

ON MATERIALISM

By Thomas Hobbes

From *Leviathan*, 4.46 (1651; found in v1: 147-148)

The world (I mean not the earth only ... but the universe, that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is corporeal, that is to say, body; and hath the dimensions of magnitude, namely, length, breadth, and depth: also every part of body is likewise body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the universe is body, and that which is not body is no part of the universe: and because the universe is all that which is, no part of it is nothing, and consequently nowhere. Nor does it follow from hence that spirits are nothing: for they have dimensions and are therefore really bodies; though that name in common speech be given to such bodies only as are visible or palpable; that is, that have some degree of opacity: but for spirits, they call them incorporeal, which is a name of more honour, and may therefore with more piety be attributed to God Himself ...

[O]f the essence of a man, which, they say, is his soul, they affirm it to be all of it in his little finger, and all of it in every other part, how small soever, of his body; and yet no more soul in the whole body than in any one of those parts. Can any man think that God is served with such absurdities? And yet all this is necessary to believe, to those that will believe the existence of an incorporeal soul, separated from the body.

And when they come to give account how an incorporeal substance can be capable of pain, and be tormented in the fire of hell or purgatory, they have nothing at all to answer, but that it cannot be known how fire can burn souls.

Again, whereas motion is change of place, and incorporeal substances are not capable of place, they are troubled to make it seem possible how a soul can go hence, without the body, to heaven, hell, or purgatory ...

From *Human Nature*, 2.7 (1650)

[U]pon every great agitation or concussion of the brain (as it happeneth from a stroke, especially if the stroke be upon the eye) whereby the optic nerve suffereth any great violence, there appeareth before the eyes a certain light, which light is nothing without, but an apparition only, all that is real being the concussion or motion of the parts of that nerve; from which experience we may conclude, that apparition of light is really nothing but motion within. If therefore from lucid bodies there

can be derived motion, so as to affect the optic nerve in such manner as is proper thereunto, there will follow an image of light somewhere in that line by which the motion was last derived to the eye; that is to say, in the object, if we look directly on it, and in the glass or water, when we look upon it in the line of reflection, which in effect is the third proposition; namely, that image and colour is but an apparition to us of that motion, agitation, or alteration which the object worketh in the brain or spirits, or some internal substance in the head.

From *An Answer to Bishop Bramhall* (1662)

The word substance in Greek ... [signifies] ... a ground, a base, any thing that has existence or subsistence in itself, anything that upholdeth that which else would fall, in which sense God is properly the hypostasis, base, and substance that upholdeth all the world, having subsistence not only in himself, but from himself; whereas other substances have their subsistence only in themselves, not from themselves. ...

Spirit is thin, fluid, transparent, invisible body. ... To his Lordship's question here: What I leave God to be? I answer, I leave him to be a most pure, simple, invisible spirit corporeal. By corporeal I mean a substance that has magnitude ...

From what I say of the universe, [Bramhall] infers, that I make God to be nothing: but infers it absurdly. He might indeed have inferred that I make him a corporeal, but yet a pure spirit. I mean by the universe, the aggregate of all things that have being in themselves; and so do all men else. And because God has a being, it follows that he is either the whole universe, or part of it.

From *Concerning Heresy* (1668)

The first principle of religion in all nations, is, *that God is*; that is to say, that God really is something, and not a mere fancy; but that which is really something, is considerable alone by itself, as being *somewhere*. In which sense a man is a thing real; for I can consider him to be, without considering any other thing to be besides him. And for the same reason, the earth, the air, the stars, heaven, and their parts, are all of them things real. And because whatsoever is real here, or there, or in any place, has dimensions, that is to say, magnitude; that which hath magnitude, whether it be visible or invisible, finite or infinite, is called by all the learned a *body*. It followeth, that all real things, in that they are *somewhere*, are corporeal.