


## Critiquing Hume’s critique of a Theological Understanding of the Deity: The Role of his Contemporary Understanding of Science

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Article type:</b> Research Article</p> <p><b>Article history:</b>  <b>Received</b> 11 April 2023  <b>Received in revised from</b> 1 August 2023  <b>Accepted</b> 12 November 2023  <b>Published</b> online 28 January 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Creator, Critique of Deity’s Power, Hume</p>	<p>Few scholars would dispute the significant impact of David Hume on the development of the humanities during the Enlightenment. On the one hand, his commitment to the scientific approach was unwavering, while on the other, he adopted a rigorous critical stance toward the concept of the Deity and religious faith. Hume effectively utilized his scientific knowledge to enhance his critiques, a notable example of which is his examination of the Deity’s supposed absolute power. His arguments are well-supported within the scientific context of his time. This paper explores and discusses Hume’s critical perspective on the Deity as an active creator.</p>
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## Introduction

The enlightenment age was the climactic point of conflict and challenge between scientific knowledge and religious faith. The majority of thinkers during this time were involved in such conflicts one way or other; however, some are quite prominent among whom David Hume is identified. His critical approach is of multi-dimensional nature discussing all of which is beyond the scope of the present paper. In his works including, '*A Treaties of Human Nature, First Inquiry*' and '*An Abstract of Treaties of Human Nature*', Hume is indeed the most renowned of all critics of religion who sought to hire skeptical, and naturalistic premises to show that the Deity is not the absolute volitional power.

In general, the critique of the possibility of miracle, his explanation of the developmental stages of religions, and his rejection of teleological argument constitute the most highlighted critical perspectives offered by Hume. Of course, one of the crucial, but not equally well-known aspects of his view is criticizing the absolute power of the Deity. This paper aims at showing to the extent to which the critique of the Deity power was significant and how he made huge efforts. Also, the paper will draw upon the stock of scientific findings and in so doing has largely relied on the scientific understanding of his time.

### 1. 'Idea' of Causal Power

Humes discussion of the origin of causal power in humans is located in the same pattern within which most other arguments by him are found. The Hume's search for the impression from which our imagination of causal power results starts with a critique of several philosophers. Subsequently, Hume's alternative account of the origin of our idea of causal power is presented.

The first conviction which Hume examines concerning the effectives of causes is that of John Locke's '*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*'. In the first section of chapter 23 where he discusses the ways of reaching the idea, he claims that if based on experience, we find out that new and several events such as movement occur in matter and conclude that the power that made these movements must be located in a place, eventually through this line of argument the idea of power and impression are inferred

The mind being every day informed, by the senses, of the alteration of those simple ideas it observes in things without; and taking notice how one comes to an end, and ceases to be, and another begins to exist which was not before; reflecting also on what passes within itself, and observing a constant change of its ideas, sometimes by the impression of outward objects on the senses, and sometimes by the determination of its own choice; and concluding from

what it has so constantly observed to have been, that the like changes will for the future be made in the same things, by like agents, and by the like ways.<sup>1</sup>

Hume claims that this view of the origin of idea of causal power is the most common and general issue. In arguing against this, he reasons that if we observe the process of one billiard ball hitting another, all we can discover is merely contiguity, precedence and permanent union. Beyond this, we are unable to discover any quality or principle in objects within which power or force is embedded. This very failure to discover power or force in the identifiable quality of matter leads the philosophers to conclude that the ultimate power and impression in the nature are totally obscure.

The small success, which has been met with in all the attempts to fix this power, has at last obliged philosophers to conclude, that the ultimate force and efficacy of nature is perfectly unknown to us.<sup>2</sup> (Hume, 1938, p. 649).

Therefore, despite the fact that Locke's assumption is a natural and ordinary one, existence of power or force in the origin of matter and source of our idea is not causal. Because of this, philosophers have tried to look for an alternative hypothesis. Here is how Hume comments on Descartes and his followers:

Matter, say they, is in itself entirely unactive, and depriv'd of any power, by which it may produce, or continue, or communicate motion: But since these effects are evident to our senses, and since the power, that produces them, must be plac'd somewhere, it must lie in the Deity, or that divine being, who contains in his nature all excellency and perfection. 'Tis the deity, therefore, who is the prime mover of the universe, and who not only first created matter, and gave it it's original impulse, but likewise by a continu'd exertion of omnipotence, supports its existence, and successively bestows on it all those motions, and configurations, and qualities, with which it is endow'd<sup>3</sup>

Hume promptly rejects this hypothesis. He applies the Copy Principle<sup>4</sup> on his idea of power and impression, and by falsifying the intrinsic ideas. Therefore, Hume concludes that neither by reliance on Decartes' hypothesis (that is the one that all actions and functions of matter is

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<sup>1</sup> John, Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Translated by Kaveh Lajevardi. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Tehran: Markaz Publishing, 2020), 218.

<sup>2</sup> David, Hume, *An Abstract of a Treatise of Human Nature*. (Cambridge Cambridge University Press., 1938), 649.

<sup>3</sup> David, Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Book One. Translated by Jalal Pikan. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Tehran: Qoqnus Publications, 2016), 219.

<sup>4</sup> Copy Principle is the central principle in Hume's Philosophical view which suggests that all our solid ideas emanate from solid conjunctions.

achieved by the force of the existence of a supreme Being nor by drawing upon the Locke's hypothesis that matter encapsulates power which is beyond our perception can causality be understood. Hume rejects both hypotheses offer an extremely skeptical conclusion concerning our idea of causation, i.e. we lack such an idea.

Having published the first and second parts of the *Treatises* in 1739 Hume came up with the idea that it would be more appropriate to say such claims have lost validity due to wrong use rather than state that power and force make no sense. Hume's view is consequently the two words, i.e. power and force, have distinct meanings which can be discovered employing the right source of our idea of necessity. This scholar has already specified that our situation is like that of individuals who are searching for something which is hidden for them, and since it is invisible, they expect to find it in the physical conjunctions and all adjacent spaces. What we seek is a new and authentic idea that has no realizations, but rather grows out of the repetitions of examples. Recurring similar conjunctions do not lead to anything new in terms of new conjunctions nor in external objects. The only thing we can do is to divert our attention from physical conjunctions to perceptions. In other words, we need to discover the source of necessity or power in the observing mind, and not in the very existence of the physical conjunctions. As Hume puts it, this change or transfer based on mental habit is equivalent to power and necessity that eventually are qualities of cognition and not physical conjunctions. They are by means of unmediated intuition. perceived by the spirit not such that they can have celestial presence in objects.

Before we are reconcil'd to this doctrine, how often must we repeat to ourselves, that the simple view of any two objects or actions, however related, can never give us any idea of power, or of a connexion betwixt them: that this idea arises from the repetition of their union: that the repetition neither discovers nor causes anything in the objects, but has an influence only on the mind, by that customary transition it produces: that this customary transition is, therefore, the same with the power and necessity; which are consequently qualities of perceptions, not of objects, and are internally felt by the soul, and not perceiv'd externally in bodies?<sup>1</sup>

Hume concluded that as a whole necessity exists in the mind and not in physical conjunction. We are not even able to induce an idea distinct from necessity that is regarded a quality of objects. Consequently, the ultimate stance of Hume evidently is that we have merely an idea of necessity which is the very compelling of thought to transfer from cause into effect and vice versa albeit according to their unity. This conclusion (that is what interpreters call it Hume's causal subjectivity) eliminates causality and necessity from all physical conjunctions. At this

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 228

very time, any attempt on our part to account for causality and necessity is dismissed.

## 2. Refuting the Deity's Absolute Power

As mentioned above regarding Hume's stance on the origin of our idea of causal power, one can delineate, upon closer examination, that there are two distinct lines in his stance, His critical or skeptical view is:

when we talk of any being, whether of a superior or inferior nature, as endow'd with a power or force, proportion'd to any effect; when we speak of a necessary connexion betwixt objects, and suppose, that this connexion depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd; in all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, . . . <sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Hume refuses to accept this skeptical conclusion. By drawing our attention to the ties that unite our cognition under conditions that we saw the eternal bound of the conjunctions, he proceeds to identify our idea of necessity. On this basis, Hume concludes that our speaking of necessity makes sense to the extent that either it is in eternal unity or connection of similar conjunctions, or in inferring one of the conjunctions from another by means of mind:

I define necessity two ways, conformable to the two definitions of cause, of which it makes an essential part. I place it either in the constant union and conjunction of like objects, or in the inference of the mind from the one to the other. <sup>2</sup>

One would hardly be able to appreciate the theologically significant and destructive implications of these two sections of Hume on the origin of our ideas of causal power. The first negative outcome in section five of Book I in discussing claims about the immateriality of the soul is that we have to face the dilemma.

There seems only this dilemma left us in the present case; either to assert, that nothing can be the cause of another, but where the mind can perceive the connexion in its idea of the objects: Or to maintain, that all objects, which we find constantly conjoin'd, are upon that account to be regarded as causes and effects. <sup>3</sup>

Quite evidently, he believes that we must accept the second claim; however, Hume explains

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 189

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 214

<sup>3</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 132

the consequences of the first part of the dilemma as follows:

First, we in reality affirm, that there is no such thing in the universe as a cause or productive principle, not even the deity himself; since our idea of that supreme Being is deriv'd from particular impressions, none of which contain any efficacy, nor seem to have any connexion with any other existence. As to what may be said, that the connexion betwixt the idea of an infinitely powerful being, and that of any effect, which he wills, is necessary and unavoidable; I answer, that we have no idea of a being endow'd with any power, much less of one endow'd with infinite power.<sup>1</sup>

As the dilemma makes it clear, the result is evident. We must choose between the Hume's account of causality and necessity, that is from the perspective of permanent connection and the inference perceived by the mind and a causal skepticism expressing that nothing exists in universe in the position of a cause which includes the Deity. However, from a theological point of view, we face a choice between two unacceptable propositions. Either we lack an idea of an absolute power that belongs to the Deity and is exerted on his part, or we must interpret this supreme and absolute power of the creator in terms the causality as expressed by Hume, namely Regulatory Theory. Since it is assumed that the Deity's absolute power incorporates something beyond a mere regulation, the only outcome of Hume's contemplation is that talking of his power uncomprehensible and a distinct meaning.

Thus upon the whole we may infer, that when we talk of any being, whether of a superior or inferior nature, as endow'd with a power or force, proportion'd to any effect; when we speak of a necessary connexion betwixt objects, and suppose, that this connexion depends upon an efficacy or energy, with which any of these objects are endow'd; in all these expressions, so apply'd, we have really no distinct meaning, and make use only of common words, without any clear and determinate ideas.<sup>2</sup>

Amid such an argument, Hume evades all theist intention and in the appendix to treaties, he states that his views do not have any effect on religion and morality.

The same imperfection attends our ideas of the Deity; but this can have no effect either on religion or morals. The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind; that is, a mind whose will is constantly attended with the obedience of every creature and being. Nothing more is requisite to give a

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 132

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 228

foundation to all the articles of religion, nor is it necessary we shou'd form a distinct idea of the force and energy of the supreme Being.<sup>1</sup>

But is this conceptualization of absolute power by Hume equitable with his account of the innocence that he quotes? Probably no. This is because according to the principles of Hume himself if the Deity assumed the absolute power, his intention would need to be obeyed constantly, but we lack any proof to draw such an a priori conclusion that his willpower (of course as we imagine) is invariably obeyed. In fact, for developing an assumption of such an argument we have no more proof than the a priori one according to which the will power of any other creature has to be obeyed. Any proof or evidence we may have for such an inference must be founded on experience per se. However, the experience is too limited to support such an inference.

Some have asserted, that we feel an energy, or power, in our own mind; and that having in this manner acquir'd the idea of power, we transfer that quality to matter, where we are not able immediately to discover it. The motions of our body, and the thoughts and sentiments of our mind, (say they) obey the will; nor do we seek any farther to acquire a just notion of force or power. But to convince us how fallacious this reasoning is, we need only consider, that the will being here consider'd as a cause, has no more a discoverable connexion with its effects, than any material cause has with its proper effect. So far from perceiving the connexion betwixt an act of volition, and a motion of the body; 'tis allow'd that no effect is more inexplicable from the powers and essence of thought and matter. Nor is the empire of the will over our mind more intelligible. The effect is there distinguishable and separable from the cause, and cou'd not be foreseen without the experience of their constant conjunction. We have command over our mind to a certain degree, but beyond that lose all empire over it: And 'tis evidently impossible to fix any precise bounds to our authority, where we consult not experience. In short, the actions of the mind are, in this respect, the same with those of matter. We perceive only their constant conjunction; nor can we ever reason beyond it. No internal impression has an apparent energy, more than external objects have. Since, therefore, matter is confess'd by philosophers to operate by an unknown force, we shou'd in vain hope to attain an idea of force by consulting our own minds.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 322

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 321

One may reason that if we apply Locke's methodology to account for the origin of our idea of absolute or infinite power, we may be able to evade the dilemma. Locke suggests that our idea of absolute power grows out of our reflections on our willpower. When Hume in the appendix to *Treaties* returned to this matter, he was cautious enough to block the way back:

For as they confess, that this energy lies not in any of the known qualities of matter, the difficulty still remains concerning the origin of its idea.<sup>1</sup>

In the appendix to the section 7, Hume discusses Locke's argument that are able to obtain an idea of power by reflecting upon mental actions or willpower:

I believe the most general and most popular explication of this matter, is to say, that finding from experience, that there are several new productions in matter, such as the motions and variations of body, and concluding that there must somewhere be a power capable of producing them, we arrive at last by this reasoning at the idea of power and efficacy. But to be convinced that this explication is more popular than philosophical, we need but reflect on two very obvious principles. First, that reason alone can never give rise to any original idea, and secondly, that reason, as distinguished from experience, can never make us conclude, that a cause or productive quality is absolutely requisite to every beginning of existence.<sup>2</sup>

The inevitable consequence of this argument is that we cannot create an idea of an infinite power of the Deity drawing upon the initial creation based on our experience of mind and its willpower.

Now, let's turn to the second negative theological consequence of Hume's approach towards causal power. Hume's definition of causality distorts the Doctrine of the Creation<sup>3</sup>. From the Christian theological perspective, creation is a crucial causal occurrence. To explain this doctrine, Hume points out to his views associated with causality.

Anything may produce anything. Creation, annihilation, motion, reason, volition; all these may arise from one another, or from any other object we can imagine. Nor will this appear strange, if we compare two principles explain'd above, that the constant conjunction of objects determines their causation, and that properly speaking, no objects are contrary to each other, but existence and non-existence. 33 Where objects are not contrary, nothing hinders them from having that constant conjunction, on which the relation of

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 87

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 228

<sup>3</sup> This expression suggests creating without any prior or precedent pattern.

cause and effect totally depends<sup>1</sup>

Based on the interpretation of Hume, in an a priori manner, it is conceivable that the universe can simply and without any cause be originated from nothing. In addition, to the extent that we assume there is a prime cause, we cannot infer anything about the nature of this thing in an a priori way. In other words, we cannot infer that the cause of the Universe has to be an absolute power. Of course, since this thing is the cause of that thing, following Hume's interpretation the occurrence of creation must, like other causal occurrences, be understood based on our experience. However, Hume's specific interpretation of the nature of causal relation (contained in the 14<sup>th</sup> section of the third part of the first Treaties) shows that the interpretation of creation within the framework of such causal expressions is impossible.

We may learn from the foregoing doctrine, that all causes are of the same kind, and that in particular there is no foundation for that distinction, which we sometimes make betwixt efficient causes, and causes sine qua non; or betwixt efficient causes, and formal, and material, and exemplary, and final causes. For as our idea of efficiency is deriv'd from the constant conjunction of two objects, wherever this is observ'd, the cause is efficient; and where it is not, there can never be a cause of any kind. For the same reason we must reject the distinction betwixt cause and occasion, when suppos'd to signify any thing essentially different from each other. If constant conjunction be imply'd in what we call occasion, 'tis a real cause. If not, 'tis no relation at all, and cannot give rise to any argument or reasoning<sup>2</sup>

Hume in the initial paragraphs of section 15 (part 3 of the first book of Treaties) raises some rules by application of which we can determine when the conjunctions are connected as cause and effect. The first rule is that cause and effect must co-occur in space and time. The second rule is that the cause must have priority over the effect, and the third one is that there must be a constant unity between the cause and effect. Hume asserts that the constant unity is a quality upon which the causal relation depends most of all. However, such a unity must be understood in the light of the repetition of the precedence and co-occurrence of cause. This indicates that the third rule depends on the first two rules. Therefore, Hume maintains that cause effect relations depend on a framework situated in space and time. Following his regulation system our idea of space relies upon the pattern of visual and tactile conjunctions just as our idea of time that hinges upon the sequence of variable conjunctions. A conjunction that is discontinued, i.e., it is neither visual nor tactile, cannot be interconnected in space with a conjunction that is

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<sup>1</sup> David, Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Books Two and Three. Translated by Jalal Pikan. 1st ed. (Tehran: Qoqnus Publications, 2018), 236.

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 234

continued. Similarly, in absence of any sequence or variation in conjunctions we won't be able to develop an idea of time or an understanding of conjunction embedded in time. These views raise the question "how we can develop an idea of the Deity that has created the universe?" Since the Deity that is the prime cause of creation, has to be connected with the effects regarding some relationships such as space and time. Based on the theological view, the Deity is not only an immaterial creature, that is invisible and untactile, but is also invariable and indivisible. With this description of the Deity in mind, it is not obvious whether we can perceive the Deity as the cause or not. The reader's attention is drawn to the following points:

1. If God is neither invisible nor untactile, he cannot co-occur with any conjunction including the universe itself.
2. It is only through creation that we can start to develop a configuration of time, that is only when the universe of varying conjunctions will allow us to develop a configuration of time.
3. The second point leads us to the understanding that we are incapable of developing a configuration of any cause of any existing conjunctions in time since this requires making an idea which is independent of any idea of sequence, or variation in conjunctions. This is what Hume claims to be impossible.
4. Therefore, either it is impossible to develop an idea of creation as a causal phenomenon or we must ignore the assumption that the Deity is an indivisible and invariable creature.

Considering these points, the problem in Hume's account emerges. If we interpret a causal relation in terms of time and space (i.e. rules one and two) the question will be how our idea of temporal and spatial status is applied to the Deity. Following Hume, if the Deity as an immaterial creature is neither visible nor tangible, he cannot be located in any spatial or temporal relationship with any conjunction. If he is imagined as an indivisible and invariable creature, then assuming the absence of any sequence of conjunctions that are variable and created, it would be impossible to imagine him in any temporal relationships with any other entity. This means that we cannot account meaningfully for the Deity as a creature who takes precedence over the universe or the adjacent universe. From the perspective of human understanding, the act of creation or better to say the existence of the universe of varying and sequenced conjunctions is a precondition for understandability of any experience of cause-and-effect connection. Therefore, the universe of conjunctions that is constantly varying cannot be imagined as an effect that is in connection with some other causes (precedent or adjacent) because the existence of universe totally depends on the condition that we can imagine such types of causal relations.

Aside from this, Hume's laws pose at least one other hinderance in the way understanding theological doctrine. The eighth law of Hume is that the conjunction which exists completely and perfectly at a certain time without having an effect cannot be the exclusive cause of that

effect.

The eighth and last rule I shall take notice of is, that an object, which exists for any time in its full perfection without any effect, is not the sole cause of that effect, but requires to be assisted by some other principle, which may forward its influence and operation. For as like effects necessarily follow from like causes, and in a contiguous time and place, their separation for a moment shews, that these causes are not compleat ones.<sup>1</sup>

Now we can turn to the skeptical and negative connection between this doctrine and creation. From Hume's perspective, we cannot accept the opinion that the Deity is able to exist in a complete time without having created the universe unless another principle supports this existence. This leads us to the inference that the Deity cannot be the perfect cause since this run against the eighth rule will assume that creation will take place despite its cause (i.e. God) exists in its perfection exists to complete the cause without any aid from other rules. Closely associated with this point is that Hume denies any distinction between power and application of power:

'Tis evident the error of distinguishing power from its exercise proceeds not entirely from the scholastic doctrine of free-will, which, indeed, enters very little into common life, and has but small influence on our vulgar and popular ways of thinking. According to that doctrine, motives deprive us not of free-will, nor take away our power of performing or forbearing any action.<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence, Hume rejects any idea of the Deity or any other creature with the power to exercise or not to exercise. The outcome of this view is that the account of Hume not only challenges the status of God as the unique or perfect cause of the universe, but also questions the assumption that he creates the universe freely. This view of causality that is applied to acts and activities deprives the Deity of the metaphysical liberty in the sense of conformity and liberty of indifference<sup>3</sup> including creation.

### **3. The Contemporary Scholars' Attitude Towards Hume**

In his own time, the most important and critical approaches to Hume were adopted by religious philosophers. They viewed Hume's accounts of absolute power of deity as problematic for many religions; therefore, they tried to propose doctrines such as plastic natures and inactivity of matter so that they could preserve the classical omnipotence of the Deity. These approaches appear below:

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<sup>1</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 95

<sup>2</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 164

<sup>3</sup> Liberty of indifference involves rejection of necessity and causes. Therefore, liberty does not denote acting according to necessity.

### 3.1. Plastic Natures

Religious philosophers<sup>1</sup> believe that our idea of necessary connection or causal powers between theists and atheists brings about two serious issues. Firstly, the issue is whether we have an idea of the infinite power of the Deity. Secondly, how can we understand the absolute power of the Deity in association with the activities and actions that we see in this world? In other words, has the absolute power been employed exclusively in the creation of material world or the same absolute power directly and without any mediation controls act and functions of the matter? We can observe the significance of these two issues in what Ralph Cudworth's book entitled 'The True Intellectual System of the Universe'. As the most prominent and pioneering philosophical and theological figure in Cambridge Platonian school, Cudworth in the first parts of the book classifies the different types of atheism, specifying two main types, namely *atomical atheism* and *Hellenistic atheism*.

Both types of these atheistic systems seem to agree that the core essence of all things is body or matter; nevertheless, they diverge over the question of whether life is possible for matter or not. The former does not attribute life to matter, and believes that life and understanding in humans as well as in animals is merely accidental and corruptible which originates from some of their states. On the contrary, Hellenistic atheism claims that life and understanding naturally and unconsciously belong to matter. On this very basis, Cudworth, in order to reject atheism, proposes that first of all we must show that life and understanding can never emanate from an inanimate and insentient matter, and secondly, we have to demonstrate that neither life nor understanding is not necessary for the matter. But how? The answer is by resorting to the doctrine of plastic natures that conduct order and motion for it. They lack mysterious qualities whatsoever, rather they are a form of life energy or subjective causality in the universe that are distinguished from the Deity's unmediated performance. These are the natures that he employs to regularize the affairs of the world:

Artificial life in nature conducts the motions of the matter, and such artificial natures do not possess any mysterious features at all, but they are a form of vital energy or mental causality in the universe that are distinct from any unmediated act of the Deity. The Deity utilizes artificial natures as instruments for regulating the universe.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Religious philosophers are the philosophical thinkers that confront atheism and the related doctrines and propositions. During the eighteenth century, the key figures in this arena were Cudworth, and Clarke and the school of Newtonian theologians who had concentrated all their efforts on Hume's atheistic philosophy and its doctrines.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph, Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe: Wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism Is Confuted, and Its Impossibility Demonstrated*. Translated by J. Harrison. 3 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1845), 223.

Therefore, in terms of Cudworth's interpretation, the universe is argued to be managed materially and not mechanically and not involving the direct operation of the Deity. Rather, it is managed by immaterial powers which he has created to serve his volition.

### 3.2. Inactivity Doctrine of Matter

In the lines above, plastic natures were discussed which suggests that the material universe neither acts mechanically nor is managed by the Deity directly. However, what is left unsaid is who we have identified as the proponents of this view. Those who are well-educated in philosophy acknowledge that this view is one of the propositions proposed by Nicolas Malebranche. About a century before Cudworth, Malebranche was a French Oratorian Catholic priest and rationalist philosopher promoted occasionalism<sup>1</sup> according to which no created entity can be the sufficient causes of events. He believes that in the perceived material world, no actual power, force or cause exists. Also, he contends that not only are the objects are incapable of the existence of actual causes, but also even the human beings' volition is not able to move the smallest of objects in the world. This is because, he argues, no necessary connection joins our intention to move our arms and the real movement of our arms due to the mentioned incapability. Malebranche claims that the actual cause is the one which involves a necessary connection between the cause and effect by the mind and we tend to perceive that necessary connection about the volition of one creature infinitely and its effects. The conclusion he draws from such a claim is that the natural causes are not actual, but occasional which act under the influence of Deity's power.

The true cause is that mind perceives a necessary connection between it and an effect. We perceive any kind of necessary connection only in relation to a perfect and infinite creature's volition and its effects. The result is that the natural causes are not the same as true causes, but rather occasional ones that act under the force and the application of Deity's volition<sup>2</sup>.

If we assume that Malebranche's view is correct, we will discover the idea of power mostly in objects. This is an atheist premise which may push us to the point of rejecting the infinite power of the Deity. To confront this skeptical challenge, we may refer to an excerpt on existence and attributes of the Deity in a book entitled, '*Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God*' by Samuel Clarke. As a pioneering proponent of Newtonian physics, his words are so

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<sup>1</sup> Occasionalism is a philosophical theory about causality which suggests that matter and mind are not the true causes of occurrences. All occurrences are created by the Deity's supreme power. In this theory, the eternal sequentially of cause and effect is in a way that whenever cause occurs, effect is introduced and effect is created within the context of supreme power.

<sup>2</sup>Nicolas, Malebranche. *The Search After Truth*. Translated by T. M. Lennon and P. J. Olscamp. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980), 449- 450.

appealing:

All the affaires of the world are either conducted by the Deity himself or the immaterial agents that have been created as finite beings. It stands to reason that this very material is not capable of enforcing any law or applying any force. Only a negative power is expected to continue autonomously forever and by itself be it static or dynamic that is at the present time. All this amounts to the proposition that everything we usually associate with natural forces of material or rules of motion like gravity or similar phenomena are in fact the agents of the Deity. These agents constantly act at any moment with his volition or involving the mediation of some immaterial but finite causes and act on his behalf.<sup>1</sup>

It is along these very lines that Clarke claims the route of nature is actually and faculty nothing but the Deity's volitional power in creating certain effects in a constant, disciplined, ordered, and stable manner. Therefore, we can attribute the essential force to the matter claiming that actions and performances of matter must necessarily be interpreted in the light of the Deity's unmediated volition or finite immaterial agents that obtain their force from him.

It must be said that Clarke's views concerning vis inertiae of matter and also theological conclusions drawn by him constitute the foundations of '*An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul*' by Andrew Baxter as the most strong-minded representative of Newtonian Philosophy and dialectics. In the first section of his book, talking of the essential power in the matter embarks upon the reasoning that resistance against the change in the present state for the matter is essential and at the same time contradicts the dynamic and active force within it. In the following section, where he talks of the outcomes of the absence of active forces in the matter, claims that these outcomes are of great importance in both philosophy and in theology.

From what is stated earlier a principal can be inferred involving the existence of a powerful immaterial creature who has initially produced this lifeless matter. This latter creation has been influenced and continues to be influenced by the initial motion. The first thing that emerges in the creature's essence is discovered as it is, and its immateriality indicates that the powerful creator is in charge of its motion<sup>2</sup> (Baxter, 1990: 79-80).

Based on Baxter's reasoning we come up with a pair of claims: First, the matter is incapable

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel, Clarke, *The Works*. 4 vols. (London :Garland Publishing, 1978), 697.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew, Baxter, Andrew. *An Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul, Wherein the Immateriality of the Soul Is Evinced from the Principles of Reason and Philosophy*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. (London: Andrew Millar, 1990), 79-80.

of activity by itself and therefore activity is an essential power and a necessary attribute of matter. Second, all the influences which are attributed to some natural forces within the matter are created by an immaterial creature<sup>1</sup>.

### **Conclusion & Discussion**

Two main issues were discussed in the present article including: First, it was shown that David Hume in his critique of our ideas concerning the absolute power of the Deity was influenced by modern science. Second, many theological problems created by Hume's interpretation were raised, finally concluding that the Deity is not the absolute power. Of course, the explications have not ignored assessing the most important reactions under the influence of Newtonian physics against Hume's understanding of the Deity's absolute state of power. The results and points that were obtained in this study include the following:

1. Hume's discussion on the origin of our idea of causal necessity or power deeply and directly pertains to the claim that we possess an idea of the infinite power of Deity;
2. Two distinct sides of Hume's stance on the origin of our idea of causal necessity or power remarkably invalidates the doctrine of the absoluteness of Deity's power;
3. Hume drawing upon his premises of nature and origin of our idea of causal necessity or power challenges not only existence, activity or sublime nature, but also immateriality of the Deity;
4. More importantly, Hume's definitions of causality eliminate the distinction between immaterial beings and conjunctions;
5. Hume distorts the doctrine of creation by raising the origin of our idea of causal necessity or power; and finally
6. Hume offers not only a skeptical challenge for the theological doctrines of absolute power and creation but also an all-embracing naturism focusing on the causal connections governing matter and thought of course by means of leaving aside the view that spiritual factors are the only sources of true activity in the universe.

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Maclaurin was a follower of Issac Newton. In his work, Account of Newton's Discoveries rejects the proposition that activities and performances of the nature are managed by the Deity's unmediated volition.

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