

## Hobbes on materialism

*In these passages we see Hobbes arguing against the possibility of anything incorporeal. This means that spirits, angels, and God cannot be real unless they are bodies. He argues that whatever exists must exist somewhere and must have magnitude. As for the sophisticated idea that the human soul is wholly present in each part of the human body, and that God is wholly present in each part of the universe, Hobbes rejects it as absurd. The only way to exist is to exist as a body: i.e., with different parts present in different parts of space.*

[Excerpted from *Leviathan* (1651, 1668)]

### CHAPTER XXXIV *Of the Signification of SPIRIT, ANGEL, and INSPIRATION in the Books of Holy Scripture*

#### *Body and Spirit how taken in the Scripture.*

Seeing the foundation of all true ratiocination is the constant signification of words, which in the doctrine following dependeth not (as in natural science) on the will of the writer, nor (as in common conversation) on vulgar use, but on the sense they carry in the Scripture, it is necessary, before I proceed any further, to determine out of the Bible the meaning of such words as by their ambiguity may render what I am to infer upon them obscure or disputable. I will begin with the words BODY and SPIRIT, which in the language of the Schools are termed *substances*, *corporeal*, and *incorporeal*.

The word *body*, in the most general acceptation, signifieth that which filleth or occupieth some certain room or imagined place, and dependeth not on the imagination, but is a real part of that we call the *universe*. For the *universe*, being the aggregate of all bodies, there is no real part thereof that is not also *body*, nor anything properly a *body* that is not also part of (that aggregate of all *bodies*) the *universe*. The same also, because bodies are subject to change (that is to say, to variety of appearance to the sense of living creatures) is called *substance* (that is to say, *subject* to various accidents), as: sometimes to be moved, sometimes to stand still; and to seem to our senses sometimes hot, sometimes cold, sometimes of one colour, smell, taste, or sound, sometimes of another. And this diversity of seeming (produced by the diversity of the operation of bodies on the organs of our sense) we attribute to alterations of the bodies that operate and call them *accidents* of those bodies. And according to this acceptation of the word, *substance* and *body* signify the same thing; and therefore, *substance incorporeal* are words which, when they are joined together, destroy one another, as if a man should say an *incorporeal body*.

But in the sense of common people, not all the universe is called body, but only such parts thereof as they can discern by the sense of feeling to resist their force, or by the sense of their eyes to hinder them from a farther prospect. Therefore, in the common language of men, *air* and *aerial substances* use not to be taken for bodies, but (as often as men are sensible of their effects) are called *wind*, or *breath*, or (because the same are called in the Latin *spiritus*) *spirits* (as when they call that aerial substance which, in the body of any living creature, gives it life and motion *vital* and *animal spirits*). But for those idols of the brain

which represent bodies to us where they are not (as in a looking-glass, in a dream, or to a distempered brain waking), they are (as the apostle saith generally of all idols) nothing; nothing at all, I say, there where they seem to be; and in the brain itself, nothing but tumult, proceeding either from the action of the objects or from the disorderly agitation of the organs of our sense. And men that are otherwise employed than to search into their causes know not, of themselves, what to call them, and may therefore easily be persuaded by those whose knowledge they much reverence, some to call them *bodies*, and think them made of air compacted by a power supernatural (because the sight judges them corporeal), and some to call them *spirits* (because the sense of touch discerneth nothing, in the place where they appear, to resist their fingers). So that the proper signification of *spirit* in common speech, is either a subtle, fluid, and invisible body, or a ghost, or other idol or phantasm of the imagination.

But for metaphorical significations, there be many; for sometimes it is taken for disposition or inclination of the mind (as when, for the disposition to control the sayings of other men, we say *a spirit of contradiction*; for *a disposition to uncleanness*, an *unclean spirit*; for *perverseness*, a *froward spirit*; for *sullenness*, a *dumb spirit*; and for *inclination to godliness and God's service*, the *Spirit of God*); sometimes for any eminent ability or extraordinary passion or disease of the mind (as when *great wisdom* is called the *spirit of wisdom*, and *madmen* are said to be *possessed with a spirit*).

Other signification of *spirit* I find nowhere any; and where none of these can satisfy the sense of that word in Scripture, the place falleth not under human understanding, and our faith therein consisteth not in our opinion, but in our submission (as, in all places where God is said to be a *Spirit*, or where by the *Spirit of God* is meant God himself). For the nature of God is incomprehensible; that is to say, we understand nothing of *what he is*, but only *that he is*; and therefore, the attributes we give him are not to tell one another *what he is*, nor to signify our opinion of his nature, but our desire to honour him with such names as we conceive most honourable amongst ourselves.

#### *The Spirit of God taken in the Scripture sometimes for a Wind, or Breath.*

Gen. 1:2. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here if by the *Spirit of God* be meant God himself, then is *motion* attributed to God, and consequently *place*, which are intelligible only of bodies, and not of substances incorporeal; and so the place is above our understanding, that can conceive nothing moved that changes not place or that has not dimension; and whatsoever has dimension is body. But the meaning of those words is best understood by the like place, Gen. 8:1, where when the earth was covered with waters, as in the beginning, God, intending to abate them, and again to discover the dry land,

useth the like words: “I will bring my Spirit upon the earth, and the waters shall be diminished,” in which place by *Spirit* is understood a wind (that is an air or *spirit moved*), which might be called (as in the former place) the *Spirit of God*, because it was God’s work.

[...]

*Seventhly, for Aerial Bodies.*

The disciples of Christ, seeing him walking upon the sea (Matt. 14:26 and Mark 6:49), supposed him to be a *Spirit*, meaning thereby an aerial *body*, and not a phantasm; for it is said they all saw him, which cannot be understood of the delusions of the brain (which are not common to many at once, as visible bodies are, but singular, because of the differences of fancies), but of bodies only. In like manner, where he was taken for a *spirit* by the same apostles (Luke 24:3, 7). So also (Acts 12: 15), when St. *Peter* was delivered out of prison, and it would not be believed, but when the maid said he was at the door, they said it was his *angel*, by which must be meant a corporeal substance, or we must say the disciples themselves did follow the common opinion both of Jews and Gentiles, that some such apparitions were not imaginary, but real, and such as needed not the fancy of man for their existence. These the Jews called *spirits* and *angels*, good or bad, as the Greeks called the same by the name of *demons*. And some such apparitions may be real and substantial, that is to say, subtle bodies, which God can form by the same power by which he formed all things, and make use of, as of ministers and messengers (that is to say, angels), to declare his will, and execute the same when he pleaseth, in extraordinary and supernatural manner. But when he hath so formed them, they are substances, endued with dimensions, and take up room, and can be moved from place to place, which is peculiar to bodies; and therefore are not ghosts incorporeal (that is to say, ghosts that are in *no place*; that is to say, that are *nowhere*; that is to say, that seeming to be *somewhat*,<sup>1</sup> are *nothing*). But if corporeal be taken in the most vulgar<sup>2</sup> manner, for such substances as are perceptible by our external senses, then is substance incorporeal a thing not imaginary, but real (namely, a thin substance, invisible, but that hath the same dimensions that are in grosser bodies).

[...]

To men that understand the signification of these words, *substance* and *incorporeal*, as *incorporeal* is taken, not for subtle body, but for *not body*, they imply a contradiction, insomuch as to say “an angel or spirit is (in that sense) an incorporeal substance” is to say in effect “there is no angel nor spirit at all.” Considering, therefore, the signification of the word *angel* in the Old Testament, and the nature of dreams and visions that happen to men by the ordinary way of nature, I was inclined to this opinion, that angels were nothing but supernatural apparitions of the fancy, raised by the special and extraordinary operation of God, thereby to make his presence and commandments known to mankind, and chief-

<sup>1</sup> By *somewhat*, Hobbes just means *something*.

<sup>2</sup> By *vulgar*, Hobbes just means *common*.

ly to his own people. But the many places of the New Testament, and our Saviour’s own words (and in such texts wherein is no suspicion of corruption of the Scripture) have extorted from my feeble reason an acknowledgment and belief that there be also angels substantial and permanent. But to believe they be in no place (that is to say, nowhere, that is to say, nothing), as they (though indirectly) say that will have them incorporeal, cannot by Scripture be evinced.

[...]

## CHAPTER XLVI Of DARKNESS from VAIN PHILOSOPHY and FABULOUS TRADITIONS

*Errors brought into Religion from Aristotle’s Metaphysics.*

Now to descend to the particular tenets of vain philosophy, derived to the Universities and thence into the Church, partly from Aristotle, partly from blindness of understanding, I shall first consider their principles.

There is a certain *philosophia prima* on which all other philosophy ought to depend; and consisteth principally in right limiting of the significations of such appellations, or names, as are of all others the most universal which limitations serve to avoid ambiguity and equivocation in reasoning, and are commonly called definitions (such as are the definitions of body, time, place, matter, form, essence, subject, substance, accident, power, act, finite, infinite, quantity, quality, motion, action, passion, and divers others, necessary to the explaining of a man’s conceptions concerning the nature and generation of bodies).

The explication (that is, the settling of the meaning) of which (and the like) terms is commonly in the Schools called *metaphysics*, as being a part of the philosophy of Aristotle, which hath that for title. But it is in another sense; for there it signifieth as much as *books written, or placed after his natural philosophy*. But the schools take them for *books of supernatural philosophy* (for the word *metaphysics* will bear both these senses). And indeed, that which is there written is for the most part so far from the possibility of being understood, and so repugnant to natural reason, that whosoever thinketh there is anything to be understood by it, must needs think it supernatural.

*Errors concerning Abstract Essences.*

From these metaphysics (which are mingled with the Scripture to make school divinity) we are told there be in the world certain essences separated from bodies, which they call *abstract essences* and *substantial forms*. For the interpreting of which *jargon* there is need of somewhat more than ordinary attention in this place. Also, I ask pardon of those that are not used to this kind of discourse, for applying myself to those that are.

The world (I mean not the earth only, that denominates the lovers of it *worldly men*, but the *universe*, that is, the whole mass of all things that are) is cor-

poreal (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, in whom we consider not what attribute expresseth best his nature, which is incomprehensible, but what best expresseth our desire to honour Him.

[...]

But to what purpose (may some man say) is such subtlety in a work of this nature, where I pretend to nothing but what is necessary to the doctrine of government and obedience?

It is to this purpose: that men may no longer suffer themselves to be abused by them that by this doctrine of *separated essences*, built on the vain philosophy of Aristotle, would fright them from obeying the laws of their country with empty names, as men fright birds from the corn with an empty doublet, a hat, and a crooked stick. For it is upon this ground that, when a man is dead and buried, they say his soul (that is his life) can walk separated from his body, and is seen by night amongst the graves. Upon the same ground they say that the figure, and colour, and taste of a piece of bread has a being there, where they say there is no bread. And upon the same ground they say that faith, and wisdom, and other virtues are sometimes *poured* into a man, sometimes *blown* into him from Heaven—as if the virtuous and their virtues could be asunder—and a great many other things that serve to lessen the dependence of subjects on the sovereign power of their country. For who will endeavour to obey the laws, if he expect obedience to be poured or blown into him? Or who will not obey a priest, that can make God, rather than his sovereign, nay than God himself? Or who that is in fear of ghosts will not bear great respect to those that can make the holy water that drives them from him? And this shall suffice for an example of the errors which are brought into the Church from the *entities* and *essences* of Aristotle (which it may be he knew to be false philosophy, but writ it as a thing consonant to, and corroborative of, their religion—and fearing the fate of Socrates).

Being once fallen into this error of *separated essences*, they are thereby necessarily involved in many other absurdities that follow it. For seeing they will have these forms to be real, they are obliged to assign them some place. But because they hold them incorporeal, without all dimension of quantity, and all men know that place is dimension, and not to be filled but by that which is corporeal, they are driven to uphold their credit with a distinction: that they are not, indeed, anywhere *circumscriptive*, but *definitive*—which terms, being mere words, and in this occasion insignificant, pass only in Latin, that the vanity of them may be concealed. For the circumscription of a thing is nothing else but the determina-

tion or defining of its place; and so both the terms of the distinction are the same. And in particular, of 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; and how the ghosts of men (and I may add of their clothes which they appear in) can walk by night in churches, churchyards, and other places of sepulture. To which I know not what they can answer, unless they will say: they walk *definitive*, not *circumscriptive*, or *spiritually*, not *temporally* (for such egregious distinctions are equally applicable to any difficulty whatsoever).

[...]

## LATIN APPENDIX

### CHAPTER I

#### *On the Nicene Creed*

[...]

A. What is *body*, what *incorporeal*, and what *spirit*?

B. Those names have seemed so well known and understood to all learned men, that I do not know whether anyone, either theologian or philosopher, has thought fit to explain them. So what do you have an idea of, in your mind, when you utter, or hear uttered, that word *body*?

A. By *body* I now understand that of which it can truly be said that it really exists in itself and also has some magnitude. That it has magnitude, I say, not that it is magnitude itself. Still, I remember that I once thought that *body* is merely what obstructs my touch or vision. So I still thought that the species of a body, appearing in a mirror, or a dream, or the dark, was a body (though I was puzzled by it). But when I considered afterwards that those species vanish, so that their existence does not depend on themselves, but on animate nature, they no longer seemed real to me, but phantasms and effects of things acting on the sense organs. They therefore seemed to be *incorporeal*. Of *spirits*, however, I judged from the air, which is a spirit, and the wind, which I felt by touch. For that reason I thought that a spirit is indeed a body, but a rarefied one; that some spirits can be more rarefied and more pure than others; and that some can differ from others in power, no less than liquids do, which (though they may be equally



transparent) still differ immensely in their powers. But I was not able to conceive a nature intermediate between a body and a spirit, or between a spirit and a phantasm (i.e., between a spirit and nothing). So it must be asked whether the terms *incorporeal substance*, or *immaterial substance*, or *separated essence*, are found in Sacred Scripture.

B. Those terms are not in Sacred Scripture. But in the first of the 39 articles of religion published by the Anglican church in 1562 it is said explicitly that “God is without body and without parts.” Therefore, it is not to be denied. Also, the punishment established for those who deny it is excommunication.

A. It will not be denied. Still, in article 20 it is said that the church ought not to ordain anything to be believed which cannot be deduced from Sacred Scriptures. Would that this article had been so deduced! For I do not yet know in what sense something can be called greatest or great which is not a body.

[...]

### CHAPTER III

#### *On certain objections against Leviathan*

[...]

A. Next, in ch. iv, directly after the beginning, he denies that any *substances* are *incorporeal*. What else is this but either to deny that God exists or to affirm that God is a body?

B. He affirms, of course, that God is a body. But Tertullian before him affirmed the same thing. For in his dispute against Apelles and other heretics of his time, who taught that our Saviour Jesus Christ was not a body but a phantasm, he declared this universal proposition: “whatever is not a body is not a being.” Similarly, against Praxeas: “every substance is a body of its own kind.” Nor was this doctrine condemned in any of the first four general councils. Show me, if you can, the terms *incorporeal* or *immaterial* in Scripture. But I will show you that “the fullness of divinity dwelt in Christ corporeally” [Col. 2:9], i.e., as Athanasius explains, “divinely.”

“We all are, and are moved in God”—these are the words of the apostle [Paul, Acts 17:28]. But we all have quantity. Can a being which has quantity be in what does not have quantity? God is great, but it is impossible to understand greatness without a body. Not even the Nicene Council defined it [as an article of faith] that God is incorporeal. The fathers who were present, however, thought [that God is incorporeal] (whether they all thought this, I don’t know). And Constantine himself approved the term *homoousios*, i.e., coessential, because it seemed to him to follow from that term that *God is incorporeal*. Nevertheless, they did not want to introduce the term *incorporeal*, which is not in Sacred Scripture, into the creed. But the incorporeity of God cannot be inferred from the term *coessential*, even though an essence is not a body. The father of David and the son of Obadiah (since he was one and the same as Jesse) were *coessential*. Does it follow that Jesse and the father of David were *incorporeal*?

Furthermore, the intention of the Fathers of the Nicene Council was to condemn by that creed, not only Arianism, but also all the heresies which had crept into the church after the death of the Lord. One of these heresies was that of the anthropomorphites, who attributed to God the members of the human body. II But it was not their intention to condemn those who had written, with Tertullian, that a true, real, and pure spirit is corporeal. Of course, those who attribute purity to God act rightly, for “purity” is an honorific term. But to attribute fineness to God, which is a kind of step towards nothingness, is dangerous. John of Damascus, explaining the Nicene faith, says:

Of the divine names, some are negative, signifying what is above substance, as *anousios* (i.e., without essence), *achronos* (without time), *anarchos* (without beginning). Not that [God] is inferior to these things, but that he is elevated above all of them. For God is not numbered among beings, but is beyond them all.

You see that John of Damascus—an Aristotelian philosopher (as his dialectical work shows), and also a father of the church and pious doctor—as long as he is afraid to say with Tertullian that God is a body, and tries to diminish the crassness of body (which he thinks unworthy of God—I don’t know why), falls into atheistic words, saying that God is *anousios* and is none of the things that are.

A. By *anousios* I believe he meant to signify nothing but uncreated.

B. Perhaps. But what was the need, after he had spoken sufficiently a few lines earlier about that attribute, *uncreated*, to say the same thing again using that unacceptable name, *anousios*? Finally, since he knew that every spirit, however fine, is still a body, what substance or real being could he suppose which would seem to be an incorporeal substance (except idols or phantasms, such as we see in mirrors, in sleep, in darkness, and which the apostle Paul says are nothing [1 Cor. 8:4])?

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[Excerpted from *Elements of Law I: Human Nature* (1640)]

### CHAP. XI.

1. HITHERTO of the Knowledge of Things *natural*, and of the Passions that arise naturally from them. Now forasmuch as we give Names not only to Things natural, but also to *supernatural*; and by all Names we ought to have some Meaning and Conception: It followeth in the next Place, to consider what Thoughts and Imaginations of the Mind we have, when we take into our Mouths the most blessed Name of GOD, and the Names of those Virtues we attribute unto him; as also, what *Image* cometh into the Mind at hearing the Name of *Spirit*, or the Name of *Angel*, good or bad.

2. And forasmuch as God Almighty is *incomprehensible*, it followeth, that we can have *no* Conception or *Image* of the *Deity*; and consequently, all *his Attributes* signify our *Inability* and Defect of Power to *conceive* any thing concerning his

Nature, and not any Conception of the same, excepting only this, That *there* is a God: For the Effects we acknowledge naturally, do include a Power of their producing, before they were produced; and that Power presupposeth something existent that hath such Power: And the Thing so existing with Power to produce, if it were not eternal, must needs have been produced by somewhat before it, and that again by something else before that, till we come to an eternal (that is to say, the first) Power of all Powers, and first Cause of all Causes: And this is it which all Men conceive by the Name of GOD, implying Eternity, Incomprehensibility, and Omnipotency. And thus all that will consider, may know *that* God is, though not *what* he is: even a Man that is born blind, though it be not possible for him to have any Imagination what kind of thing Fire is; yet he cannot but know that something there is that Men call Fire, because it warmeth him.

3. And whereas we attribute to God Almighty, Seeing, Hearing, Speaking, Knowing, Loving, and the like, by which Names we understand something in *Men* to whom we attribute them, we understand *nothing* by them in the Nature of God: For, as it is well reasoned, Shall not the God that made the Eye, see; and the Ear, hear? So it is also, if we say, Shall God, which made the Eye, not see without the Eye; or that made the Ear, not hear without the Ear; or that made the Brain, not know without the Brain; or that made the Heart, not love without the Heart? The *Attributes* therefore given unto the *Deity*, are such as signify either our *Incapacity* or our *Reverence*: Our Incapacity, when we say Incomprehensible and Infinite; our Reverence, when we give him those Names, which amongst us are the Names of those Things we most magnify and commend, as Omnipotent, Omniscient, Just, Merciful, &c. And when God Almighty giveth those Names to himself in the Scriptures, it is but ἀνθρωποπαθῶς, that is to say, by descending to our manner of speaking; without which we are not capable of understanding him.

4. By the Name of *Spirit*, we understand a *Body natural*, but of such *Subtilty*, that it worketh not upon the Senses; but that filleth up the Place which the Image of a visible Body might fill up. Our Conception therefore of Spirit consisteth of *Figure* without Colour; and in Figure is understood Dimension, and consequently, to conceive a Spirit, is to conceive something that hath Dimension. But Spirits *supernatural* commonly signify some Substance without Dimension; which two Words do flatly contradict one another: and therefore when we attribute the Name of Spirit unto God, we attribute it not as the Name of any Thing we conceive, no more than we ascribe unto him Sense and Understanding; but, as a Signification of our Reverence, we desire to abstract from him all corporal Grossness.

5. Concerning other Things, which some Men call Spirits incorporeal, and some corporeal, it is not *possible* by *natural* Means only, to come to the *Knowledge* of so much, as that *there are such Things*. We that are Christians *acknowledge* that there be Angels good and evil, and that there are Spirits, and that the Soul of Man is a Spirit, and that those Spirits are immortal: *but*, to *know* it, that is to say, to have natural Evidence of the same, it is *impossible*: For, all *Evidence* is *Concep-*

*tion*, as is said, Chap. VI. Sect. 3. and all Conception is *Imagination*, and proceedeth from *Sense*, Chap. III. Sect. 1. And *Spirits* we suppose to be those Substances which work *not* upon the *Sense*; and therefore not conceptible. But though the Scripture acknowledges Spirits, yet doth it no where say, that they are incorporeal, meaning thereby, without Dimension and Quality: Nor, I think, is that Word Incorporeal at all in the Bible; but it is said of the Spirit, that it abideth in Men; sometimes that it dwelleth in them, sometimes that it cometh on them, that it descendeth, and goeth, and cometh; and that Spirits are Angels, that is to say, Messengers: all which Words do imply *Locality*; and Locality is *Dimension*; and whatsoever hath Dimension, is *Body*, be it never so subtil. To me therefore it seemeth, that the Scripture favoureth them more, who hold Angels and Spirits corporeal, than them that hold the contrary. And it is a plain *Contradiction* in natural Discourse, to say of the Soul of Man, that it is *tota in toto*, & *tota in qualibet Parte Corporis*,<sup>3</sup> grounded neither upon Reason nor Revelation, but proceeding from the Ignorance of what those Things are which are called *Spectra*, Images that appear in the Dark to Children, and such as have strong Fears, and other strange Imaginations, as hath been said, Chap. III. Sect. 5. where I call them Phantasms: For, taking them to be Things real, without us, like Bodies, and seeing them to come and vanish so strangely as they do, unlike to Bodies; what could they call them else, but incorporeal Bodies? which is not a Name, but an Absurdity of Speech.

6. It is true, that the Heathens, and all Nations of the World, have acknowledged that there be *Spirits*, which for the most part they hold to be incorporeal; whereby it might be thought, that a Man by natural Reason, may arrive, without the Scriptures, to the Knowledge of this, *That Spirits are*: But the erroneous Collection thereof by the Heathens, may proceed, as I have said before, from the Ignorance of the Cause of Ghosts and Phantasms, and such other Apparitions. And from thence had the *Grecians* their Number of Gods, their Number of *Demons* good or bad, and for every Man his *Genius*; which is not the acknowledging of this Truth, *That Spirits are*; but a false Opinion concerning the Force of Imagination.

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[Excerpted from *An Answer to Dr. Bramhall* (1662)]

T. H. 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, and so mean all learned Men, Divines and others, though perhaps there be some common People so rude as to call nothing Body, but what they can see and feel. To his second Question, what real Being he can have amongst Bodies and Accidents, I answer, The Being of a Spirit, not of a Spright. If I should ask any the most subtil Distinguisher, what middle Nature there were between an infinitely subtil Substance, and a mere Thought or Phantasm, by what Name could he call it? He might call it perhaps an incorpo-

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<sup>3</sup> That is, *whole in the whole, and whole in every part of the body*.

real Substance, and so *incorporeal* shall pass for a middle Nature between *infinitely subtil* and *nothing*, and be less subtil than infinitely subtil, and yet more fubtil than a Thought. It is granted, he says, that the Nature of God is incomprehensible. Doth it therefore follow, that we may give to the divine Substance what negative Name we please? Because he says, the whole divine Substance is here and there and every where throughout the World, and that the Soul of a Man is here and there and every where throughout Man's Body, must we therefore take it for a Mystery of Christian Religion, upon his or any other Schoolman's Word, without the Scripture, which calls nothing a Mystery but the Incarnation of the Eternal God? Or is Incorporeal a Mystery, when not at all mentioned in the Bible, but to the contrary it is written, *that the Fulness of the Deity was bodily in Christ*? When the Nature of the Thing is incomprehensible, I can acquiesce in the Scripture, but when the Signification of Words are incomprehensible, I cannot acquiesce in the Authority of a Schoolman.

[...]

T. H. This of incorporeal *Substance* he urged before, and there I answered it. I wonder he so often rolls the same Stone. He is like *Sisyphus* in the Poets Hell, that there rolls a heavy Stone up a Hill, which no sooner he brings to Daylight, than it flips down again to the Bottom, and serves him so perpetually. For so his Lordship rolls this and other Questions, with much ado, till they come to the Light of Scripture, and then they vanish; and he vexing, sweating, and railing, goes to't again, to as little Purpose as before. From what I say of the Universe he 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. Nor does his Lordship go about to disprove it, but only seems to wonder at it.

[...]

T. H. He here concludes his first Chapter with bitter Reproaches, to leave in his Reader (as he thought) a Sting, supposing perhaps that he will read nothing but the Beginning and End of his Book, as is the Custom of many Men. But to make him lose that petty Piece of Cunning, I must desire of the Reader one of these two Things. Either that he would read with it the Places of my *Leviathan* which he cites, and see not only how he answers my Arguments, but also what the Arguments are which he produceth against them; or else that he would forbear to condemn me, so much as in his Thought; for otherwise he is unjust. The Name of Bishop is of great Authority, but these Words are not the Words of a Bishop, but of a passionate Schoolman, too fierce and unseemly in any Man whatsoever. Besides, they are untrue. Who that knows me will say I have the Confidence of a Jugler, or that I use to brag of any thing, much less that I play the Mountebank? What my Works are, he was no fit Judge. But now he has provoked me, I will say thus much of them, that neither he, if he had lived, could, nor I if I would, can extinguish the Light which is set up in the World by the greatest Part of them; and for these Doctrines which he impugneth, I have few

Opposers, but such whose Profit or whose Fame in Learning is concerned in them. He accuses me first of destroying the Existence of God, that is to say, he would make the World believe I were an Atheist. But upon what Ground? Because I say, that God is a Spirit, but *Corporeal*. But to say that, is allowed me by St. Paul, that says *There is a spiritual Body, and there is an animal Body*, 1 Cor. xv. He that holds that there is a God, and that God is really somewhat (for *Body* is doubtlessly a *real Substance*) is as far from being an Atheist as is possible to be. But he that says God is an *incorporeal Substance*, no Man can be sure whether he be an Atheist or not. For no Man living can tell whether there be any *Substance* at all, that is not also *Corporeal*. For neither the Word *Incorporeal*, nor *Immaterial*, nor any Word equivalent to it, is to be found in Scripture or in Reason. But on the contrary, that *the Godhead dwelleth bodily in Christ*, is found in Colos. ii. 9. and *Tertullian* maintains, that God is either a *Corporeal Substance* or *Nothing*: Nor was he ever condemned for it by the Church. For why? not only *Tertullian*, but all the Learned, call *Body*, not only that which one can see, but also whatsoever has Magnitude, or that is somewhere; for they had greater Reverence for the divine Substance than that they durst think it had no *Magnitude*, or was *nowhere*. But they that hold God to be a Phantasm; as did the Exorcists in the Church of Rome, that is, such a Thing as were at that Time thought to be the Sprights that were said to walk in Church-yards, and to be the Souls of Men buried, they do absolutely make God to be nothing at all. But how? Were they Atheists? No. For though by Ignorance of the Consequence they said that which was equivalent to Atheism, yet in their Hearts they thought God a Substance, and would also, if they had known what *Substance* and what *Corporeal* meant, have said he was a Corporeal Substance. So that this *Atheism by Consequence* is a very easy Thing to be fallen into, even by the most godly Men of the Church. He also that says that God is *wholly here*, and *wholly there*, and *wholly every where*, destroys by Consequence the Unity of God, and the Infiniteness of God, and the Simplicity of God. And this the Schoolmen do, and are therefore *Atheists by Consequence*, and yet they do not all say in their Hearts that there is no God. So also his Lordship, by exempting the Will of Man from being subject to the Necessity of God's Will or Decree, denies by *Consequence* the divine Prescience, which also will amount to *Atheism by Consequence*. But out of this, that God is a *Spirit Corporeal* and *infinitely pure*, there can no unworthy or dishonourable Consequence be drawn.

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[Excerpted from *Considerations upon the Reputation, Loyalty, Manners, and Religion of Thomas Hobbes* (1662)]

I admire<sup>4</sup> in the next place, upon what Ground you accuse him (and with him all those that have approved his *Leviathan*) with Atheism. I thought once, that that Slander had had some (though not firm) Ground, in that you call his a new Divinity: But for that Point he will alledge these Words of his *Leviathan*: By

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<sup>4</sup> By *admire*, Hobbes just means *wonder*. He thinks the accusation is baffling.



which it seemeth to me (with Submission nevertheless, both in this and all other Questions, whereof the Determination dependeth on the Scriptures, to the Interpretation of the Bible authorized by the Commonwealth, whose Subject I am,) that, &c. What is there in these Words but Modesty and Obedience? But you were at this Time in actual Rebellion. Mr. *Hobbes*, that holds Religion to be a Law, did in order there-to condemn the Maintenance of any of his Opinions against the Law; and you that reproach him for them upon your own Account, should also have shewn by your own Learning, wherein the Scripture, which was his sole Proof, was miscited, or misconstrued by him; (for he submitted to the Laws, that is to say, to the King's Doctrine, not to yours;) and not have insulted for the Victory won by the Power of the Law, to which you were then an Enemy.

Another Argument of Atheism you take from his denying *immaterial* or *incorporeal Substances*. Let any Man impartially now compare his Religion with yours, by this very Measure, and judge which of the two savours most of Atheism.

It is by all Christians confess'd, that God is *incomprehensible*; that is to say, that there is nothing can arise in our Fancy from the naming of him, to resemble him either in *Shape, Colour, Stature, or Nature*; there is no Idea of him; he is like nothing that we can think on: What then ought we to say of him? What Attributes are to be given him, not speaking otherwise than we think, nor otherwise than is fit, by those who mean to honour him? None but such as Mr. *Hobbes* hath set down, namely, Expressions of Reverence, such as are in Use amongst Men for Signs of Honour, and consequently signify *Goodness, Greatness, and Happiness*; and either absolutely put, as *good, holy, mighty, blessed, just, wise, merciful, &c.* or superlative, as *most good, most great, most mighty, almighty, most holy, &c.* or negative, of whatsoever is not perfect, as *infinite, eternal*, and the like: and not such as neither Reason nor Scripture hath approved for honourable. This is the Doctrine that Mr. *Hobbes* hath written, both in his *Leviathan*, and in his Book *de Cive*, and when Occasion serves, maintains. What kind of Attribute I pray you is *immaterial*, or *incorporeal Substance*? Where do you find it in the Scripture? Whence came it hither, but from *Plato* and *Aristotle*, Heathens, who mistook those thin Inhabitants of the Brain they see in Sleep, for so many *incorporeal* Men; and yet allow them Motion, which is proper only to Things *corporeal*? Do you think it an Honour to God to be one of these? And would you learn Christianity from *Plato* and *Aristotle*? But seeing there is no such Word in the Scripture, how will you warrant it from natural Reason? Neither *Plato* nor *Aristotle* did ever write of, or mention an *incorporeal Spirit*; for they could not conceive how a Spirit, which in their Language was πνεῦμα (in ours a *Wind*) could be *incorporeal*. Do you understand the Connection of *Substance* and *incorporeal*? If you do, explain it in *English*; for the Words are *Latin*. It is something, you'll say, that being *without Body, stands under* ———. Stands under what? Will you say, *under Accidents*? Almost all the Fathers of the *Church* will be against you; and then you are an Atheist. Is not Mr. *Hobbes* his way of attributing to God, that only which the Scriptures attribute to him, or what is never any where taken but for Honour, much

better than this bold Undertaking of yours, to *consider* and decypher God's *Nature* to us?

For a third Argument of Atheism, you put, That he says, *Besides the Creation of the World, there is no Argument to prove a Deity*; and, *That it cannot be evinced by any Argument that the World had a Beginning*; and, *That whether it had or no, is to be decided not by Argument, but by the Magistrate's Authority*. That it may be decided by the Scriptures, he never denied; therefore in that also you slander him. And as for Arguments from natural Reason, neither you, nor any other have hitherto brought any (except the Creation) that has not made it more doubtful to many Men that it was before. That which he hath written concerning such Arguments, in his Book *de Corpore, Opinions*, saith he, *concerning the Nature of Infinite and Eternal, as the chiefest of the Fruits of Wisdom, God hath reserved to himself, and made Judges of them, those Men whose Ministry be meant to use in the ordering of Religion; and therefore I cannot praise those Men that brag of Demonstration of the Beginning of the World from natural Reason*. And again, *Wherefore I pass by those Questions of Infinite and Eternal, contenting myself with such Doctrine concerning the Beginning and Magnitude of the World, as I have learned from the Scripture, confirmed by Miracles, and from the Use of my Country, and from the Reverence I owe to the Law*. This, Doctor, is not ill said, and yet 'tis all you ground your Slander on, which you make to sneak vilely under a crooked Paraphrase.

These Opinions, I said, were to be judged by those to whom God has committed the ordering of Religion; that is, to the supreme Governors of the Church, that is, in *England*, to the King: By his Authority, I say, it ought to be decided, (not what Men shall think, but) what they shall say in those Questions. And methinks you should not dare to deny it; for 'tis a manifest Relapse into your former Crimes.

But why do you stile the King by the Name of *Magistrate*? Do you find *Magistrate* to signify any where the Person that hath the Sovereign Power, or not every where the Sovereign's Officers. And I think you knew that; but you and your Fellows (your Fellows I call all those that are so besmeared all over with the Filth of the same Crime, as not to be distinguished) meant to make your Assembly the Sovereign, and the King your *Magistrate*. I pray God you do not mean so still, if Opportunity be presented.

There has hitherto appeared in Mr. *Hobbes* his Doctrine no Sign of Atheism; and whatsoever can be inferred from the denying of *incorporeal Substances*, makes *Tertullian*, one of the ancientest of the Fathers, and most of the Doctors of the Greek Church, as much Atheists as he: For *Tertullian*, in his Treatise *de Carne Christi*, says plainly, *Omne quod est, corpus est sui generis. Nihil est incorporale, nisi quod non est*: That is to say, *Whatsoever is any thing, is a Body of its kind. Nothing is incorporeal, but that which has no Being*. There are many other Places in him to the same Purpose: For that Doctrine served his Turn to confute the Heresy of them that held that Christ had no Body, but was a *Ghost*: Also of the Soul he speaks, as of an invisible Body. And there is an Epitome of the Doctrine of the Eastern Church, wherein is this, That they thought Angels and Souls were *corporeal*, and only called *incorporeal*, because their Bodies were not like ours. And I have heard

that a Patriarch of *Constantinople*, in a Council held there, did argue for the Lawfulness of painting Angels, from this, that they were *corporeal*. You see what Fellows in Atheism you join with Mr. *Hobbes*.

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[Excerpted from *A Historical Narration concerning Heresy* (c. 1668)]

... The Cause of the Obscurity of this Word ὁμοούσιος proceeded chiefly from the Difference between the *Greek* and *Roman* Dialect, in the Philosophy of the *Peripatetics*. The first Principle of Religion in all Nations is, *That God is*, that is to say, that God is really 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 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; and 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. On the contrary, Essence, Deity, Humanity, and such like Names, signify nothing that can be considered, without first considering there is an *Ens*, a God, a Man, &c. So also, if there be any real Thing that is *white* or *black*, *hot* or *cold*, the same may be considered by itself; but Whiteness, Blackness, Heat, Coldness, cannot be considered, unless it be first supposed that there is some real Thing to which they are attributed. These real Things are called by the *Latin* Philosophers, *Entia, subjecta, substantiæ*; and by the *Greek* Philosophers, τὰ ὄντα ὑποκείμενα, ὑποζάμενα. The other, which are incorporeal, are called by the *Greek* Philosophers, οὐσία συμβεβηκότα, Φαντάσματα; but most of the *Latin* Philosophers use to convert οὐσία into *substantia*, and so confound real and corporeal Things with incorporeal; which is not well: for Essence and Substance signify divers things. And this Mistake is received, and continues still in these Parts, in all Disputes both of Philosophy and Divinity: for in Truth *Essentia* signifies no more, than if we should talk ridiculously of the *Ifness* of the Thing that is. **By whom all things were made.** This is proved out of St. *John* i. 1, 2, 3. and *Heb.* i. 3. and that again out of *Gen.* i. where God is said to create every thing by his sole Word, as when he said, *Let there be Light, and there was Light*. And then that Christ was that Word, and in the Beginning with God, may be gathered out of divers Places of *Moses*, *David*, and other of the Prophets. Nor was it ever questioned amongst Christians (except by the *Arians*) but that Christ was God Eternal, and his Incarnation eternally decreed. But the Fathers, all that write Expositions on this Creed, could not forbear to philosophise upon it, and most of them out of the Principles of *Aristotle*: which are the same the Schoolmen now use; as may partly appear by this, that many of them, amongst their Treatises of Religion, have affected to publish Logic and Physic Principles according to the Sense of *Aristotle*; as *Athanasius*, and *Damascene*. And so some later Divines of *Note*, still confound the Concrete with the Abstract, *Deus* with *Deitas*, *Ens* with *Essentia*, *Sapiens* with *Sapientia*, *Æternus* with *Æternitas*. If it be for exact

and rigid Truthsake, why do they not say also, that Holiness is a holy Man, Covetousness a covetous Man, Hypocrisy an Hypocrite, and Drunkenness a Drunkard, and the like, but that it is an Error? The Fathers agree that the Wisdom of God is the eternal Son of God, by whom all things were made, and that he was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, if they meant it in the Abstract: for if *Deitas* abstracted be *Deus*, we make two Gods of one. This was well understood of *Damascene*, in his Treatise *De Fide Orthodoxâ* (which is an Exposition of the *Nicene* Creed) where he denies absolutely that *Deitas* is *Deus*, lest (seeing God was made Man) it should follow, the Deity was made Man; which is contrary to the Doctrine of the *Nicene* Fathers. The Attributes therefore of God in the Abstract, when they are put for God, are put *Metonymically*; which is a common thing in Scripture; for Example, *Prov.* viii. 28. where it is said, *Before the Mountains were settled, before the Hills was I brought forth*; the Wisdom there spoken of being the Wisdom of God, signifies the same with the wise God. This kind of Speaking is also ordinary in all Languages. This considered, such abstracted Words ought not to be used in arguing, and especially in the deducing the Articles of our Faith; though in the Language of God's eternal Worship, and in all godly Discourses, they cannot be avoided: And the Creed itself is less difficult to be assented to in its own Words, than in all such Expositions of the Fathers. **Who for us Men and our Salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man.** I have not read of any Exception to this: For where *Athanasius* in his Creed says of the Son, *He was not made, but begotten*, it is to be understood of the Son as he was God Eternal; whereas here it is spoken of the Son as he is Man. And of the Son also as he was Man, it may be said he was begotten of the Holy Ghost; for a Woman conceiveth not but of him that begetteth; which is also confirmed, *Mat.* i. 20. *That which is begotten in her* (τὸ γέννηθεν) *is of the Holy Ghost.* **And was also Crucified for us under Pontius Pilate: He suffered and was buried: And the third Day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven: and sitteth on the right Hand of the father; And he shall come again with Glory to judge both the Quick and the Dead. Whose Kingdom shall have no End.** [Of this Part of the Creed I have not met with any Doubt made by any Christian.] Hither the Council of *Nice* proceedeth in their general Confession of Faith, and no further.

This finished, some of the Bishops present at the Council (seventeen or eighteen, whereof *Eusebius*, Bishop of *Cæsarea*, was one) not sufficiently satisfied, refused to subscribe till this Doctrine of ὁμοούσιος should be better explained. Thereupon the Council decreed, that whosoever shall say that God hath Parts, shall be anathematized; to which the said Bishops subscribed. And *Eusebius*, by Order of the Council, wrote a Letter, the Copies whereof were sent to every absent Bishop, that being satisfied with the Reason of their subscribing, they also should subscribe. The Reason they gave of their Subscription was this, *That they had now a Form of Words prescribed, by which, as a Rule, they might guide themselves so, as not to violate the Peace of the Church.* By this it is manifest, that no Man was an Heretic, but he that in plain and direct Words contradicted that Form by the Church prescribed, and that no Man could be made an Heretic by Consequence. And because the said Form was not put into the Body of the said Creed, but di-



rected only to the Bishops, there was no Reason to punish any Lay-person that should speak to the contrary.

But what was the Meaning of this Doctrine, *That God has no Parts*? Was it made Heresy to say, that God, who is a real Substance, cannot be considered or spoken of as *here* or *there*, or any where, which are Parts of Places? or that there is any real Thing without Length every way, that is to say, which hath no Magnitude at all, finite nor infinite? or is there any whole Substance, whose two Halves or three Thirds are not the same with that Whole? or did they mean to condemn the Argument of *Tertullian*, by which he confuted *Apelles* and other Heretics of his Time; namely, *Whatsoever was not Corporeal, was nothing but Phantasm, and not Corporeal*, for Heretical? No certainly, no Divines say that. They went to establish the Doctrine of *One individual God in Trinity*; to abolish the Diversity of Species in God, not the Distinction of *here* and *there* in Substance. When St. *Paul* asked the *Corinthians*, *Is Christ divided*? He did not think they thought him impossible to be considered as having Hands and Feet, but that they might think him (according to the manner of the Gentiles) one *of the Sons of God*, as *Arius* did; but not the only begotten Son of God. And thus also it is expounded in the Creed of *Athanasius*, who was present in that Council, by these Words, *Not confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substances*; that is to say, that God is not divided into three Persons, as Man is divided into *Peter*, *James*, and *John*; nor are the three Persons one and the same Person. But *Aristotle*, and from him all the *Greek Fathers*, and other learned Men, when they consider the general Latitude of a Word, they call it Division; as when they divide *Animal* into Man and Beast, they call these εἶδη, *Species*; and when they again divide the *Species* Man into *Peter* and *John*, they call these μέρη, *partes individuae*. And by this confounding the Division of the Substance with the Distinction of Words, divers Men have been led into the Error of attributing to God a Name, which is not the Name of any Substance at all, viz. *Incorporeal*.