. Which makes it most evident, that this Proof can import no more to the present Purpose, than the other we consider'd above. The like may be said of that Text, where Mention is made of the *Eternal Purpose of God*, Ephes. iii. 11. *Πρόθεσις τῶν αἰώνων*, or *the Purpose of Ages*, as it is in the Original, which may signify either that it hath endured ever since the World began, or that it shall endure as long as the World continues. And when the Apostle speaks of the *Blood διαθήκης αἰώνις of the Covenant of Ages*, Heb. xiii. 20. we need not, perhaps, understand it in any other Sense than the former Texts.

Nor are the Proofs of the Eternity of particular Decrees borrow'd from *Reason* of greater Force, tho' of greater Subtilty ; which we shall briefly consider.

*First*, Some have attempted a Proof of the Eternity of particular Decrees, from the suppos'd Necessity or Eternity of certain Truths. Which reputed eternal Truths are of two Sorts. Some are said to refer to the *Essences* of Things ; others to their *Existence* and *Actions*. Of the former Sort are such as these in the Mathematicks, *A Circle hath equal Diameters, Two and Three are equal to Five* ; and in short, all Propositions of any Kind, whose Predicates are of the Essence of their Subjects. Of the latter Sort are all such Propositions as relate to Things or Actions not yet in Being ; such as these, *The Sun will exist, Socrates will dispute*. Which Propositions, since (as is usually imagin'd) they never began to be true, some are apt to conclude, must have deriv'd an eternal Verity (or Truth) from certain particular eternal Decrees of God.

But *First*, as for such reputed eternal Truths as concern the *Essences* of created Things, 'twill perhaps appear, that these were no distinct, necessary or

or eternal Truths, but only particular contingent Determinations of this one general eternal or necessary Truth, (in which they were but virtually included) viz. *That which is the same is not different, or, Nothing can be diverse from itself.* Which general Truth is the Basis or Foundation of all Science, and has an immediate Connection with the *Existence* of the eternal or necessarily-existent Being, without the least Dependence on his *Decree*. For it never was more necessarily true that the Deity existed, than it was that he could not be diverse from Himself.

To prove this, we may first observe, that the Sense of these Propositions, *A Circle hath equal Diameters, Two and Three are equal to Five*, and the like, is in itself identical; and they can amount to no more than these, *A Circle is nothing else but a Circle, Two and Three are not different from Two and Three.* For since a *Figure with equal Diameters* signifies the very same with a *Circle*, and *Five* is nothing different from *Two and Three*, 'tis manifest, that in these and the like Propositions, there's no real Difference between the Extremes, and by Consequence no proper Relation of Equality between Subject and Property, as is usually imagin'd, but a real and proper Identity. For though these and the like Propositions add to our Knowledge by a clearer Discovery of the same Idea, and are therefore very different (with respect to us) from such other identical Propositions wherein one and the same Idea is affirm'd of itself without Distinction of Words, yet (in themselves consider'd) they are equally identical: Since the Idea signify'd by the Predicate is the same which is signify'd by the Subject; only with this Difference, that the Predicate expresses it more clearly, or with some Modification which was not particularly express'd by the Subject.



So that this Argument amounts at last to no more than this, *viz.* That because in the general it appears that every Being which at any Time exists, has of Necessity a peculiar Nature, or is necessarily the same with it self, and distinct from all others, therefore it was eternally and particularly decreed it should be so.

But, I take it, 'tis a ridiculous Thing to imagine a particular eternal Decree was requisite, in order to bestow a necessary or eternal Truth on these important Propositions, *A Circle is a Circle, and not a Triangle, Two and Three are Five, and not an Hundred,* and the like. For whatever Necessity belongs to these Truths, is plainly no other than what is included in that eternal universal Truth we mention'd before : Which Truth (as we observ'd) was not deriv'd from any Divine Decree, but had a necessary immediate Connection with the Divine Existence and Nature itself. And as for the particular Determinations or Applications of that eternal universal Truth by the divine Decrees and productive Power either to the Essence or to the Existence of those or any other created Subjects ; they were not necessary, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, but merely contingent. For as nothing necessarily existed unproduc'd but the divine Nature, whose Non-existence was a Contradiction in it self ; so Nothing can with Reason be affirmed to have been necessarily decreed and produc'd, but such Beings whose Non-production was a Contradiction to the *Divine Nature*. But what particular Being or Sort of Beings dare we affirm to be of such a Nature, as that it was a Contradiction to the divine Nature not to have decreed and produc'd it, or (which is the same) that the Deity could not have been Himself, had he not created it ? 'Tis freely confess'd, that all the Creatures of God are in themselves good. But we know there are Degrees of Perfection among 'em ; and  
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none can say that any exists with all the Perfection that Omnipotence could bestow ; or, by Consequence, that any (much less every) Creature was the best or most perfect the Deity could produce. Which Reflexion yields us a sensible Demonstration of the divine Indetermination to particular Acts. For had the Deity been under a natural Determination to the decreeing and producing of every Creature particularly consider'd, it must have been under the Notion of the Best or most Perfect. But then there could have been seen no Creature inferior in Perfection to another, and an universal Equality must have appeared throughout the Frame of Nature.

And then, as for such Propositions as relate to the Existence and Actions of Things not yet in Being, such as, *The Sun will exist; Socrates will dispute*, and the like; they can't, *in an absolute Sense*, be affirm'd to have been necessarily or eternally true, without begging the Question in Debate; or supposing those very eternal Decrees they were design'd to prove. For if there were no such particular eternal Decrees, 'tis certain these Propositions must, in an absolute Sense, have been eternally or necessarily false; in as much as the Existence and Actions of particular Creatures, if not eternally decreed; must of themselves have been no other than pure Contingencies. But the Truth of every affirmative Proposition consists in the Conformity of the Predicate or Property with the Nature of the Subject or Thing of which it is affirm'd: Which Conformity could not be, if Necessity was absolutely affirm'd of a Thing or Action in itself contingent or indetermin'd.

There is then Nothing in the Nature of this latter Sort of Propositions, which can oblige us to assert they were eternally or necessarily true in an *absolute Sense*, or to allow that there was (as some imagin) an absolute eternal Certainty of all Events. But if they

they were true only in a *Conditional Sense*, 'tis manifest they were no otherwise true, than as the like Propositions concerning any particular possible Subject may be affirm'd to have been so, though it should never exist. For Example, this Proposition, *A Centaur shall exist, if it please the Deity so to decree*, was always as true as these, *The Sun will exist*, or *Socrates will dispute, if God so pleases*. And it is equally clear, that this conditional Truth proves no particular eternal Decrees, though it proves an eternal free Agent, who always possess'd a sovereign Power of decreeing, creating, and influencing particular Natures if and as he pleased.

Upon the whole 'tis easy to conclude, that the *eternal ideal World*, in which some *Platonick Gentlemen* have lately imagin'd themselves to have made such mighty Discoveries, and which is chiefly supported by *Eternal Essences* and *Futurities*, is in a more proper Sense than can be said of the *Earth*, founded upon *Nothing*.

Another Argument in Favour of particular eternal Decrees, is borrowed from the Opinion of a *particular eternal Foreknowledge*. This, it seems, was the Method of the *Platonists*, who appear to have been the first Introducers of that Doctrine. For they imagining it to have been essential to the Perfection of the Deity, eternally and particularly to foreknow all other Beings and all Events depending on their Existence, were probably thence disposed to receive the Opinion of particular eternal Decrees as the only sufficient Hypothesis to account for such Foreknowledge.

In Reply to this Argument, we shall here only propose it to be consider'd, whether it be not more agreeable to the Independence and Liberty of the eternal Being, to suppose his own most perfect Nature to have been the only necessary particular Object of his Knowledge ; or whether the Supposition

of the eternal or absolutely necessary Decrees and Foreknowledge of particular Creatures and all their Actions, can be maintain'd, without asserting not only all the particular Creatures, but all their Actions, to be in their own Natures such as the Deity could not have omitted to decree and foreknow, without Prejudice to his Perfection and Happiness.

There is yet another Proof of eternal Decrees attempted from the Opinion of an *Instantaneous Eternity*, and the *Absolute Immutability* of the divine Action founded thereon. But the Absurdity of this pretended Proof is generally confess'd, and will be display'd in the *Chap. of Eternity, Book II.*

We have the longer insisted on this Opinion of *Particular Eternal Decrees*, because of the impure Consequences with which it appears to have defiled the Innocence of the Christian Religion ; which Consequences, as they depend on it, must necessarily fall with it. For if there were no eternal particular Decrees of every Creature and Event, then as the absolute Predestination or Predetermination of all Persons and Events from Eternity, must be rejected (and no sufficient Reason will appear for asserting such Predestination of a later Date) so that particular immediate determining Concourse of God to the worst of Actions, for rendring those Decrees effectual, will appear to be an unnecessary Doctrine ; and thereby both the Justice of God, and the Liberty and Accountableness of Creatures will obtain a sufficient Vindication. Without such a Vindication, what-ever Arguments we may employ to convince Men of Atheistick Principles, that it is a Thing very desirable there should be a God, will, I doubt, be of very little Effect. For certainly, it is not the Idea of a most intelligent and wise Being, freely determining himself to Acts of Goodness and Justice, which frights such Persons ; but much rather that of such a Being as these Opinions represent

sent the Deity to be : Opinions far less pious than the Opinion of the *Stoicks*, as obliging their Assertors (at least indirectly and by Consequence) to make the Best of Beings the Author of the worst Actions and Events ; which to avoid, those Pagans rather chose to lay the Blame, in some Degree at least, on I know not what independent uncontrollable Destiny.

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## C H A P. VIII.

OUR Secondary Notions of the Perfection of G O D, consider'd with Reference to Himself, we have observ'd to be,

I. *Spirituality*. Men have generally agreed to express their Idea of the Best and Noblest of Beings by the Word *Spirit* : A Metaphor taken from the *Air* or *Wind*, than which, by Reason of its Tenuity, perpetual Agitation, and wide Expansion, Nothing seem'd more proper to represent that invisible Nature which pervades, actuates, and comprehends all Things. Which invisible Nature, though to Nothing so fitly resembled as to the Air (which of all the Portions of Matter is the least perceiv'd by our Senses) yet has been usually conceiv'd as distinct from the most refined Matter, and as including the three Properties already demonstrated, of which Matter was generally supposed to be destitute ;

1. *Self-Activity*. Thus *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and others, according to the Philosophy of the Eastern Nations, asserted Two Principles, the one Active and Spiritual, the other Passive and Material.

2. *Intelligence*. Says *Posidonius* in *Stob.* ὁ θεὸς ἐστὶ πνεῦμα νοερὸν, *God is an Intelligent Spirit*. To signify this, they were wont to give him the Titles of Νῆς and Δαίμων, both which import *Consciousness* and *Perception*.

3. *Liberty*. Some of the Philosophers, I confess, suppos'd the Deity to be subject to the Influence of Fate. But the  $\mu\upsilon\sigma$  of *Orpheus*, the  $\tau\alpha\delta\omega\rho$  of *Thales*, the  $\tau\alpha\lambda\eta$  of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and the  $\Lambda\pi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\omega\nu$  of *Anaxagoras*, (by which Terms they usually signify'd the material Principle of the Universe) are always describ'd as void of Liberty or self-determining Power, which these Philosophers suppos'd to be only in the  $\text{Ν}\tilde{\epsilon}\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\varsigma}$ , or *Mind*, who both impress'd and regulated their Motions.

II. Another secondary Notion of the Perfection of God, consider'd with Reference to Himself, is *Constancy* or *Immutability*: Which we conceive is to be affirm'd both of his *Nature* and *Action*.

1. Of his *Nature*. The Spring of Inconstancy or Mutability, in this Respect, must be either some necessary internal Principle of Corruption, or his own Will, or else some external Cause. But the first of these is absolutely inconsistent with his perfect vital Selfactivity, the second with his perfect Intelligence, and the third with the Perfection of his Liberty.

2. Of his *Actions*. In treating of the Divine Actions, we may, it is conceiv'd, lay it down as an infallible Principle, *That we can be no farther oblig'd to assert their Immutability, than as it appears to have a necessary Connection with the Immutability of the Divine Nature.*

The Divine Actions may be consider'd, either as essential, or as unessential. The former, because they flow immediately from the Divine Nature, can't but be immutable in the same Sense as the Nature itself. The latter, (which 'tis humbly conceiv'd, had no necessary Connection with the Divine Nature) are of two Sorts, *viz.* either his particular Decrees, or their Executions. By his Immutability or Constancy with Reference to both these, 'tis conceiv'd we are to understand in the general, his un-

unvariably decreeing Ends suitable to his Nature, and his steady Pursuit and infallible Attainment of those Ends : Both which evidently imply Perfection, and result from the absolute Invariableness or Immutability of his Nature. But as for his particular Acts, and his Knowledge consequent thereupon, the Immutability of his Nature infers no such Invariableness with Regard to them, but rather the quite contrary ; for as much as their Variety must be conceiv'd immediately to proceed from the various Exercise of his Liberty ; which (in all indifferent Cases) is the Result of the immutable Perfection of his Nature.

And as for the Actions of other Beings, and all Events depending on their Existence ; they are alike incapable of causing any Change in the Divine Knowledge inconsistent with the Perfection and Immutability of the Divine Nature. On the contrary, 'tis manifestly a Point of Perfection to know Things as they really are ; which yet can't be without some Variation in the Manner of Knowledge answerable to the Variation in the State of its Objects.

III. Another secondary Notion of the Divine Perfection, consider'd with Reference to the Deity Himself, is *Happiness*. This Idea is the necessary Result of all our other Conceptions of the eternal and most perfect Being absolutely consider'd. For a Being which essentially and independently possesses a perfect Selfactivity, Intelligence, and Liberty, (to which three Ideas, all our Conceptions of the Divine Internal Attributes appear to be reducible) join'd with a just Reflection upon, and Valuation of 'em, can't but be completely happy.

All real Happiness arises from a certain Complacence in the Possession, Hope, or Expectation of some Good : Which Complacence is ever proportionate either to the intrinsic Worth, or, at least,

to the Estimation of that Good in the Mind of its Subject. From which, 'tis evident, that That only can be a compleatly happy Being, which both possesses a perfect and permanent Good, and whose Opinion of it is ever agreeable to its real Worth.

As it hence appears that the Eternal Being can't but be a perfectly happy Being ; so it is no less clear, that Himself is the only Reason of his Complacence and Happiness ; for as much as his own Nature alone comprehends whatever is good and valuable. For since (as will be shewn hereafter) whatever else exists, could have no other real Worth but what it deriv'd from the eternal and most perfect Being ; 'tis manifest that what-ever Good is found in any other Nature, can no otherwise please him than as a Communication from Himself : Which Pleasure can no more increase his essential Happiness, than the Reflection of a Ray can add to the Lustre of the Sun.

The *Epicureans* were so far from imagining their Deities could receive any Accession to their Happiness by concerning themselves with Beings of an inferior Rank, that they thought it too mean an Employment, and a Fatigue inconsistent with that Repose or Tranquillity, which they conceiv'd to be the chief Ingredient of Happiness. Therefore, in pure Civility, they banish'd 'em out of the World, pretending it yielded no Place worthy of their Residence, and seated them in certain ultramundane Spaces, there to live in uninterrupted Pleasure, and neither to trouble themselves nor others, by a too officious intermeddling with human Affairs. Their Seats the Poet thus describes.

*Quas neque concutiunt Venti, neque Nubila Nimbis  
Aspergunt, neque Nix acri concreta Pruina  
Cana cadens violat, semperque innubilis Æther  
Integit, et largè diffuso Lumine ridet.*



— — — And happy Seats,  
Which Storm or violent Tempest never beats,  
Nor Snow invades, but with the purest Air,  
And gaudy Light diffus'd, look gay and fair.

CREECH.

Thus those Philosophers were us'd to conceive of their fictitious Deities ; if at least it be not a Disparagement to that Honourable Character to call such Men *Philosophers*, who, though we should in Charity suppose them to have believ'd such Divine Beings, yet, like the Vulgar, fram'd them after their own Model. For though it must be own'd, that they have rightly placed Happiness in the *Tranquillity of the Mind*, yet in this they were deceiv'd, when they suppos'd that such Tranquillity was absolutely inconsistent with Action in such a Being as the Deity. How mean and unphilosophical was it to imagine the most perfect Power should be subject to Fatigue, or that the most perfect Understanding should be perplex'd and discompos'd by too much Application and Solitude ! This was, in Effect, to mingle the two Extremes, and to level the noblest with the basest of Beings : Those Natures being ever the least perfect which are the least capable of and propense to Action.

From all this the general Conclusion is, that as nothing in any of the inferior Beings is capable of making any Addition to the Happiness of the Deity (which can result only from the Consciousness of his own essential Perfections ;) so his creating such Beings, and caring for them when created, could be no Diminution of it.

## C H A P. IX.

WE now proceed to consider our Ideas of the Divine Perfection or Sufficiency with Reference to other Beings as *merely possible*.

I. One of these we observ'd to be *Omnipotence*, or Perfect Effective Power. By this, 'tis conceiv'd, no more can be meant, than *an Ability to do or produce whatever is consistent in itself, and agreeable to the Divine Nature*. For to extend it farther, would be in Effect to ascribe to the Deity a Power of causing a Thing both to be and not to be at once and in the same Sense (for all Contradictions are reducible to That) or, which is all one, a Power of producing a *substantial Nothing*.

The proper Action of perfect effective Power, will appear to have a twofold Notion, *viz.* either of *Creation* or of *Sustentation*.

By *Creation*, is here meant the Production of a Thing that before was not. By *Sustentation*, we understand the preserving or continuing a Thing in its Existence or Being.

In order to prove that the true Idea of the Divine Sufficiency includes what we call *Creative Power*, we need not here demonstrate that there has actually been a Creation. 'Twill be enough for our present Purpose, to prove Creation a Possibility. For if this can be set in a clear Light, 'twill evidently appear, that creative Power can't but belong to the eternal and most perfect Being.

Neither is it necessary, in order to a Proof of the Possibility of a Creation, to undertake to explain the Manner of it, or to reduce its Idea to a Level with our Understandings. 'Twill be sufficient to rescue it from the Charge of Contradiction and Absurdity. For I take it, 'tis universally agreed, that per-

perfect Power may extend to any thing on this Side a Contradiction.

Though we want not Variety of Proofs of the Formation of the World (such as are derived from the Nature of Succession, the late Invention of Arts universally useful, the gradual Increase of Mankind, and other Animals, &c.) the Evidence of which was sufficient to oblige such Philosophers as preceded *Aristotle*, almost universally to attribute the present Frame of Things either to the Agency of a powerful and most intelligent Being, or else to a casual Hit or lucky Combination of the Parts of Matter; yet it seems to have been their Opinion, that the *Matter* of which it was form'd was eternal and independent. This their Perswasion appears to have been grounded on the Observation of the present Course of Nature and Art; according to which, whatever is produc'd is made out of pre-existent Materials. From hence it was that they concluded it absurd to imagin any thing should (as they wrongly express'd it) either spring out of Nothing, or be reduc'd to Nothing.

But 'tis worth observing, that many of the Philosophers, who could not, in the Cause of a Deity, raise their Speculations above the vulgar Level, were, when they came to reason on the contrary Hypothesis, extravagant and fantastick enough. Those very Gentlemen who were so careful to avoid an Absurdity (as they would fain have had it accounted) on the Side of Religion, were not so scrupulous in the Defence of Atheism. For rather than suppose this noble Frame of the World to have been the Creature of a perfectly powerful and intelligent Cause, they chose to father it on Chance, and to turn the most serious Affair into a Game at Hazard. Rather than own their Relation to the greatest and best of Beings, they chose to level themselves with the Brutes, to imagine that, like Insects, they were

originally begotten by the Sun's Heat, and sprung from Pimples and Tumours of the Earth. They could easily derive Liberty from Necessity, Beauty from Deformity, Harmony from Discord, by a mere Chance, or, which is all one, without any determining Cause at all. . . . But to create the minutest Thing in Nature, must, in their Opinion, pass for absolutely impossible. And why ? But because they had never seen an Instance of that Kind. They could sometimes indeed believe as strongly as other People ; but here they desired to be excused, and could not think themselves oblig'd to believe a Creation, because they were not admitted to be Witnesses of the Work ! They never had seen the Birth of the least Dust or Atom, how then could they imagine a *Generation* of the Universe \* ! They could never observe an Artificer to make any Piece of Workmanship without his *Materials*, without his *Instruments* ; how then could they conceive the vast Body of the Sun, the innumerable Stars, the massy Rocks and Mountains, to have been the Effects of Art !

This Method of Reasoning is very like the Arguings of a Man bred in the dark, disputing against the Possibility of Sight. Should such a Person be told that there's a Place in the World, where, if he came, he should need only to open his Eyes, and be immediately and distinctly sensible of an almost infinite Variety of Objects, each vastly bigger than himself, and many of 'em at very remote Distances ; would not such a Story as this appear to him as incredible, as that of a Creation from Nothing ? Might he not, with equal Reason, argue against the Possibility of such a Relation, from the very Principles those Philosophers made use of against such a Creation ? As yet, might he say, I have been sensible of but very few Objects at once, and those such

\* *Ocellus* and others contend, that there's no Production but by Generation.

as I am assur'd could not exceed the Dimensions of my own Body, and whose Distance was, for the most Part, no greater than the Length of my Arm or Staff. And as for such others as I have perceiv'd at a remoter Distance, they have been either single, or if more, extremely confus'd and indistinct. What Magick must there be in my Eyes, that so little Members should be capable of conveying the distinct Resemblances of so great Variety of bulky Objects at once? If it be reply'd, That the Eyes don't perform this alone, but with the Help of a certain Instrument call'd *Light*; yet what Idea could such a Person have of Light different from that of his Staff? And what Inducement could such an Idea be to him to allow that to be possible, which by Arguments deriv'd from his own Experience, he had before reject'd as absurd and incredible?

But though such a Person, if he (with those Philosophers) resolve to admit nothing for Truth or Possibility, but what is agreeable to his own Experience of Things, and upon a Level with the present Ideas of his own Mind, must remain under a Necessity of disbelieving all the Reports he hears of Sight and Colours, and rejecting them as Impostures, yet we, who have had the Use of our Eyes, shall never, I suppose, be persuaded, to come into his Opinion.

This ought to convince us, that there may be Possibilities in the Nature of Things, of which we are as incapable of forming Ideas, as such a Person would be of forming the Idea of Sight. And why may not Creation be such a Possibility? Why may not He produce from Nothing, whose Essence and Action depend on Nothing? If we find ourselves incapable of conceiving how a Thing which was not should begin to be, are we not alike incapable of comprehending how any thing should exist without Beginning?

We need only take a View of ourselves, to find Instances of such Powers and Manners of Acting as are inconceivable to us. It can't be deny'd that we perceive, we consider and reflect, we confute and demonstrate ; yet we may perhaps as well conceive the Creation of the Universe, as the Production of a single Thought by the Mind. Our Feet practise all the Steps of a Dance, our Fingers readily perform their Parts at a Musical Concert ; and yet I doubt, we are no better acquainted with the Power which impresses and governs their Motions, than with that which regulates the Courses of the Stars. But if we so little understand such Powers and Actions of our own as do not come within the immediate Notice of our external Senses, ought we to think it strange that we can't comprehend the Action of a Being so much superior to ourselves, and whose Nature so vastly transcends the Capacity of our weak and imperfect Minds ?

We can't comprehend by what Sort of Power God moves Matter ; and need we admire we can form no Idea of the Power by which he created it ? Our Imaginations have no other Materials to work on, in forming an Idea of the original Power, but such as they derive from the Objects we daily converse with. But may not a Person who has an Ictericism in his Eyes, with as much Reason contend, there's no other Colour but yellow, as we, who are so little acquainted with the World, that there's no nobler Manner of Acting, than such as our narrow Experience informs us of ?

But some will perhaps object, that a Production from Nothing is not only inconceivable to us in our present Circumstances, but contradictory, or absolutely inconceivable.

Before we reply 'twill be fit to premise, that it is a very wrong Notion of Creation, to imagine it to be the Production of a Thing from Nothing, as from

a *material Cause or Subject*. Our Definition of it is no other than *the Production of a Thing which was not before*.

This being consider'd, I would ask the Objectors, wherein the Nature of a Contradiction consists? Is it not in at once affirming and denying somewhat of the same Subject in the same Manner? But what is there like this in the Supposition of such a Creation? I confess, if any Man could be found so absolutely stupid and void of Understanding, as to affirm that the Deity, in creating the World, had either produc'd it out of Nothing as out of a pre-existent Subject, or had caus'd it both to Be and not to Be, to be Something and Nothing at the same Time, such a Notion of it might have some Right to the Character of a Contradiction. But since by Creation no more can be meant than the causing to be what was not *before*, this is evidently no more a Contradiction, than what we perceive to be done every Day; I mean the Production of new Motions by the Mind. Which is likewise a Sort of Production from Nothing.\*

But if the *Notion* of such Creation be no Contradiction, then the *Act* of Creation, how inconceivable soever the Manner of it may be to us, can't but be a Possibility, or it must necessarily come within the Compass of that Power which we have already prov'd to be perfect. For 'tis impossible a Power should be perfect, if there be any thing not implying a Contradiction, which it can't do.

The other Notion of the proper Action of such effective Power as is included in the Perfection or Sufficiency of the Eternal Being consider'd with Reference to other Beings as possible, is that of *Sustentation*, by which is meant the *continuing a Thing in its Existence*. I take it to be undeniable, that the

\* See more in *Free Thoughts concerning Souls*, p. 134.

mere causing a Thing to Be, can't infer a Necessity of its Continuance in Being. If the Creation of any thing should import a Necessity of its future Continuance, that Necessity must either proceed from the Nature of the Creature, or else it must flow from either the Nature or the Decree of the Creator. Not from the Nature of the Creature. For then 'twould be impossible even to that Power to annihilate it which at first produc'd it. Nor from the Nature of the Creator. For no essential Perfection of the eternal omnipotent Being can be imagin'd to infer the Necessity of a Creature's Continuance to Eternity, but what must be conceiv'd to have equally infer'd a Necessity of its Production from Eternity. Nor, *lastly*, can it proceed merely from the Decree of the Creator. For the Decrees even of the Supreme Being can have no Effect unless put in Execution. But they can't be put in Execution without Power. And if not without Power, then the Exercise of that Power can be no less than what is meant by the Act of Sustainment.

From the Nature of Sustainment, 'tis easy to collect what must be the true Notion of *Annihilation*. For if a Creature can't be conceiv'd to have any natural Aptitude to continue rather than to cease to be, but must be suppos'd to subsist entirely by a Dependence on the Power which originally produc'd it; then there can be no Necessity to imagine any positive Influx of Power to destroy it. 'Tis sufficient to suppose a Suspension of that Influence on which it depended.

The Acts of Creation and Sustainment we term'd *the proper Acts of Omnipotence*. For the Power which is capable of these, can't but be equally capable of all others on this Side a Contradiction: There being no imaginable Degrees of Power between the producing or continuing a Substance which was not,  
and



and the causing a Thing both to Be and not to Be at once.

II. The next Conception of Sufficiency with Reference to *possible* Effects, is that of *Wisdom*; whereby is (here) meant a *perfect Ability to dispose and regulate in order to the most effectual Attainment of the best Ends*. In this Idea is not only included simple Intelligence, but whatever other Ideas have a Relation to it; such as Imagination, Memory, and Judgment. All which are hereby asserted to belong to the Deity; but in a Manner agreeable to his Perfection.

A Being capable of producing no other than a *Chaos*, or disorderly Heap of Rubbish, without the Power of contriving or disposing it so as might be conducive to some valuable End, could have no just Claim to the Character of a sufficient Creator. Effective Power, singly consider'd, can supply only the gross Materials, and impress a rude unbiass'd Motion. Therefore to conceive a Creator without Contrivance and Design, is to sink his Character below that of an ordinary Artificer. Such a Being could be no Way superior to one of *Epicurus's* insignificant Deities, and might e'en as well fit an idle Spectator of the Dancing Atoms, as be any farther concern'd in the Work.

Nor could Omnipotence, join'd with Contrivance and Design, be enough to furnish the Notion of a perfect Creator, without the Supposition of a Superintending and Regulating Power: Which therefore makes the other Part of our Notion of Wisdom. Without such a Power, the Creator's Designs would be subject to the Hazard of a Defeat, and his Creatures might entirely fail of reaching their respective Ends; which would be no Way reconcilable to the Idea of Sufficiency or Perfection.

But the Divine Wisdom is not only deducible from the general Idea of Perfection or Sufficiency,  
but

but may be demonstrat'd from the particular Perfections already discover'd. For since the Deity was ever a perfectly self-conscious, free, and omnipotent Being (as was prov'd) he could not but ever fully comprehend not only his own particular Nature and Action, but in the general, the Nature and Action of whatever was producible. By Consequence, he could not but know whatever might at any time become either fit or unfit, agreeable or disagreeable, either to his own, or any other Nature or Action ; and so could not but possess a perfect Ability both to judge of and to propose the best End, and to chuse and employ the most conducive Means upon all Occasions : Which is the complete Notion of Wisdom.

III. Another undoubted Perfection of the eternal Being with Respect to other Beings consider'd as *possible*, is that of *Omniscience*. The Demonstration of this has been already produc'd in the Proof we just now gave of the Divine Wisdom. For the Ideas of Wisdom and Knowledge, as essential to the Deity, have a near Affinity to each other : Wisdom being no other than his Knowledge consider'd with Reference to Practice. Therefore that which shall here be added concerning the Attribute of Omniscience, will refer only to the Notion, which it's humbly conceiv'd, we ought to form of it as natural to the Deity.

The general Perfection or Sufficiency of the Divine Nature has taught us, that Omniscience, as well as all its other particular Perfections, ought to be consider'd as natural or essential to it. But the same Sufficiency may instruct us not to conceive any essential Perfection of the Deity with a proper Dependence on other Beings. For that Being can't be self-sufficient, whose Essence is properly dependent on another.

It seems then to have been so far from an Imperfection in the eternal Being to have been Himself the only particular determinate Object of his essential Perception or Knowledge, that the contrary Supposition would debase his Idea, and prove injurious to his Perfection. The Evidence of this may be seen even in our selves. If we find our selves improv'd or advantag'd by our Acquaintance with other Beings, this yields an infallible Proof of our natural Poverty and Insufficiency. 'Tis the Dependence and Imperfection of our Natures which gives us an Inclination to seek our Happiness beyond our selves : Whereas to the most perfect of Beings, the Consciousness of his own essential Properties could not but be an eternal Spring of Complacence and Satisfaction. To think otherwise, would be, in effect, to suppose the Fountain to be fed by its own Streams, or the Sun to be enlightened by its own Rays.

These Reflexions seem to make it evident, that whoever will form a suitable Idea of the essential Omniscience of the most perfect of Beings, ought to consider it without Regard to any particular future Objects. For though such a Being as was naturally and perfectly conscious of his own essential Activity (the immediate Source of all other Beings) could not but ever have a most perfect Knowledge of the utmost Extent of Possibility, yet this might very well be without any necessary Determination to particular Effects. The Knowledge of God, being perfect, was without Dispute essentially or necessarily extended to every Possibility. But the Election or Choice of this or that Possibility in order to its future Existence, was, it is conceiv'd, entirely the Result of his Liberty and Sovereign Pleasure. For though the Supreme Perfection of his Nature could not but incline him to external Action in the general, (as to what was more fit than a State of

Inactivity) yet that Perfection can't, it's conceiv'd, have necessarily determin'd him to any external Act in particular, forasmuch as no particular Act or Object can be said to have been absolutely best or fittest. But if such necessary Determination could not proceed from his essential Perfection, it follows that it could have proceeded from no other Original but Imperfection and Dependence ; which the Nature of the Eternal Being, we are assur'd, could never admit.

And though the particular Decrees of God, and the Existence and Actions of the Creatures consequent thereupon, may be conceiv'd to infer a new Modification of the Divine Knowledge, yet this can import no Dependence ; for as much as it proceeded not originally from the Natures or Existence of the Creatures, but purely from the Liberty and Omnipotence of the great Creator Himself.

Much less could that Knowledge which the Deity ever had of the future Existence of Creatures in general, infer any Dependence on the Creatures ; since it must likewise be conceiv'd as entirely proceeding from his essential Perfection, without the least Regard to, much less Dependence on, any particular determinate Objects. For notwithstanding such Foreknowledge, any particular Being might either have existed or not existed, according to his Sovereign Pleasure.

## C H A P. X.

**W**E come now to such Ideas of the Divine Perfection as we derive from the Consideration of other Beings as *actually existent*. Which Ideas denote no particular Perfections of the Divine Nature, but only those of its Actions.

I. The

I. The first of these we observ'd to be *Goodness* or Benevolence. Which, together with *Government* and *Providence*, yields us a more sensible Proof of the Truth of all our former Ideas of God.

The Word *Goodness* may be taken either in a *Metaphysical* Sense, viz. as denoting the same with the general Perfection of the Divine Nature, or else in a *Moral* Sense, so as to signify a Notion of our Minds derived from the Consideration of the Exercise of certain particular Perfections of that adorable Nature with Reference to other Beings. And 'tis in this latter Sense we take it here.

By *Goodness* in this Sense, we here understand *the free Determination and Exercise of the Divine Wisdom and Power in creating and sustaining or preserving the World for the wisest and best of Ends.*

That Creation and Sustainment, consider'd *with Reference to the Deity*, are reputed Acts of *Goodness*, proceeds from hence, that they are conceiv'd to have deriv'd from the Perfection of the Divine Nature, without any Constraint, or the least Determination from any Thing External.

Had the Deity created and sustained the World by an *external Necessity*, such as the *Stoicks* imagin'd, it must be confess'd he would have been as far from meriting the Denomination of Good or Benevolent, as any Instrument in the Hand of an Architect.

But if we only suppose the Reasons for creating and still preserving a World were ever such and so clearly perceiv'd by the divine Intellect, that the Deity was never indetermin'd in that Respect, nor could have omitted it in Consistence with the *internal Perfections* of his own Nature ; the Case must be allow'd to be very different. By this Supposition both the Liberty and Goodness of the great Creator are sufficiently secur'd ; as we observ'd when we treated of Liberty.

Now that all the Acts of the Deity must needs come under the Notion of *Goodness*, may be firmly demonstrated from our general Idea of his Perfection. For being compleatly sufficient and independently happy, he could have no possible Temptation to Evil : Since that could only proceed either from natural Imperfection, or from Depravation ; from both which the self-sufficient Being was eternally remov'd. To imagine that the great Creator could act either for no End at all, or for a chief End that was either Evil, or less Good, or Indifferent, would be to suppose that the most perfect Wisdom could act Imperfectly, *i. e.* Unwisely, without the least imaginable Byass or Temptation.

By what has been observed, it appears, by the Way, that *Goodness*, as it agrees to the Idea of God, can properly be no other than the free or unconstrained Determination and Exercise of his Wisdom and Power, as regulated by that original Fitness which is in the Nature or Circumstances of Things and Actions. For that there is an original Fitness and Unfitness in the Ideas and Relations of some Things and Actions, must be confess'd ; unless we will say, that it was as fit for the Deity either to have created no Inhabitants of this noble Structure of the World, or else Inhabitants neither capable of relishing the Pleasure which its Furniture could afford, nor of thanking and praising him for it, as to have created such a Being as Man, a Being equally capable of both.

To demonstrate that the Deity has indeed acted according to the most perfect Notion of Goodness, it remains that we directly prove there has actually been a Creation, which we before prov'd to be possible ; or that this vast, orderly, and most beautiful Scene of Things was the Work of that all-wise, free, and omnipotent Being, who, though indigent

gent of no other Being, has given Existence and a Possibility of Happiness to Beings innumerable.

Now this is a necessary Inference from our Observation of the World, compar'd with the rational Principles establish'd in the Beginning of this Enquiry. For if we take a considerate View of Things, we shall easily perceive, that in all that beautiful and surprizing Variety of Beings with which we are acquainted, there's none can lay a just Claim to so high a Privilege as that of an absolute Necessity of Existence. The far greater Part are evidently void of *Life*, *Understanding*, *Liberty*, and such other Perfections as we have found ourselves obliged to ascribe to a Being that thus necessarily exists. And as for ourselves, and such others as have some faint Resemblances of those Perfections, our Mutability and absolute Incapacity of securing to ourselves the Possession of them, are infallible Proofs that we can claim no Right to 'em through an absolute Necessity. But if not through an absolute Necessity, then it can be only by Virtue of the Causality of some original superior Power; which, as we formerly prov'd, could be no less than Omnipotence; and that could originally reside in none but the Eternal Being; whose Existence is absolutely necessary, and who, by Consequence, possesses all possible Perfections.

And that the Divine Goodness has not only discover'd itself in the Creation of the Universe, but is still no less concern'd in sustaining or preserving it, is equally certain. 'Tis clear from what we before observ'd, that a Creature can't subsist with an absolute Independence. To exist thus independently, is to exist necessarily in the most absolute Sense. But absolute Necessity of Existence is by no Means agreeable to the Notion of a Creature. Therefore, since the Creatures continue to exist, it can be only by a Dependence on the Goodness of that omnipo-

tent and most beneficent Being which at first produced them.

But if the Universe was at first created, and is still sustain'd or preserv'd by no less than an Almighty Power, this instructs us in the Idea we ought to form of the *Greatness*, as well as the *Goodness* of that Eternal Nature which is the Subject of that Power. For since Nothing can, without a Contradiction, be said to act immediately on what is at a Distance, 'tis clear that such a proper universal Sustainment (which could be the original Effect of none but the Eternal Being) can't be suppos'd without an universal intimate *Penetration* and *Omnipresence*.

Nor can the Supposition of such a Penetration be reasonably suspected to be inconsistent with that substantial Distinction which is necessary to be asserted between the Creator and his Creatures. For the Creatures may, notwithstanding, very well be different Beings and Substances, in as much as they are not only, for the most Part, entirely destitute of such Perfections as we have discover'd in the Eternal Being, but are, in the general, the ultimate Subjects of some or other Property, which (as including Imperfection) can't but be unapplicable to Him; such as Mobility, Divisibility, &c.

If indeed, with *Spinoza*, we will needs confine ourselves to the strictest Notion of *Substance*, and allow it to agree to nothing but what is absolutely independent, we must then, with Him, banish all real Diversity of Beings out of the World, and assert but one Substance or real Being, and must, by Consequence, allow that there's no other Deity but the *Material Universe*. But since, on the contrary, we are assur'd, that besides the original or independent Being, there are Subjects of Attributes not only very different, but contrary to His (such as were mention'd above) consequently, as we must,



notwithstanding the most intimate Penetration, assert an immutable Distinction between them and the independent Being, so we may in the larger and no less proper Sense, allow the Name of *Substance* to both. For to be the ultimate Subjects of peculiar Attributes or Properties, is, according to the original Signification of the Word, to be *distinct Substances*. This makes it clear, that *Spinoza* does no less than beg the whole Question in Debate, when as a Foundation for his pretended Demonstrations, he supposes so dogmatically, and without the least Proof, that Nothing is properly a Substance but what is absolutely independent ; or, as he expresses it, *What exists in itself, and is conceiv'd by itself, or whose Conception does not need nor require the Conception of any other Thing in order to its being form'd* \* : Which he afterwards explains, when he tells us, *'Tis the very Nature of Substance to exist, or its Essence necessarily includes Existence* \*\*. And yet it is on this too strait Definition of Substance, together with the Supposition of the *Absolute Infinity* of Extension, and an absolute material *Plenum*, (both which, we conceive, will be likewise sufficiently confuted in the Second Part of this Enquiry) that the main Articles of *Spinoza's* Creed are built.

\* \* *Per Substantiam intelligo quod in se est et per se concipitur, hoc est, id cujus Conceptus non indiget Conceptu alterius rei a quo formari debeat.* Spin. in Eth. P. 1. Def. 3.

\*\* *Ad Naturam Substantiæ pertinet existere ; hoc est, ipsius Essentia involvit necessario Existentiam.* Id. Prop. 7.

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## C H A P. XI.

**T**HE next Idea of the Divine Sufficiency or Perfection with Regard to other Beings, as *actually existent*, is derived from the Visible Effects of Wisdom to be observ'd in the World ; and it

may, perhaps, not unfitly be express'd by the Word *Government*. Under which we shall crave Liberty to comprehend *All the Acts of the Wisdom of the Omnipotent Being, as moderating or governing his own Activity, both in proposing his Ends, and in disposing and managing the several Creatures agreeably to their Natures, for the most effectual Attainment of them.*

The *great End* of the all-wise Creator in the Production of the World, we may be assur'd, was the *universal Benefit and Happiness of his Creatures according to their several Capacities*. For, as we have already prov'd, that the Perfection of his Nature was absolutely inconsistent with the Proposal of a *chief End* in the Creation, which was either *Evil*, or *less Good*, or *Indifferent*; so the same Perfection may convince us, that his End in creating the World, could not be any Good or Advantage to Himself, who was indigent of Nothing, and whose essential Happiness was absolutely incapable of the least Accession.

The *Means* which his Wisdom has employ'd for the Attainment of his Ends, will, in the general, appear to be,

1. That most exact and orderly *Constitution* and *Disposition* of the several Parts of the World. And,
2. That admirably prudent *Regulation* or *Governement* of such Parts of it as are furnished with a Principle of Life and Action. Of both which in their Order.

I. In discoursing on the former of these Means, we shall here omit many of the usual Instances of Wisdom and Design, not only because they have been already sufficiently consider'd by others, but chiefly because, being such as were absolutely necessary either to the Whole, or to such Parts of the World to which they peculiarly belong; they seem not so fit to be objected to Men of Atheistick Principles as Proofs of the Divine Agency, since they  
may

may be eluded as mere necessary Pre-requisites to the present State of Things. For, may an *Epicurean Atheist* say, We are not so absurd as to imagine the Effects of Chance to have been subject to the rigorous Laws of Mechanism, or that the eternal self-motive Matter of the Universe combin'd at the first into none but regular Models. For it is infinitely probable, there have been innumerable Worlds in the boundless Extent of Eternity, which, by reason of their Confusion and Irregularity, successively dissolved into their original Atoms, e're a World so regular as this could be compos'd. And even in the present Frame of Things, it is not to be imagin'd (in Consistence with our Principles) that the several Parts were all at the very first Hit so well dispos'd as they now appear to be: It being equally probable, that innumerable Beings have existed in it, which, because of some essential Defect in their Constitution, soon returned to their first Principles, or else wanting a Capacity to propagate their Species, became extinct. According to this Scheme, a Person of that Character will be far from admitting such Regularities as Arguments of Wisdom and Design; as conceiving them to have been no more than was necessary to the Continuance of the few casual Effects which he supposes to have survived the infinite Numbers that have long since perished.

We shall therefore not only omit such Instances of Wisdom and Design, but shall gratify our *Epicurean* so far, as for the present, to admit his Principles of necessary unintelligent Matter and eternal Motion. We'll even suppose (what we have likewise proved to be false) that this Motion was a capable Principle of Variety. Upon these Suppositions we shall not, at present, deny it to have been possible (though infinitely improbable) that after innumerable fruitless Rencounters and Combinations of the Parts of

Matter, such a Frame of Things might have chanc'd. to result as should have had noessential Defect orBlunder in it, but so much Order and Harmony, at least, as was necessary to the Subsistence both of the whole, and its several Parts ; which is indeed the utmost the *Epicurean* Principles are qualified to account for with the least Shadow of Reason.

In Requit for these liberal Concessions, we shall only expect, that our Adversaries will grant it to be most reasonable to conclude, that a most wise and beneficent Cause, if any such, would, besides what was necessary to the bare Subsistence of his Creatures, have left some Characters ofhis Wisdom and Goodness impress'd upon 'em, sufficient to distinguish 'em from the wild Effects of Chance : And consequently, that if it can be made appear that the present Frame of Things (besides the Regularity necessary to its Subsistence) has such Characters of Wisdom and Goodness every where legible on it, they'll own it far more reasonable to believe they were the Impressions and Signatures of such a Being, than the random Effects of unmanag'd Motion and Impulse.

In Expectation of this, we shall offer a few Things.

I. Supposing, that after innumerable Ages, the Matter of the Universe, by an internal Principle of Motion, might at last, by mere Chance, have combin'd into Somewhat like a World, yet it can't reasonably be imagin'd but that this World (though it might have had no fundamental or destructive Error in its Constitution, yet) would have been full of Deformities and Irregularities in Things not essential to the Subsistence either of the whole, or of any of its Parts. Men of irreligious Principles might then, without Doubt, have been gratify'd with all the various Instances of Blunder, Deformity, and Irregularity that can be imagin'd in Consistence with the Constitution of the World, and the Life of Animals.

But

But what Pains must they (vainly) take to discover one such Instance in the present Frame of Things? And how disagreeable an Employment must it needs be to an Atheist, who has any Fondness for his Principles, to be at the Expence of so much Labour to discover Defects and Irregularities in that, which to an unprejudic'd Observer, still appears more admirable, and which will never fail to suggest new Arguments, sufficient to mortify his Pride, and shock his Infidelity?

To instance only in a few Particulars, which may seem the most exceptionable.

If the Cragginess and outward Deformity of Rocks and Mountains offend his Sight, a little Enquiry will be sufficient to convince him, that these are not to be attributed to a Defect of Skill and Contrivance, but are partly owing to accidental Causes, (such as Earthquakes, Tempests, Inundations, &c.) and partly to be ascrib'd to Design. For they may be consider'd as the Foils of Nature, whose Deformity is wisely contriv'd to set off the Beauty of her nobler Parts.

If the minuter Parts of Nature seem void of Beauty and Regularity, a Microscope will soon undeceive him, and raise his Contempt into Wonder and Astonishment. For many of these discover more surprizing Characters and Signatures of the Divine Wisdom, than most of its larger Productions; since in these we see all those Miracles in a narrower Compass, which we use to admire in the larger Dimensions of the more bulky Objects. Thus if we look upon the Seeds of Plants, we shall find they are no other than the entire Plants in Miniature. So that their Procreation is, in Reality, nothing else but Nutrition and Growth of Parts. The same has been observed of the first Rudiments of Animals.

If certain Species of Animals seem defective, their very Defects, (which yet are only comparative) will yield an Argument of Contrivance and Design. For several Members would have been absolutely useless in some Parts of the World (suppose in the Water, or within the Surface of the Earth) which yet it was not fit should want their proper Inhabitants.

If he look beyond the Earth and its neighbouring Planets, and view the wide Spaces of the Heavens, shining with the united Glories of innumerable fix'd Stars, he'll see little Cause to object that these are not dispos'd into regular Figures, but seem carelessly scattered like Seeds upon the Earth. For this seeming Disorder may be said to represent something more noble and majestick, and which more sensibly strikes the Fancy than the most regular Models of human Art. Besides, 'tis plain, that neither our Station, nor the Imperfection of our Sight, will permit us to view the Heavens to the best Advantage. 'Tis probably but as a Point, if compar'd with the remoter Spaces of the World, which bounds our Prospect. From whence we may have as little Reason to attempt to form an Idea of the whole, as an Ant to judge of the Dimensions and Beauty of the Earth by what may be observ'd in a Mole-hill. But how beautiful an Idea of those remoter Spaces would the new Philosophy give him, which, with so much Reason, from the Analogy of Nature, concludes the fixed Stars to be the Centers of so many particular Systems, and as so many Suns to distribute Light and Heat to their peculiar Planets? This Hypothesis would represent the Universe to him as an Assembly of innumerable Worlds, each full of the Marks of the great Creator's Wisdom, ranged at Distances the most regular and convenient that can be imagin'd. For 'tis not doubted but the

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Distances of the Planets of our System are actually such.

The Deformity of some Things consists in Imagination only, proceeding from Antipathy or Aversion ; such as is the Hatred between Men and Serpents, &c.

The seeming Want of Beauty in others might proceed from Design. For did the same Comeliness discover itself in all the Parts of Nature which is so remarkable in some, the Art of Man would have no Subject to work upon, or at least, could not exert itself without the Regret of marring the Work of his Maker.

Besides, the Disagreeableness of some things may frequently proceed from the peculiar Make of the Senses, or Complexions and Constitutions of our Bodies. For it is not unreasonable to think, that a very exquisite Figure and Contexture of Parts may sometimes cause none of the most agreeable Impressions on our Senses and Constitutions. This may appear from the regular Shapes of the minute Parts of Salts ; and from the Effects of Poysons, which are found to be very different on different Animals.

To conclude. The present Frame of Things seems so far from being justly chargeable with Blunder, Irregularity, or Deformity, that, to the less considerate, divers Instances of Regularity and Design may appear superfluous. Of this Sort are the regular Shapes and the Colours of divers Stones, and particularly the curious Figures of the Leaves of Plants which are found naturally represented on Coal-Slate. The wise Author of Nature has not left even the dark Entrails of the Earth without Testimonies of his divine Skill, to the End that observing Men might no where want Motives to admire and adore him.

II. Supposing it might so have happen'd, that the Universe should have yielded no imaginable Instance  
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of Blunder and Deformity, yet, 'tis inconceivable, on the *Hypothesis* of *Epicurus*, that every Thing should be dispos'd *for the Best*, as in the present System of Things. As,

1. That Nothing should be without its *Use*. The Observation of the World long since oblig'd the Philosophers (though, some of 'em, not very partial to the Cause of a Deity) to confess and lay it down for a Maxim, *That Nature does Nothing in vain*.

'Twere a ridiculous Labour to undertake a Discovery of the Usefulness of every Thing in Nature, which is so various and exuberant in her Productions. It will be enough, if we can manifest the Usefulness of such Things as are subject to common Observation and Experience. For if none of these are without their Uses, we have all the Reason in the World to conclude the same of all others.

We shall single out such Instances as may seem the most unaccountable.

Though the Obliquity of the Earth's Axis may seem irreconcilable to Mathematical Exactness, yet we are to consider, that to this we owe the pleasant and useful Variety of Seasons, and the fittest imaginable Proportion of Heat and Cold, Light and Darkness, that is possibly consistent with the Figure of the Earth.

If it be said, the *Other Planets* are set at too great a Distance from the Earth, and by Consequence, are the less capable of supplying the Absence of the Sun's Light, we shall see Reason to believe, that this was so order'd to prevent a greater Inconvenience than that of Darkness, *viz.* the Destruction of Plants and Animals by excessive and disorderly Tides or Elevations of the Sea, which are observed to depend on the Motions and Neighbourhood of those great Bodies.



To the *Fix'd Stars* (though many of them seem to be made only to twinkle, and appear to be almost as insignificant Members of the World, as either a Spark or a Glow-worm, yet) we partly owe the solid Advantages we reap by Navigation; not to mention the greater Advantages of Habitation, Convenience and Delight, which they (or at least the Planets, which from the Analogy of Nature, we may probably conclude do attend them) may yield to innumerable nobler Beings than ourselves.

To the *Mountains*, which some have misrepresented as the Wens and Excrescences of Nature, we owe the most pleasant Prospects, the most delicious Wines, the richest and most useful Metals, Minerals, and other Fossils, and that which is more than all, the Convenience of navigable Rivers and Fountains.

To the *Seas* we are indebted for those vast Quantities of Vapours which refresh and fructify the Earth, and for our speedy and commodious Passage to the remotest Nations. Both which Blessings we must in a very great Degree have wanted, had the Proportion of the Waters to the dry Land been considerably less than at present.

If *Poisons* are sometimes destructive, yet when skilfully prepar'd, they become beneficial, and the Means to preserve Life, when Food is insufficient to that End.

To *Whirlwinds* and *Thunder* we owe the Dissipation of Pestilential Steams, and the cleansing of the Air, the chief Instrument of Life.

In short, if the *Air* be sometimes the Vehicle of Infection and Blasting; if the *Waters* be render'd unsafe by Rocks, Quickfands, and Whirlpools; if the *Fire* be prone to Conflagrations; if the *Earth* sometimes trembles, and swallows up its Inhabitants; neither are these without their Uses. If it was fit to implant in us the Principle of Fear, it  
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could not be amiss to place us among such Objects as are apt sometimes to excite and exercise it. If it be natural to Men, as Creatures, to be defectible or capable of Degeneracy, then whatever contributes to retain them within the Bounds of Duty and Allegiance, and thereby prevents a greater Evil, becomes itself an Advantage. But what could have been a more effectual Curb on Vice, or Spur to Virtue, than that which is apt to remind us how easily the Elements may be arm'd against us to our Destruction, and the very Supports of our Lives become the Instruments of our Maker's Justice?

2. 'Tis still less conceivable on the Principles of *Epicurus*, how the same Thing should have been dispos'd for such *Variety* of particular Uses as may be observ'd in the World. To obtain a great Number of Ends by as few Means as may be, is the highest Point of Wisdom. But nothing can be imagined more admirable in this Respect, than the present Frame of Things. Thus, though the human Body is compos'd of a great Variety of Parts, yet how much more various and numerous are their Uses? How many are the Uses of the Hand, which, directed by Reason, is instead of all other Instruments? How many Advantages do we owe to the Eye, the Ear, and the Tongue? And, if we take a deeper View, and look into the minuter Parts of which these are compounded, what can be more admirable than the Variety of Aims and Intentions that may be observed in each. The several Uses of the Structure and Position of each single Muscle, have been computed by *Galen*, in his Book *De Formatione Fetus*, to be no less than Ten. The like may be observ'd with Reference to the Bones and other similar Parts; but especially with Respect to the Members, and such Parts as are heterogeneous or dissimilar. Yet it is not to be doubted, but that a

far less Degree of Usefulness in many of these might have been sufficient to our Subsistence.

3. 'Tis less accountable by the *Epicurean* Principles, how every thing should be adapted to its particular Uses in the *fittest and most regular Manner*. Yet what Instrument could be better suited to Vision than the Eye, to Operation than the Hand, to Motion than the Foot or Wing? What could have been invented so convenient as the Distances, Inclinations and Celerities of the Planets of our System? What could be more nice and exact in the general, than the Adjustment of the Make of the Bodies, and the Degrees of all Sensations of Animals to their common and particular Circumstances? This whoever has observ'd, can never enough admire. Yet neither can such Exactness in all these Respects, be imagined to have been of absolute Necessity to the Subsistence and Preservation of Animals.

4. 'Tis no less unaccountable by the Hypothesis of *Epicurus*, that so many different Parts should so fitly and harmoniously conspire to *one common Use*. How different are the Parts that contribute to Motion and Nutrition in Man and other Animals? Yet how fit is their Position, and how exquisitely regular is their Action? But what is chiefly to be noted, is, that all these Parts were not absolutely necessary to the Acts themselves, but only to the Perfection of 'em. For had the least Part been wanting, the Acts, though they might have been perform'd, would have been imperfect or irregular; and yet should others have been added, they could not have been better'd or improv'd. A Man might have been capable of Nourishment without the Assistance of the Tongue or Spittle; but then it must have requir'd more Time, and been attended with less Pleasure. A Bird might have been capable of Flight without the Direction or Steerage of its Tail; but then it would have been less steady and difficultly

govern'd. And by the Addition of these (how inconsiderable soever they may seem in themselves) the Acts are render'd so perfect, that the Wit of Man is incapable of making the least Improvement.

5. 'Tis still less accountable by the Principles of *Epicurism*, that almost every thing should be dispos'd, not only for Use, but for *Ornament*: The Beauties of Nature need no Artifice to varnish and set them off. 'Tis a sufficient Acknowledgement of this that the most admir'd Artists never propose to excell, but to imitate it. The naked Eye may convince us of the exquisite Colours and Proportions of the greater Parts of the World ; and the Microscope will surprize us with the far more admirable Structure and Symmetry of the lesser. But in Nothing is this Beauty more remarkable than in Animals and Vegetables. Yet sure none can be so absurd as to imagin, that mere Colour and Proportion in the outward Make of their Bodies was of absolute Necessity to their Subsistence. Nor is it a Jot more reasonable to conclude, that the so curious Embroidery of the Veins, Arteries and Fibres, in their inward Constitution, was thus necessary. For a skilful Anatomist or Botanist knows how to separate divers of those Parts without the Destruction of the Subject. And yet such Beauty and Exactness in the outward and inward Make of Plants and Animals, is not only every where to be met with in the World, but both are diversify'd almost infinitely and beyond Imagination.

6. 'Tis equally unaccountable by that Hypothesis, that the most noble and useful Parts of Animals should always be either *well secur'd*, or else *double*. Thus the Heart and Brain, which 'twas requisite should be single, are lodg'd in the interior Part of the Body, and strongly fortified with the Bones of the Head and Breast. The Lungs and Kidneys, though likewise placed within the Body, yet, because by reason

son of their Office more subject to Accidents, are double ; to the End that if by Obstructions, or any other Mischief, the one should become unserviceable, the other might be sufficient for the Support of Life. Thus likewise the Eyes, being of Necessity plac'd in the exterior Part, are given us by Pairs, and guarded by Eye-brows and Lids fortified with Brittles. And not only so, but in some Animals, by whose Method of living they are more expos'd to Danger, we may observe a peculiar Provision for their Security, by Means of a certain horny moveable Membrane, which being transparent, hinders not the Sight even at the Time when it guards it from Accidents. This may be observ'd in Frogs, and, with some Variety, in divers other Animals. Yet these Precautions can't be pretended to have been of absolute Necessity to their Subsistence, any more than those in the former Instances to our own.

7. 'Tis equally unaccountable by the Principles of *Epicurus*, that all *useless Expence* of Members in Animals should be avoided. As the great Author of Nature has been very bountiful with Respect to the Multiplicity of the Uses of such Organs or Members as he has bestow'd, so he has been no less sparing and frugal with Reference to the Organs themselves. As there is no Part but what has its Use in the general, so there's none but is suited to the particular State and Circumstances of the Animal to which it belongs. Thus Animals, whose peculiar Make or Constitution has qualified them to be the constant Inhabitants of the watry Element (which is not so fit for the Conveyance of Sounds) are observ'd to want the Instruments proper for the forming of Sounds. And thus Animals which have Teeth on both Jaws have but one Stomach, since in them more would have been superfluous, and unnecessary to Digestion. Whereas, had the *Epicurean* Hypothesis been true, we might have expected to have

seen all imaginable Instances of Superfluity as well as of Defect.

But here I apprehend it may be objected, that divers of these Instances of Contrivance and Design are to be observ'd in such Animals as are said to be bred of Putrefaction and Moisture.

But admitting there are such Animals, and that their Make or Constitution yields equal Appearances of Wisdom and Skill with that of other Beings, 'tis evidently most reasonable to conclude from thence, that they likewise derive their Original from a wise or intelligent Cause: And so much the rather, because Wisdom is ever most illustrious, when it produces a regular Effect from irregular or indispos'd Materials. At least, no Admirer of *Epicurus* can imagine such a constant Regularity as is observ'd in those Animals, to have been purely casual in any tolerable Consistence with his own Principles, which suppose such innumerable Blunders to have happen'd at the original Coalition of the Parts of Matter.

Yet that this Opinion is a great Mistake, is sufficiently clear from the Discoveries of divers of the Moderns, who have made it appear, that there is no Animal produc'd in the present Course of Nature but by Means of some other Animal from some pre-existent Seed.

Others will perhaps allow the mentioned Instances of Wisdom, but will chuse to ascribe them to an eternal material *Anima Mundi*, or Soul of the World. But this Notion of a Soul of the World is no other than a corrupt and disparaging Idea of God, and has already been confuted.

*Lastly*, Others will possibly have Recourse, with the *Spinozists*, to that long since exploded Hypothesis of the Eternity of the present Frame and State of Things, and will pretend to reverse the Edge of our Argument, by producing the Regularity and other Perfections of the World to prove it to be that necessa-  
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ry Being which we formerly discover'd, and not the Effect of Wisdom and final Causes. But this Conceit has likewise been abundantly confuted already, when we demonstrated the Existence of a Being possessed of all possible Perfection, in Opposition to the Existence of absolutely necessary Matter and Motion, and likewise the Possibility and Reality of a Creation. And perhaps it needs no better Confutation than that of the *Epicurean* Poet *Lucretius* himself, arguing from the late Beginning of History and the Invention of Arts and Sciences,

— — *Si nulla fuit Genitalis Origo  
Terrarum et Cæli, semperque æterna fuere  
Cur supra Bellum Thebanum et Funera Trojæ  
Non alias alii quoque Res cecinere Poetæ ?*

But grant the World Eternal, grant it knew  
No Infancy, and grant it ever new?  
Why then no Wars our Poets Songs employ  
Beyond the Siege of *Thebes*, or that of *Troy*?  
CREECH.

So that upon the whole, it must be confess'd by such as ever us'd the least Observation and Reflection, that the World every where abounds with such Characters and Impresses of inimitable Wisdom, as make it infinitely reasonable to conclude it to be the Creature of a perfectly wise and beneficent Being.

II. The other of those Means employed by the Divine Wisdom for attaining its great Ends in the Creation, we observed to be that admirable Regulation or Government of such Parts of the World as are furnish'd with a Principle of Life and Action. This we may perceive to be different, according to the Diversity of its Subjects; which are either rational or irrational. The Government of the former is by

100 *An Impartial Enquiry into the  
Laws, of the latter by Instincts.* We shall begin  
with the latter.

If we view the Actions of brute Animals in general, we shall perhaps see little Reason to believe they proceed either from an innate intelligent Principle, or from the mere Mechanism or Texture of their Parts.

I. Not from an innate intelligent Principle. For tho' divers of those Actions, to which they have a natural Inclination, bear a near Resemblance of Contrivance and Design, yet their Invariableness sufficiently discovers them not to be the Effects of Reason. The Productions of Reason are wont to be diversify'd to an almost infinite Variety. If all the great Masters in Architecture were ordered severally to compose the most exquisite Model of a Royal Palace that they could contrive, we should find the Models as distinguishable as their Authors. Or should the most celebrated Orators in the World undertake to declaim on any particular Subject, 'tis great Odds whether any two of them would be found exactly to agree in their Methods and Materials. Whereas in the most admir'd Performances of Brutes the Case is very different. Birds of the same Kind, in the same Climate, build their Nests of the same Materials (if procurable) and in the same Form. The several Communities of Bees, without any preceding Instruction, frame their Habitations in the same Manner, as well as submit to the same Method of Government. And (which is no less considerable to our Purpose) they are unimproveable as to such Acts as they perform by a natural Propension. We may perhaps as easily teach a Stone in its Descent to describe Circles, or any other the most regular Figures, as a Bird to build its Nest, or a Bee to compose its Cells, by a new Model. And though, as to other Acts, towards which they have no natural Propension, some Brutes are capable of Improvement,



ment, yet this is no Proof of an intelligent Principle, but may be sufficiently accounted for from the Mechanism of their Bodies. For frequent Exercise producing an Aptitude to particular Acts, we may fitly resemble such Tricks of Brutes to the Motion of the Fingers on a Musical Instrument; which frequently is regular enough, though performed without the usual Attention or Perception. Yet,

2. Mere Mechanism, or the Structure and Organization of their Parts, seems no sufficient Cause of all the Operations of Brutes. This may appear from the Variableness of such unimprov'd Actions of theirs as don't proceed from any natural Propension. As some Actions of Brutes are natural and uniform, so others are so strangely diversify'd, that they seem near a-kin to such as are voluntary. Which Observation may be made not only with Reference to such Animals as are seemingly more perfect, such as Apes, Beavers, &c. but even with Respect to such as are commonly reputed the meanest and most contemptible. If we look upon an Ant-hill, or into a Bee-hive, we shall find those little Animals almost as differently employ'd as the Inhabitants of a City: When, at the same Time, they are every way beset with the same Objects, and, for ought appears, receive the same Impressions from without. A sufficient Proof that the Diversity in their Actions ought not to be ascrib'd to any external Impressions working on the Mechanism of their Bodies, but rather to such an internal vital Principle as directs the Motions of those who perform such strange Actions in their Sleep.

We may therefore properly enough distinguish the Principle of brutal Action by the Name of *Phantasy*; since this, even in ourselves, is found to be distinct from Reason, and yet to be a vital Principle sufficiently distinguish'd from mere Mechanism.

Now as Reason is the governing Principle of Man, so *Phantasy* is of Brutes. And as the Dictates of every Man's Reason, how different soever in Matters of less Concern, or greater Difficulty, are commonly uniform with Reference to Actions of the utmost Consequence to the general Welfare of Mankind, and are wont to come under the Notion of *Laws*; so in Brutes, the Impressions of Phantasy, how different and variable soever, in Cases of less Concern, may yet be observ'd to be uniform, when they directly tend to the Benefit and Preservation of their respective Kinds; and they are commonly call'd *Instincts*: Which Instincts are in some Respects the same to Brutes, that Laws are to Men and other intelligent Creatures. Such are the Instincts of Gratitude to Benefactors, of Association for mutual Defence, of Provision for their young, and the like.

And herein is the Wisdom of the great Father of the World most clearly visible, in that he has implanted such an uniform Principle of Action in those less capable Agents, which so directly tends to the Attainment of his most beneficent End, the universal Welfare of the vital Part of his Creation.

2. The other Method of Government instituted by the wise Author of Nature, is by *Laws*: Which Government is twofold; either of particular Persons, or of entire Communities. Its Foundation is the absolute Propriety of the Creator in his Creatures antecedent to Consent or Contract. Its original Rule or Standard is the Nature and Will of the Supreme Governour. Its *immediate* Instrument is Reason; or that Faculty of comparing and connecting Truths already known, in order to the Illation and Discovery of other Truths before unknown.

The Existence or Reality of this Government appears from hence, that there are (as we just now observed) certain uniform beneficial Dictates of Reason,

son, with Regard to Matters of the highest Concern to the Welfare and Happiness of intelligent Creatures, grounded on the natural Relations of Fit and Unfit, discernable in Things and Actions, of which every such Creature, acting like himself, can't be ignorant, such as *Benefits are to be gratefully acknowledged and retaliated; the general Good is to be industriously promoted and maintain'd*, and the like. These Dictates of Reason are qualified to be a Rule of Action and a Standard of the Conduct of Life. But whatever is qualified to be a *Rule*, with Reference to the Actions of Creatures, can be no other than a *Law* with Regard to the Design of the Creator, whose immutable Intent (as was prov'd) can't but be *the universal Good of his Creation*.

In the Subjects of this Government are two principal Qualifications to be distinguish'd, *Reason* and *Liberty*. Without the former they can't be qualified for the Knowledge of their Duty; without the latter they can't duly discharge it. Where a sufficient Degree of either of these is wanting, or incapable of due Exercise, there a Government by Laws would be ludicrous and insignificant. Where both concur in the requisite Perfection, they found an immediate Obligation to Obedience; though possibly with some Variety proportionate to the Degree of the Perfection of each. From this Obligation results the Supposition of Rewards and Punishments, and of Justice in proportioning and dispensing them. Which appear to have the same Foundation and Reason with Government itself, *viz.* The absolute Propriety of the Creator in his Creatures, and the supreme Perfection of his Wisdom, which can't but immutably incline him to act in Conformity to the States and Capacities of his Subjects, and to that original Fitness and Unfitness which is in the Natures and Circumstances of Things and Action. But of this more will be said anon.

Were there no natural Laws so univerſally promulgated, Man, the moſt noble of inferior Beings, who, by Reaſon of his great Capacity, is qualified for ſuch excellent Purpoſes, would become far more miſchievous than the Brutes. His Wit and Contrivance, when free from Obligation and Reftraint, would probably ſoon degenerate into Craft and Circumvention. His Ambition would know no other Limits but thoſe of his Power; and an Ability to hurt would be reputed a ſufficient Warrant to do ſo. Every thing would be meaſur'd by Appetite, and all the Virtues would ſhrink into the narrow Principle of Self-intereſt: The Effects of which would be as various as either the wanton Caprices of Fancy, or the uncertain Fluctuations of the rougher Paſſions. All Men would be Tyrants to the inferior Creatures; and each Man (as far as conſiſtent with his Ability and his preſent Notion of Intereſt) would be ſo to another. And in ſhort, every thing would tend to a State of War and Confuſion, as far as the predominant Principle of Self-intereſt and the natural Inclination to Society would permit. Which makes it evident both how neceſſary ſuch Government is to the great End of the Creator (*viz.* the general Good of his Creatures,) and how unſuitable it would be to his Wiſdom (and by Conſequence, how impoſſible to him) to grant Men a Diſcharge from the Obligations of Reaſon.

In attempting to make ſome Diſcovery of the Methods of the Divine Wiſdom in that Government which is deſign'd for the Prevention of theſe Miſchiefs, we ſhall firſt endeavour to form an Idea of it as it regards Particulars, and then add ſomething with Reference to it as it regards Communities.

Though the Wiſdom of the beneficent Creator in the Government of particular Perſons as ſuch, may well be ſuppos'd in a great Degree inſcrutable by

by us, yet from the Consideration of the Perfections of his own Nature, and the Nature and Circumstances of the Subjects of this Government, compar'd with our Experience and the credible Tradition of former Ages, we may, questionless, by the careful Use of our Reason, attain some tolerable Satisfaction. In order to which we shall proceed by Steps, illustrating the Discoveries of Reason by the Consent and Testimony of the Scripture Revelation.

1. 'Tis evident, as we before observ'd, that the great End or Design of the wise Governour of the World, is the universal Welfare and Happiness of his Subjects according to their several Capacities.

From hence we may clearly deduce the most noble Principle of civil Society, *viz. That Men are not born for themselves alone, but that in all proper Cases they ought to seek the Benefit and Happiness of others to the utmost of their Power.* For it is an indisputable Point, that the highest Perfection of Creatures cannot but consist in the nearest possible Conformity to the natural Perfections, as well as Will of their Creator, who is the most perfect of Beings. But this Conformity can't be without the Practice of whatever is good and virtuous, and beneficial. For that the Perfections of God immutably incline him to act in the best Manner, was prov'd when we treated of the Divine Liberty: And that the chief End of all the divine external Acts was the universal Good of the Creatures, was shewn in the Beginning of this Chapter.

2. *As it is the Property of perfect Wisdom not only to propose the best Ends, but to chuse and employ the fittest and most conducive Means, so we need not doubt but the wisest of Beings makes Use of such Methods of Government as are most conducive to his great End (the general Happiness of his Creatures) in Consistence with the Perfection of his own Nature, and with the States and Capacities of his Subjects.*

3. Consequently, we can't suppose his Intention to have been to expose the Happiness of any of his Creatures to a perpetual Hazard: Since this would be to expose his own great Design to the continual Danger of a Defeat.

4. Therefore, since intelligent Creatures are under a natural Obligation to the Laws of Reason, and since their supreme Happiness could not but depend on their free Obedience to those Laws (as was prov'd;) and since the Exercise of Freedom or Liberty in imperfect Agents could not be without a Possibility of Disobedience, it can't be suppos'd to have been the Design of the wise Governour of the World always to suspend their supreme Happiness on so precarious and hazardous a Condition as that of a Free Obedience.

5. Yet a total Determination or Necessitation of intelligent Creatures to Acts of Obedience, is absolutely inconsistent with the very Notion of Government by Laws, enforc'd by Rewards and Punishments, and consequently with the great Creator's Wisdom in qualifying them for such Government.

This is agreeable not only to Scripture and Reason, but to Experience, and sufficiently accounts for the Permission of Sin in the World.

6. Consequently, whatever Opinion supposes such Necessitation and is totally destructive of Liberty, is alike inconsistent with the Notion of Government by Laws, and the Nature of the great and beneficent Creator.

Such, it is humbly conceiv'd, is the Opinion of an absolute and particular Foreknowledge, as suppos'd to be founded on particular absolute Decrees of all Events both good and Evil, and an universal efficacious Concourse. For this plainly infers an universal external Necessitation, which can't but be entirely destructive of that Liberty or Freedom of Action in the Creatures which is requisite in a State of Tryal.

As for such who suppose an absolute particular eternal Foreknowledge of all Events as future with-

out founding it on absolute Decrees and an efficacious Concourse in order to their Accomplishment; though their Opinion seems both more pious, and not so directly destructive of the Creature's Liberty, yet it is perhaps equally indefensible. For, (not again to mention its Inconsistence with the Divine Absolute Independance, nor to insist on its being destructive of the Divine Decrees, which by this Supposition seem to be render'd unnecessary; since it can't be imagin'd to what End a Thing should be decreed, if its future Existence would have been certain, and certainly foreknown, though no such Decree had been) this at least is clear, that whatever is certainly or determinately foreknown, is foreknown to be fix'd or determin'd. But 'tis no less clear, that all such Events as entirely depend on human Liberty, (whose very Nature in the present State we have proved to include Indetermination) can have had no fixing or pre-determining Cause, and by Consequence cannot be affirm'd to have been Objects of a certain or determinate Foreknowledge without a Contradiction.

It can certainly be no Impiety to assert, that Things can be foreknown only in such a Manner as their Natures admit; particularly, that Effects can be no otherwise foreknown than in their Causes. If the Cause be necessary (or certainly determin'd to produce its Effect) then indeed the Effect may be certainly or determinately foreknown, *i. e.* it may be foreknown as certain or determin'd to exist. For Instance, when we say an Eclipse is certainly foreknown, we can only mean that it is determined by the fix'd or establish'd Order and Motions of the Heavenly Bodies. But if, on the contrary, the Cause be properly contingent, or such as is not fixed, but either may or may not produce an Effect (such a Cause as is every Man who is completely free or indetermin'd to act) then the Effect being

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contingent, indetermin'd, or uncertain, can be no otherwise known than as contingent, indetermin'd, or uncertain. For to say an indetermin'd or uncertain Event was certainly or determinately foreknown, or (which is the same) was foreknown as certain or determin'd, is to say that it was foreknown not as itself but as another, *i. e.* that it was not foreknown at all, even while we intend to assert it to have been foreknown.

'Tis true, some are pleas'd to object, that a certain absolute Foreknowledge makes no Necessity of the Things foreknown. But 'tis conceiv'd, that tho' it does not make, yet it supposes Necessity, and is therefore inconsistent with human Liberty. For as a certain Knowledge of Things present is founded on a *present* Necessity of their Existence (since 'tis certain, that what Is, cannot but Be while it Is) so an absolutely certain Knowledge of Things future must pre-suppose and be founded on a *Future* Necessity of Things: For there's no other Foundation of an absolute Certainty but Necessity. Wherefore, a certain absolute Foreknowledge of all Things and Actions, if admitted, can't but pre-suppose an absolute future Necessity of all Things and Actions, and by Consequence, the Supposition of such Foreknowledge can't be defended, without asserting an absolute and universal Fatality; which, (as Dr. Clarke\* freely confesses,) “ Absolutely destroys all  
 “ Religion and Morality, and tends more to the  
 “ Dishonour of God, than the denying him a  
 “ Foreknowledge, which (on Supposition that such  
 “ Foreknowledge and human Liberty are inconsi-  
 “ stent) would be impossible, and a Contradiction to  
 “ conceive him to have; and the Denial of which  
 “ would, in such Case, be no more a Diminution  
 “ of his Omniscience, than the denying him the

\* *Demonstration*, p. 109.



“ Power of working Contradictions, is taking away  
 “ his Omnipotence.

What the Doctor adds concerning the eternal Certainty even of free Actions, grounded on the eternal or necessary Truth of all Propositions relating even to contingent or indetermin'd Events, has been already consider'd, *Chap. vii.* where we prov'd, that whatever Truth such Propositions contain'd, could be no other than conditional, and by Consequence, no sufficient Foundation of an absolute or certain Foreknowledge.

Nor can the certain Foreknowledge of contingent or indetermin'd Events, (it's humbly conceiv'd) be prov'd from the Scripture Prophecies. All the Scripture Prophecies may be reduc'd to three Sorts. They are either Revelations of what is actually present (for a Prophecy is not always of future Things,) or else they are conditional Threatnings of Punishments, or Promises of Blessings for certain Actions contingently dependent on Man's free Determination, or else they are Declarations of the absolute Decrees of God. But there's none that can be prov'd to be an absolute Prophecy of what was purely contingent or indetermin'd to exist. We are likewise to take Notice, that some seeming Prophecies are no more than Declarations of the usual Course of Events.

Yet I am sensible, there's a Text or two which may seem to import a particular certain Foreknowledge of contingent Events. One is, *Psal. cxxxix. 2. Thou beholdest my Thoughts afar off.* But this is agreed by the best Interpreters to be spoken of the Knowledge of present Things, even the most secret, in Opposition to the Apprehensions of the Vulgar, who are apt to consider the Deity as somewhat afar off, or at a Distance from us and our Affairs. Thus *Montanus* and *Pagninus*. And the *Arabick* and *Ethiopic* Versions render the original Word *from afar*, and the *Syriack*, *from on high*. Accordingly

dingly *Mollerus* thus paraphrases it, *Deus intelligit Cogitationes nostras procul, &c.* God understandeth our Thoughts afar off, *i. e.* though he may seem to be far absent, and to neglect human Affairs, yet he does not so reside in the Heavens as not to see what is done upon Earth. By the same Manner of speaking he is said to *look down from Heaven and behold the Sons of Men.*

And then, as for that Challenge made to the false Deities, *Isaiab xli. 23. Shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods;* the most natural Sense of the Words in their Connexion, appears to be this: *By changing the ordinary Course of Nature, and determining and foretelling Things otherwise in themselves contingent, give Proof of such Sovereignty and actual Dominion in the World, as is the incommunicable Prerogative of that God on whom all Things depend.* So that it seems only to establish God's Sovereignty in decreeing future Things; not any natural determinate Foreknowledge of purely contingent Events. This will perhaps appear by considering the Instances given in the preceding Verses, such as *the opening of Rivers in High Places, and Fountains in the Midst of the Valleys, &c.* which are all so many Instances of God's Sovereignty over the World, and his sole Prerogative of influencing or changing the Order of Nature at his Pleasure.

7. *A Determination to Future Obedience (in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of an intelligent Creature) consequent on a Free Obedience in a State of Tryal, is highly conducive to the End, and therefore most suitable to the Character of the wise and beneficent Governor of the World.*

The Supposition of such a Determination as this, not only secures and promotes the great End of the most beneficent Creator, but admits a sufficient Use of the Creature's Liberty. And as it is very consonant to Reason, so it is exactly agreeable to the

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Christian Scheme. For the Scriptures sufficiently intimate, that such of those nobler Beings (known to us by the Name of *Angels*) who preserv'd their Innocence in a State of Tryal, were favour'd with a Confirmation in Obedience and Felicity. And we are assur'd that this will be the happy Case of such other intelligent Beings, as shall make a right Use of their Liberty in the Time of their respective Tryals.

8. *Tis very agreeable to the Wisdom of the Supreme Governour, that the State of Tryal should be of some Latitude, to yield Room to Repentance and Amendment in Case of Transgression.*

This is sufficiently consistent with the Scripture Revelation. For there's no necessary Reason to conclude, that the Apostate Spirits (though in very different Circumstances from our own \*) were doom'd to Unhappinefs immediately on their first Rebellion. And 'tis manifestly agreeable to our Experience, whose whole Life appears to be ordinarily no other than a State of Tryal. For that it is not the final State of Rewards and Punishments, is most evident from the present unequal Distribution of Things; which is in Reality such as has given Occasion to some either to doubt of, or to deny any divine Government. For the Truth is, there can be no present Government of the World at all, or at least it cannot be worthy of God, if there be no equal Retribution to be expected in a future State. But that there really is a Government of the World, and that this Government is worthy of God, has been already prov'd. Therefore such a State of Retribution is certain. To make this yet more clear, the Design of God in creating and governing the World was the Good of his Creatures. The Good and Happinefs of intelligent Creatures was plainly connected

\* See *The Christian Religion founded on Reason.*

with a Practice agreeable to the Divine Nature and Will. But such Practice, in the present State, is in many Cafes so far from rendring Men more happy, that it rather exposes them to greater Miseries and Infelicities than others. The plain Inference is, there must be a future State of Retribution, where the great Creator will sufficiently attain his original End or Design, and where his intelligent Creatures shall receive according to their several Practices and Deserts; and by Consequence the present State is the State of Tryal, and not the final State of Rewards and Punishments.

This will assist us in unravelling divers Intricacies in the Conduct of the Divine Government. For if this Life of Men here upon Earth be no other than a State of Tryal, we may cease to wonder that ill Men are not always punish'd here, nor the virtuous rewarded; or that the impious so frequently abound with secular Advantages, while the virtuous are distress'd and the Objects of Contempt. For present Prosperity or Adversity can't, on that Supposition, be either good or evil in themselves, but may be indifferently either the one or the other, according to their Aspect and Influence on the future State: Which, as is most evident, may be very different, as they are either abus'd or improv'd.

'Tis therefore very consistent with the Wisdom of the supreme Governour, to allow his Subjects (as he usually does) the free Use of their Faculties, and to suffer Effects to follow the Influence of their immediate Causes, without frequently interrupting the establish'd Order of Nature. 'Twas very fit that Riches, Honour, and Reputation, should usually be the Effects of Industry and prudent Management; and that the contrary Effects should proceed from the contrary Causes, without any peculiar Regard to Persons or Circumstances. For Prudence and Industry are political Virtues, and naturally tend to the  
Good

Good of Society, though they may be sometimes exercis'd by Persons morally vicious. But indeed when Industry degenerates into Rapine and Violence, and Prudence into Craft and Circumvention, then though their Permission is still very agreeable to our Notion of the divine Government, (as being the Government of free Agents) yet it may be sometimes very suitable to the Wisdom of the beneficent Governour of the World to interpose, and to cause some Variety in the usual Series of Events. But Experience assures us that this does not always happen; and but very seldom when these Vices don't so immediately tend to the Destruction of Society. For as to the Actions of particular Persons towards each other in this present Scene of Things, we find 'em, for the most Part, to resemble the celebrated Games among the *Greeks*; wherein every Man was permitted to exert his whole Skill and Activity, and in case of Victory, received his Reward, not according to the Quality of the Person, but that of the Performance.

9. *An Interruption of the State of Tryal by a Determination to certain Acts, which the Divine Wisdom may have judg'd fit to be decreed for the general Good either of the whole World, or of entire Communities, is sometimes very suitable to our Idea of this Divine Government.*

Of this Sort, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, are all such human Actions as may be certainly prov'd to have been absolutely foretold in Scripture. For though some of those Actions, consider'd in their immediate Circumstances, without Regard to their remoter Consequences, may seem to have been morally evil, yet, with all due Submission, it appears to have been in no sort inconsistent with the Perfection of the supreme Governour to pre-ordain them in order to a much greater Good. For though we, who are naturally subject to a superior Will; we, who have

no Share in the supreme Government of the World, nor any sufficient Capacity to judge of or to determine the Tendencies and Consequences of Actions in their full Extent, may not ordain an Act, which, consider'd in its immediate Circumstances, appears to be Evil, that Good may come of it ; yet, it's conceiv'd the Case is widely different with respect to the supreme Governour.

This, if it can be set in a due Light, will perhaps prove no inconsiderable Expedient towards the removing of many Difficulties which have cast so thick a Darkness on divers Acts of the Divine Government. To which End I shall humbly offer the following Remarks.

I. 'Tis clear, that the Notion even of *moral natural* Evil does not consist in its being any real Detriment to the great Governour of the World. When therefore we meet with such Expressions in the Scripture Revelation as seem to ascribe to him the Passions of Anger and Revenge, or to intimate that Sin is any Disturbance to his Repose and Felicity, 'tis agreed by all sober Reasoners, that they are to be understood as spoken in Condescension to human Capacities.

II. 'Tis agreed, that no human Act is in itself consider'd either morally good or evil, but indifferent. If therefore any such Act becomes either good or evil, it must be on account of its proper Circumstances and natural Consequences ; or by reason of the Relations it acquires. Now though the original Reason why the Notion of *moral natural* Evil becomes affixed to any particular Relations of natural Acts, is not the mere arbitrary Pleasure of the Deity, but his very Nature, yet 'tis that Perfection of his Nature which must be conceiv'd to have an immediate Influence on the Government of the World, and to be the Standard of all moral Evil whatever : Which Perfection we have observ'd to be his *Wisdom*.  
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Therefore, in forming a Notion of the moral Good or Evil of any particular Act, we must, it seems, consider it in all its Relations, or view it in all its proper immediate Circumstances, and remotest natural Consequences with reference to this governing Perfection of the great Lord of the World, *viz.* his Wisdom. According to which Method I conceive, That,

1. If the Act, both in its proper immediate Circumstances and remotest natural Consequences be agreeable to the Notion, and conducive to the Ends of the divine or most perfect Wisdom, 'tis then in the compleatest Sense morally good, or fit to be ordain'd.

2. If the Act be disagreeable in its proper immediate Circumstances to the Notion of the divine Wisdom, and yet conducive to its Ends in its remotest natural Consequences, then though it comes not up to the compleat Idea of moral Goodness or Fitness, yet 'tis not to be reputed morally evil, or absolutely unfit to be ordain'd by an Agent not subject to any Obligation to the contrary. But,

3. If in the last Place, an Act be neither agreeable to the Notion of the Divine Wisdom, nor conducive to, but destructive of its great and most beneficent Designs in the Government of the World, then 'tis morally evil, or absolutely unfit.

So that moral Evil appears to have two distinct Notions; *viz.* a Dissimilitude or Disagreeableness to the governing Perfection of the great Lord of the World (his Wisdom,) and likewise a Tendency to frustrate his most beneficent Ends in the Exercise of it: Of which only the latter has immutably the Nature of moral Evil.

III. It seems clear to me, that *Holiness* and *Justice* (tho' usually conceiv'd as distinct Perfections essential to the Idea of God) are not, in Reality, different from his *Wisdom* diversly consider'd; and by

Consequence are not to be the Standards of our Judgment of moral Evil as distinguished from that.

If we duly reflect, we shall perhaps see Reason to conclude, that by the divine *essential Holiness*, Nothing else can be meant but the general indetermin'd Rectitude or Perfection of the Divine *Wisdom*, whereby the Deity immutably perceives and inclines to what is best and fittest in governing the World. For this is plainly the Reason of his Abhorrence or Disapprobation of moral Evil, as being directly contrary to the Ends of his Government: Which Disapprobation is usually conceiv'd as the immediate Result of his Holiness.

And then as for the Attribute of *Justice*, it can be no other, it's conceiv'd, than the Divine *Wisdom* consider'd as particularly determin'd to an equal Retribution. For such Determination is plainly the Reason why the great Governour of the World is conceiv'd to be incapable either of acquitting the impenitently guilty, or of finally punishing the purely innocent: Which is the compleat Notion of *Justice*, as concern'd in the present Argument.

The considering *Holiness* and *Justice* as essential Properties in the Deity distinct from his *Wisdom*, has not been without its Inconveniencies. Particularly, this appears to have confirm'd many in the most rigid Predestinarian Principles. For imagining it to be necessary that all the Divine Properties or Attributes should be glorified in the Creatures, and looking upon *Holiness* and *Justice* as two distinct essential Attributes, many (quite contrary to the Tendency of our present Argument) have proceeded so far as to infer, that 'twas necessary Sin should be ordain'd for the Glorification of the Holiness and Justice of God in punishing it.\*

From

\* Maccov. Disp. 17. p. 11. *Locus Misericordiae et Justitiae manifestandae nullus fuisset futurus, si Peccatum non extitisset.*



From this Account of the Nature of *moral Evil*, as well as of *Holiness* and *Justice*, it seems clearly to follow, that though the Supreme Governour can't, in Consistence with his *Holiness* and *Justice*, (*i. e.* with the Perfection and Exercise of his Wisdom) pre-ordain an Act morally evil, or an Act both in its immediate Circumstances and natural Consequences, directly tending to frustrate the great Ends of his Wisdom in the Government of the World, yet to suppose him to pre-ordain an Act or Event disagreeable in its immediate Circumstances, but, at the same time conducive to those Ends in its remoter natural Consequences, is no Way inconsistent with the Character of the most *Just* and *Holy* (*i. e.* of the *wisest*) of Beings.

More particularly, such a Pre-ordination can't, 'tis conceiv'd, be inconsistent with the *Holiness* of God (or with the indetermin'd Rectitude or Perfection of his *Wisdom*) since hereby he only uses the most conducive Means for the Attainment of the best Ends: Which is so far from being contrary to his Wisdom, that it yields us the most perfect Idea of it.

Nor can this be inconsistent with his *Justice* (or his Wisdom consider'd as determin'd to an equal Retribution) since in case of the Pre-ordination of such an Act or Event for the general Good, the particular Instrument or Instruments can't merely on that Account be capable of Guilt, or liable to Punishment.

To clear this, we may single out the famous Example of *Judas*.

As for the Act of *Judas* in betraying his Master, the Scripture says, 'twas not barely by the Divine

Piscator contra Schaffman, Thef. 34. *Falsum est Deum non opus habere Peccatore, — opus eo habet ad patefaciendam Gloriam suam, viz. tum Gloriam Justitiæ in eo non respiciente damnando, tum Gloriam Miserecordiæ in eo respiciente servando, &c.*

Permission, but *by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God*. And not only so, but our Saviour is affirmed to have foreknown who should betray him, and at what Time. But how may we conceive this Predetermination both of the Act and the Person to have been consistent with our Notion of the Divine Government? If we consider the Act in its immediate Circumstances and nearer Consequences, 'tis certain there could be nothing more disagreeable to the Perfection of the Divine Wisdom, nor more directly tending to frustrate its great Ends in the Government of the World. If then the Determination of *Judas* to such an Act was nevertheless consistent with this governing Property of the supreme Lawgiver, (as all who believe the Scriptures must allow) it follows that it could be on no other Account than of its remoter Consequences, than which none could be more conducive to the universal Good of Mankind, nor consequently to the Attainment of the great Ends of the Divine Wisdom in the Government of the World.

If it be said, that this was a most impious Act of *Judas*; I own it became so by the accidental Circumstances of Malice and Covetousness, to which he was remarkably inclin'd; as the Scripture but too plainly intimates, by stiling him a *Thief* and a *Devil*; which Circumstances, none, I hope, will imagine to have been the Effects of the Divine Pre-ordination. So that the Case of *Judas*, in this Respect, appears to have been much the same with that of the *Israelites* on another Occasion. These God had commanded to chastise the People of *Judah*. Which Commission they readily executed; and in so doing they can't be said to have been criminal. Yet 'tis plain they became so by the accidental Mixture of Malice and Revenge in the Execution. Accordingly we find they were severely reprimanded by the Prophet,

Prophet, who told them, they had *destroyed their Brethren with a Rage that reach'd to Heaven.*

And though *Judas* himself, when he brought again the thirty Pieces, said, *I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent Blood*; yet this is no sufficient Proof of his being liable to Punishment merely for the Act of Betraying. The Case of *Judas* being so peculiar, we may easily conceive he was ignorant of his State with Reference to the Divine Decree. Wherefore finding a great degree of Malice and Covetousness to have accompanied his Action, he was apt to imagine these to have been the Principles from whence it originally proceeded.

If the Apostle *Peter* calls the thirty Pieces the *Reward of Iniquity*; this can prove nothing. For being the Reward of an Action, attended with such Impieties as by Accident render'd it a sinful Act, they might very well be term'd *the Reward of Iniquity.*

But, may some say, Is not Sin defin'd by the Apostle to be the *Transgression of the Law*? And was not the betraying of an innocent Person to Death such a Transgression? I answer, The Law was design'd as a Rule to such only as are free Agents; and consequently, in any Case wherein an Agent is unavoidably depriv'd of Freedom, his Act can't justly be reputed a Transgression. But in this Case *Judas* seems to have been no free Agent, but a mere Instrument irresistibly actuated by an external Influence; and therefore this could not, simply consider'd, be reputed his own Act; nor could he by Consequence, transgress, or be liable to Punishment merely on this Account. And as for the Sovereign of the World, who appears to have absolutely decreed the Event, and permitted the Tempter to influence the Act of *Judas*, 'twas no Injustice in him; since he had an absolute Right of Dominion not only over *Judas*, but over the Blessed *Jesus* as

his Creature. Such Pre-ordination was neither contrary to the Perfection of God, as proceeding from a most wise and beneficent Intention ; nor to his reveal'd Will, which we may well conclude was design'd as a Standard of Action in ordinary Cases only, or such wherein the Creatures are alone concerned ; not in Cases so peculiar as this, wherein the Deity was so particularly interest'd.

'Tis confess'd, the Apostle *Peter* styles the Act of *Judas* a *Transgression*. But this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, can't well be meant of the merely executing that which was pre-determin'd to be done, and to which he was not only pre-ordin'd, but strongly influenc'd by the Tempter ; but rather of his executing it in so criminal a Manner, *viz.* with a pre-conceiv'd Malice and habituate Covetousness. And the like may perhaps be said of the Persons who were chiefly instrumental to our Saviour's Crucifixion, who, as the same Apostle says, had by *wicked Hands* crucified and slain him.

If *Judas* be term'd *the Son of Perdition*, this may not import his being predestinated to eternal Perdition merely on account of betraying his Lord ; an Act, in respect of which he appears not to have been free. On the contrary, if consider'd, in its Connection, it appears to import no more than his being pre-ordin'd to perish, or to be lost out of the Number of the Disciples, in the same Sense as those who are lost out of the Number of Mankind, are said to perish from the Earth.

If our Saviour says, *Luke xxii. 22. The Son of Man goeth as was determin'd, but Woe to that Man by whom he is betray'd, &c.* Yet even this can't necessarily import the Sinfulness and Guilt of the pure Act of Betraying, but may very well be conceiv'd to be spoken with Reference to those concomitant Sins of Malice and Covetousness which our Saviour saw

law already harbour'd in the Breast of *Judas*, who was then upon the Point of putting it in Execution.

To conclude, If our Saviour, *John* xix. 11. speaking to *Pilate*, tells him, *Tbou couldest have no Power over me, unless it was given thee from above; therefore be that deliver'd me unto thee both the greater Sin; This is agreed by Expositors to be meant of the High Priest Caiaphas (who immediately deliver'd Jesus to Pilate) and not of Judas. Which Caiaphas, by maliciously delivering him, may well be said to have had greater Sin than Pilate, who with only a criminal Weakness and Compliance, order'd his Execution; especially since Pilate, without the Action of Caiaphas could have had no Power over him.*

Whoever opposes this Hypothesis, will find it difficult to propose another so agreeable to our Notion of Justice, and so consistent with the Honour of the Christian Revelation.

But though this appears to have been the Case of *Judas*, and perhaps of the Persons chiefly concern'd in our Saviour's Crucifixion; yet a like Pre-determination is not necessary to be supposed with Regard to all other Actions and Events appearing in their immediate Circumstances to be evil, which are mentioned in the Scripture Prophecies (much less with Regard to all Actions and Events whatsoever, as some assert) but only in Cases extraordinary, and of great Importance to Mankind.

'Tis agreed that the Scripture Prophecies don't always import a determinate Certainty of the Event. A Prophecy, though absolutely and particularly express'd, may yet include a tacit Condition on which the Event is suspended. Such, for Instance, was the Prophecy of *Jonah* against *Nineveh*. And such was that of the Captivity of the *Jewish* Nation, and the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*. Though the Terms were absolute, yet a tacit Condition, (*viz.* Repentance) is known to have

have been imply'd. From whence we may infer it as a good Rule in interpreting Prophecies that fore-tel Impieties and Judgments in all ordinary Cafes, that a Condition is always to be understood tho' not exprefs'd.

Some other Prophecies relating to impious Actions, are no more than Revelations of what God, the Searcher of Hearts, knew to be actually existent. For Example, When *David* ask'd Counfel of God, whether he fhould go down to *Keilah*, and whether in that Cafe the Men of the Place would deliver him up to *Saul*? God answers, *They will deliver thee up*. This needs not fignify that God had decreed their delivering him; but only that he knew their Purpose, at that Time, was to deliver him up, if he went. So when *Ezekiel* received his Commiffion to terrify the *Jews* from their evil Practices, God immediately adds, *The Houfe of Ifrael will not hearken to thee, i. e.* I know their prefent Refolution is obftinately bent not to obey. For if thefe Words muft be underftood to import a Certainty of the Event by Virtue of a preceding Decree, then both the Prophet's Commiffion, and thofe moft pathetick Invitations *to turn and live*, which were afterwards made them in the Name of God, would be fufficiently unaccountable. And thus, as to the Prophecy of the Rife and Progreff of *Antichrift*, perhaps it does not neceffarily import any more than that the Searcher of Hearts, who knew the *Mystery of Iniquity* began already to work (as the Apoftle intimates) would, partly for a Tryal and Warning to his People, and partly as a Punifhment to the Offenders, if they obftinately perfifted, permit the Evil to proceed till it might meet its appointed Punifhment. Which Sort of Prophetical Threatnings may be confider'd as the Means which the fupreme Governour (as a moft wife Phyfician) fometimes ufes, either for the Prevention or Cure of thofe Difcafes

to which the whole political Body, or any Part of it is expos'd: Such Prophetical Threatnings having a more extensive Influence than even Miracles; as tending more effectually to retain Men in their Duty to the End of the World. And though, in the *Revelations*, we have a Declaration of the Methods design'd by the Lord of the World for executing his Judgments on *Antichrist* and his Followers in a certain Order, according to several Periods; yet this perhaps, as in the former Case, may have been only foretold conditionally, (*viz.* in case the Evil should spread and become inveterate;) or the Prophecy might not be design'd to take Effect in every Respect (at least not with Respect to the continued Impieties and final Destruction of the Offenders) unless their Obstinacy should provoke the beneficent Deity no otherwise to put a Stop to those Impieties, than by their Destruction at the Time prefix'd. For though it be said to be a Revelation of Things *which must shortly come to pass*; yet these Words are not more absolute than those of God by the Prophet *Jonah*, who denounced Destruction to the *Ninevites* *within forty Days*, in these Terms, *Nineveh shall be destroy'd*.

To conclude this Head: As it appears by what has been observ'd, that an Interruption of the State of Tryal by a Determination (in some extraordinary Cases) to Acts seeming in their immediate Circumstances evil, may be sufficiently consistent with the Wisdom of the Divine Government, so a like Interruption by a Restraint from Actions really evil, or by a Determination to such as are in the completest Sense good, may in some particular Cases be highly worthy of it: Of both which the Scriptures yield sufficient Instances.

10. *An obstinate and impenitent Offender, in such a State of Tryal, can have no sufficient Plea against the*  
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*An Impartial Enquiry into the Execution of the Penalty which the just Governour of the World may have ordained for his Offence.*

*Not the Imperfection of his Nature.* For to be perfect and immutable are the incommunicable Prerogatives of the independent Being. Imperfection is as essential to Creatures as Dependence: And should it be admitted as a Plea against Punishment in case of Transgression, it might as well be admitted as an Argument against all Government by Laws. On the other Side, 'tis manifest, that a Creature furnish'd with Reason, joyn'd with the Knowledge of his Duty, and with Liberty to act it, is a sufficiently perfect or capable Subject of such Government. If such a Creature offend, it must be either through a culpable Inadvertence in a greater or lesser Degree, or else through an unreasonable Obstinacy. But neither of these ought to be resolv'd entirely into the Imperfection of his Nature, but chiefly into a wilful Degeneracy and Depravation of it. Yet it must, I think, be confess'd, that if a Creature is under the Influence of invincible Ignorance, or if his Reason and Liberty are otherwise, without his Fault, incapable of due Exercise, he appears in these Circumstances to be no capable Subject of Government by Laws, and by Consequence to be neither capable of Sin, nor liable to Punishment. Whoever shall assert the contrary, must by unavoidable Consequence, subject the very irrational Beings to the Laws and Duties of Religion. For to have neither Reason nor Liberty, or having them, to be in any Case unavoidably depriv'd of their due Exercise, are in Effect the same.

Nor can a mere *Dependence on the Sustentation of his Maker* be justly pleaded to excuse a Creature from such a Penalty. 'Tis indeed to be confess'd, that if the Doctrine of an universal Sustentation should argue the Deity to be the immediate Principle of all Action, and by Consequence should be found to exclude



clude a self-determining Power in the Creatures, the very Notion of Government by Laws must cease. For if the whole intelligent Creation have no proper Action of their own, but are entirely manag'd and actuated by the Divine Power, then the most serious Affairs of the World must be regarded as a mere ludicrous Scene or Dance of Puppets. A Set of Beings capable of the Knowledge of their Duty, but quite destitute of the Ability to act it, must be less capable Subjects of Government by Laws, than the intelligent Trees in the fabulous *Dodona's* Grove.

But if the Sustentation of a Creature's Being should be imagin'd to be inconsistent with its possessing a self-determining Power in Order to Action, it must be either on Supposition that the Deity *could not* produce and preserve such a distinct Power in a Creature in Consistence with such a Sustentation, or else that he *would not*. As for the former Supposition, 'tis sufficient to observe, that no good Reason can be assign'd why the Production of a distinct *Power* should be thought less possible than the Creation of a distinct *Substance*. And as the Deity sustains or preserves the *Substance* of his Creatures so that it still remains (notwithstanding the most intimate Penetration) sufficiently distinguish'd from his own (as was prov'd ;) so by Parity of Reason, he may as well be suppos'd to sustain or preserve the *Power* of a Creature so as that it may still retain its Distinction and Capacity of becoming a proper Principle of Action. And as for the latter Supposition, *viz.* that the Deity *would not* produce and preserve such a self-determining Power in a Creature; 'tis a sufficient Confutation only to remark, that it's irreconcilable to the Notion of a perfectly wise Being (such as is the Deity) to suppose him to act without any valuable End or Design. But to impart a Capacity to know our Duty, without bestowing an Ability to execute it, would have been to impart it for no wise or valuable

luable End. And can we entertain so mean an Idea of the wisest as well as greatest of Beings, as to imagine he would raise this glorious Structure of the World, only to serve as a Scene for intelligent Machins to be mov'd and actuated in, and that for the most Part so ridiculously, for no other End but to divert himself with the trifling Spectacle!

11. *To suppose that the great Governour of the World should finally punish or afflict the Innocent, or acquit or reward the obstinately guilty, is by no Means reconcilable to our Idea of the most perfect Government.*

This we have already observ'd to be clear, from the Perfection of the *Wisdom* of the great Author and Manager of this Government. We may, it's confess'd, (agreeably to what was observ'd under the Ninth Proposition) conceive him, for the Good of the World, to afflict an innocent Subject for a Time. Thus the innocent *Jesus* suffer'd; but it was both for the universal Good of Mankind, and in Order to a glorious Reward. And thus the Deity is in the Scriptures represented as sometimes visiting the Offences of the Fathers on their Posterity; but 'tis only by temporal Afflictions, and in Order to the far greater Good of Mankind in general; to whom such severe Executions may serve as a Warning to avoid the like Offences.

12. *Lastly, 'Tis alike agreeable to the Character of the supreme Governour, both to punish the finally impenitent, and to pardon and reward the penitent and virtuous.*

To make this appear, 'tis conceiv'd, we need do little more than fix the true Reason of Rewards and Punishments.

That the Rewards bestow'd by the Creator on his Creatures, are not the Result of any proper *Merit* in them, nor his Punishments the Effects of *Passion* in Himself, is evident. Our most perfect Acts of Pie-  
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ty can't be said to deserve or to be Equivalents to the Favour of God; nor can our most enormous Impieties be any real Detriment to him, or capable of exciting in him passionate Emotions, or an Appetite of Revenge. For what Benefit or Disadvantage can it be to a Prince to be either obey'd or disobey'd by an Insect? But the Disparity between the Creator and the most noble of his Creatures is inconceivably greater.

Nor is *Justice* or Equity (as we hinted before) to be conceiv'd as a distinct essential Property in God, which is the *immediate Reason* of Rewards and Punishments. For if we consider, 'twill appear to be no other than a Notion of our Minds, deriv'd from our Observation of the Methods and Effects of the Divine Wisdom in the Government of the rational World. For when the Wisdom of the supreme Governour is conceiv'd to determin him either to punish or reward, with a due Regard to the State of his Subjects, we properly give him the Title of *Just*. But if we say that the Deity was essentially just (before any Object of Justice existed) we speak improperly, and can mean no more than that his Wisdom, which inclines him to exert the Acts to which we give the Denomination of Just, is essentially perfect and uniform, and must immutably have produc'd Effects worthy itself. The like may be said of his *Faithfulness*, which is in Effect a Species of Justice.

And as for the essential *Holiness* of the Deity, which is usually represented as the original Reason of Rewards and Punishments, or as that Perfection of his Nature which determines his Justice to exert its Acts, it can (as was likewise observ'd) signify nothing else but the general Rectitude or Perfection of his Wisdom, which cannot but immutably incline him to act in the most regular Manner. Hence it proceeds, that to assert that God, by a mere Act of Dominion, or without the least Regard either to the  
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State of particular Persons, or the Good of the Community, can punish or afflict the purely innocent, or acquit and reward the obstinately rebellious, is inconsistent with the Notion of his Holiness as well as his Justice. For this is, in Effect, to affirm him capable of acting irregularly for none or for an unwise End.

We may then conclude, that *Holiness* and *Justice* (as distinguished from the *Divine Wisdom*) are not the proper Reasons of Rewards and Punishments. To discover which, we can perhaps use no better Method than to consider the great End of the Divine Government.

Now the primary End or Design of the Deity in governing the World, we may be assur'd, can be no other than that which he immediately propos'd in its Creation, *viz.* the Exercise of his Wisdom and his other Perfections, in Order to the Welfare and Happiness of his Creatures: Which End may well be regarded as the Rule of all his consequent Acts.

Therefore, in proving the equal Congruity or Fitness of Punishments in Case of Transgression, and of Rewards and Pardon in Case of Obedience and Repentance, it seems we have nothing else to do, but to make it appear, that the great End of the all-wise Creator is equally served by these Means.

To clear this, we may first reflect a little upon the Notion of Transgression, Sin, or moral Evil, and of the Guilt or Obligation to Punishment which results from it.

We have already observ'd, that moral Evil can't consist in being any real Detriment to the all-sufficient Deity; and by Consequence, that the Reason of Punishment is not his Sense of Detriment, or an Appetite of Revenge.

On the contrary, we have perceiv'd that it chiefly consists in being an extreme Detriment to the Creatures; and that in two Respects, *viz.* First, By rendering

rendering them most unlike their Creator (as being a Deviation from those wise Rules of Benevolence and Equity by which we formerly prov'd him to govern all his Actions) and then consequently, by directly tending to frustrate the great Design of his Wisdom in the Government of the World, viz. their own Welfare and Happiness.

We shall now proceed to consider moral Evil in its full Latitude, or under both these Notions of it, to the End we may be qualified to make the more certain Estimate of its Guilt.

In its former Notion, viz. that of a mere Dissimilitude or Unlikeness to the divine Perfection (abstracting from its Consequences) the Appearance of its Evil and Guilt is, without Dispute, proportionably less, according to the diminishing Circumstances that attend it. Our Understandings are often unavoidably misinform'd and misguided. The Light of Truth, which discovers our Duty, does not always shine with equal Vigour in our Minds; but is often either obscur'd by Clouds of Melancholy, and the thick Dust of Prejudice, or refracted by the Storm and Tumult of Passion. There's often a great Degree of Ignorance and Prejudice in the Minds of the wisest and most virtuous. For as it is manifest that the wisest and best of Men are not without their Faults, so 'tis certain, that a rational Nature can't easily resolve obstinately to act in direct Opposition to the clear Evidence of Reason and Interest. Which Circumstances, as they represent the Act to be often more excusable, because less free; so they can't but cause the Evil and Guilt to appear proportionably less when so consider'd.

But then, if we consider Sin or moral Evil in its latter Notion, or with Regard to its Consequences, as having a direct Tendency to frustrate the great Design of God; as the Evil more clearly appears, so the Guilt or Obligation to Punishment can't but ap-

pear to be greater in Proportion. For as the chief End that perfect Wisdom propos'd in the Creation and Government of the World, could not but be the greatest Good, so that which naturally and directly tends to frustrate this End, must by Consequence come under the Notion of *the greatest of Evils*.

'Tis a plain Inference from hence, that the Exercise or Admission of the proper natural Means either of *preventing* or *remedying* this greatest of Evils, is become no less necessary to the wise and most beneficent Governour of the World, than was the Choice and Proposal of the greatest Good. Now these Means are *Rewards* and *Punishments*, *Repentance* and *Amendment of Life*.

That no natural Means can be imagin'd more directly to tend to the *preventing* this greatest of Evils; and by Consequence, to the attaining the chief End of the most wise and beneficent Governour of the World, than the Allurements of *Rewards* and the Terrors of *Punishments*, is, I think, too clear to be doubted. Virtue is indeed, in some Respects, it's own Reward; and Vice, since it naturally tends to make us unhappy, may be said to be its own Punishment. But of this we are usually either very little sensible, or possess'd with an Opinion of the contrary. We find by Experience, that the inward Satisfaction which springs from Acts of Charity and Humanity, would prove but a faint Encouragement to most Men, without the Hope of Glory and Applause, or some other Recompence. And on the contrary, the Regret that attends an ill or barbarous Action, would be very ineffectual to restrain a Robber or a Murtherer, without the additional Terror of a Wheel or a Gibbet. For which Reason the Scriptures accommodate themselves to our Insensibility, and rouse us from our Lethargy by all the Charms of Happiness and Terrors of Misery. They promise

promise us no less than an *Eternity of Happiness* in a future State as a Reward for our endeavouring to render ourselves and others happy by our Obedience in the present State. And though we should persuade ourselves that the Account the Scriptures give of the Severity and endless Duration of the State of *Misery*, with which they threaten *Disobedience*, was proposed to us by the most wise Governour of the World, only for the better securing the most beneficial Ends of his Government, by striking a greater Terror into the less sensible Part of Mankind ; yet we may not doubt but the Difference between those two States will be such as shall (at least) make the necessary Compensation for the present unequal Distribution of Things. Of the Reasonableness of such Compensation the very Heathens were generally convinc'd. Their *Metamorphoses* and *Transmigrations* were, for the most Part, no other than *Hypotheses* invented to save the Honour of the divine Government by future Retributions. And many of their wisest Theorists observing how faint an Impression the severest Penalties, when under the Notion of future, are wont to make on the Minds of Men, concluded it necessary to represent the Penalties of the Future State to be not only the most severe, but endless and irremediable. Of this the *Epicurean* Poet *Lucretius* is an unexceptionable Witness ; who pretends the Fear of eternal Punishments to have been the Original of all Religion.

This is plainly the Case with Reference to Rewards and Punishments. We shall now proceed to consider the Nature of *Repentance and Amendment of Life*. And if these can be prov'd to have as natural a Tendency to the *remedying* the Evil of Sin, as Rewards and Punishments to the *preventing* it, it will, it is conceiv'd, sufficiently appear, that they are no less conducive to the great End of the divine Government, and by Consequence that they

not only may, but must be consider'd as natural Conditions of Pardon. For (as was hinted before) we may be assur'd, that the all-wise Governour of the World can't but admit and encourage the natural Means of remedying that Evil which is directly opposite to and inconsistent with the chief Good of his Subjects. To explain this, we shall again take a View of Sin in both its Notions, and endeavour to shew, how naturally Repentance and Amendment of Life tend to the remedying it in both Respects.

We have observ'd, that the first Notion of Sin is that of a *Dissimilitude to the Divine Perfection*. (This, in the Scripture Stile is sometimes signify'd by *Filth*, *Pollution*, and *Uncleanness*. Therefore that which naturally tends to remedy its Evil, must be somewhat which may be said to *cleanse* and *purify* us from the Filth which defaced the divine Image in us, and thereby to restore us to the Likeness and Resemblance of the Deity. This Repentance and Amendment most certainly do. Our Resemblance to God in the Government of our Actions (which alone is here to be consider'd) must consist in our Imitation of that Perfection of his Nature by which all his Actions are ever govern'd and regulated; I mean his *Wisdom*, or (which we have observ'd to be in Effect the same) his *Holiness*. And 'tis this Imitation of the divine governing Perfection (or rather the Habit from which it proceeds) which is chiefly what the Scriptures call the *Divine Image*. Accordingly, the whole of Religious Practice is in the Scriptures represented under the Notion of *Wisdom*; as is the contrary Course under that of *Folly*. But if Religious Wisdom be the same with Holiness, and Sin and Folly be nothing different; and if to deface the divine Image in our Souls, and pollute our Natures, be in the Scripture Stile the same as to deviate from the most perfect Rule of Wisdom, by which all our Actions ought to be form'd; it follows, that



as when (by the divine Assistance) we repent and turn from Sin to Virtue, we do the wisest Act that our Nature in those Circumstances is capable of; so by a sincere Continuance in a virtuous Course for the future, we recover our former State with Respect to Purity, or re-assume so much of our Maker's Image as by our Sin and Folly we had lost.

The other Notion of Sin we observ'd to be a *Contrariety to the Divine Perfection*, or a Tendency to frustrate the great End of the Divine Wisdom in the Government of the World. In this Respect the Scriptures sometimes stile it *Enmity* and *Hatred*. By which Words, in a Tropical Sense, it's Evil is very well express'd. For though we assert that no Man can be said, in a proper Sense, to hate or to bear an Enmity to God as God, or as having a true Notion of him, yet Sin (at least) consists in the Commission of such Actions as have a direct Opposition to his great End or Design; such as those of an Enemy are wont to have. And as Sin produces Guilt, or an Obligation to Punishment, so 'tis sometimes in the Scriptures represented under the Similitude of a *Debt*. Now if we consider Sin in these Notions of it, it will appear, that Repentance and Amendment of Life no less naturally tend to remedy its Evil, and by Consequence that they are naturally qualified to be Conditions of Pardon. For these have evidently a direct Tendency to the Accomplishment of the great End of God; and by inclining Men to Acts agreeable to the Divine Nature and Will, and thus far changing their States with Reference to the great Lawgiver, they may be said to reconcile them to him, and if not to discharge their Debt, or dissolve their Obligation to Punishment, yet to qualify them for an Interest in that Satisfaction which effectually does it.

But here it may be objected, that Faith in the Saviour of the World is in the Scriptures joyned with Repentance and Amendment of Life, as a Condition of equal Necessity in Order to Pardon.

But to this may be reply'd, That though Faith in a Saviour both was and is necessary to such as either heard or do hear the Sound of the Gospel-Revelation, yet the Case of such as liv'd before his Incarnation (a very few excepted) was, it seems, very different: Since Faith in a future Redeemer was, for ought appears, never expressly requir'd of them as a Condition of Pardon: Whereas on the contrary, Repentance and Amendment were ever so requir'd both by the natural and revealed Law. We have here been treating only of the natural Congruity or Fitness of Repentance and Amendment to qualify for Pardon. But though this should be admitted, 'twill by no Means follow that no other Condition could in any Case become necessary. For none can justly doubt but the supreme Governour was free to suspend the Benefits of our Saviour's Satisfaction on other Conditions besides the natural ones; especially on so reasonable a Condition as that of Faith in the great Author of it, when clearly reveal'd. But this does not in the least hinder but that the Performance of the natural Conditions may still be sufficient to qualify those who never heard of that Satisfaction for a Share in its Benefits.

Thus much may have been sufficient with Reference to the Government of particular Persons as such. The Wisdom of God in the Government of *Communities*, may, 'tis conceiv'd, be abundantly clear'd by the following Propositions.

1. *God is the Author of Political Society; as having qualify'd some Creatures for it, and implanted an Inclination to it.*

'Twas the Notion of Mr. *Hobbes* (deriv'd from the *Epicureans*) that the natural State was a *State of War*;

*War* ; or that there was no Difference nor Notion of Right or Wrong, Just or Unjust, antecedently to Compact or Agreement ; and that by Consequence Men, as well as Brutes, had not only a Privilege, but a natural Inclination to oppress and destroy each other, in order to engross to themselves whatever was in the Compass of their Power.

But the eternal immutable Relations of Fit and Unfit (which we have observ'd to be in the Nature of Things) according to which not only Reason but Instinct is observ'd to act ; the innate Principle of Self-love, which inclines not only Men but the very Brutes to consult their own Security, and not to assault others unless for Self-preservation ; the natural Affection between the Sexes so strongly disposing them to Union ; the natural Inclination of all Animals of the same Species to each other ; and lastly, the natural Methods of communicating their Inclinations or Affections, but especially the Faculty of Speech for which Men were so peculiarly fram'd, and by which they are render'd more sociable than other Animals, are sufficient Consutations of that Fancy.

2. *The immediate End of political Society is the present Good.*

As the End of the supreme Governour in his Government of particular Persons as such, is most rationally concluded to be chiefly their future Good, and their present no otherwise than as conducive to, or, (at least) consistent with that ; so in the Association and Government of Communities, 'tis principally their present Good. This is clear from the mention'd Principles of Society implac'd in our Natures ; which have all an immediate Tendency either to the procuring present Advantage, or to the warding off impending Evils.

Hence it partly proceeds, that though in the Government of particular Persons, Rewards and Punish-

ments are usually reserv'd to the Future State; on the contrary, such Societies as most industriously promote or oppose the true Ends of Government, are commonly recompenc'd in this. As we shall have Occasion more particularly to remark hereafter.

3. *From the Complication and Interfering of these two Governments, (viz. of Particulars and Communities) distinguish'd by two so different Ends as are the Future and the Present Good, it necessarily proceeds, that there must frequently be some Variety and seeming Irregularity in the Conduct and Methods of the supreme Governour.*

For since the chief Design of God may justly be concluded to be the future Good of particular Persons as such, no Wonder if he sometimes postpones the (present) Good of Communities when in Competition, as being in itself of far less Consequence.

4. *The present or future Good of a few particular Persons or Societies, being of less Consideration than the present or future Good of the whole Community or entire human Species, must ever be conceived to give Place when in Competition.*

Hence it follows, that the Divine Conduct in governing the World ought not to be measured by such narrow Models as some are apt to frame; who (as my Lord Bacon observes) are wont to thrust themselves into the Centre of the World, and to imagine that all Lines should meet in them and their Fortunes. Every wise Governour proposes certain general Ends which are chiefly to be promoted for the publick Good, and to which all private Interests must submit. Thus (to give an Instance in the Divine Government of the World:) Since the erecting of mighty Monarchies could not but be a general Benefit in the earlier Ages of the World, as tending in the most effectual Manner to civilize the rude and barbarous People by the Propagation and Improvement of Religion and Arts; the supreme Governour,

nour, partly for this Reason, and partly for a Punishment of the Vicious, hath frequently either ordain'd, or permitted the Conquests of Nations: In which, for the most Part, he has made Use of the most civiliz'd, or, at least, the most virtuous People as his Instruments. Thus 'tis observable, that the *Babylonians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Getes, Chineses, Jews* and *Mexicans*, who most extended their Conquests in their several Quarters, were in those Times either the most polite, or the most virtuous Nations upon Record in History. And though Enterprizes of this Nature were not usually achiev'd without the great Damage and Destruction of particular Persons, yet such Inconveniencies were, for the most Part, both less considerable than the Benefit that thereby accru'd to the Community, and fell most heavily on such as apparently deserv'd them most. And though the Good and the Bad have been ever so mix'd together, as that the former could not sometimes without a Miracle escape a Share in the Miseries of the latter; yet the best of Men being ever more or less faulty, there could be no just Plea against the Administration of the Divine Government in this Respect; especially if it be consider'd, that temporal Destruction was to them but a Surprize into Happiness, at the same Time that it to the others was a Prelude to future Misery.

A certain Nation, I confess, whose barbarous Treatment of the naked defenceless *Americans* is so generally detested, may seem to yield no inconsiderable Objection against the Observation we just now made. And this the rather deserves our Notice, because the Invention of Fire-arms (which facilitated the Conquest of that vast Continent) immediately before its Discovery, and the Concurrence of so many extraordinary Circumstances in the Discovery and Conquest themselves, seem to argue the Deity to have had a particular Concern in that Affair.

Yet

Yet admitting all this, 'tis conceiv'd, the Equity of the Divine Conduct is sufficiently clear. For as on the one Side, 'tis but too evident that those *Americans* (like the *Canaanites* of old) were become impious Wretches, polluted with the Blood of human Sacrifices, and guilty of the grossest Idolatry and other enormous Vices ; so on the other Side it must be confess'd, that though their Invaders exceeded their Commission, by suffering their Pride and Avarice to prevail almost to the Extinction of Humanity (for which their Leaders appear to have received exemplary Punishment) yet their Posterity have discover'd a very commendable Zeal for the Conversion and Civilizing of those Barbarians. And I think it must be confess'd, that the *Roman* Religion (though sufficiently corrupted) was far preferable to that most abominable Superstition which had blinded those unhappy People. And if we reflect upon the Advantages of that Religion in its so near Resemblance of the Pagan Worship of Demons and Inferior Deities, by which it the more easily insinuates itself among such as have been bred in a Superstition so little different, it may be consider'd as no unfit Introduction to a purer Religion in future Ages.

To this Place may be reduc'd that Method of the Divine Government which some would represent as unaccountable ; I mean the Punishment of Princes in certain Cases, by the temporal Loss and Destruction of their Subjects. For as we may be assur'd that this is never without sufficient Demerit in the Subjects themselves, so (since the Grandeur of Princes, which is supported by the Numbers and Riches of their Subjects, is their most tender and sensible Part) it can't be doubted but it tends most effectually to their Reclamation on whose Conduct the Welfare of the whole human Community so immediately depends. The like may be observ'd with Reference to  
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the Punishment of Parents by the temporal Damage of their Posterity.

5. 'Twas highly suitable to the Divine Wisdom in the Government of the World, both to pre-ordain some of the principal Events with Reference either to the entire human Community, or to the more considerable Parts of it, and to reserve to itself the Right of interposing and influencing particular Agents, more especially in order to the Accomplishment of those Events.

That this has been the Method of the Divine Wisdom, is abundantly clear from the Scripture Prophecies and Histories. And that the Divine Wisdom in this Regard displays itself in the most illustrious Manner, is certain. For hereby it appears, that the Government of the World is equally oppos'd to *Chance* and *Destiny*. Had the Deity taken no Care of Futurity, but left every Man to the Conduct of his own Inclinations, and natural Effects in the general to the immediate Influence of their Causes, without ever interposing to direct 'em to the Attainment of his great Designs; this would have been almost, in Effect, to divest himself of the Government of rational Agents, and to subject their Affairs to Chance, and to the Hazard of the utmost Disorder and Confusion. Or had he, on the contrary, absolutely or fatally determin'd every Event (though this, I confess, would have been far enough from divesting himself of the Government of the World, yet) it would have been a Government unworthy the Deity, a Government entirely exclusive of all proper Sin and Punishment, Virtue and Rewards; wherein himself would, in Effect, have been the only Agent, and all the Creatures stupid and passive. Whereas on the contrary, by pre-ordaining the most material Events, and suffering the Creatures freely to exert their Faculties in all convenient Cases, he appears most wisely to  
have

have chosen the middle Way, and thereby to have equally avoided the Mischiefs of both Extremes.

Again, If the Deity had left Men in every Case to the Exercise of their Liberty, he could have given no Proof of his Government of human Actions; and had he quite excluded Liberty by fatally determining every Event, the Creatures could have given no Proof of their Subjection and Obedience. Whereas by determining some Events, and reserving to himself a Liberty of interposing in all others, as he gives his intelligent Creatures sufficient Capacity and Opportunity, in all convenient Cases, to evidence their Allegiance to him, so he procures to himself the Opportunity of making sensible Discoveries of his Sovereignty, and actual Dominion over them and their Affairs; and at the same Time of striking a deep Sense of that Reverence and Duty which they owe him. This we find he has sometimes done by foretelling future Events, and sometimes by his palpable Interposition in the Affairs of the World by Miracles or supernatural Effects: By both which Methods, how much the Interests of Religion, and by Consequence his great Design in the Creation and Government of the World, have been advanc'd, may in some Measure be conceiv'd by such as consider how much greater Impression miraculous or extraordinary Effects are apt to make on the Minds of Men, than the common and daily Results of natural Causes; and how strongly most Men are bent to search into Futurity, even sometimes to the Neglect of their present Interests. For which Reason, we find the Wisdom of the great Creator, in this Respect, has often been imitated (whether by Demons or designing Priests we need not here determine) in the Pagan Oracles, as likewise in their Auguries and Divinations; by which bold and inquisitive Men have endeavour'd to penetrate into those Secrets which none but the Deity could disclose.



8. *If, notwithstanding these most prudent Methods of the supreme Governour his great End and Design (the universal Good of his Creatures) does not appear to be advanc'd so constantly and uniformly as might be expected where the most perfect Wisdom has the Management and Direction; it deserves to be remember'd, that it is the Government of Free Agents, who are, in most Cases, to be the Determiners of their Actions.*

There's no compelling Men to be virtuous, nor consequently to be happy. For where there's Force of any Kind, the very Notion of Virtue ceases. The Wisdom therefore of the Divine Conduct in the Government of the World, could not, in Matters purely moral, consist in a constant necessitating Influence on the Minds of Men, and an entire Banishment of Evil out of the World; but must have discover'd itself either in making a prudent Provision against such cross Events as might proceed from their Perverseness and Folly, or else in rendering particular Evils (as far as is consistent with the Government of Free Agents) conducive to the common Good. Both which Designs he evidently pursues by the Methods before observ'd.

## C H A P. XII.

III. **O**UR last Idea of the Divine Perfection or Sufficiency, as it refers to other Beings as actually existent, is that of *Providence*.

*Our Idea of Providence we derive from the Consideration of those Acts of the Divine Wisdom and Benevolence, proceeding from an exact Knowledge of the several States or Conditions of the Creatures, whereby the Deity has always more immediately provided for their Preservation or Subsistence.*

That God perfectly knows whatever is in the World, is plain, because he created and still sustains  
what-

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whatever is in the World. For 'tis equally absurd to say, either that he knew not what he created, or that he knows not what he now sustains or continues in Being.

As the Acts of Creation and Sustentation refer simply to the Existence of the Creatures, and those of Government to their State and Actions, so those of Providence, as here understood, refer to their *Subsistence* and *Preservation*.

It has, I confess, been usual to conceive Providence in a larger Sense, as including all the Acts of God towards his Creatures consequent on their Creation. But as this is a very general Notion, and contains a Complication of many and very different Ideas, which are thereby apt to be confus'd and indistinct, so both the original Signification of the Word, and its common Use, both among Ancients and Moderns, will favour a more restrain'd and limited Sense.

Some Philosophers, under Colour of raising our Conceptions of the Divine Greatness and Majesty, have absolutely excluded a Providence in the larger Sense of the Word. Others, conceiving the King of the World under the degrading Character of an Earthly Prince, have imagin'd that he ever commits the Care of his Subjects to his Ministers or Deputies. Others have limited it to the nobler Parts of the Creation, and abandoned the inferior to Chance, or the unmanag'd Influence of second Causes.

But as our *Reason* will not suffer us to doubt but that the Knowledge of God is perfect, and extends to the meanest of his Creatures, and his Power Almighty and incapable of Fatigue; so 'twill assure us, that Nothing is by his Wisdom judg'd unworthy his Care and Protection, which by the same Wisdom was judg'd not unworthy his Creation.

Nor

Nor will our *Experience* suffer us to doubt of the Reality and Universality of a Providence. We shall instance in a few Particulars ; and in so doing we shall omit all such Effects of it as may with any Plausibility be suspected to be the necessary Results either of the original Structure of the World, or of that of particular Beings ; to the End there may be no just Pretence to elude the Evidence they may yield us of the present and more immediate Efficiency of such an omnipotent and most beneficent Being as we before discover'd.

'Twere endless to enumerate such probable Instances of a Providence with Reference to particular Persons and Things, as both our own Experience and the Histories of all Ages abound with ; and we shall wholly omit them ; both because Men are apt to be very incredulous in Matters of this Nature, and because there's no perfect or constant Uniformity to be pretended (for Reasons easily to be collected from what was observ'd when we discours'd of the Methods of the Divine Government) but whatever Instances can be produc'd as Proofs of such a particular Providence, may perhaps be confronted by others which seem to import the contrary.

We shall therefore single out such Instances only, in which we are either universally concern'd, or with Reference to which there can be no colourable Plea for Incredulity. Such we humbly conceive to be,

1. *The Continuation of the Gravitation of the Parts which compose the several greater Bodies of the Universe towards their respective Centres, and of that of the Bodies themselves towards each other.*

For this we formerly prov'd to be no Effect of any intrinsic Property of Matter, but to be either a mediate or immediate Impression of the Divine Power. But *Gravity* is the only Cement which holds the Parts of the World together : Without which, that very Motion we observe in some of those  
vast

vaſt Bodies (at preſent ſo neceſſary to the Subſiſtence of Animals and Vegetables) would ſoon ſhatter and reduce them to a *Chaos* of Confuſion and Deformity.

2. *The Continuation of the nice Adjustment of that Projectile Motion of the Planets of our System to the Force of their Gravitation towards each other and the Sun.*

How great an Inſtance this yields us of a Providence, will eaſily appear to ſuch as ſhall conſider, that without it all things (as in the former Caſe) would by Degrees come to Confuſion. The *Moon* and the *Earth*, *Jupiter* and its *Satellites*, would either meet, or elſe fly off from each other to the utmoſt Spaces of the Heavens. In ſhort, the whole Planetary *Chorus* would ſoon either ſink into the Sun, and lie broiling in that vaſt Ocean of Fire, or elſe deſert him, and like *Comets*, pay an unwelcome Viſit to the remoter Parts of the World; to the Damage, and perhaps Deſtruction of the neighbouring Systems.

3. *The Continuation of the Oblique Poſition of the Earth's Axis, by preventing ſuch Alteration therein as might have happen'd either by the too near Approach of Comets, or the Influence of any other Cauſe.*

Without this, the uſeful and neceſſary Variety of *Seasons* would ceaſe. The Sun's Heat would nowhere increaſe by thoſe juſt Degrees neceſſary for the ripening of Fruits. The greateſt Part of the Earth would be expoſ'd to the Rigours of a perpetual Winter, while the others would be parch'd and burnt up by an Exceſs of Heat.

4. *The Regulation of the Winds* is another Proof of a Provident Deity. The frequent Variations of the Winds in moſt Parts of the Earth, demonſtrate that they proceed from no uniform mechanical Cauſes, Yet theſe are the grand Inſtruments of Nature, on which the Preſervation or Deſtruction of Animals  
and

and Vegetables more immediately depends. Which makes it necessary to conclude, that a perfectly wise and beneficent Deity (if any such) would not leave them entirely to Chance, or the ungoverned Influence of their immediate Causes, and thereby abandon his Creation to so manifest a Hazard. And we may be assur'd from Experience that he does not. For did not some superior Principle sometimes excite and regulate their Motions, 'tis reasonable to believe the Earth would soon be reduc'd to an inanimate Heap and hideous Solitude. The *Air* would soon become a vast Receptacle of Infection and Blasting. The *Sea* would be no other than a Sink of Poison and Noisomeness. The *Land* would either become barren for want of Moisture, or be laid waste by repeated Inundations.

Whereas, on the contrary, we find the Seasons of the Year are sufficiently distinguish'd. The pestilential Steams of the Earth are dissipated. The Seas are preserv'd wholesome by Storms and Tempests. And the Air is refresh'd with seasonable Breezes.

This makes even the Variation of the Winds, a considerable Proof of the Superintendence of an intelligent Cause. For were they every where uniform and periodical (like the Trade-Winds that blow between the Tropicks) such Regularity, and whatsoever good Effects it might produce, would, with some Colour of Reason, be suspected to proceed from the necessary Constitution of the World, and consequently would yield no sufficient or convincing Proof of the Agency of an intellectual Cause.

It must be own'd, that the Acts of the Divine Government do sometimes interfere, and cause a Variety in the usual Course of Providence. The Winds have not always been so regulated as to prevent Inundations, Pestilence, or Sterility. But then the Divine Government, as it makes, so it solves the Difficulty. The credible Tradition of former Ages

(not to mention the suppos'd Effects and Relicts that are still visible) will not suffer us to doubt of the Reality of the universal Deluge. For this we have the concurrent Testimonies of the *Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phœnicians, Greeks*, and even of the *Americans*, as well as of the *Jews*. But this both *Jews* and *Pagans* agree to have been the just Demerit of a degenerate World. And even then, 'twas no inconsiderable Instance of a Providence, that in the Midst of the general Desolation there should any escape to furnish the Earth with Inhabitants. And that the Lot should be cast on the Virtuous, while the Waters were every where triumphant over the Impious. Thus, (if we will not believe *Moses*) *Ovid*, from the Tradition of former Ages, assures us of *Deucalion*, (which appears to be but another Name for *Noah*) and his Wife *Pyrrha*, that,

*Non illo melior quisquam nec amantior æqui  
Vir fuit, aut illâ reverentior ulla Deorum.*

Ne'er liv'd a better, juster Man than He;  
Nor liv'd a Woman more devout than She.

And as for the rest of that Age, we have the Testimony of Historians, as well Profane as Sacred, to assure us, that they were extremely degenerate and vicious.

It must likewise be own'd, that we sometimes hear of Famine and Pestilence. But then these seldom happen, are of small Extent, and are usually appropriated to the Circumstances either of the Country or its Inhabitants. So that they are so far from yielding an Argument against the Reality of a Providence, that they sometimes furnish a Proof of the Equity of the divine Government.

These are the more general Proofs of the Existence of a Provident Deity. Some of the less general are, 'tis humbly conceiv'd,

1. *The due Proportion between the Numbers of the different Sexes of Animals.*

This is very remarkable in Man, in whom it was most necessary. The Proportion has been observ'd to be commonly either as Fourteen to Thirteen, or as Sixteen to Fifteen. The small Surplufage is so far from weakening this Proof of a Providence, that it rather strengthens and confirms it; for by this, Provision is made against the Accidents to which the Males are chiefly expos'd. By these Methods in all Ages so great an Equality has been preserved between the Sexes, as would have been absolutely unaccountable without the Supposition of a Providence. For had not a Providence concern'd itself in this Affair, (whether we conceive the Rudiments of the human Body to be originally contained in the Egg, as are those of Plants in their Seeds; or whether we suppose it to proceed from some Animalcule of the Male Sperm, as is most likely, yet) since the Ovary of the Female must be conceiv'd to contain Numbers of Eggs of either Sort; and since the Animalcules of the Male Sperm are observ'd to be so numerous, 'twas very possible, in either Case, that the Disproportion between the Males and Females might, at some Time or other, have been so great, as very much to diminish, if not entirely to extinguish the Species.

2. *The Prevention of the Confusion of Species by unnatural Mixtures,* is another Proof of a Provident Deity. Without this the Face of Nature might, by Degrees, have been almost entirely changed; and many of those Signatures of Divine Wisdom, which at present discover themselves in the regular Frame and Constitution of Animals, effac'd. The World might have been filled with *Minotaurs*, *Harpies*, and *Chimera's*: And these might have been infinitely blended together into all the Shapes of hideous Deformity. The Man and the Brute might

have been no longer distinguishable ; and Reason might have been impair'd, if not entirely lost, in the unequal Mixture. For we find no such strong and uniform Inclination in Animals of the same Species to each other, or Aversion to those of a different one, as wholly to prevent promiscuous Copulation. We are assur'd, that in *Africa* especially, where the excessive Heats oblige Beasts of different Kinds to meet at Watering-places, they by Degrees become familiar, and often produce Monsters ; for which *Africa* was ever remarkable. But these, like Meteors, soon disappear : The divine Providence so ordering, that they want the Means of propagating their anomalous Kinds ; which are ever extinct in the Individual. Of this Mules are a known Instance.

3. *The Invariableness of Seeds*, is another no less considerable Instance of a Providence. This is usually seen in Animals when the ordinary Course of Nature is observ'd. But 'tis most remarkable in Plants, where more necessary. Otherwise, what was wholesome Food or Physick in one Age, might have become Poison in another : Whereas on the contrary, such Descriptions of the Virtues and Properties of Plants as have been left us by the Ancients, are found exactly agreeable to the Experience of the present Age. And yet, the slight Texture of the innumerable Parts of Seeds, the Difference of Soils, and the Variety of Accidents to which they are expos'd, may well render such an Agreement unaccountable without the Supposition of a Providence.

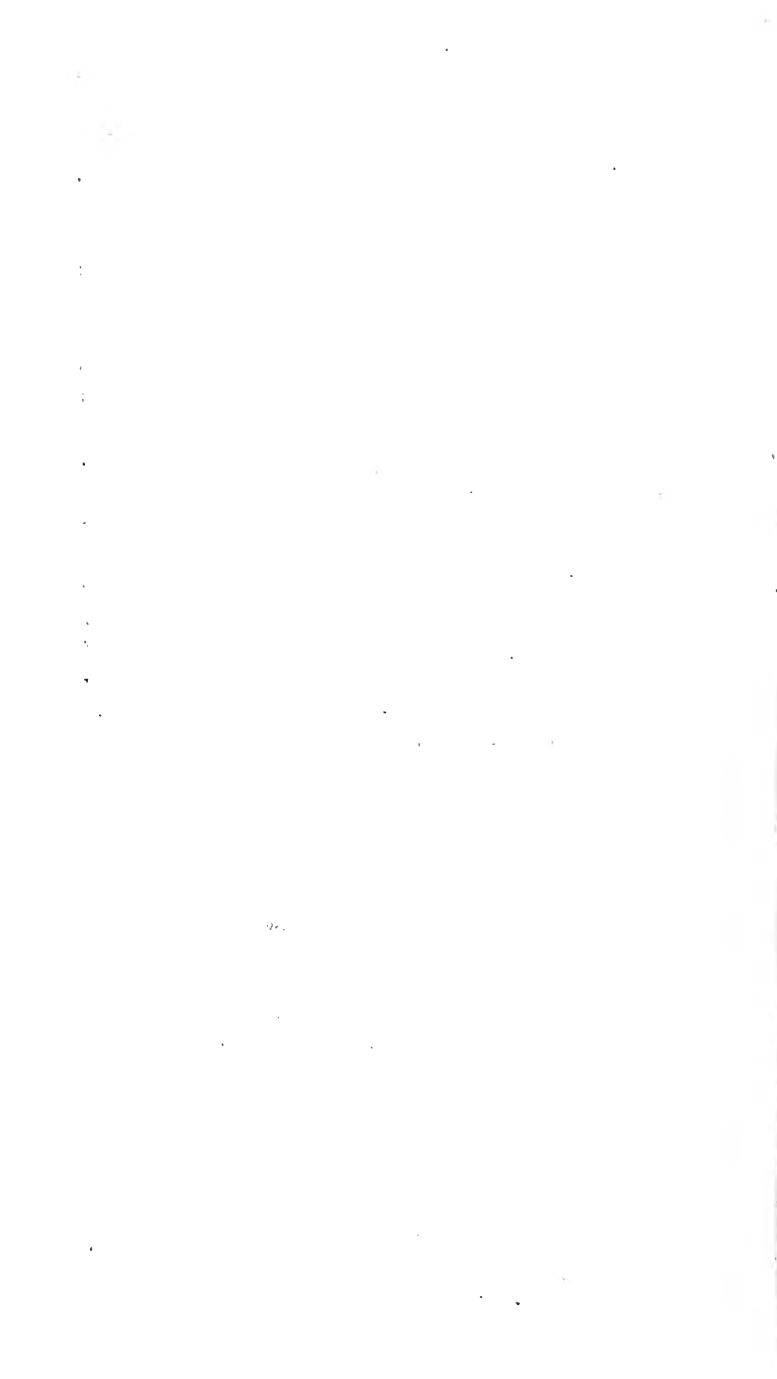
4. To add no more. *The due Proportion of the Numbers of Animals and Vegetables, by the equal Prevention of their too great Increase and Destruction*, is an Argument of a Providence. Thus, notwithstanding the great Consumption by Wars and other Accidents, the Number of Mankind in every Age not only equals, but exceeds that of the former. And, which



which is more remarkable, the Increase is in such a Gradation as bears a Proportion to the gradual Invention of Arts and Sciences, and the Improvement of the Methods of Living.

And as for other Animals, their Propagation is observ'd to be ever proportionable both to the Length of their Lives, and to the Accidents to which they are more peculiarly subject. Thus, the Doe, which lives long, breeds, after eight Months Pregnancy, but one, or, at the most, but two; whereas the Fox, which lives but ordinarily Six or Eight Years, breeds four in a much shorter Time. The like may be observ'd of the several Sorts of Vegetables. And in the general, it may be remark-ed, that Beasts multiply more than Men; Fowls than Beasts; Fishes than Fowls; Insects and Vegetables than Fishes: Which they severally do in a fit Proportion to their Decay and Consumption. By which uniform Course of Providence both the Species are preserv'd, and yet the World is not overstock'd with Inhabitants.





A N

# Impartial Enquiry

Into the EXISTENCE and

## NATURE OF GOD:

Being a MODEST ESSAY towards a  
more INTELLIGIBLE ACCOUNT of the  
DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

With REMARKS on several AUTHORS  
both ANCIENT and MODERN.

---

BOOK the SECOND.

---

By SAMUEL COLLIBER.

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*Dedit omnibus Deus pro virili portione Sapientiam, ut  
et inaudita investigare possent et audita perpendere.*

Lactantius Lib. 2. Divinarum Inst. Cap. 8.

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LONDON: Printed for R. ROBINSON, at the  
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A N

# Impartial Enquiry

I N T O T H E

Existence and Nature of *G O D*.

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B O O K the S E C O N D.

---

P A R T the F I R S T.

*Of the Existence of G O D.*



I N the former Book we made it our Endeavour to discover such Principles of Reason as might yield Conviction to ourselves, without being very solicitous about the Sentiments of others. In this Discourse we shall proceed to make some Enquiry into the commonly receiv'd Opinions, to the End that having clearly comprehended the Agreement or Disagreement, we may be the better qualified to determine upon the Parallel.

Which

Which we perhaps shall successfully do, if we agree equally to suspect such Opinions as shall tempt us either to think meanly of the Deity, or else to affect an abstruse and unintelligible Sublimity. The latter of which appears to be the more dangerous Extreme. For few Men find themselves inclin'd to receive little degrading Ideas of the best and noblest of Beings; whereas on the contrary, the Prospect of so glorious an Object so vehemently strikes the Spirits, that it is apt to unfix the most sedate Minds, and to dissolve our Reason into Rapture and Enthusiasm.

We shall reduce our Enquiry to Three General Divisions. In the First we shall treat of the *Existence of God*. In the Second, of the *Infinity or Immenfity of his Effence*. And in the Third, we shall treat of what is usually call'd the *Infinity of his Duration*. Under these Three Divisions may be comprehended whatever shall appear necessary to be added on this important Subject.

To begin with the *Existence of God*. This, we humbly conceive, has been so firmly demonstrated in the former Book, as to admit of no reasonable Doubt. Wherefore the Cause being already sufficiently secur'd, 'twill be no Disadvantage, but a considerable Service to it, to detect the Fallacy and Weakness of some other pretended Proofs that have been employ'd to support it.

*Epicurus* having rejected all other Arguments for the Existence of a God, and, in Effect, retain'd only the Name of *God* in his Philosophy, was yet willing to admit one Proof, *viz.* the Proof deriv'd from the Universality of his Idea. For he pretended, that even antecedently to Instruction and the Exercise of Reason, by a Sort of Anticipation of the Use of his Faculties, every Man had in his Mind an Idea of something Divine.

I confess, I have always thought we had Reason to suspect the Gifts of Enemies; who if they can once persuade us to cast away our Weapons, and to defend ourselves with such others as they please to bestow upon us, will not easily fail of Victory. For whatever Bustle has of late been made with this Argument of *Epicurus*, it seems to me to be capable of yielding very little Assistance to the Cause of a Deity.

Had *Epicurus* look'd upon the Idea of God as a Result of Reasoning and Enquiry, 'tis to be own'd he might have drawn a probable Argument from its Universality to prove his Existence; that being, without Dispute, most highly reasonable to be believ'd, which in all Ages and Nations has been believ'd by the most wary and disinterested Reasoners as well as others. But this was none of his Meaning. For 'tis agreed that he suppos'd this Idea as Innate or Con-natural, not as the pure Result of Reason.

Or had he been capable of proving but the *Reality* of such an innate Idea, it might have been admitted as a good Argument by such as assert either a Creation or Formation of the World by a provident or beneficent Cause. For supposing such an universal Idea to be real, it would on their Principles be altogether unaccountable from whence it should have proceeded, unless from the Author of Nature. But still it could have been no Proof upon the Principles of *Epicurus*, who conceiv'd it no otherwise than as the Effect of stupid unintelligent Matter and fortuitous Motion, and whose Idea of a God, included no such Attributes as Providence and Beneficence.

From whence 'tis clear, that since this Argument could have no rational Effect upon *Epicurus*, it follows, that when he said he admitted a God or Gods because of the Universality of the Idea of something, Divine,

Divine, he could in Effect mean no other, than that he suppos'd the Existence of some Divine Being or Beings, only because the Supposition was fashionable and popular, and because the contrary might have expos'd him to Censure and Punishment.

But that there is really such an Idea in the Mind of any Man antecedently to Instruction and Reasoning, does neither appear by our Experience of ourselves, nor is capable of Proof from our Observation of others; which yet are the only possible Ways of proving it. For Tradition and Instruction usually make such early Impressions, as to prevent the least Reflection upon any such innate Idea. And as it admits of no Proof from Experience, so 'tis sufficiently confuted by it. For we find that such as receive either none, or but some imperfect Notices of a Deity from Tradition or Reasoning, have either no Idea of him at all, or but such a corrupt and imperfect one as sufficiently corresponds to their Means of Information. And this, I take it, is abundantly clear from the credible Accounts of Travellers.

*Des Cartes*, after the Example, though I will not say with the Design of *Epicurus*, having equally discarded all the usual Proofs of the Divine Existence, thinks he has sufficiently supply'd their Room by two Demonstrations deriv'd from the Nature of the same suppos'd *innate Idea*. And this Topick has since become fruitful of Arguments.

One Demonstration of *Des Cartes* is to this Effect: An Attribute which we clearly and distinctly perceive to be included in the Idea of a Thing may be truly affirm'd of that Thing. But the Idea which we find implanted in our Minds of a Deity or most perfect Being, plainly includes *Necessity of Existence*: For this being without Doubt a Perfection, can't but be contain'd in the Idea of that Being which is conceiv'd to possess all Perfections. Consequently, we may truly affirm, that God, or a most Perfect  
Being,



Being, necessarily exists : It being a Proposition which is self evident.

It were to be wish'd that this pretended Demonstration was as solid as 'tis specious and surprizing ; but I fear it never yet had the proper Effect of Demonstration on any considering Man, by entirely removing all Doubts and Scruples on this great Point. We shall give it a few Thoughts.

And in the first Place we may observe, that there are many Propositions which are self-evident and indisputable, *viz.* All such whose Terms are necessarily connected or jointly signify the very same Idea either in whole or in Part. So this Proposition, *A Man is a rational Being*, is self-evident. For there's none who understands the Terms but must immediately assent to its Truth ; since these Terms, *A Man* and *a Rational Being* (in the strictest Sense) signify the very same Idea.

Again, The Truth of such Propositions may be observ'd not to depend on the Existence of the Subjects or Things of which they are affirm'd. For if the Idea jointly signify'd by the Terms or Words was fix'd, then the Words were necessarily connected, and by Consequence the Proposition they compose was necessarily true, though the Thing signify'd by the Idea had no Existence ; which Sort of Truth we may properly enough distinguish by the Name of *ideal* or *notional Truth*, because not founded on the Existence of the Thing signify'd by the Idea, but merely on the Existence of the *Idea* in the Mind of some intellectual Being, and on the fix'd Conformity of the Terms or Words to that Idea.

In the next Place it may be observ'd, that as there's a *notional* or *ideal Truth of Propositions*, consisting in the fix'd Conformity of the Terms to the Idea existing in the Mind, so there's a *real Truth of Ideas*, consisting in the Conformity of the Idea to the Thing signify'd or represented by it. This Truth is  
of

of a quite different Kind from the Notional Truth; and the notional Truth may (as we before observ'd) be very well without it. For Example, This Proposition, *A Man is a Rational Being*, might be notionally true, *i. e.* the Terms might be fix'd and determin'd to signify the Notion or Idea of a *Man* in the Mind of some other intellectual Being, and by Consequence, the Conformity between these Terms and such an Idea of a *Man*, might cause this Proposition to be true, though no such Creature as a *Man* represented by that Idea were existent in Nature. These Things, I take it, are so clear as not to need any further Illustration.

To apply this to the present Case.

We grant that the Proposition, *God necessarily exists*, or, which is all one, *God is necessarily existent*, is a self-evident Proposition, like the former. For there's none who has an Idea of a *God or most perfect Being*, and of *necessary Existence*, but must immediately perceive the Conformity and Connection of these Terms; since the Term *necessary Existence*, signifying a Perfection, can't but be connected with the Term *God*, which signifies a Complication of all Perfections.

It must therefore be own'd, that this Proposition has a necessary notional Truth, *i. e.* since the Notion or Idea of *God* necessarily includes the Idea of *necessary Existence*, (which is by Consequence a Part of the same Idea) therefore the Terms or Words, while determin'd to signify those Ideas, must necessarily have a fix'd Conformity and Connection with each other.

But then it may be observ'd, that this *notional* or *ideal Truth* (which is all that can be infer'd from one Term's being connected with another) does not by any Means demonstrate the *real Truth* or the Existence of an Object or Thing conformable to the Idea

Idea or Ideas signify'd by those Terms. As appears by the former Instance.

From hence 'tis manifest, that the first and main Proposition of *Des Cartes's* Demonstration, (*viz.* An Attribute which was clearly and distinctly perceiv'd to be included in an Idea, may be truly affirm'd of the Thing signify'd by that Idea) is false. For an Attribute may be clearly included in an Idea, and may by Consequence be truly affirm'd of the Idea which includes it, when yet it can't be affirm'd of any thing signified by that Idea. For as the Idea (if a complex one, and capable of being form'd or compos'd by the Imagination) may well be without the Thing which it is suppos'd to signify, so many Propositions may be true of the Idea which are not true of the Thing. Consequently, though I find Necessity of Existence included in my complex Idea of a God or most perfect Being, and though I can clearly perceive its unalterable Connection with that Idea, yet it does not for that Reason follow that I may affirm it of any real Being, unless I was antecedently convinc'd (which must have been by some other Argument than this) that there actually is such a Being as is conformable to my Idea: No more than it follows that I may affirm Power or Wisdom of him antecedently to such Conviction: For these are equally included in that Idea. This Argument therefore can't prove the Existence of a God, but only a certain Mode of his Existence already prov'd, *viz.* *Necessity.*

The other Demonstration of *Des Cartes* is deriv'd from the Perfection of the suppos'd innate Idea of a God; and is to this Effect.

The Idea of an infinitely perfect Being, which I am conscious of in my Mind, has greater Perfection than any finite Being was capable of causing it to represent. By Consequence, 'tis impossible I should perceive any such Idea in my Mind, unless there be

a Cause of that Idea possessing as much Perfection as is represented by it. Therefore a God, or a Being of infinite Perfection exists, who is the Cause of that Idea which represents infinite Perfection.

This pretended Demonstration is weaker, if possible, than the former ; and it seems unaccountable, that the *Meditations* of that Philosopher should gain such Credit in the World, which had so little besides the Novelty of the Method to recommend them.

What Perfection is there in the Idea even of an infinitely perfect Being, as it exists in the Mind, more than what the Mind may be suppos'd to have given it ? If we reflect, we shall soon perceive, with the excellent Mr. *Locke*, that we have no positive Idea of any thing as Infinite. We can't receive nor form in our Minds any Idea so great as will admit of no farther Addition or Increase. Whatever Idea we perceive at any one Time is plainly limited ; and the most we can do to qualify an Idea to represent something of Infinity, is only in a negative Way, by not fixing any Period to the repeated Additions in our Minds. And whatever Materials we employ in forming or representing such an Idea, are plainly no other than what we have deriv'd from the Finite Objects we daily converse with. But the uniting of borrow'd Ideas of particular Kinds and Degrees of Perfection, without determining any Limits of the Progression, is certainly no such Effect as should necessarily require an infinitely perfect Cause. This we are sensible is sufficiently within the Power of our own Imaginations. We can form the Idea of a Mountain without limiting any particular Height, by heaping *Pelion* upon *Ossa*, and imitating the famous Labour of the Giants, though we ourselves don't equal the Bulk of the least of those Mountains. And by Parity of Reason, we may form a like negative Idea of an universal, unbounded, or infinite Perfection, without having any infinite Perfection in ourselves.

Another

Another Argument for the Existence of God, which some derive from the Nature of his suppos'd innate Idea in our Minds, is to this Effect.

The Existence of a God, say they, is possible, because there's nothing contradictory in our Idea or Notion of him. But if it be possible, it follows that it is likewise necessary. For, supposing there is now no God, 'tis impossible there ever should be any : Since Eternity, which is included in our Idea of him, can have no Beginning. His Existence must therefore either be impossible, (which yet we clearly perceive it is not) or else he must now necessarily exist.

This is another plausible Argument. But we do not want it ; having so many others which have Strength as well as Plausibility.

To shew its Weakness, it will perhaps be sufficient to produce a parallel Instance.

If this Way of Arguing was good, the following Argument would be no less a Demonstration. I have an Idea or Notion of a *First Man with Wings* ; and I find Nothing impossible or contradictory in this Idea. If then 'tis a possible Idea, I conclude the Thing is necessarily so. For if he does not now exist with Wings, then (since the First Man can't be produc'd after any other) it follows that he can never exist with them. Consequently, a possible Being would be impossible.

But this being manifestly a fallacious Argument, the former must be so too. For they are, I think, exactly parallel.

So uncertain is it to argue from the Notional Possibility to the real Existence ; and much more to the Necessity of that Existence. For an Object may be possible in its abstract Idea (*i. e.* there may be Nothing contradictory in the Idea of a Thing in our Minds) when yet, on Account of some external Consideration, it may be incapable of existing.

That then which made the former Argument so plausible, was its confounding an external Consideration, *viz.* the Want of Beginning, with the internal Attributes of the Divine Nature. For a Relation to the Parts and Periods of Duration is somewhat merely extrinſical. But the abstract Idea of a God, which was first consider'd as possible in that Argument, included no such Relation. And therefore if the Deity could be suppos'd not to exist, yet his abstract Idea would still be a Possibility (or would include no Repugnance, in its self consider'd) tho' on Account of that external Consideration, he could never exist.

*Spinoza* gives this Argument a different Turn in his *Opera posthuma*, p. 381. Says he, *Si tale Ens non existeret, &c. i. e.* " If such a Being (*viz.* an absolutely infinite one) did not exist, it could never be produc'd ; and so it would follow, that our Minds could conceive more than Nature could perform ; which he thinks absurd.

But this Argument is founded on the Supposition of our having a positive Idea of such an Infinite : Which that it is a vain Supposition, has been partly shewn both in this and the former Book, and more will be said in the following Part.

## PART the Second.

### *Of the Infinity of the Divine Nature.*

#### C H A P. I.

THE Opinion of the positive or absolute Infinity of the Divine Nature has so long and so generally prevail'd, that some, we find, take it for a Natural Notion, and tell us we need only read  
over

over the Catalogue of our *Innate Ideas* to obtain Satisfaction about it.

But because all Men are not as yet agreed, whether there be any such Thing as *innate Ideas*, much less, whether this be of the Number; and because 'tis very possible that Prejudices of Education may have crept into the List, 'twill perhaps be convenient to make it the Subject of our *Impartial Enquiry*.

As for the *English* Word *Infinite*, every one knows 'tis a Negative Term deriv'd from the *Latin infinitus*, which Word, as the Learned will inform us, was first coin'd to express the Sense of the *Greek ἀπειρον*; which properly signifies somewhat either without *End* or *Limits* in itself, or without *Bounds* from other Beings: Of which Senses the former is *Absolute*, the latter *Relative*.

The Word *Finite* admits of the same Difference of Senses; since a Thing may sometimes be consider'd as having Limits in itself, (which is to be Finite in the absolute Sense,) and sometimes as bounded by other Beings, (which is to be Finite in a Relative Sense.

In our Enquiry into the History of the Word *Infinite*, and its *Synonyma*, it will be needless to make a laborious Search into the Opinions of the *Eastern Nations*; both because we have no certain or complete Account of their Philosophy, and because their Sentiments could have no other Influence on the present Age, than by Means of the *Greeks*, by whom they were usually borrow'd and transmitted to Posterity.

Yet I can't omit the famous Paradox ascrib'd to *Hermes Trismegistus*, who is said to have taught; that *Deus est Sphæra cujus Centrum est ubique, cujus Peripheria nusquam*, i. e. *God is a Sphere whose Centre is every where, but his Circumference no where*. But since the Learned are not agreed, whether there was ever such a Person as this *Egyptian Hermes*; much

less whether those Remains which are attributed to him be genuine, we may, it is conceiv'd, be excus'd from taking any further Notice of it.

Therefore, the First (for ought with any Certainty appears) who asserted an *absolute Infinity* was *Anaximander*. This Philosopher, with his Followers, held τὸ Ἄπειρον, or *Infinity*, to have been the Principal or Original of all Things; yet this Infinity of theirs (on Enquiry) we shall find to have been no Deity, but a confus'd Heap or *Chaos* of *inanimate Matter*, from the casual Mixture or Coalition of which they fancy'd the Universe with all its Beauty and Regularity to have proceeded.

This Method of Philosophy was afterwards revived by *Democritus* and *Epicurus*, who undertook to improve the grosser Atheism of *Anaximander*, and to disguise the Monster in a more specious and philosophical Dress.

What Success those wise Projectors met with in so hopeful an Undertaking may easily be imagin'd. Having banish'd all Contrivance and Design, and left all to the Management of Chance, no Wonder if they made but bungling Work on't. Let us a little observe their Method.

And, in the first Place, these Builders of Worlds having prudently *suppos'd* the necessary Existence or Eternity of Matter; their next Care was to set it a moving. This we may conceive was but a small Difficulty to such mighty Undertakers. 'Twas but to *suppose* Motion to have been alike necessary, and the Atoms (without the Toil or Fatigue of any Deity) could move as nimbly as the Stones of the *Trojan Wall* at the Melody of *Apollo's Harp*. Having thus set every Dust or Atom in Motion, and begun the imaginary Dance, their next Care was to provide them sufficient Room. And lest they should have wanted Scope to exert their eternal Activity, they soon agreed, at the Expence of another *Supposition*,



to accommodate them with no less than an *absolutely infinite Space*. But having once suppos'd such an infinite or endless Space, they soon found themselves oblig'd to *suppose* a like Infinity of their Atoms; since otherwise they could have born no Proportion to the Space, and consequently could not so commodiously have been imagin'd to coalesce into Worlds. Thus these three Principles of *Eternal Motion, Infinite Space,* and *Infinite Matter*, being once admitted, they soon lost and bewilder'd themselves among their infinite Worlds, where we shall leave them, and proceed.

By what has already been discover'd, it appears, that an *absolute Infinity* was first introduc'd among the *Greeks* by *Anaximander*, and his Followers the *Atheistical Atomists*, and made the Attribute of *Matter*. Our next Business will be to enquire when and by whom it was first consecrated or set apart for the Deity.

And we need not go far to make the Discovery. For *Anaxagoras*, the next Successor but one to *Anaximander*, having, it seems, taken a more considerate View of the wonderful Frame of the World, and observ'd those Signatures of Wisdom and Design which appear in the Order and Beauty of its several Parts, was soon inclin'd to recall that Deity whom his Master had banish'd, and to own him for the Author of so noble a Work. For thus he began his Philosophy with *πάντα χηματα ἕν ὄντι*, &c. i. e. *All Things were at first mingled and blended together, till the MIND new modell'd and dispos'd them into an orderly and beautiful Frame.* To this *Mind* *Anaxagoras* is said to have given the Title of *ἄπειρος*, or *Infinite*. For being still in other Respects a Follower of *Anaximander*, and consequently an Assertor of the absolute Infinity of *Matter*, he found himself oblig'd to attribute a like Infinity to the *Mind* or Deity; since otherwise it could have born no Proportion to the Matter on which it was conceiv'd to act.

And thus the Notion of an *absolutely infinite Deity* was deriv'd from that of *absolutely infinite Matter*.

Though several other Philosophers, especially of the *Ionic Sect*, became Patrons of this Opinion, yet we shall find that the first considerable Promoter of it was *Plato*. That this Philosopher was an Asser-tor of an *absolutely infinite Deity*, is, what I conceive, not likely to be deny'd. Therefore, instead of proving it from his Writings, let us proceed to consider his Character; it being that which may be of some Use to us in forming a Judgment of his Opinions. And this we may borrow from the judicious and impartial *Monf. Rapin*, who in his *Reflections on the Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, near the Beginning, informs us, "That though *Plato*  
 " is indeed a very florid and ingenious Author, yet  
 " he writes with little Coherence or Method, de-  
 " cides but little in his Discourses, and establishes  
 " almost Nothing at all. That through his too  
 " great Desire to be pleasing, he's too much for  
 " telling of Wonders, and thence it is that the most  
 " Part of his Discourses are nothing else but Fables,  
 " Metaphors, and continual Allegories. That he  
 " often affects to be mysterious in what he says,  
 " and that 'tis commonly by Lying that he under-  
 " takes to persuade Truth.

To this Character we may add the general Ob-servation, that *Mystical Divinity* was first introduc-ed among Christians by Derivation from the *Plato-nick Philosophy*. On which Account the Learned *Meric Casaubon*, in his Treatise of *Enthusiasm*, was led to make this Reflection, p. 69. "That how-  
 " ever some of the Fathers have imagin'd the Phi-  
 " losophy of *Plato* to have been serviceable to  
 " Christianity, yet it has been the Occasion of  
 " many Heresies among Christians, and that to this  
 " very Day 'tis the common Refuge of contempla-  
 " tive

“ tive Men who have run themselves beside their Wits.

But if we examine farther into the Matter, we shall find, that though *Plato* was the first considerable Promoter of this Opinion, yet the chief Advancer and Propagator of it was *Aristotle*; a Person indeed of an admirable Genius, but too guilty of an affected Singularity in his Opinions, and a perpetual Humour of contradicting others; as I think his greatest Admirers must confess.

But to make good this Character, we need no other Proof but the Matter before us: For we must observe, that this his Opinion of the divine absolute Infinity was neither entertain'd by him as a Dictate of his Master *Plato*, (whom he seems to take a peculiar Pleasure to contradict and expose,) nor as the Result of free and impartial Reasoning, but was a Notion which he rather appears to have taken up through the same Humour of Contradiction. For having asserted that odd Opinion of the Eternity of the World in its present Form; not perhaps because it appear'd to him to be the most rational, but because all the Philosophers who went before him had held the contrary (as himself would persuade us in his *Book de Caelo*, c. 10.) and being content to admit a Deity into his Hypothesis (probably to avoid the Fate of *Protagoras* and other reputed Atheists) he conceiv'd himself oblig'd to assert his absolute Infinity as a necessary Consequence of that Eternity he had attributed to the World. For since he had deriv'd an eternal World by way of Emanation from the Deity, and had thereby made him the Author of the eternal Motion which he conceiv'd in that eternal World; and since he suppos'd that Nothing less than an absolutely infinite Power could be the Cause and Preservation of such an infinite (or eternal) Motion, he thought himself oblig'd to assert an absolutely infinite Deity as the only capable Subject

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of that infinite Power. For this is his own Method  
of Arguing.

From hence then it appears that this Opinion,  
first taught by *Anaxagoras*, and afterwards spread  
and propagated by *Aristotle*, was taken up by both  
on the Credit of false Principles; if the *absolute In-*  
*finitude of Matter*, and the *Eternity of the World*, may  
deserve that Character. However, since the bare  
Derivation of an Opinion from a false Principle is  
no necessary Argument of its being its self false, we  
ought not from thence to take Advantage against it,  
but to be entirely determin'd by the Evidence of  
Scripture and Reason.

This Opinion being thus entertained by *Plato*, and  
his celebrated Scholar *Aristotle*, who besides their  
great Wits had so many other Advantages above most  
Philosophers to make themselves believ'd and fol-  
lowed; no Wonder if it soon overspread the learned  
World. Yet how many soever its Profelytes were  
among the more modern Philosophers, 'tis certain its  
Success among the more Primitive Christian Fathers  
was very different. These we find were so far from  
thinking it any Part of their *Creed*, that they rejec-  
ted it as an Imposture of *vain Philosophy*. So did  
*Justin Martyr*\*, who for his Learning was stil'd *the*  
*Philosopher*, and writ immediately after the first Cen-  
tury. The same did *Tatian*\*\*, *Clemens Alexandri-*  
*nus*\*\*, and *Tertullian*†, the three other most cele-  
brated Fathers of the first and purest Ages of Chri-  
stianity: And these have since been follow'd by *Sco-*  
*rus*\*†, the most subtile of the Schoolmen, the lear-  
ned Prince of *Mirandola*††, and others.

And though it must be confess'd that the Argu-  
ments which the mention'd pious Fathers produc'd

\* *Contra Tryph.* p. 283. et 357. \* *In Lib. adv. Gentes.*  
\*\* *In Paræn.* † *In Lib. adv. Orig.* c. 7. et *contra Marcion.*  
*Lib. 2. c. 16.* \*† *Lib. 1. Sentent. Distinct. 1.* †† *Johan. Pi-*  
*cat in Positionibus.*

for their *private Opinion*, in Opposition to this Doctrine of the Pagan Philosophers, prove Nothing in a *positive* Way so much as the Strength of their Prejudice against it; yet it can't be deny'd that they conclude so far in the *Negative*, as sufficiently to demonstrate, that an absolutely infinite Deity was no Object of the Primitive Christian Worship.

But it was not long e'er the Scene was chang'd. For now the Church emerging from under the Deluge of Persecution, the sublime and mystical Divinity of *Plato* was thought more suitable to the Splendor and Magnificence of the Christian Temples than the Primitive Apostolical Simplicity. And the Age of Miracles being at an End, no other Method was judg'd so likely to reconcile Christianity to the Relish of the learned Heathens, as the endeavouring an Accommodation between the *Church* and the *Academy*.

Yet after the Interval of a few Centuries, the absolute Authority of *Plato* became somewhat limited, and *Aristotle* was admitted to a Copartnership in the Empire of Science. However, though the Method of *Aristotle* was chiefly follow'd in the *Physical* and *Elenctical Philosophy*, the *Divine Plato* still held his Reputation in *Theology*.

## C H A P. II.

**T**HUS have we brought down the History of the Word *Infinite* within the View of our own Times; till which, in this Respect, Matters have continued much the same.

Our next Task will be to make an impartial Enquiry into the Opinion of *Infinity* itself, as 'tis now generally entertain'd among us.

And First, we must observe, that as Perfection, abstractedly consider'd, is a general Mode of the  
divine

divine Nature, so Infinity is conceiv'd as a Mode of its Perfection. So that *absolute Infinity* is in Effect the same with that *absolute Perfection* of which we treated in the former Book.

There's none who is but moderately skill'd in Philosophy, but knows there is a twofold Notion of *Infinity*, and likewise of *Immensity*.

The first Notion imports something purely *negative* or *relative*, or denotes a Thing's being endless no otherwise than with Reference to other Beings: Which negative or relative Infinity may be understood as either *actual* or *potential*. In the former Sense, the universal Space or Expansion may be said to be infinite; both because by thinking we can never arrive at any fix'd End or Limits, and because there is no other Space to bound it. In the latter Sense, any given Line or Number is sometimes said to be infinite, inasmuch as we can never imagine either to be so far increas'd as to render it an absolute Contradiction that still more should be conceiv'd to be added *in infinitum*. And Mathematicians by Infinite sometimes mean such Quantity as is *indefinite*, or which either is not or cannot be defined or limited by us; as also such Quantity to which a lesser Quantity bears no sensible Proportion: Which last is a very improper Sense of the Word.

The other Notion imports something *positive* or *absolute*, or denotes a Thing's being in its very Nature incapable of End. 'Tis in this Sense that the Deity is usually said to be Infinite. And the ancient *Atomists*, with some modern *Cartesians*, have thought fit to attribute the same Infinity to Space and Matter.

Now 'tis a Maxim among Philosophers, that all the Attributes of an Infinite are infinite in the same Sense: And accordingly it has been usual to ascribe an absolute Infinity of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection

tion to the Deity. This Infinity, when consider'd with Reference to the divine Essence in general, is stil'd *absolute Immensity* ; when with Reference to his Power in particular, 'tis *absolute Omnipotence* ; when with Respect to his Knowledge, 'tis *absolute Omniscience*, &c.

And here we must be so just as to observe, that this Opinion of an absolute or positive Infinity recommends itself by a certain Air of Piety, and seems at the first Sight to be very agreeable to the Idea we find ourselves dispos'd to entertain of the Greatness and Majesty of the Supreme Being. But since Religion does not consist in an ignorant Admiration and blind Obedience, but in a Belief upon Conviction, and in a reasonable Service ; and since we cannot be too wary how we receive any Notion of the Object of our Religion without sufficient Warrant ; it can be no Want of Piety nor of Modesty to make it the Subject of our Impartial Enquiry.

And therefore, our present Business being chiefly with such Christians who profess to own the Scriptures as the only sufficient Rule of Faith, let us first consider whether this Opinion may justly plead any Countenance or Authority from them.

The Word *Infinite*, in our *English* Translation, though as apply'd to other Things it may be met with several Times, *viz.* in *Job* xxii. 5. *Nab.* ii. 49, and iii. 9, yet as it refers to God it occurs but in one Place, *viz.* *Psal.* cxlvii. 5. where his *Understanding* is said to be *infinite*. But if we consult the original *Hebrew*, we shall observe that the Word which is here translated *infinite*, properly signifies *Without Number*. And therefore, in the Judgment of any unprejudic'd Man, it can't here be conceiv'd to denote the absolute Infinity of the divine Understanding (which none will assert to be infinite in Number) but must necessarily be expounded (as by the  
-best

best Expositors it is wont to be \*) with Reference to its *Objects*, or its *Effects*: Which are hereby asserted to be so numerous as either to surpass, or not easily to come within the Compass of human Reckoning. For thus we read of *Camels without Number*, Judges vi. 15. *People without Number*, 2 Chron. xii. 3. *Catterpillars without Number*, Psal. cv. 12. *Virgins without Number*, Cantic. vi. 8. &c. By which Expressions, I am persuaded, none ever understood an absolute Infinity.

But though the Scriptures do not expressly teach it us, yet are there not some Texts which at least infer or imply it? What else can be meant by 1 Kings viii. 27. where we read, *That the Heavens, yea, the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain the Essence of their Creator*. And Psal. cxxxix. 7. &c. *Whither shall I flee from thy Presence, &c.?* But I think it must be confess'd, if we lay aside Prejudice, that neither of these can amount to a sufficient Proof. For though the *Heaven of Heavens* (or the utmost Heaven, as the *Hebraism* imports) cannot contain the Essence of the Deity, does it therefore follow, that it is *absolutely* infinite? Certainly no more than if it had been said, the Earth or Air cannot contain it. For since the Heavens are by those very Words asserted to be of a finite Extent, (which, by the Way, is no weak Argument to prove the Finiteness of the material Universe;) 'tis evident that they can bear no greater Proportion to an absolutely infinite Being than the Earth or Air, or even the minutest Particle of Dust. And therefore to infer the absolute Infinity of the divine Essence from a Comparison with the Heavens (though the greatest and most capacious of created Beings) would be no less impertinent, than to make the same Inference from a Comparison with the most

\* *Sapientia ejus non est numerus; i. e. Rerum quarum Intelligentiam habet. Sic. Mus. Vel eorum quae sapienter fecit. Ut Gejer. Camp. Moller. &c.*



diminutive Thing in Nature; since the greatest and the least of finite Beings must bear an equal Disproportion to such an Infinite. And as for the latter Text, it can't necessarily import any more than the former. For it proves nothing but the divine *Omnipresence*, which may very well be admitted without the Supposition of a positive or absolute Infinity with Respect to Space: As may be fully shewn hereafter.

But *whatever is not read, or may not be prov'd by the Scriptures, is not to be requir'd of any Man that it should be believ'd as an Article of Faith; according to the Fourth Article of the Church of England.*

And as this Opinion is neither supported by Scripture, nor authorized by the Articles of our Church, so it seems to have no solid Foundation in Reason. 'Tis freely confess'd, that nothing can be more evident from Reason (as 'tis hop'd we have elsewhere made appear) than that the Eternal Being is the necessary Subject of all possible Perfections. But this, 'tis conceiv'd, he may very well be, though this Opinion should not be admitted. For certainly that Being possesses the greatest possible Perfection with Respect to *Space*, which actually includes all Space, so as to be every where essentially present; or whose Essence surpasses all Things, and beyond which nothing either is or can be. That Being is most perfect with Respect to *effective Power*, whose Ability extends to whatever is an Object of such Power. That Being can't but be most perfect with Respect to *Knowledge*, which fully comprehends or knows whatever is a capable Object of Knowledge. And in short, the utmost possible Perfection may very well exist without any absolute Infinity of any Sort; as hath been already shewn in the former Book, and will, it's hop'd, more fully appear hereafter.

But

But as it can't be suppos'd that an Opinion which has so long prevail'd among the Learned, should want the Support of specious Arguments, we shall now proceed to consider their Force.

*Arg. I.* The great Argument which of late has been us'd as little less than a Demonstration of the absolute Infinity as well as Existence of the Deity, is deriv'd from that *innate Idea* of an absolutely infinite Being, which is said to be in every Man. This (as we before observed) is the Argument of *Monf. Des Cartes*. For that ingenious Author having so far proceeded in his Doubts, in the Beginning of his *Meditations*, as to question the Reality of his Senses, and all his Ideas deriv'd from sensible Objects, and having thereby excluded all such Proofs of the Existence of a God, whose Credit depended on the Veracity of their Testimony, he found himself oblig'd to search out some other Proof from what he could discover within his own Mind, by the Help of which he might demonstrate the Existence of a Deity, and thereby lay a Foundation for Certainty in other Matters.

Wherefore, in Pursuance of his Design, having laid it down for a Principle, that (though all the Informations of his external Senses might possibly prove false and delusive, yet) *whatever he clearly and distinctly perceiv'd in his own Mind, without Derivation from external Objects, must of Necessity be true*; and then discovering, as he thought, an Idea of an absolutely infinite Being impress'd on his Mind, which contain'd greater Perfection than it could derive either from the immediate Instrumentality of his external Senses, or from the Power of his own Imagination, he thence proceeded to conclude, that such an infinite Being existed; since nothing less than such an infinite Being could be a sufficient Cause of that Idea.

This Argument plainly supposes Two Things.

1. It supposes that we have such an Idea of a Being infinite in all Perfections, as could not be deriv'd from the Power of our own Imaginations working on the Ideas transmitted from sensible Objects ; and therefore,

2. That it was innate, or born with us.

As for the former Supposition ; it has already been observ'd, that whatever Idea we may be said to have of an Infinite, it can in Reality be no other than a Negative one, and consequently no sufficient Reason can be assign'd, why the Perfection of that Idea should be suppos'd to be such as to exceed the Causality of our own Imaginations.

And as for the latter Supposition, *viz.* That the Idea we are said to have of a positively or absolutely infinite Being is innate ; 'twas consider'd in the Beginning of this and the former Book, and has been refuted at large by the late judicious Mr. *Locke*.

*Arg. II.* Another Argument made use of as a Proof of the absolute or positive Infinity of the Divine Being, is deriv'd from the Attribute of *Absolute Independence*, and is to this Effect. If the Deity be not thus Infinite, it must be either because he was limited by Himself or by another. That he was not limited by Himself is evident. For no wise Being can be suppos'd willing to abridge Himself, but rather the contrary. And that he was not limited by another, is no less evident. For no other Being was capable of so doing.

This Argument, as commonly understood, supposes Two Things.

1. It supposes, that whatever Being is finite, must have been made so by a proper Causality. Thus the learned Dr. *Scot* (according to the Sense of the *Platonists*) explains its Meaning\* ; “ God's Inde-

\* *Christinn Life*, Part. 2. p. 193.

“ pence (says he) or his not being from another, necessarily infers his Immensity (*viz.* in the absolute Sense.) For that which limits or makes Beings finite, is only the Will or Power of their Causes.

But certainly, if we judge impartially, that can't be reputed the proper elective Cause of Finiteness, even in created Beings, which could not have been the Cause of Infinity. For no Cause can properly be said to abridge its Effect of that which it could not have bestow'd. But if no Being can bestow an absolute Infinity on its Effect, and if what can't bestow it can't with any Propriety be said to refuse or withhold it, or to chuse to produce the contrary by a positive Causality; it seems that the Reason why an Effect is finite could not be the Will or Power of its Cause, but an absolute Necessity in the Nature of Things.

2. This Argument supposes that the Deity's being such as he is, proceeded from his own Pleasure or Choice. Thus the learned *Monf. Le Clerc* unriddles it's Meaning; says he \*, *Quando cogitamus Deum ab omni Æternitate extitisse nec quidquam eorum quæ habet ab alio accepisse, sed per se et Naturâ suâ semper habuisse, eo faciliè devenimus ut ejus Proprietates esse Infinitas agnoscamus. Etenim qui tantæ Prestantiæ est ut Duratione infinitâ est præditus atque nihil ab ullo Ente acceperit, nullos etiam Proprietatum terminos habere potest. Proprietates Finitas eæ Naturæ habent quæ eas ab aliâ ipsis Fines statuente acceperunt, non quæ sibi ipsa, si ita loqui licet, pro Arbitrio quæ voluit dedit. i. e.* “ When we consider that God existed “ from all Eternity, and naturally and independent- “ ly enjoy'd whatever he possesses, without being “ Debtor to any other, thence we are easily indu- “ ced to acknowledge his Perfection to be Infinite. “ For so excellent a Nature as was of infinite Du-

\* *Pneumat.* p. 172. 173.

“ration, and was no way indebted to any other,  
 “can consequently have no Bounds of its Properties.  
 “For such Natures only have finite Properties,  
 “which receiv’d them from some limiting Cause ;  
 “not such an one as (if I may so speak) confer’d  
 “on itself whatever Perfections it pleas’d.

This, we see, is confess’d to be the Sense and Import of the present Argument : By which it appears, that none can become its Profelyte till he be brought to speak seriously in the Style of *Plato* \* and *Des Cartes* \*\*, and to assert the Deity produc’d himself by a proper Causality : Which Assertion, it is conceiv’d, can need no Confutation ; but must on the contrary, be allowed to be a sufficient Confutation of any Principle from which it clearly and naturally derives. Yet in this *Plato* is imitated by *Lactantius*, when he says, *Deus seipsum fecit* ; The Deity produc’d Himself ; and that therefore he is *Talis qualem Seipsum esse voluit*, such as he will’d Himself to be. And *Plotinus*, one of *Plato*’s Disciples, calls the Deity *αἰτίον ἑαυτοῦ*, his own Cause. : And he tells us, that since an absolute Simplicity is reckoned among the Attributes of the First Being, (which Simplicity, says he, requires that his Will and his Essence be reputed one and the same ;) consequently his Essence must be from Himself, for as much as his Will is so.

But of Absolute Simplicity we shall discourse hereafter, when we treat of the Consequences of this Opinion of an *Absolute Infinity*.

Some, I know, have endeavour’d to soften those harsh Expressions, and have inform’d us, that by the Deity’s being the *Cause of Himself*, no more is meant, than that he contains in Himself a necessary Reason of his own Existence. But though such Language may be capable of a less offensive Sense

\* *De Repub. Lib. 18.*    \*\* *Medit. p. 57, 58.*

in the Mouths of others, yet 'tis clear, that the Proposers of this Argument (if they intend to prove any thing) are reduc'd to the Necessity of using it in the most absurd and indefensible Sense. For a Being's not abridging or limiting itself is somewhat purely negative, and therefore can't alone infer such an Infinity; which, though conceiv'd in a negative Manner, and express'd by a negative Word, is asserted to be most highly positive in itself, and not only not to exclude, but actually to include an endless Progression of Kinds and Degrees of Perfection.

*Arg. III.* Again, 'tis usual with the Assertors of a positive or absolute Infinity, to borrow a Proof from the Nature of *Creation*. Since nothing less, say they, than an absolutely infinite Power was sufficient to pass over the infinite Distance between not being and being in the Production of a Thing from Nothing, it follows that there never could have been a Creation, had there not been some absolutely infinite Being who was the Subject of such Power.

E're we consider this Argument, it may not be impertinent to observe, what Pains have been taken by the Introducers of this Opinion of an absolutely infinite Power (if I may so say) to christianize it, and suit it to the Analogy of Faith. For whereas *Aristotle* made it an Inference from his Opinion of the World's Eternity by way of Emanation, these Gentlemen, by a strange Logical Dexterity, bestow'd on it a Relation to a very different Principle, and infer'd it as a Consequence of the World's Creation.

But perhaps, 'tis no difficult Matter to manifest the Weakness and Insufficiency of this Argument. For if to pass over a Distance be to prove it finite, (as it most certainly is,) it follows that the Distance between Not being and Being was not infinite; since it has been actually passed over in the *Wk* of Creation.

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Whatever some may imagine; it seems to me, that the Distance between Not being and Being, is no other than such as is between Not thinking and Thinking, Not moving and Moving: For these are Terms equally contradictory; between which and the like Terms, if we suppose something analogous to an infinite Distance; it can, it is conceiv'd, be for no other Reason, than because contradictory Terms can never be brought together or reconcil'd. But though these Terms can never be brought together so as to render one and the same Subject both Thinking and Not thinking, Moving and Not moving at once and in the same Sense; yet the passing from one of these Terms to the other (so as is actually done when a Thing which was in any Respect unthinking or without Motion begins to think or move) is, I suppose, no passing of an infinite Distance; since 'tis what we see done every Day even by finite Agents. If in the Creation the divine Power had so pass'd the Distance between Not being and Being as to have brought together or reconcil'd these two contradictory Terms, by causing the World both to Be and Not to be, to be at once both Something and Nothing, this would, it is confess'd, have yielded somewhat like a Proof. But that the Supposition of a Creation obliges no Man to believe such Absurdities as these, has already been observ'd in the former Book.

Besides, the Degrees of Distance between Not being and Being, Nothing and Something, can't be more in Number than the Degrees of Entity or Perfection in the minutest created Being. But certainly these can't be asserted to be absolutely infinite; unless we will attribute an absolute Infinity of Perfection to the least and meanest of Creatures:

Notwithstanding what has been said, I think none will deny that the Act of Creation furnishes a sufficient Demonstration of the *Divine Omnipotence*; since

Nothing on this Side a Contradiction can be imagin'd less possible than a Production from Nothing. For that a Power may be properly Omnipotent or Almighty without being absolutely infinite, may appear by what shall be said under the Ninth Argument.

*Arg. IV.* Another Argument may be form'd, by comparing the Opinion of an absolute Infinity with the vulgar Notion of *Eternity*. For may it be said, Since we easily admit *Eternity* as a genuine Attribute of the Deity, though it is confess'd it surpasses our Imaginations to conceive an *absolutely infinite Duration*; why should any Man be backward to believe an *absolute Immensity*, for no other Reason, than because he can't comprehend an *absolutely infinite Substance*? And this is, perhaps, the Argument which has seem'd of greatest Weight to most considering Men.

But to this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, may be reply'd,

1. That the Reason why any intelligent Man either doubts of or disbelieves an *absolute Immensity*, is not merely because he can't comprehend it. For such a Person can't but be sensible that many things may be incomprehensible to us, that are not inconsistent with the clear Ideas which he has in his Mind. But it must chiefly be because of the suppos'd Absurdity of that Opinion, or its Inconsistence with his clear and distinct Ideas.

2. That supposing the Comparison between any two Opinions to be just with Reference to some Analogy or Similitude that we may conceive, yet if they don't appear to be equally founded on Reason, the bare Similitude between their Notions can't be sufficient to oblige us to entertain them with the same Degree of Assent. But that there's no little Difference between these two Opinions in this Respect, is too evident to be deny'd. To disbelieve the Existence



istence of an eternal Being, is to suppose the grossest of Contradictions, *viz.* the Production of the First Cause. For which Reason, (as we elsewhere observ'd) there never was a Philosopher in his right Wits but he asserted somewhat that was Eternal. *Anaximander*, though he deny'd the Existence of a God, yet attributed Eternity to Matter and Motion. And if he likewise asserted an Immensity of Space in the absolute Sense, 'twas not merely for its own Sake, but chiefly perhaps on Account of its Connection with the Eternity of Motion which he found himself oblig'd to suppose. But we have already mentioned divers, and might have added more, who have rejected the Opinion of the *Divine Absolute Immensity*. A sufficient Argument that the Attributes of *Eternity* and *Immensity in the absolute Sense*, are very different either in Point of Reason, or at least, of Evidence.

I confess, *Des Cartes*, and a certain learned Writer of our own \*, have been pleas'd to affirm, that to assert *an End of Space*, is to assert a Contradiction. Their Meaning is, That if the universal Space be finite, it must be bounded by somewhat which likewise is Space. And indeed if this were a necessary Consequence, the Contradiction would be too evident to be denied. But, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, the *Ends* of Things are absolute or independent on their being bounded or encompassed by any Thing without them; being in Reality nothing distinct from the Things themselves. For what is it to have *Ends*, but to have *Extremities*? If it was not so, then the immediate Reason of a Thing's being finite, would be no other than the Neighbourhood of the surrounding Beings. But who will assert the surrounding Air to be the immediate Reason that the Globe of the Earth is of a finite Extent? If none will assert

\* *Dr. Clarke, in his Reply to the 6th Letter, p. 38.*

it, then the immediate Reason of its being of *finite Extent* is plainly this; *viz. because it bath Extremities or a Superficies*; which (though as Mr. Jackson somewhere objects, it is a Part of itself) surrounds its Substance, and terminates or limits it on every Side.

But some will say, What Idea can we have of a Thing beyond which there's no Space or Extension? I reply, Though it should be granted that we can form no Idea of it, will it purely from thence follow that 'tis in itself inconceivable? Will the Assertors of an *absolute Infinity* affirm our Ideas to be the necessary Standards of Reality? Will they allow nothing to be possible but what's conceivable by *us*?

'Tis confess'd, we can form no Idea of an End of the universal Space or Extension. But does it follow that there can be Nothing in Nature but what enters into our Imaginations? 'Tis, I think, clear, there can be no absolute Contradiction in supposing there is an End of any Extension whatever: For whatever Extension we conceive at any one Time in our Minds is finite; and if we cannot notwithstanding attain an Idea of the universal Space or Extension as finite, yet since this is as well Space or Extension as any other, it can certainly be no Repugnance in the Nature of the Thing that it should be conceivable as finite too; and by Consequence, an End of Space or Extension may be conceivable to some other Being, though not to us. For that it is not the Nature of the Idea itself, but our own peculiar Circumstances, and the Manner of our acquiring it, which oblige us to consider the Thing as endless, may farther appear from hence. When we attempt to form the largest imaginable Idea of Space or Extension, we consider its Idea in such Manner as it is transmitted to us by our *Sight*. But our Sight represents it as a vast *Congeries* of innumerable Beings severally surrounded by others. So that according to this Manner of conceiving, Space  
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and the Neighbourhood of surrounding Beings (which likewise include Space) seem to be necessarily connected and inseparable. There is therefore no limiting the Excursions of our Thoughts by any conceivable End of Space; for still the same Scene is represented to our View without End.

This is that Idea of *Infinity* of Space which is said to force itself upon us. But let us now suppose we had no other Idea of Space or Extension but what we receiv'd by our Sense of *Feeling*, in a State of Rest. 'Tis manifest that in this Case, our Ideas of *Feeling* and *Space* would be always connected and commensurate; and by Consequence, we should be so far from being under a Necessity of conceiving *Space* as *infinite* or *endless*, that we should perhaps find it difficult, if not impossible, to conceive it to exceed the Limits of our own Bodies.

'Tis known to be the Method of the *Cartesians* sometimes to run counter in their Reasonings, and to argue, not that the Idea is true because it agrees with the Thing; but on the contrary, that the Thing must therefore be so and so, because the Idea in our Minds is so. Hence it proceeds, that having discover'd the Negative Infinity or Immensity of our Idea of *Space* or *Extension*, they make no Difficulty of concluding that the Thing it represents is absolutely or positively *Infinite*. But this Sort of Reasoning becomes none who allows that Things may be otherwise in Nature than they sometimes appear to be in our Phantasies, and that it's the Office of our Reason to examine the Truth of our Ideas by comparing them with the Things they represent. For though 'tis confess'd we find ourselves under an Inability of conceiving the universal Space with End or Limits, yet this is not an Argument of the Impossibility of an End of Space sufficient to be oppos'd to the plain Demonstrations which may, and hereafter shall be produc'd from Reason to evince the contra-

ry: No more than a blind Man's Inability to form an Idea of Light and Colours, is fit to be admitted as a Proof that our Eyes perpetually deceive us. This Inability ought rather to be resolv'd into the Influence our State and Circumstances have on our Minds. For being ourselves every Way surrounded by extended Objects, and finding (as we just now observ'd) that all those Objects are severally surrounded by others; we are apt to forget, or perhaps not well to apprehend, that the Limits of Things are nothing else but their own Extremities; to argue, with *Spinoza*, that whatever is finite is bounded by some other Thing; and consequently to conclude, that the universal Space or Extension, since there is nothing beyond it by which it can be bounded, is absolutely Infinite or without Limits.

'Tis therefore, I humbly conceive, most reasonable to conclude, that though the simple positive Ideas which we perceive in our Minds proceed immediately from something real without us; (since the Mind can't form any *materially* new Idea;) yet compound and negative Ideas yield no such infallible Proofs of the Existence of any external Objects from whence they immediately proceed. For we experience in ourselves a Power both of uniting the Ideas of Things that never were united in Nature, and of forming Negations arbitrarily and at Pleasure: Or if not form'd by our own Will and Pleasure, they may be unavoidably deriv'd from the Nature of our State and Circumstances. Thus, because we have an Idea of *Space* or *Extension*, we may be assur'd there's something in Nature from which the Idea immediately proceeds; for this is a simple positive Idea. And that there's something external which immediately causes in us the Idea of *End* or *Limits* we are sure for the same Reason, since even our Idea of the *End* of any Thing is positive. But that there's any real external Cause of our Idea of  
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the *Endlessness* of Space or Extension we can't be assur'd merely from the Idea itself, since that Idea is purely negative, and therefore represents no Being as positively or absolutely infinite\*, and consequently, may have been deriv'd, if not from our own Will, yet from our particular and unavoidable Circumstances, in such Manner as was shewn. But to proceed.

3. If we should add, that the Attributes of Eternity and absolute Immensity have as little Similitude or Agreement in their Natures as either in Reason or Evidence, we should not perhaps want sufficient Proof. For though it should be admitted that the Nature of Eternity is well represented by the Idea of *Duration*, yet 'tis impossible to conceive how Eternity can be *now* an absolutely infinite Duration. For should we fix on any imaginable Point of it, yet (whatever *Boetius* in his Vulgar Definition may pretend to the contrary) there would be an inexhaustible Duration still to come. This alone must make the Case of Eternity quite different from that of an absolute Immensity; which necessarily excludes the very Possibility of the least Addition or Increase. But 'tis, I think most evident, that neither the Idea of Duration is suited to represent the Nature of Eternity, nor is necessary Existence capable of the Denomination of *Infinite*, as will be shewn hereafter.

*Arg. V.* Another Proof of the Attribute of absolute Infinity, is usually attempted from the suppos'd *Immensity or Infinity of Extension*, or (which with many of our modern Philosophers is the very same) of *Matter*. To this Effect *M. Le Clerc* expresses himself; says he, *Immensitas Dei inde colligitur quod Materia videatur immensa. Absurdum enim esset Deum, qui multo plures Proprietates habet quam*

\* See Mr. Locke's *Essay of Hum. Underst.* part 1. c. 17. Sect. 13.

*Materia, qui eam pigram et immotam agit prout vult, eâ ita superari, ut Partes materiæ ultra Potentiæ Divinæ Limites porrigerentur; quod tamen, nisi Deus esset immensus, seu posset per se agere per immensam Materiæ Extensionem, statueretur, &c. i. e.* “ The  
 “ Immensity (or Infinity) of God is infer’d from the  
 “ seeming Immensity of Matter. For it would be  
 “ absurd to imagine that the Deity, who possesses  
 “ many more Properties than *Matter*, who moves  
 “ and actuates the stupid Heap as he pleases, should  
 “ be so far excell’d by it, that the *Parts of Matter*  
 “ should be extended beyond the Limits of his Pow-  
 “ er. Which yet we must either assert, or else must  
 “ confess that he is immense, or capable of acting  
 “ immediately in all Parts of the infinite material  
 “ Extension, &c.

This Argument is grounded on that Inability before spoken of, which we experience when we set ourselves to limit the Excursions of Imagination with regard to our Idea of the universal Extension. For ’tis the relative Infinity of the Idea that lies at the Bottom of the most plausible Arguments for the absolute Infinity of the Thing. ’Tis upon this Basis alone that some have rais’d their Perpendiculars of infinite Lines and Superficies. Take away but the Power of Imagination, and those Notions have nothing left to support them in the Nature of Things.

But since by the Confession of all Men, Nothing is more apt to deceive us than Imagination, ’tis a Thing unworthy a Philosopher to suffer himself to be entirely determin’d by That, without consulting his Reason, whose Office it is to curb and correct it.

Yet some (I mean *Des Cartes* and his Followers) confounding the Ideas of *Extension* and *Matter*, have by this Error of Imagination been led to assert the absolute Infinity even of the material Universe; though they could not but at the same Time be sensible, that their Opinion in some Sense render’d Mat-

ter a necessary Being, by depriving the Deity both of a Power of creating a finite Whole at the first, and of afterwards annihilating any Part. I call this an Error of Imagination ; for that Reason (or Intellect) does not concur with Imagination in the present Case, is, I think, most certain. For,

1. Reason will assure us, that since any assignable Portion of *Geometrical Quantity* (or *Extension*) hath certain particular Dimensions, by Consequence an absolutely infinite or immense Extension (if really existent) must actually contain an absolute Infinity of distinguishable Dimensions ; or such a Number as, by Reason of its Vastness, absolutely excludes the very Possibility of the least Addition and Increase. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd, that such an absolutely infinite Arithmetical Quantity (or Number) is a pure Impossibility. For after Millions of Ages spent in adding Millions of Millions together, 'tis evident that the Number will be no less finite than it was at the first. And so there will still be the same Possibility of adding on and increasing for ever. If any Man will deny this, he ought to assign a Reason, why, after having arriv'd at any particular Number, it should then become an absolute Impossibility or Contradiction for it to increase rather than before. But there is no possible Number but may be produced by Addition and Increase ; otherwise Number must cease to be Number.

Thus the very Method by which our Minds attain their negative Idea of the Infinity of Space or Extension (which is by repeated Additions of Dimensions without End) serves as a Demonstration of the absolute Impossibility of a positive or absolute Infinity of Space or Extension in Nature. For if an absolutely infinite Increase of Number by Addition be therefore impossible, because 'tis the very Nature of Infinity never to be replete ; 'tis manifest that an absolutely infinite Extension or Space (or an absolutely

lutely infinite Number of Dimensions) must be equally impossible for the same Reason.

This Way of Arguing, Mr. *Locke* thinks sufficient to prove the Impossibility of a positive Idea of Infinity in our Minds. And 'tis difficult to imagine why it should not equally prove the Impossibility of a positive Infinity in Nature. For different Dimensions are as distinguishable in Nature as in our Imaginations. A positive or absolute Infinity of Numbers of Dimensions, if it be absurd in itself, and therefore impossible in Idea, can't but be equally impossible in Nature. Not that our Ideas are the adequate Measures of Reality; but because what is absurd or inconsistent in itself, can't but be impossible both in Idea and Reality.

But here the *Spinosists* will tell us, that Distinction and Number of Parts and Dimensions are mere Non-entities or Chimera's, and therefore not to be consider'd in the present Argument. For, say they, whatever Division or Distinction of Substance we are apt to believe, is no other than a Misreport of our Senses; which are easily deceiv'd by Appearances, and can't penetrate into the true Nature of Substance, which though represented to them under innumerable Modifications, is yet in Reality, but one and indivisible\*.

I reply, Though according to the System of *Spinoza*, who defines *Substance* in Terms which import an absolute Self-Subsistence or Independence, it would follow that it's but one Being: yet it could not follow even from thence, that there's no Distinction in that Being. But since besides the original or independent Substance or Being, there's another Sort of Beings, (which as was prov'd in the former Book) deriv'd their Existence from him, and which, as being the real ultimate Subjects of pecu-

\* *Spinoza in Ep. 21*



liar Attributes, may (as was observ'd) very properly come under the Notion of *Substance* too, there can be no Colour of Reason to doubt of the Reality of that Distinction and Variety, which we perceive among those inferior dependent Beings. For 'tis plain, there's Nothing in their Natures inconsistent with the Notion even of a real Division. And consequently, we may and must consider Distinction and Number of Parts and Dimensions as real Attributes of such Beings. But in the present Argument, we need not suppose any real Divisibility. 'Tis enough for our Purpose to have only suppos'd Extension to be mentally divisible, *i. e.* distinguishable. For Distinction in Nature yields as real a Foundation of Number as a proper Division.

Others, on the contrary, will perhaps object, that Matter, as such, is infinitely divisible, and that an infinite Divisibility can imply no less than an actual Infinity of Parts and Dimensions. That by Consequence, 'tis unreasonable to deny the Possibility of an absolutely infinite Extension on Account of the suppos'd Absurdity of its containing an actually infinite Number of Parts, when at the same Time we are obliged to own such an actual Infinity of Parts in the least imaginable Portion of it. But this Objection will be found to have no Weight in the Reply to the following Argument.

2. Reason will assure us, that as an absolute Nothing can bear no Proportion to any real Quantity; so on the contrary, all real Quantity, how minute soever, must of Necessity bear some Proportion to all other Quantity of the same Kind. For this Proportionateness resulting from the very Nature of Quantity consider'd absolutely or in itself, can't possibly be taken away by any merely relative Consideration whatsoever. Therefore, since we are Witnesses of the actual Existence of a great Variety of quantitative Parts, it would follow, that if the whole

was absolutely infinite, these finite Parts must severally bear a real (though not a sensible) Proportion to an absolutely infinite Whole. But if so, then such an infinite Quantity, by the Substraction or Annihilation but of a single Particle, would become finite. Consequently, the Difference between *finite* and *absolutely infinite*, would consist in a single quantitative Part; and absolute Infinity would be the Attribute of a certain determin'd or limited Quantity; than which nothing can be more absurd. For absolute Infinity, in its full Latitude, can't but exclude all Limitation. This Reasoning is clearly founded on the very Nature of Quantity, and cannot be destroy'd without destroying Quantity itself.

This will appear beyond Contradiction, by the very Evasion made use of by some, who tell us, that finite Quantities are not to be conceiv'd as aliquot or proportionate Parts of an Infinite, but as mere Mathematical Points that bear no Proportion at all\*. For since Mathematical Points are mere Nothings or Creatures of Imagination (as well as infinite Lines and Superficies) 'tis in Effect to say, we must repute the several Parts of Geometrical or extended Quantity, when consider'd with Relation to the whole, as mere Nothings, deprived at once of Extension and Existence. Wherefore this Evasion is so far from helping the Difficulty, or weakening our Argument, that, in the Judgment of any unprejudic'd Man, it strongly confutes the Supposition of an absolutely infinite Extension. For hence it appears, that such an Infinity can't be defended any otherwise than by depriving Extension, as much as in us lies, of its very Nature, or by denying it to be really proportionate, which is all one as to

\* *Dr. Clarke, in his Discourse of the Being and Attributes of God, p. 37.*

*Mr. Jackson, in his Defence, p. 97.*

deny it to have Dimensions. I say, in general, 'tis to deprive Extension of its very Nature ; since for the same Reason that we deny any conceivable Part of Extension to be thus proportionate, we shall be equally oblig'd to deny all others to be so. Yet such Absurdities we shall be reduc'd to, if we will not allow the Opinion of an absolutely infinite Extension to be itself an Absurdity. For the Difficulties appear to be equal, whether we suppose Finites to bear a real Proportion to the imagin'd absolutely infinite Whole, or not to bear any Proportion at all. There is therefore an absolute Inconsistence between Extension (which can't but have Dimensions) and such Infinity or Immenfity (which excludes all Dimensions.)

The invincible Evidence of these or the like Reflections had such Influence on *Aristotle*, that having at the End of his Physicks concluded, that the Deity was not of finite Magnitude, (as thinking it to be inconsistent with his Notion of an eternal Mover) he adds, that he neither could be of an absolutely infinite Magnitude, because such an infinite Magnitude was absurd and impossible ; and therefore upon the whole, he concludes him to be of no Magnitude at all. Accordingly *Gassendus*, the most learned Reviver of the *Epicurean* Philosophy, (who was one of the greatest *Mathematicians* of his Age) asserts Space to be infinite only in a Negative or Relative Sense. And even *Des Cartes*, too timorous at first to assert an absolute Infinity of Extension, chose rather to assert it to be *indefinite*\* (i. e. *negatively* or *relatively Infinite*.) And if he afterwards asserted its Infinity in the absolute Sense, it was, it seems, Nothing but the necessary Result of his particular Principles.

These two Arguments, founded on the Nature of Things, and not on our Imaginations, clearly de-

\* *Cartesi Principia*, p. 7.

monstrate an absolute Inconsistence between *absolute Infinity* (which if it be at all in a proper Sense, must be an Attribute of Quantity) and *all Quantity whatsoever*. For there is no real Quantity but what is reducible either to *Number* or *Extension*.

But some will here object the Demonstrations of Abstract Geometry as Proofs of an absolutely infinite *Space* or *Extension*. For Instance, 'tis plain, say they, from the *Elements of Euclid*, that to any given Point of a Circle's Circumference a Tangent may be drawn, of which only one Point falls on the Circle, and the rest falls without it.

But to this it may be reply'd, that Abstract Geometry considers Things only as they are in Idea: Therefore the utmost that this and the like Demonstrations (or rather *Postulata*) can prove, is no more than this, *viz.* That no Space or Extension can by us be imagin'd so great, but that greater and still greater may be conceiv'd *in infinitum*. But since Things may appear otherwise in Idea than they are in themselves, it does not necessarily follow, that what is true of the abstract Idea in our Minds, is true of the Thing as it exists in *Nature*. And tho' this and the like Demonstrations must be confess'd to hold with Reference to any *particular Portions* of real Space, as well as with Respect to the best Idea we can form of Space in general, yet they cannot hold with Reference to the real *universal Space or Extension* beyond which whatever Space we conceive is purely imaginary, *i. e.* an *absolute Nothing*.

It can, I conceive, be to little Purpose to object, That if the universal Space or Extension is bounded or limited by Nothing, it must be absolutely without Limits, or Infinite. For the immediate Limits of Things are (as we elsewhere observ'd) Nothing else but their own Extremities. Which renders the Idea of Limits no less positive in the Universe beyond which Nothing exists, than in a Being surrounded

rounded by the *Indefinitely* or infinitely extended *Vortices* of *Des Cartes's* Visionary World. So far is the Notion *Spinoza* gives us of *Finiteness* in his second Definition and its Explication from being true, by which he allows that only to be finite which is limited by another Being of the same Nature. Consequently, the Inference he draws from thence, *viz.* That therefore the universal Substance is absolutely immense or infinite (because it's impossible there should be a Substance of the same Kind or Nature, and yet distinct from, it by which it might be limited) is of no Weight.

But some perhaps will still object, that admitting such a *pure Nothing*, yet since Bodies may exist where there's nothing to exclude them, it follows, that even *That Nothing* must still imply a Capacity of receiving Bodies, and consequently must come under the Notion of *Space*. But to this I reply, That where no Being is, there can be no *Space*, and a *pure Nothing* can have no real *Attributes*; whereas a Capacity of receiving Bodies being an Attribute which implies *Space*, can't but be a great Reality. For whatever arbitrary Distinction some have made between *Extension* and *Space*, they import Notions equally real and absolute; as will be shewn hereafter.

Before we dismiss this Subject, I can't but take Notice of an Argument that may be form'd from the Principles of Sir *Isaac Newton*, to prove the *absolute Infinity* of the *material Universe*. The greater Bodies of our System are by him demonstrated to incline towards each other by a mutual Gravitation. And we have Reason to believe the same of the remoter Bodies of the Universe. Now if those Bodies are finite in Number and Extent, the terminating Bodies can have no Gravitation or Tendency towards any Thing beyond themselves; and consequently, having no contrary Tendency to balance their Gravi-

tation towards the interior Bodies, they must be continually approaching nearer to the common Centre of the Universe. But this, in Time, must occasion no small Confusion in the World, and must very much reflect on the Wisdom of its great Creator, for having establish'd Laws so directly tending to the Destruction of his Work.

But to this, I suppose, we may reply, That if, with the ancient *Epicureans*, we conceiv'd *Gravity* to be a necessary or independent Property of Matter, and uniform or alike in all its Parts; or if, with the *Cartesians*, we thought ourselves oblig'd to account for every thing by uniform mechanical Principles, we should then be inclin'd to grant the Consequence, and assert the absolute Infinity of the material Universe. But since, in the former Book, we have from Sir *Isaac Newton's* own Principles demonstrated, that *Gravitation* is no eternal essential Property of any one particle of Matter, and therefore in Effect no other than an immediate continued Impression of the Deity, who being a free Agent, was capable of suiting its Degrees and Conditions to the various States of the several Parts of his Creation; we can be under no Necessity (by virtue of the same Principles) to suppose the great Bodies in the Extremities of the universal System to be subject to the same Degrees and Laws of Gravitation with those in the interior Spaces: Which being duly consider'd, the Difficulty vanishes.

*Arg. VI.* As some are us'd to argue from the suppos'd infinite Bulk of the World, so are others apt to do so from a very different Principle, *viz. Infinite Smallness*. Says *Monf. Abbadie*, in the First Part of his *Discourse of the Christian Religion*, p. 101. "Tho' we could not prove *Magnitude* to be infinite, yet the Demonstrations of *Geometry* will oblige us to own an Infinity in *Smallness*." This he speaks with Reference to the infinite Divisibility of Matter, and  
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the actual Infinity of Parts from which it may be suppos'd to result.

But to this, 'tis conceiv'd, the following Reflections may yield a sufficient Reply.

That *Matter* is infinitely divisible, needs no Proof from the Demonstrations of *Geometry*, being abundantly clear from this one Consideration. Nothing is more plain, than that mere Division can never effect the Annihilation of any Thing. But if not, then there will always remain something capable of further Division. For since the minutest imaginable Parts of Matter have upper and under and Sides, it can never be prov'd a Contradiction that what is above should be divided or separated from that which is under, nor that any one of the Sides should be sever'd from its opposite. But if it be no Contradiction, then it can't be affirm'd to be impossible to that Being to whom every thing not implying a Contradiction, is possible.

But what can we conclude from this to the present Purpose? Shall we say, that because Matter is infinitely divisible, therefore it contains an absolutely infinite Number of Parts? But this, with Submission, is a strange Method of arguing, how specious soever it may appear. For though any particular Portion of Matter should be eternally divided by the Divine Power, yet the Number of separate Parts resulting from the Division must ever remain finite. And the Reason of its infinite or eternal Divisibility is not because every particular Portion of Matter contains an absolutely infinite Number of co-existent Parts, but on the contrary, because it is impossible that such an absolutely infinite Number should even exist. For could it at any Time (even by the Action of Omnipotence) exist, then there could be no further Divisibility; unless we can suppose a Number greater than absolutely infinite. This infinite or eternal Divisibility of Mat-

ter is therefore so far from being a Proof of the actual Existence of an absolute Infinity of Parts, that it effectually confutes it.

Besides, though it would be difficult, as well as needless, to reply to all the Subtilties that might be objected, 'tis, I think most certain, that there can be no *absolute Infinity of Parts* in a Subject that is not of an *absolutely infinite Bulk*. For if so, then the Addition but of the least imaginable Particle (since all Quantity is essentially proportionate) would render it more than absolutely infinite; which is absurd.

Again, if both the whole material Universe, and every particular Portion of it, consisted severally of an actual or absolute Infinity of co-existent Parts, 'twould follow that there's an absolute Infinity of absolutely infinite Numbers of co-existent Parts in the World, each of which contains as many real co-existent Parts as the whole which they compose. For absolute Infinity, in its full Latitude, admits not of more or less. An absolute Infinity of Millions, if allow'd to be possible, would, I confess, import more than an Infinity of Units, and an infinite Superficies might be demonstrated to be greater than an infinite Line, if the Existence of an absolutely infinite Superficies could be proved. But these are pure Imaginations.

As for the Demonstrations of *Abstract Geometry*, they may indeed prove the *Infinite Divisibility of Matter*, already granted, but can never evince an actual absolute Infinity of co-existent Parts in *Matter* or *Space*; and by Consequence, they can prove nothing to the present Purpose. When the Space between the *Asymptote* of some *Hyperboloids* and a Line parallel thereto is demonstrated to be infinite, this can only mean, that those Proportions being incommensurable, can never meet, though drawn out to an infinite, or rather indefinite Length in Imagination; but can never demonstrate that the Reason of their



not being capable of meeting in Nature, is the actual Infinity of the Parts of Space between them. If such an actual Infinity of Parts existed in every Portion of Space, it would as effectually hinder the meeting of any other Lines whatever. And thus even *Zeno's* Argument against the Possibility of *Motion*, grounded on the same Supposition of an actual Infinity of Parts in Matter and Space, would be no less a Demonstration.

Yet some, I apprehend, may object, that supposing the infinite Divisibility of Matter will not infer such an actual Infinity of Parts, yet since it at least infers an infinite or eternal Inexhaustibility of Substance, it may serve to demonstrate that there's an infinite Distance between *Matter* and *Nothing*; and by Consequence, that the Power which created it, is no less than absolutely infinite.

I reply, That there was no infinite Distance between *Nothing* and *Matter* (as was suppos'd in a former Argument) is as certain as that there has been a *Creation*: And that there's no infinite Distance between *Matter* and *Nothing* (as this Objection supposes) is as clear as that there may be an *Annihilation*. Consequently, the Reason of *Matter's* infinite Divisibility, is not because it has an infinite Inexhaustibility of Substance, or because it is at an infinite Distance from *Nothing*; but 'tis because Division (as we before observ'd) is not a proper Means of exhausting it or reducing it to *Nothing*. 'Tis certain, *Matter* loses nothing of its Nature by mere Division; and by Consequence, though eternally divided, 'twould still be at an equal Distance from *Nothing*. But 'tis no less certain (on the Principles of our former Discourse) that the bare Suspension of the Divine Influence but for a Moment would exhaust or reduce it to the *Nothing* from whence it sprung. 'Tis such a Suspension of the Divine Influence

fluence which is the proper Means of Annihilation ! But Division can contribute nothing towards it.

Therefore for such especially who believe that Matter was created and is annihilable, to argue that there's an absolutely infinite Distance between it and Nothing, only because it can't be exhausted or reduc'd to nothing by mere Division, appears to be very unreasonable. 'Tis as if a Philosopher who has seen Ice congeal'd from Water by the Cold, and knows that it is reducible to Water by the Means of Heat, should nevertheless contend that there is such an infinite Distance between Ice and Water ; for no other Reason, than because it can never be reduc'd to Water by a bare Division or Separation of its Parts. For Ice merely by Division can no more become Water, than Matter, by the same Means, can become nothing.

As this infinite Divisibility of Matter is no way serviceable to the Cause in which 'tis usually engaged, so it may easily be turn'd against it. For hereby it appears undeniably, that the Ideas of *Great* and *Little* are not absolute, but purely relative. For as there is no Extension absolutely or infinitely little, or such as to render it a Contradiction that there should be a Less and still a Less suppos'd to Eternity ; so there's a Parity of Reason to conclude, that there's no Extension absolutely or infinitely great, or of such a Nature as to render it an absolute Contradiction to suppose a greater and yet greater in an eternal Progression.

Yet at the same Time, I think, it must be confess'd, that there may be an Extension (or Expansion) which, not merely on Account of its own abstracted Nature as Extension, but for some other Reason, may be affirm'd incapable of any real Increase : For in judging of the Natures of Things, we are not to consider them according to their abstract Ideas only, but as cloath'd with all their known

known Properties. But simple Extension abstracted from all Properties exists no where without the Imagination. And the universal Extension, as it exists in Nature, since its State is so peculiar, may well be allow'd to have some peculiar Properties distinct from those of any particular Extension whatever; which Properties can only be discernable by the Eye of Reason; for as much as the universal Extension, as such, is not the Object of our external Senses. But of this more may be said in the Reply to the following Argument.

Again, The very same Reason which obliges us to *allow* an infinite Divisibility of Matter, will, 'tis conceiv'd, no less oblige us to *deny* an absolute Infinity of Extension or Space. For the Reason why we allow an infinite Divisibility of Matter, is not because we can form an Idea of such Division, or conceive in our Minds a Particle to become less and still less *in infinitum*. 'Tis true, *Matter* is sometimes said to be mentally divisible *in infinitum*; but, as I think, improperly. For when a Particle is by mental Division reduc'd to the Smallness of the least visible Dust, it soon escapes the Eyes of the Mind as well as that of the Body. The chief Reason then of our allowing the infinite Divisibility of *Matter*, is immediately deriv'd from the Nature of *Matter*, which we hereby suppose to be in its very Nature quantitative or proportionate. From whence it necessarily follows, that the least imaginable Particle of it having still Dimensions which bear a Proportion to each other (as Upper, Under, Sides, and Middle) we find ourselves oblig'd to conclude, that it's no absolute Contradiction or Impossibility for these to be separated. But the same necessary Proportionateness which establishes the infinite or eternal Divisibility of Matter, is (as may appear from an Argument we lately propos'd) inconsistent with the absolute Infinity or Im-

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mensity not only of *Matter*, but of all *Quantity*  
whatever.

In fine, From this infinite Divisibility of *Matter* it appears, that the Notion of an absolute Infinity is unapplicable to any real Being. - For one Reason why any thing is infinitely divisible (or inexhaustible by Division) is because (as we observ'd) the Parts which are separated can never become actually infinite in Number. But if (even by the Action of Omnipotence itself) they can never become thus infinite in a State of Separation, so neither may they be suppos'd to be so in a State of Union. The Reason why the Parts which are separated can never become actually infinite, is plain, because as it is the very Nature of Number to be ever increaseable, so 'tis the very Nature of Infinity never to be complete; which, I take it, amounts to a demonstrative Proof, that the Supposition of an absolute or positive Infinity (whether it be consider'd as *actual*, or only as *possible*) has no Foundation in Nature.

This even *Aristotle*, e're he was aware, seems plainly to intimate in his Definition of *Infinite*. For whereas the more ancient Philosophers generally and with Reason contented themselves with saying, *That is infinite beyond which Nothing is*; he thinks fit to correct them by saying, *That only is infinite which has always something beyond it*. Which, I take it, can import no less, than that it's the very Nature of a proper Infinity never to be complete.

Yet I find a certain ingenious Author\* is not only confident in the general, that every Particle of *Matter* consists of an actual Infinity of infinitely small Parts (than which, according to him, nothing less is sufficient to fill the least finite Space) but pretends particularly to prove, that the Number

\* *Dr. Cheyne, in his Philos. Prin. of Nat. Relig.* p. 18.

of organical Parts in Animals is thus infinite. “ This, says he, “ is clear both from the Nature of Sensation and Nutrition. For first, with Reference to *Sensation*; there is not the least imaginable solid Part of the Vessels or Muscles but what is sensible; and therefore, says he, the Organs in Animals which convey this Sensation are infinite in Number.

But this Consequence is not only built on the Supposition that the Parts of the Vessels and Muscles are therefore absolutely infinite, because infinitely divisible, (which, 'tis conceiv'd, we have already shewn to be no very conclusivè Method of Arguing,) but it supposes too, that each of those imagin'd infinite Parts is sensible. But this is what I suppose could never be prov'd, though such an Infinity of Parts were true. For the contrary is most apparent from the following Reasons.

First, We know that our Sense of Feeling is proportion'd to our Circumstances; being chiefly design'd for our Preservation. Therefore it is sufficient to suppose it to be diffus'd in such a Manner thro' our Bodies as to be capable of informing us of such ill Impressions from the surrounding Bodies as may be prejudicial to us. But the infinitely small Parts of the neighbouring Bodies (if any such Parts should be admitted) are not singly capable of making such ill Impressions; and consequently, an infinitely small Sensation is unnecessary.

Again, 'Tis not only unnecessary, but contrary to Experience. For we find that the minuter Parts of Matter are capable of exciting little or no Sensation even in the most sensible Parts of our Bodies. What Sensation may we then suppose an infinitely small Part to be capable of exciting? Yet if there be an absolute Infinity of sensible Parts in any Member, each of these may be affected by the Impression

pression of an infinitely small Part of the surrounding Matter.

And then as for *Nutrition*, says he, “ Since there  
 “ is no Part of the Body that may not be increas’d  
 “ or diminish’d (as is evident from the Cure of  
 “ Wounds in all Parts through which the necessary  
 “ Fluids of the Body can pass) ’tis plain that every  
 “ individual Point of the Animal’s Body is the  
 “ Termination of an Organ through which the Nu-  
 “ trition may be convey’d.

But though every perceptible Part of an Animal be thus capable of Increase by Nutrition (as being subject to Wounds and Decays, and therefore requiring the Means of Reparation) will it therefore follow, that every infinitely imperceptible Part of it, though not liable to any Wounds or Decays, and by Consequence needing no immediate Conveyance of Nourishment to repair it, is thus immediately capable of Increase by Nutrition?

But this Gentleman adds, “ Moreover, seeing  
 “ the Canals of the Body themselves do increase in  
 “ Bulk, may decay and be impair’d, every assign-  
 “ able Part of these Canals must be the Termina-  
 “ tion of some secretory Duct separating a Fluid fit  
 “ to increase their Dimensions, or repair their Los-  
 “ ses, and so on *in infinitum*.

But such Argumentation as this, few, I believe, will be dispos’d to admit, without the utmost Necessity. And to make it appear that there is such a Necessity to admit it, this Gentleman, it is conceiv’d, was bound to prove, that the most wise and powerful Author of Nature either could not or would not discover and make use of any other Method of nourishing the more minute Parts of those Vessels, but that which he makes use of in nourishing the greater Parts, *viz.* by proper Ducts and Vessels. Till this be prov’d, his Argument for such a *Pro-*  
*gressus*

*gressus in infinitum* in Nutrition will be far from Demonstration.

Arg. VII. Another Argument for the Existence of an absolutely immense or infinite Being, is derived from the Nature of an *absolute Necessity* of Existence: To this Effect. A Necessity which is absolute in itself, or not depending on any outward Cause, must be absolutely unlimited. For a Necessity which is not every where the same, is a consequential Necessity depending on some external Cause. But a Necessity absolutely such, has no Relation to Place or any Thing else. Whatever therefore exists by an absolute Necessity in its own Nature, must needs be absolutely infinite or immense.

This is an Argument lately adopted by a very learned Divine\*. The Sum of it appears to be this. If a Thing exists by a Necessity that was independent on any outward Cause, or (which is the same) is absolutely necessary, it follows that it is absolutely immense or infinite; because Finiteness could only proceed from a Limitation of Necessity by some external Cause; which yet could have no Influence on that Necessity which had no Dependance on any Cause.

Before we reply, it will be convenient to give some Account of the Principles on which the learned Author proceeds.

First, He establishes a Necessity, which (because absolutely independent on any outward Cause) he infers to be absolutely unlimited, and from thence concludes, that the other Perfections of the Divine Being (which he, in Order of Nature, conceives as posterior to that Necessity\*\*) are so too.

But this, with due Submission, is, we conceive, to use *absolute Necessity* in too large a Sense, so as to

\* Dr. Clarke, in his *Demonst.* p. 45.

\*\* See his *Answers to Letters*, p. 36, 37.

import a Necessity independent on a fundamental Reason, as well as on any outward Cause.

On the contrary, the Principles establish'd in our former Book may be conceiv'd to be to this Effect. Some Perfection or Property of the Eternal Being (having an intimate Connection with all other Perfections) must be supposed to have been in its very Nature a Foundation or Support of Existence, or to have essentially included Necessity. This particular fundamental Perfection is the Reason of the absolutely necessary Existence of the Divine Being which possesses all Perfections: So that the absolute Existence of that adorable Nature, is, according to our Manner of conceiving, founded on its Perfection; *i. e.* because the Divine Being possesses a fundamental Perfection sufficient to infer all other Perfections (which it even virtually includes) therefore that most excellent of Beings exists *with* (not *by*) an absolute Necessity.

The particular Perfection, which I humbly conceive to have virtually included all other Perfections, and to have been the Reason, Ground, or Support of the Divine Existence, is that of *Vital Power*. For as nothing can be supposed to exist without some Sort of Power (which being conceiv'd to be taken away, all vanishes with it) so nothing can be supposed to exist with a Necessity that is absolute, without a perfect Power in itself. And as we cannot help asking, What was the Reason and Support even of original Necessity; so on the contrary, it would be extremely impertinent to ask, What was the Support of original Power? The Necessity of the Existence of original Power was plainly of the Essence of the Power, or, which is the same, was essentially included in and founded on it. For perfect Power not only existed because it was necessary, but it was necessary because it existed; which makes its Case different from that of any other Perfection.



fection. And to suppose a Necessity antecedent to the original Power, is in Effect to suppose another Power before the first Power : Which is absurd.

How perfect Power lies, as it were, at the Bottom of all other Perfections, and as a Root, spreads Perfection and Necessity, may appear from the following Reasoning.

'Tis clear, that Imperfection can no otherwise infer a Possibility of ceasing to Be, than as it presupposes Impotence. From whence 'tis obvious to conclude, that where there never was any Possibility of ceasing to Be, (*i. e.* where there was an absolute Necessity of Existence) there could be no Kind nor Degree of Impotence, or there must have been Omnipotence or the most perfect Power ; and likewise that where there was Omnipotence there could be no Imperfection ; or, which is the same, there must of Necessity have been all possible Perfections. So that the Necessity of the Divine Being must be conceiv'd as founded on perfect Power, which was, as it were, the necessary Source and Support of all other Perfections.

Here we may observe by the Way, that perfect Power (which is the Reason and Support of all other Perfections) could be no necessary Reason of an absolute Infinity with Regard to Space. For, as will be shewn in the following Chapter, the Estimate of the Perfection of Power, as such, is not to be made with Regard to Extent of Space, but with Relation to the Objects of Power ; which Objects cannot be absolutely infinite either in Extent or Number.

The Doctor and his acute Vindicator insist\*, that pure Necessity is the Reason and Support of the Divine Existence, because it doth not pre-suppose but infer Existence, or because 'tis first in the Order of our Ideas.

But I answer, If we consider Necessity as an influential Principle of Existence, (which is in Effect

\* Mr. Jackson, in his Defence, p. 194.

to conceive it under the Notion of a *distinct Power*;) then indeed 'tis first in the Order of our Ideas. But if we consider it as a Mode or Manner of Existence essentially included in and founded on Power (which seems to be the genuine Conception of it) then it cannot be conceiv'd before the Power on which it is founded. For as the external conditional Necessity of the Existence of dependent Beings is originally included in and founded on the Power or Will of their external Causes, and is therefore antecedent to their Existence, so the internal absolute Necessity of the Existence of the independent Being must (if I may so say) be originally included in and immediately founded on an internal Power, and therefore ought not to be conceiv'd as antecedent to the Divine Existence.

To shew that these are no needless Subtilties, I shall conclude with recommending it to be consider'd, whether by supposing a Sort of antecedent Necessity of the Divine Nature, which is absolutely unlimited, we shall not at last be reduced (with *Spinosa*, who argues from the same unlimited Necessity) to assert one only Being or Substance, because absolutely infinite; and likewise, whether we shall not be obliged with him, to extend that Necessity to the Divine (and even to Human) Action, by supposing an universal Fatality. For as, by the Doctor's own Confession, it cannot be explain'd how pure absolute Necessity could infer Liberty\*, so neither can it be explain'd how Necessity can be absolutely unlimited, if it doth not extend to all Action as well as Existence. For, as the Doctor himself expresses it. *Necessity absolutely such has no Relation to Place nor any thing else*, or (as both the Words and the Nature of the Thing seem to import) is every where and in every Case the same.

\* *Demonstration*, p. 52, 53, &c.

But to proceed to the learned Doctor's Argument. I answer.

1. That though there was no external Cause to limit the original Necessity, yet it doth not follow, that either it or its Subject is absolutely unlimited, merely because the abstract Idea of Necessity hath no Relation to Place or Limits. To give an Instance of the same Nature. The abstract Idea of Necessity in our Minds, which has no more Relation to Variety than to Place or Limits, but is absolutely simple and uniform, would (if consider'd as the Reason or Ground of the Divine Existence) infer that the Divine Nature must exist without the least Variety of any Sort. But this would be directly contrary to Reason. For even Reason (to say nothing here of Revelation) assures us, that the most perfect Nature includes a real Diversity of essential Properties (such as Intelligence and effective Power) whose Notions cannot with any tolerable Sense be confounded. For though even real absolute Necessity (if not suppos'd to be founded on Perfection) could admit of no Variety of any Sort (as we observed when we disputed against the absolute Necessity of Motion) yet (if supposed to be so founded) though still it be but one, or agreeable to no more Beings than one, it cannot but admit of all the Variety in that one Being that is included in the general Idea of Perfection.

This shews the Vanity of Arguing merely from abstract Ideas. For the Properties of Things must be consider'd relatively, or in their Connection as they exist in Nature, not absolutely and abstractedly as they exist in our Imaginations only. Thus, as to know somewhat of the Nature of the Divine Perfection, we must (as in the former Book) consider the Nature and Import of necessary Existence, so if we would acquire a more complete Notion of Necessity of Existence, we must, it seems, consider it  
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in its Relation to Perfection. For though the Necessity of the Divine Existence was so far absolute, as it was not dependent on any proper Cause, yet it was ever founded on Perfection, and therefore was such as the Nature of Perfection required. But the Nature of Perfection not only required Variety of Properties, but was *relative* and *determinate*; as was shewn elsewhere.

2. There is abundant Reason to assert (as we have done) that Finiteness, in the absolute Sense (or as importing a Thing's being complete, or having a determinate Essence) is no proper Effect of any Cause. 'Tis true, the particular Modifications of it may properly enough be said to be caus'd, or a Cause may have the Power of producing its Effect either with more or less Limitation according to its Pleasure. But we cannot say, in the general, that the Will or Power of any Cause was the Reason of the Finiteness of its Effect.

3. Finiteness in the absolute Sense (*i. e. Completeness of Essence*) seems plainly to be the Result of a Necessity in the very Nature of Things. For every real Being must have a complete and positive Essence, by which it determinately is what it is: Whereas our Notion even of what we call an absolute or positive Infinity is, on the contrary, negative, incomplete, and indetermin'd, and therefore unapplicable to any real Being. We speak indeed of Infinity as of something positive; but this is to join Words whose Ideas can never be join'd by us, nor so much as prov'd to be consistent with each other. For if *Finiteness* be positive (as was shewn) *Infinity* must needs be negative.

But if every Being, as such, is of a positive, complete and determinate Essence, then how absolute soever the Necessity is with which any Being exists, that Necessity and its Subject cannot but be determin'd or limited by its internal Reason, though not  
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limited by any external Cause : Which Sort of Limitation by an internal Reason, is so far from an Imperfection, that it is the utmost Perfection or Completion of Being. This, as I humbly conceive, appears most plainly from the Doctrine of the *Trinity* in the divine Nature ; which, however understood or explain'd, implies a Limitation with Respect to Number, included in the very Nature of Perfection (the internal Reason of the divine Existence) which Limitation constitutes or *completes* the divine Essence, by excluding all Imperfection \*. And even in Beings that derive their Existence from a proper Cause, there is a Sort of peculiar Limitation which fixes and completes their particular Natures, and gives them the Perfection of their several Species.

Here I cannot omit the Testimony of a late learned and dignified Prelate of the Church of *England*.  
 “ The Truth is (says he) this Word *Infinite* con-  
 “ founds our Notion of God, and makes the most  
 “ perfect and excellent Being the most perfectly un-  
 “ known to us. For *Infinite* is only a Negative  
 “ Term, and signifies (in the absolute Sense) that  
 “ which hath no End, and therefore no positive or  
 “ determin'd Nature ; and therefore is Nothing.  
 “ An (absolutely) infinite Being, had not Use and  
 “ Custom reconciled us to that Expression, would  
 “ be thought Nonsense and Contradiction. For  
 “ every real Being has a certain and determin'd Na-  
 “ ture, and therefore is not infinite in this Sense ;  
 “ which is so far from being a Perfection, that it  
 “ signifies nothing real \*\*.

4. Though the original Necessity doth not appear to be absolutely indetermin'd or unlimited in itself, it might notwithstanding be sufficiently absolute, and by Consequence, such as render'd it equal-

\* See the *Christian Religion founded on Reason*, p. 99.

\*\*1 *Disc. of the Trinity*, p. 77.

ly impossible for its Subject either not to be, or to be other than it is. That it could not but be sufficiently absolute, is clear, in as much as it was not in the least dependent on or determin'd by any proper Cause. And that its Subject could not but exist such as it actually does, is no less clear; because (as we have already seen) Necessity was absolutely connected with and included in Perfection, and likewise because Perfection is in its very Nature fix'd and determin'd.

But, says the learned Doctor, “ To suppose a finite Being to be self-existent, is to suppose it is a Contradiction for that Being to exist, the Absence of which may be conceiv'd without a Contradiction. For if a Being can without a Contradiction be absent from one Place, it may without Contradiction be absent from another Place, and from all Places.

I answer, It has been already shewn, that a Being may possess all Space, or fill all Places, and by Consequence be omnipresent, without being strictly or absolutely infinite or immense. Therefore this Arguing doth not directly affect such a Being. But since the Doctor seems to make our Conceptions the Standards of the Necessity of Things, by saying, that what we can conceive to be absent in Part may be wholly absent. I reply farther by asserting, that a Thing may be so necessary as to render it a Contradiction in Nature for it not to exist, though its Absence may be conceiv'd without any Contradiction to our Ideas; or there may be a Contradiction in Nature that doth not appear to be such to us.

We shall vainly amuse ourselves with abstract Ideas, and shall easily be deceiv'd, if in every Case we will argue from them, which are the Creatures of the Mind, to the Things as they exist in Nature. The necessary Existence of a Thing may not be the less certain, though the abstract Idea of it in our Imaginations

ginations may not include any Necessity of Existence : Or a Thing may be necessary in its real Connection with other Things, though it may not appear to be so, consider'd singly or in itself. Thus for Example, Though the Attribute of Intelligence doth not include any Necessity of Existence in its abstract Idea, yet being necessarily connected with the other divine Perfections, we are assured it could not but exist.

Again, An abstract Idea may, on the contrary, seem to include Necessity of Existence, when the Thing it represents we are assur'd could never have existed abstractly, or without Connection with something else. Thus *Space* or *Extension* (though its Idea seems to include Necessity of Existence) could never have existed singly, or without Connection with something which is not *Extension*. For absolute Necessity of Existence (as was prov'd) supposes in its Subject a Connection of whatever Attributes import Perfection. Therefore as we ought not to consider That as necessarily existent alone, tho' seemingly necessary in Idea, which could never have existed thus alone in Nature ; so, it seems, we ought not to consider any thing as incapable of existing necessarily in its Connection in Nature, merely because it includes no such Necessity in its abstract Idea.

The Question therefore (when we dispute about the capable Subject of an absolute Necessity of Existence) is not concerning either *Wisdom*, or *Power*, or *Space*, or any other single Perfection, but 'tis concerning Perfection in general. 'Tis not either *Power*, or *Wisdom*, or *Space*, or any other particular Attribute or Perfection (without Connection with any other Perfection) but 'tis the Deity who possesses all Perfections, who is capable of existing with an absolute Necessity, or without Dependence on our Conceptions, or any thing else.

Arg. VIII. Another Argument deriv'd from the same *absolute Necessity of Existence*, is thus delivered by the learned Dr. Scott \*, “ In conceiving of God, “ we must ascribe to Him *infinite Fulness of Being*, “ by which he is so infinitely remov'd from Not “ being, that he cannot but Be; and in thus conceiving of him, we attribute to him necessary Existence.

But this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, may admit of the following Reply.

1. That Fulness of Being (or Fulness of Perfection) may very well be without an absolute Infinity, has been already shewn in the former Book \*\*.

2. Such Fulness of Perfection as we then attributed to the Eternal Being (since it as effectually excludes all Imperfection as even the Notion of Infinity itself) may be well conceiv'd as a sufficient Foundation of necessary Existence. For since (as was then observ'd) a Possibility of ceasing to Be can nowhere be found without Imperfection, we may in the general be assur'd, that where no Imperfection is, there can be no Possibility of ceasing to Be; or there must needs be necessary Existence.

3. An infinite Distance or Remoteness from *Not being*, is an improper Manner of speaking. 'Tis true, the irreconcilable Opposition between two contradictory Terms, makes us apt to imagine a Sort of Space or Distance between them, to which we are us'd to give the Title of *Infinite*. But 'tis plain, that to talk of such an infinite Distance, is to speak improperly, and to expose ourselves to the Danger of being amus'd with Words instead of Things. Besides, that there's no Need of any real Infinity of Perfection to found such an infinite Distance appears from the Confession of the Asser-

\* *Christian Life*, Part. II. Vol. I. Chap. 6.

\*\* See Ch. 4. B. 1.



tors of an absolute Infinity themselves. For these (as appears by a former Argument) suppose a like infinite Distance between the Not being and Being, even of Creatures; without attributing to them any Infinity of Perfection.

*Arg. IX.* Not only the Nature of Necessity, but that of Possibility, has furnished an Argument of an absolutely infinite Being. For I find a late judicious Writer arguing to this Effect \*, “ God, says he, “ as he is the actual Cause of whatever is, so he is “ the possible Cause of whatever is possible to be. “ Wherefore since it is evident that no Limits can “ be set by our Thoughts to the Number and Ex- “ tent of Possibilities, but that more may be conceiv’d to be produc’d, and still more without End “ or Bounds; consequently the Divine Power must “ be own’d to have an actual Infinity in Proportion to this possible one.

To this I reply, ’Tis manifest that Possibilities in general can no otherwise be suppos’d capable of the Denomination of *Infinite*, than as any particular Line or Number which we may conceive in our Minds, may be said to be so, *viz.* in as much as we can’t in our Imaginations arrive at any fix’d End or Limits of Progression in adding other Possibilities to those we first imagin’d. Thus we must conceive of the Infinity of possible Effects; unless we will be guilty of the Trifling of the Schools, and talk of Possibilities as of real Beings.

But though we experience such an endless Liberty of thus adding in our Minds, yet ’tis humbly conceiv’d, there’s no arguing from Imagination to Reality, nor concluding that it must be in every Respect in Nature as in our Phantasies.

When we conceive an infinite or unlimited Increase of co-existent Effects, we consider it only as to its

\* How, in his *Living Temple*, Part I. p. 161, 163.

*Notional Possibility*, or to that Non-repugnance which we conceive in the Idea of an infinite or endless Increase of Number and Extension consider'd abstractly or in itself. But an *abstracted or absolute Possibility* is a very improper Expression. For Possibility, in a proper Sense, has a necessary Relation to Power; and nothing can properly be said to be possible but what is producible, or within the Power of some real Agent. If therefore we attempt to determine any thing concerning the *Real Possibility* of such an infinite or eternal Increase, we must, it seems, consider it not only *absolutely*, or as not repugnant in its own Idea, but *relatively*, or as agreeable to the Idea of some Power of whose real Existence we were antecedently convinc'd. If we first could demonstrate the Existence of an absolutely immense Being who is the Subject of a Power thus infinitely extended with Reference to Space, we might then safely conclude, that there's a proportionable infinite Possibility. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd we can't, on the contrary, argue (as in the present Case) from the mere abstract Notion of an infinite Possibility in *our Imaginations*, to the real Existence of such a Power and Possibility in *Nature*.

To explain this by a parallel Instance. If a Person, having first prov'd the Existence of a Power that is perfect, and made it appear that perfect Power can't but extend to whatever is a capable Object of Power (or to whatever includes not a Contradiction) should then proceed to prove that the Act of Creation implies no Contradiction, and at last should conclude that therefore Creation is a Possibility (*i. e.* effectible by the Exercise of that perfect or Almighty Power whose Existence he had before demonstrated;) I conceive there could be no reasonable Objection against such a Method of arguing. But if, on the contrary, he should say, I plainly perceive there's no Contradiction in the Supposition

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of a Creation or Production of a Thing that was not, and should from thence immediately infer that a Power capable of Creation exists; this would be a very preposterous Way of demonstrating; which yet is the very same Method with that of the present Argument.

Nor is the Perfection of Power, as such, to be measur'd by the Extent of its Activity; but to be conceiv'd in a Relation to its Objects consider'd in themselves. 'Tis, for Instance, as great a Demonstration of the Perfection of Power to produce two such Beings as the Earth and Moon, whose Distance is comparatively so small, as to produce two others as distant as the Earth and fixed Stars. These Acts are equally perfect in themselves; and if the latter seems to excel, 'tis not because it argues a greater Perfection of Power in the Agent, but only because it imports a larger Sphere of Activity; which yet is something extrinsical to Power, and can by Consequence, add nothing to the Perfection of it as such.

But if the present Argument can't assure us of the Existence of a Power *extensively* infinite or immense, much less can it prove a Power *intensively* so, *i. e.* infinite in Degree. For if (as we humbly conceive was elsewhere shewn) the mere Production of a Thing from Nothing is no sufficient Proof of an infinite Degree of Power, neither could the successive Production of any imaginable Number of any assignable Perfection amount to a Proof of a Power infinite in Degree. For every capable Effect is equally producible by a Power which is perfect. And by Consequence, an eternal Repetition of the Act could not, in the present Case, yield a greater Argument of Power than a single Act. The Being that can produce a Sand or a Drop from Nothing, can, by the same Degree of Power, successively produce a Mountain or an Ocean. I confess, the con-

tinued or frequent Repetition of the same Act (especially if in any Degree laborious) argues the greater Degree of Power in created or imperfect Agents. But the Case must be own'd to be different with Respect to the Creator of the World ; unless we imagine him capable of Fatigue, and (with the absurd *Anthropomorphites*) interpret his Rest after the Creation in a proper and literal Sense.

*Arg. X.* Another Argument which I find used by *Spinoza* as a Proof of an absolutely infinite Being, is as follows. Says he, “ To be capable of not existing is a Sign of Impotence ; and on the contrary, “ to be able to exist, is a Token of Power ; if then “ whatever actually exists is finite, it follows that “ Finites are more powerful than an absolutely Infinite ; which, says he, is absurd. Therefore, “ either Nothing at all exists, or else there is such a “ Thing as an absolutely infinite Being \*.

This Argument, for ought I know, might prove something, if any Man could make appear that the Notions of a finite and such an infinite Being are equally possible or consistent. But 'tis humbly conceiv'd, the contrary will be sufficiently evident to any that shall consider what has been already said, and what may be further observ'd in the following Chapters.

There's yet another Proof attempted from the *infinite Desires and Appetites of the Soul after the supreme Good*. But this rather seems a Rhetorical Flourish than an Argument of Weight. Not to insist upon the Reflection it seems to cast upon the Wisdom of the great Creator, by supposing him to have implanted in us Appetites absolutely disproportion'd to our Capacities, and which by Consequence can never be satisfied.

\* *Spinoza in Etb. Part. 1. Prop. 11.*

## C H A P. III.

**T**HUS have we finished the History and Proofs of this Opinion both from Scripture and Reason. We shall next proceed to consider its *Usefulness* or Significancy to the Ends of Religion and Morality.

In the former Book we discover'd abundant Reason to attribute Nothing to the Deity but what is most perfect in its Kind. For being necessarily existent, and the Fountain from which all other Natures derived, we have invincible Evidence that he possesses the highest Perfection that either is, or is possible to be. We can therefore have no Room to doubt, but that the genuine Notion of the Deity is that of *the most perfect Being*, or that Being whose very Nature includes whatever belongs to the true Idea of Perfection. Our present Task will be to enquire a little more particularly whether a positive or absolute Infinity be a necessary Ingredient of that Idea.

Now this, it is conceiv'd, may be best determin'd by the Consideration of some of the principal Ideas which are allow'd to compose it : By which we may judge of the rest.

I. As to the Idea of *effective Power*. I suppose, whosoever shall consider the Divine Power (as we have done in the former Book) under the Notion of *an Ability to do whatsoever implies not a Contradiction*, will be allow'd to conceive it in the most suitable and perfect Manner : Since this is to extend it to every Object of Power. For as for Contradictions or Absurdities, they are pure Nothings ; and by Consequence no Objects of Power. If a Contradiction can by any Power be caused to exist, it must be by the Conjunction of two Terms which are absolutely destructive of each other ; so as that if  
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the former be caus'd, the latter can't be caus'd without the Destruction of the former. For Example ; A Being that is entirely Man, and entirely Horse, is such a Contradiction in the Nature of Things ; since the entire Nature of a Man absolutely excludes or destroys that of a Horse ; and so on the contrary. But when two Things absolutely exclude or destroy each other, their Conjunction must be (as was said) a pure Nothing ; and by Consequence no Object of Power. Power may therefore be perfect without an Ability to effect Contradictions ; since without that it may extend to every Object of Power. And though perfect Power could not but require a Sphere of Action vastly surpassing our narrow Conceptions, yet in making an Estimate of the Perfection of Power, we must consider it without any Regard to the Extent of Space. The Production of a Dust from Nothing appears to be as great an Instance of the Perfection of effective Power, as such, as the Production of the entire Globe of the Earth. The Degree, and consequently the Perfection of Power, is in both Cases the same. And if the latter Act includes something more magnificent in its Idea, it is purely on Account of something extrinsical to Power ; as was elsewhere observ'd.

This then is that Idea of effective Power which is most agreeable to the Nature of the perfect Being, Whatever Conception comes short of this, is evidently too mean and unworthy of the eternal Nature, and whatever exceeds it is absurd and unnecessary.

But one must be very ignorant not to know how different this Idea is from that which the Opinion of an absolute Infinity has oblig'd some to entertain. 'Twas that Opinion which induc'd the ingenious *Des Cartes* to attempt the Subversion of the only solid Foundation of Truth and Certainty, which (as was observ'd in the former Book) lies in the *immutable Nature* of God, by extending the Divine Power to  
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the reconciling of Contradictions ; thereby making Truth to have depended entirely on the *indetermin'd Will* of God. Of which more anon. And 'twas partly that Opinion of an absolutely infinite Power, which tempted so many others (at least by plain and inevitable Consequence) to shake the fundamental Principles of Religion, by deriving the worst Events and Actions from the Divine Causality. And tho' the most judicious Divines, considering the Extravagance and Absurdity of these Notions, are wont to explain the Infinity of the Divine Power in such a limited Sense as includes no more than is contain'd in the former Description ; yet (since the Idea of an absolute Infinity, both extensive and intensive, admits no such Restriction or Limitation) this amounts, at least, to a Confession, that when the Word *Infinity* in the absolute Sense is applied to the Attribute of Power, 'tis wholly usefess and insignificant.

2. Let us consider the Idea of *Knowledge*. This being an undoubted Attribute of the same most perfect Nature, Reason will assure us, that it ought to be conceiv'd in the same most perfect Manner. To which End, it is humbly suppos'd, we need not imagine it to be absolutely infinite. 'Tis perhaps sufficient to conceive it to extend to whatever is a fit and capable Object. This we have observ'd some of the Patrons of an absolute Infinity freely to own with Reference to the Attribute of Power ; and 'tis difficult to imagine what should make them so unwilling to do so in the present Case. If there be some Actions which our Reason assures us are unfit, and therefore incapable Effects of the Deity's more *immediate Causality* ; are there not some Events too, which it equally assures us are no less incapable Objects of his *remote Causality* (I mean his particular efficacious Decree) and consequently of his particular determinate infallible Foreknowledge ? For that the Decrees of God are to be suppos'd as the Foundation

dation of his Knowledge of Things as future, may, we conceive, appear from this one Observation. Whatever was no Object of the divine particular efficacious Decree was absolutely indetermin'd to exist, or was a pure Contingence. But properly speaking, a pure Contingence, with Regard to Foreknowledge, is a pure Nothing; as having Nothing positive, fix'd, or determin'd in its Idea. Therefore it is no more an Object of Foreknowledge than a Contradiction is of Power. By Consequence, the Divine Knowledge may extend to all Things without being extended to Contingences, or being absolutely infinite. But of this more particularly in the following Chapter.

3. To conclude with the Idea of *Perfection* with Regard to *Space*.

Whoever shall conceive the Deity to be that absolutely necessary Being, *in* which and *by* which *all Things live and move and have their Beings*, and *beyond* which there neither *is* nor *can be* any Thing; or that Being which pervades, sustains, and surpasses all others; must, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, be allow'd to think as piously and magnificently of his Perfection as either the Scripture or Reason requires or warrants. That Being whose Nature possesses, or rather includes, the utmost possible Space, is most certainly perfect with Respect to Space. Such a Being is likewise properly and incomprehensibly infinite or immense; in as much as no Being can measure or circumscribe it, nor even human Imagination itself. This *negative* or *relative* Infinity of the eternal, independent, and most perfect Being, neither Scripture nor Reason, I think, will suffer us to deny. But whatever is more than this, though it may serve to raise Wonder and Astonishment in the ignorant at the Divulgers of such sublime and mysterious Notions, yet, we humbly conceive, it is unnecessary, and can in Reality add Nothing either

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to the Perfection of the Divine Idea, or to that high Veneration with which it strikes the Minds of all serious and considering Men.

But if we will needs be more particular in our Enquiries, we forget the Modesty that so well becomes the Imperfection of our Nature and Circumstances. 'Tis sufficient that we are assured in the general, that the eternal Being is in all Respects such as the Nature of Perfection required. And certainly we ought not to wonder that the Imperfection of our Nature will not permit us to discover how the Perfection of his Nature is the Reason of his existing so and no otherwise with Respect to *Space*, no more than that it will not admit of a Discovery of the Reason why his essential Properties are so and no otherwise with Regard to *Number*.

Upon the whole, from what has been here and elsewhere observed, 'tis natural to reflect on that bold and magisterial Method of Speculation introduc'd by the *Platonists* and *Schoolmen*, who, as Dr. *More* observ'd, were wont to *spread out every Attribute of God to as infinite Excess as they could, forgetting that one necessary Measure of all his Attributes, viz. That they be no farther apply'd to him: than as they imply Perfection.*

#### C H A P. IV.

**W**Hoever has prov'd an Opinion to be both groundless and useless, needs proceed but one Step further and prove it *pernicious*. Our next Enquiry therefore shall be into the Effects or Consequences of this Opinion of an absolute Infinity.

These we shall perceive to regard the Deity under a twofold Notion, *viz.* as consider'd either as He is in Himself, or with Reference to us. Of the former Sort is;

1. The Opinion of his *Inextention*, as it is usually express'd, or his being absolutely without Magnitude or Dimensions. This we have observ'd no less a Man than *Aristotle* to have infer'd as a plain and immediate Consequence of that Principle. For Dimensions whose very Notion includes End or Limits, could not, as he rightly infer'd, belong to a Being absolutely infinite and immense : Since it is demonstrable, that no possible Number of Finites can constitute such an Infinite:

This Opinion of his *Inextention* being once entertain'd, 'tis scarce conceivable what a Train of Riddles and Paradoxes it drew after it. For thence the later *Platonists*, as well as the *Aristotelians*, were wont to infer what is usually call'd his *Indistance*. For Distance being only a relative Conception of Space; consequently it could not, as they rightly concluded; be conceiv'd in a Being who was, as they imagin'd; absolutely without Amplitude and Dimensions.

Thus far they proceeded in Absurdity : Their next Step was Impiety. For since they found it impossible to conceive a Being without Amplitude or Dimensions any otherwise than as a mere indivisible Point ; they began to speak of the Deity in the like diminutive Terms, and in Effect, imprison'd the great Creator within the smallest Dust of his Creation.

But fearing lest this Consequence of their Zeal for the divine absolute Infinity should be thought to destroy it, they quickly solv'd the Difficulty with a pretended Mystery, and gravely concluded that it was no Impossibility for such an infinite Being to exist entire, though in a certain atomical or indivisible Manner, not only in one, but in every individual Particle of the Universe at once. For this worthy Discovery we are particularly indebted to *Plotinus*, one of *Plato's* Disciples, who oblig'd the World with two whole Books, tending to demonstrate, that one  
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and the same Being may be all of it entirely in each distinguishable Part of the Universe.

This Philosopher, it seems, had found the Secret of producing more Deities out of one than the fruitful Fancies of all the Poets in their *Theogonies* could ever make. And 'tis to this Discovery of his that we chiefly owe the most plausible Argument to support *Transubstantiation*, which implies that the Body of Christ is in many Places at once.

But fearing, good Man, lest this Discovery of his should be thought inconsistent with the *Unity* of God, he made bold to stretch the Mystery a little farther, by concluding not only that it is the Property and Privilege of the absolutely infinite Being to exist whole in every Particle of the World, but that he has an undoubted Privilege of existing whole in the Whole of it too ; so as to be *one individual innumerable universal Deity*. All which *Platonical* Mysteries were afterwards receiv'd as Articles of Faith by the *Schoolmen*, and are comprisd in that vulgar Maxim of theirs, *viz. Deus est Totus in Toto, et Totus in qualibet Parte Mundi, i. e.* God is Whole in the Whole, and Whole in every Part of the World : Mysteries that require a Degree of Faith beyond that of Miracles ; a Faith which can transform Contradictions into Arguments with a *Credo quia impossibile est* \*.

Though it is next to impossible to speak of such Extravagancies as these, and at the same time to preserve that Gravity which is so necessary in Discourses of this Nature, yet I conceive it could not be amiss to observe thus much, to the End it may be shewn how strangely the Names of Learning and Orthodoxy have been misapply'd to Whimsies of this Kind, and how profanely even the sacred Name of God has been abus'd to consecrate the most egregious Absurdities.

\* i. e. *I believe it because 'tis impossible* : The Saying of a certain Father.

That these Opinions found no Entertainment among many of the Primitive Christians, may appear from divers Passages in *Tertullian*. Thus in *Lib. 2. contra Marcion*, says he, *Who (viz. among the Christians of that Age) will deny that God is a Body [ Corpus ] though he is likewise a Spirit ?* Where, by *Body* is probably meant no more than what has some Sort of Amplitude. For we read of some Philosophers in *Laertius*, who call'd Space  $\Sigma\tilde{\omega}\mu\alpha\ \text{Ἄυλον}$ , or an *immaterial Body*. 'Tis therefore likely that in *Tertullian's* Time, the Word *Body* was generally us'd, at least among the Christians, in such a Sense: Though afterwards, in the Time of *St. Austin*, it appears to have been disus'd with Respect to the Deity. For, says he, *Tolle omne Corpus*, Conceive not God as a Body.

And as these Opinions gain'd no Credit with the more primitive Christians, so they have found many Opposers in the latter Ages of Christianity, and have prov'd no small Occasion of Scandal to Atheistical Wits. Mr. *Hobbes* may serve for an Instance; who in his Book *de Homine*, p. 72. tells us, *That though the Scriptures acknowledge Spirits, yet they no where say that they are without Dimensions.* And in the preceding Page, says he, *Substance without Dimensions are Words which flatly contradict each other.*

These are Consequences of the divine absolute Infinity and Inextension which have been generally confess'd and vindicated. But there's another which, (though it was never so fortunate as to obtain the Decree of a *General Council* in its Favour, yet) may perhaps claim as true a Relation to those Principles as any other: And that is the Opinion of the *Nul-libists*.

'Tis well known, that *Weigelius* was the Reviver of this Extravagance among Christians. For one Assertion of his (among divers others flowing from the Height of *Enthusiasm* and *Distraction*) was that  
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ritual Beings (since conceiv'd to be unextended or without Dimensions) are *no where and yet every where*. But the chief Patron of this profound Mystery of *Nullibism* was *Des Cartes*; a Philosopher who has render'd himself remarkable for these three confident Assertions, *viz.* *That whatever Thinks is absolutely immaterial; That whatever is Extended, or has Dimensions, is material; and that whatever is unextended, or without Dimensions, is no where.* Which last Assertion (perhaps the truest) is in Effect no other than a frank Confession of what the Schools labour'd to conceal under an insignificant and arbitrary Distinction between the *Locus* of a Body and the *Ubi* of a Spirit; which Distinction, it seems, the less Metaphysical *Cartesians* find themselves unable to comprehend.

From this Conceit that the Deity is no where substantially, there soon sprung another, *viz.* the Opinion that his *Omnipresence* and *Omnipotence* are the same; or that he is no otherwise present with his Creatures than by his Power and Efficacy: The like to which is by some asserted of all other spiritual Beings. And this is that Notion of a Spirit which deservedly gave such Offence to Mr. *Gildon* \*. For indeed a Power without a Subject, is in plain *English*, a *powerful Nothing*.

A late Author having spent many Pages in disputing against the vulgar Opinion of *unextended Substance*, at last very confidently advances this of a *separately-existing Power* in its Stead; in which he does but act over the same Part in Disguise, which he before had hiss'd and exploded as too ridiculous for a Man of Sense. For after all, this Opinion will be found to be no other in Effect than the same *unextended Substance*, which he so much condemns.

For though he supposes the Divine Power actually to reach every Part of the Universe, yet that he af-

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\* See *Oracles of Reason*, p. 187.

firms it so to do without any proper Extension of its own, must be confess'd ; unless it should be asserted, that mere Power is measurable by Inches and Feet. And that this separately-existent *unextended Power* to which he gives the Name of *Deity*, must, according to him, be understood to be a *Substance* in the very same Sense wherein the Deity has been usually asserted to be so, is equally manifest ; both because he asserts it *to subsist by itself*, or without any Subject, and because he allows it to *support* or sustain whatever else exists ; which, if I mistake not, is the complete Notion of Substance as vulgarly attributed to the Deity.

But let us briefly consider his Proofs of such a separately-existent Power.

This he, first of all, attempts to prove from the Nature of *Motion*, which, says he, “ \* hath a distinct Essence from the Matter in which it is ; “ though we can hardly find Words to express its “ *Quiddity*, *i. e.* (as he afterwards explains his Meaning) though it is neither Substance nor Accident.

But admitting Motion to be as much a Reality as he pleases, yet 'tis conceiv'd, that unless he can prove the Possibility of its Separate Existence without any Subject, it can be of no Advantage to him in the present Case. For the Question is not concerning the Reality of Power, but concerning its Separability. But what a strange Motion must that needs be which is the Motion of Nothing !

But he proceeds to Scripture Proofs. And particularly he quotes those Texts wherein God is said to have taken of the *Spirit* (or *Power*, as he explains it) and transfer'd it to another Subject ; and wherein *Virtue* (or *Power*) is said to have gone forth from our Saviour on the Woman's touching him. From whence he concludes, that Power can't be an

\* *Grand Essay*, p. 4.

Accident ; because an Accident can't pass from one Subject to another without Inhesion in the Conveyance.

But since Nothing is more certain than that the Scriptures are not always to be understood in the literal Sense, how shall we be assur'd that these Expressions are not tropical ?

This he afterwards seems to think a reasonable Objection ; and therefore he adds, that though it should be supposed that these Scripture Phrases are not to be understood in a proper or literal Sense, yet he conceives that when Power is said to pass from one Person to another, it must, at least, import some new real Power superadded. And this he imagines will be sufficient for his Purpose.

But again, How shall we be assur'd, that among all the improper or tropical Methods of Speech to be met with in Scripture, these Expressions are not of that Sort which we call *Metonymical*, or that the Cause is not here put for the Effect ; the Spirit, Virtue, or Power, for the Result of its Operation ? For if so, (as it's most rational to suppose) they can't so much as be allow'd to import either the Transition or Infusion of any new Power, but only the Production of a new Effect by the same original divine Power. Thus, when God is said to have taken of the Spirit which was upon *Moses*, and to have put it on the Seventy Elders, no more can necessarily be infer'd to the present Purpose, than that the Effects of the same divine Power which had assisted and actuated *Moses* in the Discharge of his Office, did afterwards discover themselves in a lesser Degree in his Coadjutors. And when Virtue is said to have gone out of our Saviour, no more needs be understood, than that the miraculous Effect which was then wrought proceeded from the Divine Power which acted in and by the Blessed *Jesus*,

By this Time the Gentleman thinks fit to lay aside the Bible, and again to betake himself to Reason. Says he, p. 175. *The original Power can't but have a separate Existence; for it gave Being to itself, and to every Thing else.*

This is a Touch of the *Platonick* and *Cartesian* Divinity of which we discours'd before, and, as I take it, needs no Confutation.

But says he, *It is a Contradiction to affirm that the original Power inheres in a Subject: For this would be, in Effect, to deny its being the original Power; in as much as the Subject must have a Priority of Existence.*

But could he need to be inform'd that necessary Existence admits of no real Priority or Posteriority? Can any Man need a Demonstration to convince him that the Case is very different between the Creator of the World and the Effects of human Art?

Yet to give this Hypothesis its due, it must, I think, be confess'd, that it is at least as ingenious as that of the *Indian* Philosopher of whom Mr. *Locke* speaks. For Power without a Subject may, for ought I know, yield as good a Support to the World as the Elephant and Tortoise. And could any of our Projectors so far improve on this Notion as to discover the Secret of extracting Power from its Subject, he might gratify the Age with the Method of building Castles in the Air, without the Help of *Æsop's* grosser Invention of Eagles and Baskets.

To be more serious in a Matter of this Concern. Did not this Gentleman profess so fairly in some Places of his Book, his Management would almost incline one to suspect his Deity to be no other than the Power or Activity which he supposes to be in *Matter*. For while he bestows *self-active* Power on all Matter, he contends that the Deity is nothing else but *Power*. And while he denies the Deity to be an immaterial Substance, and chuses rather to call him an *immaterial Being*, he pretends to prove that the  
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Power of Matter is a distinct Being from its Subject, though no Substance; which he conceives to be a Title agreeable only to Matter. And that which will possibly render him yet more suspected with some, is what he subjoyns concerning the Inconceivableness of a Power's existing without any Subject: Which seems to imply, that whatever he had before asserted with Reference to the separate Existence of a Divine Power was nothing else but Pretext and Artifice.

I would not be understood to insinuate this to have been his real Opinion. But, however that may have been, 'tis certain, we can't be too much aware of such super-refin'd Notions as these, lest they be found to leave us Nothing but the Name and Shadow of a Deity. But to proceed.

From the Opinion of the Deity's being absolutely void of Extension our new *Cartesians* have infer'd, that he is nothing else but *Cogitation*. And thus his *Omnipresence* is by them explain'd by an *Universal Cogitation*, *i. e.* they assert that he is for no other Reason every where, than because he thinks and is conscious every where. Thus say *Poiret*, *Roel*, &c. who in this have chosen to desert their Master *Des Cartes*\*, and to follow the Sentiments of some of the Schoolmen, who probably deriv'd this Opinion, together with that of his *Inextension*, from the Notion of his absolute *Infinity*. Against these *Schoolmen Aquinas* disputes, in *Sum.* p. 1. q. 54, 55.

2. Another Opinion which has been entertain'd as a Consequence of that of an absolute Infinity, is the Notion of the *absolute Simplicity* of God. By which is meant the *real Identity* of all the Divine Perfections with each other, and with the Divine Nature.

\* See *Cartes. Resp. ad Object.* 3. *where he asserts there can be no Act without a Subject.*

That it was not without great Appearance of Reason that this was reputed a genuine Consequence of that Principle, is certain. For supposing the absolute Infinity of the Divine Nature, should we admit a real Diversity of its Attributes or Properties, it might, not impertinently, be queried, whether each of those Properties singly contain'd an *absolutely infinite Perfection*? If it should be affirm'd, 'twould follow that an absolutely *Infinite* consisted of many (or, as is usually asserted, infinite) *Infinites* in the same Sense. If deny'd, 'twould follow, that an *absolutely Infinite* consisted of *Finites*. For that which doth not singly contain an *absolutely infinite Perfection*, must be finite or limited.

That the Opinion of an absolute Infinity is the only Principle that can be suppos'd to infer such an absolute Simplicity, is, I think, clear. For though the Argument which some derive from the general Perfection of the Divine Nature, is sufficient to demonstrate the Impossibility of its being the Subject of a proper Composition, yet it excludes not all Diversity; since no Diversity or Distinction can with Reason be reputed an *Imperfection*, but such as is the Result of a proper Composition importing a Dependence on some external Cause. On the contrary, Perfection necessarily infers a Diversity of essential Properties or Powers united in one Being; such as *Self-activity*, *Intelligence*, and *Liberty*, which can't but co-exist in a Being that is perfect, with an absolute independent Necessity. But an absolutely necessary Diversity of these Properties can't but be the greatest Diversity, as their absolutely necessary Union in the same Subject can't but be the strictest and most indissoluble Union\*.

This Opinion of the absolute Simplicity of the Divine Nature, how innocent soever it may appear,

\* See the *Christian Religion founded on Reason*, p. 101.

has been the Occasion of great Inconveniencies. For hence *Spinoza* and others have argued for the Necessity of the Divine Action. Say they, the Nature of the Deity being absolutely simple, his Decrees and Ideas can't but be the same with his Essence. But his Essence is confessedly necessary; therefore these must be so too. But if so, 'tis well known how destructive to Religion the Consequences must be. And 'tis this same Opinion which has inclined some to confound the Duration of the Deity with his Essence, and from thence to infer, that since his Essence is simultaneous or unextended, therefore his Duration is so too: Thereby involving the Notion of the Eternal Being in needless and inextricable Difficulties.

3. Another Opinion by some entertain'd as a Consequence of this Principle of an *absolute Infinity*, is that of the *divine absolute Omnipotence*. We have, I confess, observ'd the Patrons of the *divine absolute Infinity*, for the most part, to assert Omnipotence in a somewhat limited Sense, by extending it only to such Acts as are judged to imply no Contradiction. But there are or have been others, who, considering the Nature of an absolute Infinity, have conceiv'd it to be no less than Presumption and Impiety to limit or confine that Power, in any Sort, in our narrow Minds which is usually asserted to be absolutely infinite or unlimited in itself. This induc'd the ingenious *Des Cartes* to assert, that how gross a Contradiction soever we may imagine a Thing to be, yet we ought not to affirm 'tis impossible to God, for as much as our Understandings, being finite, can't be pretended to be the Measures of his absolutely infinite Power.

This Method of Reasoning seems to have greater Weight than is commonly allow'd it. For what is it less than an abridging or limiting the divine infinite Power to assert it can do nothing but what is agreeable and reconcileable even to the most perfect Ideas

of Finite Beings? Since the Deity, as absolutely infinite, is suppos'd to *be* what is absolutely inconceivable to any finite Understanding, ought we not by Consequence to admit that he can *do* what is absolutely inconceivable to finite Minds? It was therefore, it seems, not without Reason, *on these Principles*, that the Philosopher we just now mentioned laid it down for his Opinion \*, *That all Truth originally depended on the Will or sovereign Determination of God*; which, according to him, was the only Cause of the Truth of this Proposition, *That the three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two Right Angles*; and that he might, had he so pleas'd, by Virtue of his absolutely infinite Power, have caus'd the contrary to be true: An Opinion which tends to lay a Foundation for the Belief of the grossest Absurdities wherever the Divine Power is suppos'd to be immediately concern'd.

4. Another Consequence of the Divine Absolute Infinity is that of *Absolute Omniscience*.

That the Deity absolutely foresees all Events, however conditionate in their Natures, and necessarily and determinately foreknows all the Actions even of his intelligent Creatures, though free or indetermin'd in their Principles, are Paradoxes not likely to have been believ'd for their own Sakes, but rather appear to have been entertain'd on the Credit of some other more plausible Opinion. For sure no wise or good Man could be very forward to countenance Notions which (as commonly understood and asserted) seem so inconsistent both with the Justice of God and his own Liberty, did he not conceive them to be the necessary Consequences of some more specious and innocent Principle. That this Principle was originally no other than that of an absolute Infinity, will, 'tis conceiv'd, be sufficiently clear from

\* See Cart. Ep. 6. P. 2.

the immediate Connection between these Opinions. For since that can't be absolutely infinite or unbounded Knowledge which is not equally extended to all future as well as past and present Events; it follows that if the Divine Knowledge be asserted to be thus infinite, it must of Necessity be understood to be thus extended. And this indeed is the principal Reason which is usually assign'd of such Foreknowledge.

With Respect to this universal absolute infallible Foreknowledge of the Deity, 'tis the Observation of the excellent Mr. *Boyle* \*, " That the greatest Wits  
 " that have labour'd to reconcile it with the Liber-  
 " ty of Man's Will, have been reduc'd to maintain  
 " something or other that thwarts some acknow-  
 " ledg'd Truth or Dictate of Reason.

From this Supposition of an eternal absolute and universal Foreknowledge, the natural and immediate Consequence was that of *eternal absolute Decrees of all Actions and Events*. For since the Doctrine of *Eternal Decrees* was taught by *Plato*, it can't be pretended to have taken its Original from such Expressions as are commonly thought to favour it in the *New Testament*. And as for the *Old Testament*, (whatever the Opinion of some of the less ancient *Jews* might be) it yields the least Colour in the World for such a Notion. But that it was admitted by *Plato* as a Consequence of his Doctrine of an *absolute universal Foreknowledge*, seems very clear from the natural Connection between these two Opinions. For 'tis self-evident (as we elsewhere observ'd) that whatever is the Object of an *absolute infallible Foreknowledge*, must be somewhat that is already fix'd and determin'd. But whatever is determin'd to be, must plainly either have been determin'd in its own Nature, or else it must have been determined by

\* *Discourse of Things above Reason*. p. 13. and 78.

virtue of some immutable Order of Things independent on the Deity ; or Lastly, it must have been determin'd by some particular divine Decree. That it could not be so determin'd in its own Nature is clear. For since no particular Event can be affirm'd to come to pass by an absolute independent Necessity in itself, nothing is more manifest than that all Events, in themselves consider'd, are absolutely indifferent either to be or not to be. That it could not be thus determin'd by virtue of any immutable independent Order of Things is alike clear. For 'tis not only unaccountable how such an immutable Order should establish itself without the divine Ordination, but this would render the true Deity (like the *Jupiter* of the *Stoicks* and other *Pagans*) a very insignificant Being, incapable of any free Action, and unable to foreknow any thing without first consulting the mysterious Book of *Fate*. It therefore remains, that as nothing could be sufficient eternally to determine the Existence of any particular Event but some eternal absolute Decree of that sovereign Will on which all Things depend, so Nothing less than such eternal Decrees could be a sufficient Foundation of such an universal infallible Foreknowledge as is usually attributed to the Deity.

But of the Eternity of the Divine Decrees, and its Inconveniencies, we have discours'd in the former Book. And as for the Opinion of the Universality and Absoluteness of those Decrees, 'twas generally rejected by the Ancients who preceded St. *Austin*, (who unanimously asserted that the Non-elect lay under no absolute necessitating Decree of Damnation) and though it was zealously defended by St. *Austin*, (who having quitted the *Manichean* Sect, began to derive from the Deity all that Evil and Fatality, which those Hereticks imputed to their evil Principle) yet it was rejected by many even at that Time, nor was it ever confirmed by any Synod. And tho'

it was indeed defended by the most noted Writers of the Western Church in Imitation of him, yet it was much mollified by some in the Point of *Reprobation*, or *Predestination to eternal Punishment*.

The Consequence of universal absolute Decrees was the Opinion of the *universal Agency of God*, and the *absolute Passiveness of his Creatures*, and (which appears to be but little better than the same Opinion in Disguise) the Doctrine of *universal immediate Concurse*.

That not only such as are deservedly reputed Fanaticks or Enthusiasts, but Men of Learning and Sobriety have been Assertors of these Opinions, there's none, I suppose, will deny, who knows the former to have been the Doctrine of divers of the Schoolmen \*, and that the latter is still one distinguishing Principle of some who claim the Title of *Orthodox* for their peculiar Character.

I confess the Absurdity and Impiety of the former Opinion are so undisguis'd and barefac'd, that at present it finds little Entertainment with any but such whose giddy enthusiastick Minds render them both incapable and unworthy of Dispute. But since the latter has been so fortunate as to engage so many learned Advocates in its Defence, whose Pens for so many Ages have been employ'd in casting its ill Features into Shades, and representing it with an Air of Piety, it will perhaps be necessary to give That a few Thoughts.

If we look into their Writings, we shall find, that as in order to the establishing an universal absolute Foreknowledge, they assert absolute efficacious Decrees of all Actions and Events, so they suppose a proportionable Influx of the Divine Power on all the Creatures, not only exciting them to act, but irresistibly directing and governing their several Actions

\* These were wont to teach that it was not Fire that burnt, but that God burnt ad præsentiam Ignis.

in order to the fulfilling those Decrees. They maintain that it is a great Indignity and Affront to the absolutely infinite Deity, to imagine him to be no more than either the remote or the partial Cause of all Action. They assert that he acts not only *with* but *in* his Creatures; who are as absolutely unable to act of themselves as they were either to create or to preserve themselves. But how all this is consistent with the Liberty of the Creatures, and by Consequence with any thing that may deserve the Name of Religion, must, I think, be own'd to be absolutely incomprehensible.

It is not, I conceive, sufficient to say, in Defence of this Opinion, that God influences and actuates the Creatures in a Manner agreeable to their respective Natures, *viz.* Necessary Agents necessarily, but free Agents in a Way consistent with and perfective of their Liberty. For this is to say what they can never explain or reconcile in any tolerable Degree with the Dictates of Reason; forasmuch as such an irresistible Force (or Influx, as they chuse to call it) absolutely subverts the Distinction of *Necessary* and *Free* with Regard to the Creatures, and reduces all to the same Level, leaving no imaginable Difference with Respect to Liberty between the Action of an Angel and that of a Brute or Clock. Besides, that Act which by inevitably bending the Will or causing us to commit what is really evil voluntarily, (which is all that some People mean by *Freely*) is in Reality more destructive of Liberty, and more deeply concern'd in the Evil committed, than that which forces us to commit it only by immediately constraining our Practice.

Nor is it to better Purpose to affirm, that God effects only the Matter and not the Form of sinful Actions. For this appears to be absolutely irreconcilable to their own Principles. For if he effects only the Matter or Physical Part of the Act, then  
the



the Form, or moral Part, is by Consequence entirely the Effect of the Creature's Power. For Instance, a Person is guilty of Hatred to his Father. In this Action two Things are to be distinguish'd, *viz.* the *Matter* of the Act, or Hatred in general, which is neither good nor evil, but indifferent: and the *Form*, or the Direction or particular Determination of that Hatred towards an unlawful Object. Now if it be said that God effects only the *Matter* of the Act (or Hatred in general) without the least Direction of it to any particular Object, then he cannot be said to concur to the whole Action, much less is he the total Cause of it. For the Direction of the Hatred towards such a particular Object (to which he does not concur) is most certainly something positive, and deserves the Name of Action as well as the Hatred itself. But if they say (as according to their Principles, which make the Deity the total Cause of all Action, they are bound to do) that God not only effects the Action of Hatred, but irresistibly governs and directs it, then it seems to be absolutely inconceivable how there should be any proper Concourse or Liberty of the Creature in that Action, or how God should not be the Author of the Evil, since he is affirmed to be the total Cause of the Action: Which indeed is what *Beza* himself owns to be inexplicable\*.

Nor can it be to better Purpose to seek Refuge in their usual Distinctions of *Necessity*; for if the Necessity resulting from the Decree and Influence of the Almighty be absolute and irresistible, 'tis, we conceive, but little Odds, whether it be call'd a Necessity of *Coaction* or of *Immutability*; only as the latter (though usually conceiv'd to be the lesser, yet) is in Reality the greater Necessity of the two; since it not only influences the Practice, but the very Will, whereas a Necessity of *Coaction* (as we lately observed) only constrains the Practice.

\* *In Libro advers. Castell. de Prædestinatione.*

And whereas in Justification of these Opinions 'tis pretended, that the ascribing a self-determining Power to a Creature would be to render it independent of the Creator, 'tis humbly conceiv'd we sufficiently secure the Dependence of rational Agents on the first and supreme Cause, if we assert that as they at first deriv'd their Power from Him, so they still owe to Him the Preservation of it, and are continually liable to his Interposition and Influence, according to his sovereign Pleasure.

Nor is such a Power of determining our Actions in any Respect inconsistent with the divine Sustainment. For Sustainment has a Reference only to the preserving our Beings and such Powers as we possess; and is very different from an universal immediate Concourse, which refers to the Excitation, Government, and Direction of those Powers in all our Actions. And as the Deity sustains our Beings without any Confusion of Substance, so he may very well be suppos'd to sustain such Powers as belong to our Beings, without having any Part in the Actions which proceed from them.

And certainly it appears to be much more for the Honour of the great Creator, to suppose that he has produc'd Creatures capable of determining their Actions, than that he has made mere Machines, incapable of effecting any thing without being first mov'd and acted themselves. As he who has contriv'd a Watch or a Clock, which by Means of the Spring and Wheels within itself points at the Hours, must be own'd to have given a greater Proof of his Skill, than he who has made a Cart or a Plough, which can do nothing unless dragg'd by a continual Application of external Force.

5. As the Opinion of an absolute Infinity has tempted some to assert God's *doing* all Things, so it has given Occasion to others to hold his *being* all Things.

'Tis sufficiently known to have been and still to be the Persuasion of many, that God is the *All or entire Universe*, and that particular Beings are but so many different Modifications of his Essence.

This was the Assertion of *Spinoza*, who by attempting to prove that Every Thing is God, has in Effect deny'd that there's any God at all.

That which first tempted him to undertake his pretended Demonstration of Atheism, appears to have been no other than the *Cartesian Principles*, *That Matter and Extension are the same*, and that *Matter is in its very Nature infinite*. For these being once admitted, he thought it not impossible, in the first Place, to persuade the World, that infinite Matter could not but belong to the divine or necessarily-existent Nature. For thus he affirms *Substantiam corpoream, quæ non nisi infinita concipi potest, nulla ratione Natura Divina indignam esse dici posse. i. e.* "That bodily (or material) Substance, which can no otherwise be conceiv'd than as infinite, can in no Respect be said to be unworthy the Divine Nature." His next Step was to prove that his pretended Deity was *the All*, or that it included not only Matter, but All Being in itself. Thus in his Explication of his Sixth Definition, says he, *Quod absolute infinitum est ad ejus Essentiam pertinet quicquid Essentiam exprimit et Negationem nullam involvit, i. e.* "That Being which is absolutely infinite comprehends in its own Essence whatever is positive or expressive of Essence.

And his Followers are us'd to argue to this Effect. An absolutely infinite Nature can't but include and properly and formally possess all Being, or must needs be the universal Substance, For wherever there is any Being or Substance which is no Part of it, there it must of Necessity be bounded, and consequently it can't, on that Supposition, be allow'd to be that absolutely infinite Nature which

we conclude to exist. There is then, say they, either no absolutely infinite Nature, or else it must formally include whatever is real and substantial.

This Method of Arguing will possibly be found more conclusive than some are willing to apprehend. And whoever undertakes to confute it, will have perhaps as much Difficulty to make appear how there can be another Being or Substance distinct from that which is supposed to be absolutely infinite (with an Infinity of *Fulness* as well as of *Immensity*, as Dr. *Clarke* and others express it) as how there can be another Matter distinct from an absolutely infinite Matter. For as 'tis undeniable that an absolutely infinite Matter (if existent) must be all Matter, so 'tis perhaps impossible to apprehend how an absolutely infinite Substance (if any such) should be any other than all Being, or a Being which formally includes all Reality, all Entity in itself. As a Being which is supposed to be strictly infinite with Respect to Extent only (such as Matter by some *Cartesians* is asserted to be) must necessarily be conceiv'd to exclude any other Extension of the same Sort, so it seems clear, that a Being which is both extensively and intensively infinite, or is strictly infinite in all Respects, (such as the Deity is usually asserted to be) must needs be allow'd (as containing in its own Essence not only every specific but every numerical Perfection or Reality) to exclude any other Being whatsoever.

And not only the *Spinosists*, but some of a very different Character, are wont to infer, that all Beings are Parts of the Deity from this very Principle of his absolute Infinity. Thus do many of the mystical Divines, and particularly *Benedictus Angelus* in his *Regula Perfectionis*, which had the Approbation of many of the Popish Doctors: Who describes his *super-eminent Life* as chiefly consisting in our believing that there's nothing distinct from God and living

accordingly. For he maintains that Nothing in the Universe is any otherwise distinguish'd from the Deity than as the Sun-beams are from the Sun; which yet are in Effect the same Thing. For, say those Men, God being absolutely infinite, there can, by Consequence, be no other Being but Himself: Since God and the minutest Being distinct from him would be more Entity than God alone. But Infinity in the absolute Sense admits not of more or less.

These, 'tis conceiv'd, are some of the ill Consequences of this Opinion of an *absolute Infinity* with reference to the Deity consider'd in Himself. We shall conclude with such as have a Reference more especially to us. These appear to have been,

1. Its discouraging Enquiries into his *Nature*.

2. Its raising Prejudices against his *Existence*.

1. It appears to have had this ill Effect, that it has in a very great Degree discourag'd Enquiries into the Nature and Perfections of God.

As God is the Object of Religion, so Religion can have no other solid Foundation but a rational Apprehension of the divine Nature. It must needs be a vain Thing to inform a Man of Reason that he ought to believe in an eternal, omnipresent and omnipotent Being, the Creator and Governor of all Things, unless he be first instructed in the Grounds of that Belief, and assur'd of the Consistence of those Ideas. To discourse of the Nature of Virtue and Vice, or the Punishments and Rewards of a future State, whatever Impression it may make on weak and timorous Spirits, will have none at all on manly and generous Minds, till they are first convinc'd, that there is indeed a Being, who by Right of Creation has an absolute Authority to govern and dispose of us, and who not only takes Notice of our Actions, but will render to every Man according to his Deeds. Without such a previous Conviction as this, the most artificial and pathological Discourse will seem Cant and Enthusiasm to such

Persons, and will prove in Effect but declaiming to the Winds.

Now it is an indisputable Principle, that if there be a most wise and beneficent Being, who created and governs the World, he either created such Beings as were capable of a competent Knowledge of Himself, or else he never design'd to suspend their Happiness on that Obedience, which, without such a competent Knowledge, was either not likely to be performed, or, if performed, could have nothing to recommend it to his Acceptance. For to believe and to practise without sufficient Conviction is no Virtue, but a Shame and Disparagement to any capable Being.

But if such a Knowledge of God be necessary, if it be attainable, 'tis an evident Consequence, that whatever Opinion renders his Idea impossible in itself, and by baffling the Enquiries of so many Ages, has proved the Occasion of so great Discouragement to further Attempts, can't be the genuine Conception of his Nature, but is equally groundless and pernicious.

This, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, has been the Case of the Opinion of an *absolute Infinity*. For from hence many have been apt to infer with *Philalethes* in Mr. *Guildon's Manual*, p. 51. *Supposing the Existence of a first Cause, of what Import would it be to us, unless we were better acquainted with his divine and infinite Nature than consists with a Being so finite as Man, which can never comprehend an Infinite? And if we can't comprehend his Nature, neither can we comprehend his Will, &c.*

This Reasoning can by no Means affect the true Notion of the divine Eternity (as some will possibly object.) For as the Existence of an eternal Being is one of the most evident Truths in Nature, so the Difficulties which it includes (tho' in some Respects above our Conception, yet) admit of an Hypothesis sufficient, it is conceiv'd, to yield Satisfaction to all  
sober

sober and ingenuous Minds. To make this appear will be the Design of the Third Part of this Book.

2. The Opinion of an *absolute Infinity* has been the great Occasion of Prejudice against the *Existence* of God. Though Men of Atheistick Principles have not always deny'd the Existence of an absolutely immense or infinite Being, but were, for ought with any Certainty appears, the very first Assertors of it; yet their suppos'd Infinity (which was no other than that of Matter and Space) was evidently of such a Nature as excluded those Consequences which have since been drawn from the Opinion of the divine absolute Infinity, and which have prov'd the Occasion of so much Scandal to People of that Character. But notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding what the *Spinofists* have since held, 'tis notorious that many others of the Clan have deny'd the Possibility of *a Being absolutely infinite in all Perfections*. For what Objection has been more frequent in the Mouths of Infidels and Libertines than this, that the Attributes of *infinite Power, Knowledge, &c.* as commonly ascribed to the Deity, signify no Idea or Conception of Men's Minds, but are only Expressions of their ignorant Admirations and Astonishment; and consequently, that the Deity is nothing else in Effect but a Complication of high sounding Words, without the least Signification or Reality?\*

For the Satisfaction of the Curious, I shan't think it a Trouble to transcribe *Vanini's* Description of God in his *Amphibeatrum Providentiæ Divinæ*; wherein he sums up all the aforementioned Consequences of the Opinion of absolute Infinity with Design, as it seems, to prejudice Men against the Existence of a divine Being. This *Vanini* is known to have dy'd a Martyr for the Cause of Atheism, being burnt at *Tbolouse*, and this his Description may well

\* See Dr. Cudw. *Intel. Syst.* p. 640, 641. and 652, 653.

be reputed as an Abstract of his Reasons for his Infidelity. Says he, *Deus est sui ipsius et Principium et Finis ; utriusque carens, neutrius egens, utriusque Patrens atque Autor. Semper est sine tempore, cui Præteritum non abit nec subit Futurum. Regnat ubique sine loco ; immobilis absque Statu ; Pernix sine Motu ; extra omnia omnis, intra omnia, sed non includitur in ipsis ; extra omnia, sed non ab ipsis excluditur. Bonus sine Qualitate, sine Quantitate magnus. Totus sine Partibus. Immutabilis cum cætera mutat. Cujus Velle Potentia, cui Opus Voluntas. Simplex est in quo nihil in Potentia, sed in Actu omnia ; imo Ipse purus, primus medius et ultimus Actus. Denique, est omnia, super omnia, extra omnia, intra omnia, præter omnia, ante omnia, et post omnia Omnis.* That is (to make it speak as good *English* as it will bear) “ God is both the Ori-  
 “ ginal and the End of his own Existence ; or want-  
 “ ing either without being indigent of either he is  
 “ (yet) the Cause and Author of both. He is al-  
 “ ways without Time, without any Vicissitude of  
 “ past and future. He reigns every where without  
 “ Place ; is immoveable without Station, swift  
 “ without Motion. He is whole without the Uni-  
 “ verse, and yet not excluded ; whole within it,  
 “ and yet not included. Good without Quality ;  
 “ great without Quantity ; whole without Parts ;  
 “ unchangeable, though Author of Change in o-  
 “ ther Beings. Whose Will is not only his Power  
 “ but his very Work. He is so simple, that in  
 “ him nothing is in a State of Possibility but eve-  
 “ ry Thing in Act ; being himself the only pure,  
 “ first, middle, and last Act. To conclude, He is  
 “ all Things, above all Things, without all Things,  
 “ within all Things, besides all Things, before all  
 “ Things, and after all Things.



## PART the Third.

## Of E T E R N I T Y.

FROM the first Philosophers recorded in History down to the Age of *Plato*, it appears that such as concern'd themselves with Speculations of this Nature, were us'd for the most Part, to conceive Eternity under the Notion of a *continued Succession*. This indeed was the most natural and obvious Conception, and the most agreeable to the Infancy of Philosophy. Those ruder Reasoners, considering that the Life of Man, consisted of a Series or Succession of Days, and Months, and Years, and was (as it were) measur'd out by the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, were easily induc'd to conceive the like of the eternal Being.

But when the Wits of Men began to be more refin'd and metaphysical, another Hypothesis soon became fashionable. For *Plato* and a few of his Predecessors, having adopted *Anaxagoras's* Notion of an absolute Infinity of the Divine Essence, thought themselves oblig'd, by Consequence, to assert an *unsuccessive or simultaneous Eternity*. For since the Opinion of the divine absolute Simplicity (which we have observ'd to be a Consequence of that Principle) requires that nothing be affirm'd to belong to the Deity but what is the Deity himself; they therefore conceiv'd it necessary (as we before observ'd) to assert the Identity of the Duration and Essence of the eternal Being. And inasmuch as they had concluded the Essence of God to be absolutely simple, they infer'd his Duration to be so too.

This Opinion of a simultaneous or unsuccessive Eternity, being conceiv'd to have so necessary a Connection with that of an absolute Infinity, has ever been an Attendant on it. Thus it has been

propagated from the Time of *Plato* through the Times of the *Schools* even till the Reformation; when some having rejected the Doctrine of an *absolute Infinity*, exchange'd this Notion of a simultaneous Eternity for the more ancient Opinion of a successive one.

'Tis between these two Opinions that the present Age is divided. But if we consider and judge impartially, perhaps neither will be found to be defensible. For,

1. As to the *unsuccessive* or *simultaneous* Eternity of *Plato*. What can be more extravagant and desperate than to assert, that the Duration of innumerable Ages is actually summ'd up and comprehended in a single indivisible Moment! That Eternity, which is more than equivalent to all the Periods and Vicissitudes of Time, is itself an Instant! That the Deity, who created the World near 6000 Years ago, is still pronouncing the Almighty *Fiat*; and that tho' all things yet remain as they were from the Beginning; he has actually kindled the universal Conflagration! And not only so, but that he destroy'd the World the very Moment wherein he created it, and yet both has been and still is eternally creating and destroying it!

'Tis, I confess, a Subject which has exhausted the Leisure and Subtlety of the *Schools* to explain the Nature of the imaginary simultaneous Duration of the eternal Being, and the Manner of its Co-existence with that of successive Beings. But how *subtile* and *profound* soever they may have been on this Point, I persuade my self their Attempt has been as fruitless as that of squaring the Circle: and the voluminous Labours of those great Masters of Quibbling and Sophistry have in the Issue been no less ridiculous than the Birth of the Mountains. But,

2. As for the other Notion, *viz.* that of a *successive Eternity*. Is that in any Degree more intelligible than the former Opinion? What Sense can

we possibly make of a Succession without Beginning? Can there have been a Second, or Fifth, or Tenth without a First? Besides, is it possible a really successive Duration should be actually infinite? Can that Number to which new Additions both are and will be made for ever, become at any Time so great as not to admit of Increase by those Additions? May we not as easily conceive an Infant gradually to arrive at old Age without passing through Childhood and Youth, as a Succession without Beginning? And may we not as well suppose an actually infinite growing Line, or a Cube or Triangle without Sides and Dimensions, as an actually infinite and yet ever increasing Succession or Number? For certainly to say that a Number of Ages actually past is strictly infinite, and therefore cannot be increas'd by the Addition of Millions of Ages to Eternity, is not only begging the Question with Regard to the Number suppos'd to be past, but 'tis flying in the very Face of Reason.

But if neither of the vulgar Methods be defensible, it follows that either we must be content still to speak Contradictions about it, or must look out for some better or more consistent *Hypothesis*.

To which End it may not be amiss to consider the Nature of *Duration* and *Time*. For having once got a true Notion of these, we shall thereby the more easily be instructed to form some Conception of Eternity.

Duration and Time are both of them Notions of our Minds resulting from the Consideration of the Existence of Beings with Reference either to a real or an imaginary Succession. Yet in this they are made to differ; that whereas Duration is usually (though perhaps erroneously) said to be a necessary Appendage of all Beings, Time is conceiv'd to agree to Creatures only, or Beings whose Existence is purely contingent. Time therefore in its usual Accep-

tation imports Contingence ; and may perhaps not unfitly be exprefs'd by *contingent Existence*.

This then being the proper Notion of *Time*, and *Time* being oppos'd to *Eternity*, it follows, that as *Time*, (or temporal *Existence*) is *contingent Existence*, (or that particular Sort of *Existence* which agrees to *Creatures*, as distinguish'd from that which is peculiar to the *Deity* ;) so eternal *Existence* or *Eternity* (however some may conceive it) is no otherwise to be consider'd than as *necessary Existence*, without any necessary *Priority* or *Posteriority*.

If we keep to this Notion of *Eternity*, as we shall have the most proper and genuine Conception of it, so we shall easily disengage ourselves from the *Plexities* which unavoidably spring from our conceiving it entirely under the Notion of *Duration*. For I believe whoever considers the Nature of the Idea of *Duration* (which is a Sort of imaginary *Space* in *Existence*) and how impossible it is in any *Case*, to separate it from the Ideas of *Succeſſion*, *Parts*, *Beginning*, *Priority* and *Posteriority* (as the *Schools* in vain attempted to do) will soon be sensible, that our conceiving *Eternity* under that Notion, has been the original of most of the *Difficulties* which usually pose and perplex our *Minds*. Let this one Quotation serve for a *Proof*. “ How any thing can have  
 “ existed eternally, *i e.* how an eternal (or infinite)  
 “ Duration can now be actually past, is a Thing  
 “ utterly as impossible for our narrow Understan-  
 “ dings to comprehend, as any thing that is not an  
 “ exprefs Contradiction can be imagin'd to be (says  
 “ *Dr. Clarke* in his *Demonst.* p. 10.) Yet (says he)  
 “ to deny the Truth of the Proposition, *That an e-*  
 “ *ternal or infinite Duration is now actually past*, would  
 “ be to assert something still far more unintelligible,  
 “ even a real and exprefs Contradiction, (*viz.* that  
 “ there is no eternal Being, (as I conceive his Mean-  
 “ ing to be : ”) Which imports that *Eternity* and a  
 real

real Succession and Duration were, in his Opinion, as inseparable as incomprehensible.

Yet notwithstanding this, 'tis humbly conceiv'd that the Idea of *necessary Existence* will, in a great Degree, prevent these incomprehensible Difficulties in our Conception of *Eternity*. For being us'd to think of the Deity as of a Being that necessarily is, as this will effectually distinguish him from all other Beings, so it will dispose us to receive Ideas of him very different from those of his Creatures. And since this Conception of *Eternity* neither admits the Idea of *Finite* nor *Infinite*, neither necessarily includes any real Succession, nor absolutely excludes it; 'twill perhaps not only prevent such Difficulties as were apt to arise in our Minds from the vulgar Idea, but will admit of a rational and satisfactory Hypothesis with Respect to the Thing itself.

It has already been observ'd, that the Methods which have hitherto been us'd in conceiving *Eternity*, either as entirely *successive* or *unsuccessive*, are attended with inextricable Difficulties. The former, because it supposes a continual Addition without either Beginning or Increase: The latter, because it supposes an *Instant* not only commensurate to all the Periods and Vicissitudes of Time, but even of such a Latitude as absolutely to exclude the Possibility of the least Addition. Let us therefore, in the next Place, consider whether any *Medium* can be discover'd between these two Extremes.

To which End we may recall to Mind two Principles already established in the former Book.

The first is, That the eternal Being is a perfectly free Agent.

The second is, That the Supposition of particular eternal Decrees is inconsistent with our Notion of the perfect Liberty or absolute Independence of the divine Actjon.

From

From these Principles, 'tis conceiv'd, it may not be unreasonable to conclude, that though the eternal Being had no necessary Succession in his Nature, yet being perfectly self-active and free, thence it proceeded that the Exercise of his Freedom in decreeing and producing the Creatures, in such Manner and Order as was judg'd fit by his most perfect Wisdom, became the Original of whatever real Succession has been in Nature: And that such Succession as we are apt to conceive to have preceded, is no other than imaginary.

Against which Account I can think of no Objection but what will admit of a satisfactory Solution. As,

1. If it be urg'd, That to suppose the Decrees and Production of the particular Creatures to have been the Original of Succession, and neither of them to have been eternal, is inconsistent with the Notion of an eternal intelligent Deity; inasmuch as we experience that Intelligence and Thought necessarily include Succession: I conceive it may be reply'd,

That the Reasons why Intelligence and Thought are join'd with Succession in ourselves, are not necessary but purely accidental; proceeding either from the Imperfection of our Nature, or from the Peculiarity of our State and Circumstances.

1. One Reason is, the Imperfection of our Nature. Our Minds are naturally in a Manner empty and unfurnish'd of Ideas. We are originally, in a great Degree, ignorant even of ourselves. So that in order to an Acquaintance with our own Natures we are oblig'd to proceed by Steps, and to make use of a Train or Succession of Ideas as we can acquire them. Whereas, on the contrary, we have already observ'd, that a perfect Self-consciousness is an essential Property of the eternal Being.

2. The Peculiarity of our Circumstances is another Cause of our successive Perception and Thought. We find ourselves beset on all Sides with a great Variety of Objects, which are continually making Impressions on our Senses. But these Impressions can't be distinctly attended to, view'd and compared, without a Succession of Ideas. But the Case of the eternal Being was widely different. For it is conceiv'd we have already prov'd it an injurious Supposition to imagin him to have had any other particular necessary Object of his Perception or Knowledge but himself.

From both these Considerations, 'tis, I take it, sufficiently clear, that the Deity might very well be a most intelligent Being, without any such Succession of Ideas as we experience in ourselves. For Perception or Intelligence does not necessarily include Succession; but if it be successive, 'tis only by Accident, and only to be suppos'd in the Cases we just now mentioned.

The essential Perception of the eternal Being is therefore, it seems, no otherwise to be conceiv'd, than as his complacential Consciousness of his own most perfect Nature, and as terminated on none but himself. For that it ever had the least Reference to any other particular Being, proceeded entirely from his free Determination, as was elsewhere observ'd.

'Tis to be confess'd, that the Idea of Succession so insinuates itself into our Idea of Existence, that we find it almost impossible to conceive the eternal Existence of the Deity any otherwise than as an eternal continued Series or Succession. But Imagination, as was elsewhere observ'd, ought not to be heard in Contradiction to the Verdict of Reason. And there needs but little Attention to discover the Original of this Notion of an eternal Succession: Which will appear to be no Reality, but to proceed from the same Error of Imagination that inclines

us to consider Extension as absolutely infinite. For since we immediately converse with almost nothing but what includes both Succession and Extension in its Idea, thence it happens that our Imaginations are so fill'd with these two Notions, that we find ourselves equally unable to conceive any End of the one, or Beginning of the other. Just as a Mole can conceive the Universe no otherwise than as a Heap of Earth; having no other Idea whereby to represent it.

2. Some will possibly object, that if there was *once* no real Succession in Nature, 'twill follow that the divine Existence was *then* at least (as 'tis usually said to be) *instantaneous*.

But to this it may be reply'd, That Existence is nothing as distinguish'd from the Being which exists. Consequently, there can no real Quantity belong to it as so distinguish'd. Therefore it cannot properly be denominatèd either finite or infinite, successive or instantaneous. For these are Attributes which have a Relation to Quantity, and can no more agree to Existence, which is but a modal Conception of Being, than they can to Necessity or Contingence, which are conceiv'd as Modes of Existence. To define necessary Existence by Infinity or the Negation of Limits, seems to be no less impertinent than to define Virtue by the Negation of Red or Blue. For Existence (which hath no Quantity and Dimensions) hath no more Analogy to Extension and Limits, than Virtue (which hath no Colour) hath to Red or Blue. And for the same Reason, 'tis no less improper to define it to be instantaneous; since even an Instant (as likewise an Atom) is conceiv'd as Quantity, though the minutest imaginable. But if it can't properly be denominatèd instantaneous, much less can it properly be term'd successive, or be suppos'd to include any real Succession;



cession ; since that would be more plainly to suppose it to be quantitative.

What has here been observ'd, (if I mistake not) sufficiently confutes such as from the Notion of Eternity, consider'd as an absolutely infinite Duration, are wont to infer the absolute Infinity of all the other divine Attributes.

3. *Lastly*, Some may yet object, that admitting the necessary Being not to have been eternally the Subject of any real Succession, 'twill follow that he could never have become so in Consistence with his Immutability.

To this I reply, That no sufficient Reason can be given, why such Change as is the Result of the Exercise of Liberty should be judg'd to be injurious to the Perfection of the divine Nature. On the contrary, 'tis evident, that to be absolutely incapable of such Change as is included in the free Determination of Action, is the greatest of Imperfections.

If it be said that the eternal Being is necessarily what he is, and consequently must be absolutely incapable of Change ; I freely grant it to be the indisputable Prerogative of that adorable Being to be absolutely incapable of Change with Reference to his *Nature* or *Essence* (which, I take it, is the only Unchangeableness or Necessity that is consistent with his Perfection) and thence I conclude, that he is necessarily or unchangeably a free Agent. But if Freedom, or an independent Power of Self-determination, be a necessary or essential Perfection of God, its Exercise can be no Imperfection. Either these or the like Considerations oblig'd some of the Schoolmen, and after them, *Clara*, in his fourth Problem, to conclude, that *Deus potest velle aliquid novum sine mutatione sui ; i. e.* The Deity may decree a new Thing without any Change injurious to the Perfection of his Nature.





T W O

# DISCOURSES

Concerning the

## Nature of SPACE

A N D

## DURATION.

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### I. *Of SPACE.*

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**A** Competent Knowledge of the Nature of *Space* and *Duration*, being of absolute Necessity to the more perfect understanding of what has been advanc'd concerning the Attributes of Immensity and Eternity ; I shall here subjoin what appears most reasonable to be said on both these Subjects.

Though I am satisfied that the Words *Space*, *Extension*, *Amplitude*, and *Expansion*, are nothing different, neither in their genuine Signification, nor in their original Use, and that whatever Distinction is wont to be assign'd is merely arbitrary : yet to avoid  
Con-

Confusion, I shall here, for the most Part, use the Word *Extension* with Reference to *Matter* or *Body*, and the other Terms shall be us'd to signify what I humbly conceive to be immaterial. For that there's a real Space or Expansion distinct from Matter may appear from what will be said.

*Distance* is a relative Idea of Space and Extension consider'd as a Line between two separate Points. For though the Ideas of Space and Extension can't be form'd without that of Distance, yet they are never call'd Distance, but with an immediate Reference to two such Points.

As the Idea of Distance is in Reality nothing different from those of Space and Extension, consider'd with Relation to two separate Points; so that of *Figure* is no other than either of these Ideas, consider'd with Reference to three or more Points, whether real or imaginary.

Hence it appears, that the Ideas of Space and Extension are absolute, but those of Distance and Figure are relative and modal.

As nothing is so easily conceiv'd as Space and Extension in the general, so nothing is so difficultly express'd: Which is a farther Evidence of the Absoluteness and Simplicity of their general Nature. For though such Notions as are compos'd of different Ideas (as are all Relations) will admit of a Description by Words, yet where there is no such Composition of Ideas, there can be no such Description; since different Words, being the Signs of different Ideas, can't jointly express a Notion void of all Difference or Variety.

That the general Notion in which Space and Extension agree, is of so simple and absolute a Nature, as to admit of no proper Description by Words, will evidently appear by considering the reputed Descriptions which are usually given: Which we shall find to be no better in effect, than if we should say *Space*

*is Space, Extension is Extension.* Thus if we either say they are Length, or Breadth, or Depth, or all these together, yet these are evidently but different Words for Space and Extension diversly consider'd. And supposing we knew not what Space and Extension were before, we might with as much Reason enquire what Length, or Breadth, or Depth are. Or if, as usual, we define Extension to be that which hath *Partes extra Partes*, or Parts beyond each other; yet since no Extension can consist of unextended Parts, 'tis in effect no more than to say, that *Extension consists of Extensions.* A Description that looks rather like Banter than Instruction.

There's scarce any thing in Nature, whose particular Contemplation is attended with greater Difficulties than those of Extension and Space. For here we have not only the proper Abstrusity of the Things themselves, but the Defects and Misreports of our Faculties to encounter; which, for the most Part, we find almost as difficult to discover and confess as to rectify.

If we impartially reflect, we shall, perhaps, observe three grand Prejudices by which we are apt to be perplex'd and misled in these Inquiries.

1. Since our external Sensories (and especially our Organs of Sight) every where receive the Idea of Extension, thence it proceeds that as we can set no Limits to it in our Imaginations, so we are strongly dispos'd to conclude, that it is absolutely infinite or unlimited in itself.

2. Because we immediately converse with Nothing but Matter or Bodies, thence it proceeds that we are apt to conclude there's no real Space or Expansion distinct from the Extension of Matter.

3. Consequently, since we can't but see great Reason to believe the Existence of somewhat that is immaterial, and therefore (as we are inclin'd to sup-

pose) unextended or without Dimensions, thence we are easily persuaded, that Extension or Expansion is merely accidental to Being in general, and that *Substance* is a more recluse and hidden Thing equally remote from our Senses and Conceptions.

The first of these Prejudices has, it is humbly conceiv'd, been sufficiently detected in *B. 2. Ch. 2.* I shall here only remark a few Things with Reference to the two last.

The Possibility and Reality of a Space specifically distinct from Matter, has been so fully demonstrated by Sir *Isaac Newton*, Mr. *Locke*, Dr. *Bentley*, and others of the first Rank for Learning, that it may seem wholly superfluous to say any thing in so clear a Case. But that I may not be suspected to suppose any Principle without sufficient Proof, something shall be added on that Head.

1. As to the *Possibility*. That a Space or Expansion distinct from Matter or Body must be reputed possible, is clear from the very Notion of *Matter*; which is not simple, but comprehends several Ideas, such as Expansion, Mobility, and Divisibility. Between these (though all necessary to the Notion of Matter, and especially the first, which may be reputed the Foundation of all its Properties) there appears to be no absolutely necessary Connection in Nature: But an Expansion may, for ought we know, exist without either Mobility or real Divisibility. If then we can see no Repugnance in the Notion of an immoveable and indivisible Expansion, it follows that an immaterial Expansion, or Space void of Bodies, must be allow'd (at least as far as we are capable of judging) to be a Possibility.

2. As to the *Reality* or actual Existence of an immaterial Expansion or Space. This, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, is most clear with Reference to the Spaces between the Heavenly Bodies. That those wide Spaces contain but a very inconsiderable Portion

tion of Matter (and that without any Vortical Motion, as *Des Cartes* dreamt) may be concluded from the free Passage which they give to the Tails of Comets; though these move in Planes at all imaginable Angles of Inclination with one another, and with that of the Ecliptick, and are compos'd of Vapours so thin and diffipable as to admit the Rays of the fixed Stars quite through their entire Column, though usually (as hath been calculated) of above 400,000 Miles Diameter.

And that even the grossest and firmest Bodies of our Earth (such as Steel and Adamant) have their Vacuities or Spaces void of Matter, may be concluded from the following Reflections.

That such Bodies have their Pores is undeniable. Now, these Pores must be either entirely void of Matter, or else furnish'd with some such subtile Matter, as the *Cartesians* suppose. But admitting such a subtile Matter, admitting too that it has no Pores of its own, and is by Consequence most nicely qualified to fill up the Pores of the grosser Bodies, yet it may be enquir'd, whence it is that it is more subtile than the Steel or Adamant which is suppos'd to contain it, seeing its Particles are much more closely compacted and wedg'd together? If it be said that its Subtility is the Result of the Motion of its Particles; how is such a Motion possible, when the Particles are suppos'd to be so compacted and contiguous, that there's not the least Interval into which the Particles situate in the Extremities may retreat? If it be reply'd, that these Particles are not confin'd or pent in by the Superficies of the Steel or Adamant, but have a Communication by Motion with others of the same Kind situate without; yet this is only to shift the Scene, not to remove the Difficulty; since the World is by them conceiv'd to be infinite, and to be every where alike full of Matter. If they have Recourse to their last Refuge;

and with *Des Cartes*, inform us that this Motion of the subtile Matter is circular, each Particle succeeding in the other's Place so closely, that not the least *Hiatus* or Vacuity can intervene; this seems to be the most extravagant Supposition in the World. For how can a Body moving in a streight Line determine another Body to move in a Circle? Besides, whatever Figure they please to give to those subtile Particles, (except they suppose them to be angular, which yet would be a very unfit Figure in such a circular Motion) they must suppose some other Particles of different Figures to fill up the Spaces between them. But this will put them upon a yet greater Difficulty, *viz.* to conceive how any particular Round or Wheel of Particles should so swiftly drag those others of a different Make without rubbing against the neighbouring Wheels, and moving the whole Mass of Matter at once: Which Inconvenience, if not well provided against, would expose the whole material Universe to the utmost Confusion upon the Motion of the most inconsiderable Gnat or Fly.

A further Proof of the actual Existence of a Space void of Matter, may be deriv'd from the Nature of *Gravitation*. If there be no Portion of Matter either absolutely light or less heavy in its own Nature, (as the *Aristotelians* and others have, without sufficient Reason suppos'd) but every Particle gravitates in a just Proportion to its real Bulk (as is now generally agreed;) then it follows that every greater Portion of Matter must gravitate in a just Proportion to the Number and Size of the Particles which compose it. From which Principles it is manifest, that no sufficient Reason can be given, why any two Bodies of equal Superficies should gravitate differently (or be of different Weight) but only this, *viz.* that the one has either more or greater Pores, and contains less Matter than the other.

But



But if the grosser and more compact Bodies have their Pores or Intervals which contain nothing material, how much greater Intervals must we suppose in the Water and the Atmosphere which surrounds our Earth?

Yet that these Intervals (though they contain nothing that is material) are not absolutely empty, is manifest. For it has all the Evidence of a First Principle, that a mere Nothing can't be the Foundation of Distance, or that two Bodies between which there's no real Space or Expansion, must of Necessity coalesce and unite.

And that this Expansion, which is so necessary to be suppos'd as the Foundation of the Distance between the Parts of Matter, is not only something, but a very great Reality, is no less certain. For it is Expansion which we are assured is the greatest Reality that belongs to the Nature of Matter, as being the Foundation of all its Properties. And it is that which (under the Name of *Extension*) is by some Philosophers asserted to be the very Essence of Matter. And certainly there's no sufficient Reason to imagine that the Expansion (or Extension) of Matter, which is cloath'd with those imperfect Properties of *Divisibility*, *Mobility*, &c. should be either a greater, or even so great a Reality as that immaterial Expansion, which without those Imperfections pervades and contains it.

For that the immaterial Expansion not only replenishes the Pores or Intervals, but even penetrates and pervades the Parts of Matter, appears from hence, that it gives no Hindrance to the Motion of Matter, and is neither increas'd nor diminish'd by its Access or Recess: Than which there can be no surer Proofs of a Penetration.

This Hypothesis of an immaterial Expansion, which pervades and replenishes the material Universe, as it is the most natural, so it is the most an-

cient Method of Philosophy. For it appears to have been the Opinion of the ancient *Egyptians* and others, and to have prevailed among the Learned long before *Democritus* and *Epicurus* debauch'd it to serve the Ends of Atheism: To which it is so far from being really subservient, that by so firmly establishing two different Sorts of Extension or Expansion, (or *two distinct Substances*) it appears to be the best suited to destroy the most fashionable Hypothesis of Atheism (I mean that of *Spinoza*) which is built on the Principles of an absolute material *Plenum* and *one Substance*.

But some will here enquire, What is this immaterial Expansion, or what Rank does it hold among the other Beings of the Universe? As to this there are two Opinions.

1. Some are inclin'd to think it a peculiar Sort of Being (distinct both from *Matter* and *Spirit*.) This was the Opinion of the *Epicureans*, and has since been adopted by several great Men of the present Age. But, with Submission, this Opinion seems justly chargeable with the Fault of multiplying Beings without Necessity. And though it was consistent enough with the Principles of an *Epicurean*, who in effect deny'd a Deity, yet it less suits the Faith of a *Christian*, who believes in *an eternal omnipresent Spirit, in whom we all live and move, and have our Being*. Therefore,

2. They seem to speak both more like Philosophers and Christians, as well as more agreeably to the Sense of the Ancients, who think it the peculiar Prerogative of the Deity to pervade and comprehend, as well as to sustain the Universe. For that the Deity sustains the entire System of Things, and sustains it no otherwise than as present to its several Parts, is agreed by all sober Reasoners. His Omnipresence and universal Penetration are indisputably certain

certain both from Scripture and Reason. The only Controversy is concerning the Manner of it.

Now, since in all Cases wherein the Learned differ; 'tis not to be expected that either of the Sides should want its Difficulties; 'tis the Part of a prudent Person to incline to that Side, which upon an impartial Estimate shall appear to have the least and fewest. 'Tis evident there can be but two Methods in the general, of explaining the Manner of the Divine Omnipresence and Penetration of Matter, *viz.* either as with or without Amplitude or Dimensions. The insuperable Difficulties which attend the latter Method have been already detected. It remains that we here proceed to consider what may with any Plausibility be objected against the former.

And shall we say, in Opposition to this, that a Penetration of one Dimension by another is impossible? But it has been already proved to Be, and therefore not to be impossible. Nor can this, I persuade my self, be surprizing to any Man who shall consider the vast Disparity between a Penetration of Matter by Matter, and the Penetration of Matter by a Being that is immaterial.

One Reason of the Absurdity and Impossibility of a Penetration of Matter by Matter is plainly this. Two equal Portions of Matter, being of the same specific Nature, have no other Distinction but such as proceeds from their separate Existence joyn'd with the various Figures and Contexture of their Parts. Could we therefore suppose either so to penetrate the other, as that they should co-exist in the same Space, with the same Figure and Texture of Parts, 'tis clear, that on this Supposition, they could no longer retain their Distinction, but must become numerically as well as specifically the same. Consequently, to suppose a Penetration and Co-existence of two Bodies or Portions of Matter, would be no less absurd than to suppose two Beings still

retaining their individual Distinction to become numerically one ; than which, I confess, nothing can be more extravagant. But in the Supposition of a Penetration of Matter by a Nature specifically different, the Case is quite otherwise. For when Natures are so opposite as to be absolutely incapable of a proper Coalition, the most intimate Penetration can't abate the Distinction, nor hinder their retaining their respective Properties and Dimensions. And certainly, was it possible for two Bodies to penetrate so as not to coalesce or cease to be distinct, whoever should measure their common Superficies, would as really measure two equal Bulks, as he would have done had he measur'd each of them singly or apart. For from their being both measurable at once, we could no more infer that their Extension was numerically the same, than we can conclude two equal separate Bodies to have the same individual Dimensions because successively measurable by the same Instrument.

In Consistence with this, 'tis observable, that the first Philosophers, who so much insisted on the Impossibility of a Penetration of Dimensions, *viz.* the *Atomists*, meant no more by it, than that one Atom or Particle of Matter could not penetrate another. (A Supposition without which they could never have form'd their Worlds.) For though they defin'd Matter to be *διὰ τὸ ἀντιπυρρον*, or a *Thing impenetrably extended*, yet nothing is more certain than that they still suppos'd a Penetration of their Atoms by the *void* or immaterial Expansion which they (as likewise the *Pythagoreans*) suppos'd to be a real Being, though intangible.

A second Reason of the Impossibility of the Penetration of one Body by another is the Equality of their Natures. Every Particle of Matter has an equal Reality, and none has any essential Pre-eminence above another. But the Case is quite different,

rent, (if we may be allowed to make a Comparison) between Matter and the eternal immaterial Being. The latter, as being self-existent, possesses the utmost Reality ; but the former is absolutely contingent, and in Effect, but a Heap of Dusts at one Remove from Nothing. And must we yet make the one the Standard of our Conceptions with Respect to the other ? Because we perceive a Penetration of Beings by others whose Natures are equal to be absurd and impossible, must we presently conclude it is impossible that the eternal Nature, which possesses the highest Perfection of Being, should pervade a Being so imperfect as Matter, a Being which possesses so inconsiderable a Share of Reality ? Must we needs imagin That which so lately was Nothing, to be on a sudden become such a mighty Something, as to exclude even the Substance of its Maker ; in Comparison of whom we may be assur'd, that whatever we are apt to imagine to be the most solid and impenetrable, is little more than a Shadow !

Thus if we form but a true Notion of Matter, as a created dependent Being, those mighty Difficulties will easily vanish. And, on the contrary, it will appear, that the immaterial Expansion which our weak and vitiated Minds are so apt to regard as a mere Nothing, is the chief and original Reality, and in effect, the only firm and durable Being.

But it may be further objected, that Cogitation and Expansion are inconsistent. This is an Objection, which no Doubt, will seem of Weight to some People. But what Proof have these Objectors produc'd of this confident Assertion ?

*First*, say they, the Idea of Expansion or Extension does not include that of Cogitation, nor the Idea of Cogitation that of Extension. This, I confess, is true, and from thence I conclude them to be distinct. But what Rule of arguing will allow us

to infer an absolute Inconsistence from a bare Distinction? Though we should grant that we cannot conceive how an extended Being can be capable of Thought, yet since (even at the first View) it seems so plain that all Beings must be in some Sort extended, does it not seem far more rational to conclude from thence, that Cogitation (or Thought) is consistent with Extension in its Subject, than from our Inability to conceive how it can be thus consistent to infer that it is absolutely inconsistent? This we ought the rather to do, because Bodies themselves have unextended Properties, such as Solidity, Mobility, &c. which cannot be measured any more than Thought.

Again, a cogitative or thinking Being, say they, must needs be one and indivisible. For if compounded, as Bodies are, nothing in the Compound could be said singly to perceive any whole Object, but one Part of it would perceive One, and Another another Part of the Object: Which they imagine to be inconsistent with the Nature of a Thinking Being. Yet whatever Force this Arguing may have to prove *Body* or *Matter* to be incapable of Thought, 'tis clear, it proves nothing against the Possibility of a thinking Being which is *immaterial*, since it consists not of any proper divisible Parts, but is uncompounded and naturally indivisible. In the Case of such a Being, why may not Cogitation be conceiv'd to be as individual an Action, as the Re-action of Matter (which Mr. *Hobbes* conceives to be nothing different from it) is allow'd to be?

But it seems, there's a Method of demonstrating all immaterial Beings to be nothing else but *pure Cogitation* or *Thinking*, and by Consequence, to be void of all Extension. For because the first thing that a *Cartesian*, after his universal Doubting, perceives in his own Mind, is Cogitation or Thought, thence he concludes

concludes that his Mind, and (whatever else is immaterial) can be no other than pure Thought.

But though the Idea of Cogitation or Thought should be own'd to be our first Idea of an immaterial Being, would it therefore follow that it is the only one? This would be in effect to assert, that our first Notions of Things are always perfect, and that because we usually at first discover but one Property of an Object, we ought to rest satisfied, and spare ourselves the Pains of attempting any further Discovery.

But omitting the Weakness of the Proofs, let us consider the Thing itself. What Sense can we possibly make of a Being that's nothing but pure Thinking? Can there be an Act without a Subject, without an Agent? Can there be an Act which is the Act of Nothing?

I know very well that the *New Cartesians*, to evade this Objection, use sometimes to call such a Being *substantial Thinking*, or a general Thinking indifferent to any particular Thought; and they tell us, that the Will is the Cause of particular Thoughts, by determining the general Thinking to particular Objects: Which supposes a general indeterminate Cogitation or Thinking to be, as it were, the Subject of particular Thoughts. But how there can be such a general Thinking, rather than a general Motion without any particular Direction, may deserve some Consideration.

I confess, this *Cartesian* Account of the Subject of Cogitation is so far from satisfying my self, that I'm the more strongly confirm'd by it in the Opinion, that Cogitation can't be without some Sort of Extension or Expansion as its immediate Subject. Besides, having no other Notion of Cogitation than as by Ideas, it appears to me impossible that any Being should receive Ideas (or Images) of extended Things, in Case its own Nature admits of nothing like

like Extension. This Method of Arguing, *Malebranch*, (speaking of the *human Mind*) thought to carry so much Weight with it, that it obliged him to have Recourse to his wonderful Hypothesis of our *seeing all Things in God*. For, says he in his *Search*, Vol. I. B. 3. *It is impossible we should be able, by ourselves, to perceive material Things, because they being extended, and our Souls not, there's no Proportion between them*. And thence he concludes, that since we do perceive them, we perceive them no otherwise than by the divine Ideas. But whether this Argument will not extend farther, and prove as well the Impossibility of the Perception of extended Objects by any other Being, which, like our Minds, is suppos'd to be void of all Extension or Expansion, may likewise deserve some Consideration.

If we may credit *Aristotle*, it was a Maxim of *Plato* and others, that *Like is known by Like*; which imports, that a Subject absolutely void of Extension, can have no Ideas of extended Things.

There's yet another more vulgar Maxim, which will furnish us with a second Argument to the present Purpose; and that is, *Nil dat quod in se non habet*, or, Nothing can bestow what it hath not in it self. For though we can't reasonably infer from hence, that the Creator of the material Universe is himself Matter (because the Imperfection of Matter has been shewn to be inconsistent with the Perfection of the eternal Being;) yet we may, 'tis humbly conceiv'd, very fairly conclude, that since he has created the material Expansion, therefore his Nature does not absolutely exclude such Amplitude or Expansion as is free from the mentioned Imperfections of Matter. Just as we infer his *Wisdom* or *Goodness* from the like Properties of his Creatures. Besides, whatever Property is free from Imperfection, cannot but be a Perfection. Consequently, the eternal Being could neither be in all Respects perfect without



out it ; nor can he be suppos'd to have bestow'd that Perfection on others which he wanted Himself.

But whether these Reasonings be conclusive or not (which yet I perswade myself none will ever be able to disprove) 'tis enough for our present Purpose, that Cogitation and Expansion can't (as was before observ'd) be prov'd inconsistent : Which Reflection secures (at least as far as we can determine) the Possibility of *cogitative expanded Beings*.

And in this we have the Concurrence of the most judicious Mr. *Locke*, who in his *Essay of Human Understanding*, makes no Difficulty of affirming, *That we can have no Assurance of the Inconsistence of Expansion and Thought.*

*Lastly*, Some will perhaps object, that it is by no Means safe to attribute any Sort of Expansion to the Deity, because it seems necessarily to imply Parts and Divisibility ; which would be inconsistent with his Perfection.

But this is no real Difficulty. For since by *Parts* is here meant what may be parted or divided, (which indeed is the only Notion of Parts that can with Reason be pretended to be inconsistent with Perfection) 'tis certain there can be no such Parts in the original Expansion which has been prov'd to pervade and contain the created Universe ; it being most perfectly indivisible. For seeing there can be no real Division or Separation without Distance, nor Distance without Space, 'tis clear, that where there is no Space independent on that Space or Expansion of whose Divisibility we are discoursing, capable of being the Foundation of Distance between the Parts which might result from the Division, there can be no real Division neither. But 'tis evident, that to suppose a real Division of the original Expansion which pervades and sustains all other Beings, is to suppose Distance without Space, (or which is in effect

270 *Two Discourses concerning the*  
fect the same) Space without Space: Than which  
there can be nothing more absurd.

Though from what has been observ'd it may justly  
be concluded, that the Existence of an Expansion  
distinct from Matter, and the Reality of a Penetra-  
tion of Matter by that immaterial Expansion are  
abundantly clear from Reason; yet that these Affers-  
ions may yet more fully appear to be neither novel  
nor dangerous, I shall add some Testimonies both  
ancient and modern.

To this Purpose, that Sentence of *Pythagoras*,  
Father of the *Italick* Sect of Philosophers, as recor-  
ded by *Cicero*, is very remarkable, which (accor-  
ding to the Doctrine of the ancient *Egyptians*) af-  
serts, *Deum esse Animum per Naturam Rerum omni-  
um intentum et commeanem, i. e.* That God is a *Mind*  
inwardly co-expanded with and pervading the Na-  
ture of all Things. And it has been usual with  
the *Rabins* to give to the Deity the Denomination  
of *Place*, to signify that he pervades and compre-  
hends the Universe.

As for the Moderns; the Opinion of Dr. *H. More*,  
*Derodon*, and others of their Time, is well  
known. And for later Writers, the learned Dr.  
*Cudworth*, p. 14. of the Preface to his *Intellectual*  
*System*, hath these Words, "Whether the Divine  
" Substance be altogether unextended, or extended  
" otherwise than Bodies, we shall leave to every  
" Man's own Judgment to determine, without  
" dogmatically asserting any thing in a Case which  
" is no Article of Faith." And again. p. 833. of  
the *Intell. System*. he adds, "Whatever the Truth  
" of the Case be, it must be acknowledged, that  
" the Hypothesis of an extended (or expanded)  
" Deity, may be very useful and serviceable to  
" retain some in Theism who can by no Means ad-  
" mit of a Deity or any thing else unextended.

This,

This, it seems, was the Judgment of the learned Doctor. And I take it indeed to be the most effectual Method of dealing with Men of Atheistical Principles, who generally laugh at the Opinion of unextended Beings as the most absurd Notion in the World ; and who having rejected that, and by Consequence concluded, that whatever Is is extended, are wont to make but one Step more, by asserting with *Des Cartes*, that whatever is extended or expanded, is material ; and so they think they have gained their Point. Whereas by this Method of proving an Expansion essentially distinct from Matter, they may, 'tis hop'd, be led to see their Reasoning is inconclusive, and that though there should be no such thing as an *unextended Substance*, yet there certainly is an *immaterial Deity*, who is the Creator and Sustainer of Matter.

But it ought not to be forgotten, that the most judicious Mr. *Locke* gives no obscure Intimation of his Opinion in the present Case. Says he, p. 87. of his *Essay of Human Understanding*, “ Whether any  
“ one will take Space to be only a Relation resul-  
“ ting from the Existence of Things at a Distance,  
“ or whether they will think the Words of the most  
“ knowing King *Solomon*, *The Heaven and the Hea-*  
“ *ven of Heavens cannot contain thee* ; or those more  
“ emphatical ones of the inspir'd Philosopher St.  
“ *Paul*, *In Him we live, and move, and have our*  
“ *Being*, are to be understood in a literal Sense, I  
“ leave every one to consider : Only our Idea of  
“ Space is, I think, such as I have mention'd, and  
“ distinct from that of Body.” He likewise else-  
where expressly ascribes *boundless Expansion* to the Deity.

After the Testimonies of these great Men, I shall add but one more, and that is of the ingenious Dr. *Cheyne*, in his *Philosophical Principles of Natural Religion*, Chap. iv. p. 19. Says he, “ I don't here  
“ determine,

“ determine, whether infinite Extension may be  
 “ the Immensity of the first great Being, though  
 “ perhaps there may be abundance of Reason to  
 “ lead one to think so.

Upon the whole, I conceive it will sufficiently appear, that contrary to the third and last grand Prejudice, mention'd in the Beginning of this Discourse, Expansion, in the larger Sense of the Word, ought not to be reputed (as usual) to be merely accidental to Being in general, but that it is to be esteem'd to be Substance itself. For that must certainly be reputed the Substance of all Beings, without which no imaginable Properties can be conceiv'd to exist, and which may itself be conceiv'd or imagin'd to exist with the Absence of any particular Property whatever : Which is certainly the Case of Expansion.

Some \* indeed tell us, that we have no more Reason to suppose Extension or Expansion to be the Substance of Beings, than we have to suppose either Duration or Existence to be so. But as for Duration, this appears to be no more than a Notion of a certain external accidental Appendage of Beings. And Existence is likewise nothing but a Notion of our Minds derived from the Beings themselves. But the Case of Extension or Expansion is quite different.

Here I can't but take Notice of what I conceive to be a great Mistake of some very acute Writers, who frequently confound *Essence* with *Substance* ; whereas Essence is properly a Complication of several Attributes, whereby one Class of Beings is distinguished from all others : But what is meant by Substance appears to be a simple Thing, common to whatever exists. That *Extension* was the *Substance* of all *Bodies*, the *Cartesians* might have rightly

\* See Dr. Clarke's Demonst. p. 83.

enough concluded from its being the *Substratum* or Subject of all their known Properties. But by calling it, not the Substance, but the *Essence* of Matter, and thereby denying it to other Beings, (*viz.* to such as are immaterial) they not only confounded very different Notions, *viz.* those of Matter and Extension, but depriv'd us (as the Schoolmen had done before them) of all Possibility of attaining any Knowledge of *Substance*, according to their Principles. For if Extension (or Expansion) be not the *Substratum* to the Properties of all Beings, it seems absolutely impossible there should be any Notion of Substance at all. If Extension be an Attribute or Property, then, for ought I can perceive, Substance must be reputed a mere Chimera, and we must be so absurd as to allow Nothing to exist but Properties or Accidents, all subsisting by themselves, and each in the other. At least, 'tis vain for us ever to talk of *Substance*, since we can have no Idea of it but what is inconsistent in itself. For it seems not to have been without sufficient Reason that Mr. *Hobbes* and others have contended, that *Substance void of Extension* is a Contradiction in Terms. And on the contrary, had the same *Cartesians* concluded *Cogitation* in its different Notions to be the *Essence only of Spirits*, it might have partly been admitted, since 'tis that which chiefly distinguishes them from other Beings. But by affirming it to be the very *Substance* of Spirit, they involv'd themselves in inextricable Difficulties : As we have already seen.

Here it is obvious to every one to observe, that Mr. *Locke's* Story of the Elephant and Tortoise very well exposes those who will not allow Extension or Expansion to be *Substance*, but regard it as something peculiar to a certain Sett of Beings. For if any of those should be ask'd, what is the Subject in which Colour or Weight, or any other Property of Bodies inheres, he could have nothing to reply, but

that it is the extended Parts. And if it were further demanded, wherein Extension inheres, he would find himself sooner nonpluss'd than the *Indian* Philosopher, who, saying that the World was supported by a great Elephant, and being asked what the Elephant rested on, reply'd, 'twas a great Tortoise; but being again press'd to explain what gave Support to the broad-back'd Tortoise, said, 'twas Something he knew not what. From which Story the only natural Inference I conceive to be this; either that Extension must be allow'd to be *Substance*, or the Subject of Properties, or else that we must own an unfurmountable Ignorance.

## 2. Of D U R A T I O N.

**D**URATION seems to me to be no other than a Phantasm of Space or Expansion. We get the Notion by reflecting on the Succession of Ideas in our Minds; which we are apt to conceive as a Chain drawn out in Length, of which the particular Ideas are consider'd as the Links. For since we find the Idea of local Motion to be always connected with that of Space, thence we come to fancy a Sort of Space or Expansion in our Existence and in that of other Beings, to which the Succession of our Ideas (being conceiv'd as a continu'd Motion) is imagin'd to be commensurate.

To this Phantasm of Space we have given the Name of *Duration*. Whereas, had we but one invariable Perception without any such Succession of Ideas in our Minds, we could have no such Notion as this of Duration, but that of pure Existence only. For we find that when the Train or Succession of our Ideas is interrupted, (as sometimes happens in our Sleep) our Notion of Duration ceases, and up-

on our waking we are insensible of any thing like Space that interven'd.

Though Succession includes a real Quantity which is absolute or independent on our Imaginations, yet Existence (as was observ'd in the Chapter of *Eternity*) includes no Quantity but what is purely imaginary. Whatever Quantity we therefore attribute to Duration, agrees to it not as it signifies Existence, but merely as it connotes some real Succession. Thus, if we say there was a real Distance between the First and the Tenth Olympiads, this is for no other Reason true, than because there was a real continued Succession between those two Periods.

So well, it seems, had *Aristotle* comprehended the Nature of Duration, (though he gave it the Name of *Time*) when he defin'd it to be *the Measure of Motion*. Which implies, that if there had never been any Motion (or Succession at least) there could, in his Opinion, have been no proper Duration. And therefore, if he suppos'd Duration to have been eternal, 'twas only on Account of his suppos'd eternal Motion.

It must yet be confess'd, that we can no more avoid conceiving Eternity (or the divine Existence) even before any real Succession began, under the Notion of a continu'd Succession, than we can avoid conceiving a Space even beyond the utmost Limits of the Universe. But this (as we elsewhere observ'd) must, in both Cases, be resolv'd into the Peculiarity of our Nature and Circumstances.

We can have no Idea of an unsuccessive Duration, for, as was shewn, our Idea of Duration has a necessary Connection with Succession. There may indeed be a Nature which does not necessarily include any real Succession (as was observ'd in the Chapter of *Eternity*) but if we attribute a necessary Duration to such a Being, we lose the genuine Conception of Duration.

An eternal Duration is therefore as unintelligible as an eternal Succession was impossible. For if a necessary Succession be (as was prov'd) inconsistent with the Nature of Eternity, 'tis manifest that an eternal or necessary Duration is a Connection of Words whose Ideas are absolutely incompatible.

Consequently, as we before observ'd, the true Conception of Eternity can be no other than that of *necessary Existence*. For since Duration adds nothing to the Idea of Existence but only a Relation to Succession, it follows, that if in any Case we abstract Succession from any particular Being, (as we have seen Reason to do in a certain Case or State, with Reference to the eternal Being) our Idea of its Duration will, in that Case, be reduc'd to that of simple Existence: To which if we add Necessity, we have all that's contain'd in the proper Notion of Eternity.

*To conclude.* It must still be remember'd, that both the Eternity and Omnipresence of God are certain; and though we knew nothing of the Manner, they would be never the less so. But the natural Curiosity of Man, and his Unwillingness to believe any thing which he can't in some Measure account for, have render'd such Discourses as these necessary. And indeed the Scandal which the usual Accounts of those important Articles of Natural Religion have occasioned, will alone yield a sufficient Apology for any modest Attempt of this Nature.

## F I N I S.

### E R R A T A.

Page 178. Line 37. read *Work*. p. 195. l. 34. for *even* read *ever*. p. 199. l. 23. for *Eyes* read *Eye*. p. 209. l. 17. for *Prelate* read *Divine*. p. 244. l. 3. read *utriusque carens*.









