

**Did Samuel Clarke really disavow action at a distance in his correspondence with Leibniz?  
Newton, Clarke, and Bentley on gravitation and action at a distance**

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In this paper I argue against John Henry's claim that Newton embraced unmediated action at a distance as an explanation of gravity. In particular, I take issue with his apparent suggestion that the fact, as he sees it, that two of Newton's prominent followers, namely, Richard Bentley and Samuel Clarke, embraced unmediated action at a distance as an explanation of gravity provides significant supporting evidence that Newton did as well. Instead, I argue that while Bentley did ultimately defend the notion of unmediated action at a distance as an explanation of gravity, Newton himself accepted that notion neither in his correspondence with Bentley, as Henry has maintained, nor in any of his later works. I also provide evidence that suggests that Newton did, in fact, accept both the principle of local causation and the passivity of matter. Finally, I argue that whatever the case may be with respect to Newton on the matter, it is clear from his correspondence with Leibniz, as well as from his Boyle lectures, that contrary to what Henry has maintained, Clarke was a stalwart opponent of unmediated action at a distance due to his strong commitment to both the principle of local causation and the passivity of matter.