

29. Whatever power I may have over my own thoughts, however, I find that the ideas I get through my senses don't depend on my will in the same way. When in broad daylight I open my eyes, it is not in my power to choose whether or not I shall see anything, or to choose what particular objects I shall see; and the same holds for hearing and the other senses. My will is not responsible for the ideas that come to me through any of my senses. So there must be some other will - some other spirit - that produces them.

30. The ideas of sense are stronger, livelier, and clearer than those of the imagination; and they are also steady, orderly and coherent. Ideas that people bring into their own minds at will are often random and jumbled, but the ideas of sense are not like that: they come in a regular series, and are inter-related in admirable ways that show us the wisdom and benevolence of the series' author. The phrase 'the laws of nature' names the set rules or established methods whereby the mind we depend on - that is, God - arouses in us the ideas of sense. We learn what they are by experience, which teaches us that such and such ideas are ordinarily accompanied or followed by such and such others.

31. This gives us a sort of foresight that enables us to regulate our actions for the benefit of life. Without this we would always be at a loss: we couldn't know how to do anything to bring ourselves pleasure or spare ourselves pain. That food nourishes, sleep refreshes, and fire warms us; that to sow in the spring is the way to get a harvest in the fall, and in general that such and such means are the way to achieve such and such ends - we know

all this not by discovering any necessary connection between our ideas but only by observing the settled *laws of nature*. Without them we would be utterly uncertain and confused, and a grown man would have no more idea than a new-born infant does of how to manage himself in the affairs of life.

32. This consistent, uniform working obviously displays the goodness and wisdom of God, the governing spirit whose will constitutes the

laws of nature. And yet, far from leading our thoughts *towards* him, it sends them *away from* him in a wandering search for second causes - that is, for causes that come between God and the effects we want to explain. For when we perceive that certain ideas of sense are constantly followed by other ideas, and we know that this is not our doing, we immediately attribute power and agency to the ideas themselves, and make one the cause of another - than which nothing can be more absurd and unintelligible. Thus, for example, having observed that when we perceive by sight *a certain round luminous figure*, we at the same time perceive by touch *the idea or sensation called heat*, we infer that the sun causes heat. Similarly, when we perceive that *a collision of bodies* is accompanied by *sound*, we are inclined to think the latter an effect of the former.

33. The [1] ideas imprinted on the senses by the author of nature are called 'real things'; and those [2] that are caused by the imagination, being less regular, vivid, and constant, are more properly called 'ideas' or 'images' of things that they copy and represent. But our [1] sensations, however vivid and distinct they may be, are nevertheless *ideas*; that is, they exist in the mind, or are perceived by it, as truly as [2] the ideas that mind itself makes. The [1] ideas of sense are agreed to have more reality in them - that is, to be more strong, orderly, and coherent than ideas made by the mind; but this does not show that they exist outside the mind. They are also less dependent on the spirit or thinking substance that perceives them, for they are caused by the will of another and more powerful spirit, *namely God*; but still they are ideas, and certainly no idea whether faint or strong - can exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it.

34. Before we move on, I have to spend some time in answering objections that are likely to be made against the principles I have laid down. I shall answer twelve of them, ending in **72**; and further objections will occupy **73-84**. My answer to the first of the twelve will run to the end of **40**. If fast-thinking readers find me too long-winded about this, I hope they will pardon me. My excuse is that people are

not all equally quick in getting a grasp on topics such as this, and I want to be understood by everyone. **First**, then, this will be objected:

By your principles everything real and substantial in nature is banished out of the world, and replaced by a chimerical [= 'unreal or imaginary'] system of ideas. All things that exist do so only in the mind - according to you - , that is, they are purely notional. Then what becomes of the sun, moon, and stars? What must we think of houses, rivers, mountains, trees, stones - even of our own bodies, for that matter? Are all these mere illusions, creatures of the imagination?

To all this - and any other objections of the same sort - I answer that the principles I have laid down don't deprive us of any one thing in nature. Whatever we see, feel, hear, or in

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any way conceive or understand remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. There *is* a real world, and the distinction between realities and chimeras retains its full force. This is evident from **29**, **30**, and **33**, where I have shown what is meant by 'real things' in opposition to chimeras or ideas made by us; but by that account real things and chimeras both exist in the mind, and in that sense are alike in being ideas.

35. I don't argue against the existence of any one thing that we can take in, either by sense or reflection. I don't in the least question that the things I see with my eyes and touch with my hands do exist, really exist. The only thing whose existence I deny is what philosophers call 'matter' or 'corporeal substance'. And in denying this I do no harm to the rest of mankind - that is, to people other than philosophers - because they will never miss it . The atheist indeed will lose the rhetorical help he gets from an empty name, namely 'matter' , which he uses to support his impiety; and the philosophers may find that they have lost a great opportunity for word-spinning and disputation.

36. If you think that this detracts from the existence or reality of things, you are very far from understanding what I have said in the plainest way I could think of. Here it is again, in brief outline. There are spiritual substances, minds, or human souls, which cause $\text{H}\Omega\text{M}\text{O}\blacklozenge$ in themselves through acts of the will, doing this as they please; but these ideas are faint, weak, and unsteady as compared with other ideas that minds perceive by sense. The latter ideas, being impressed on minds according to certain rules or *laws of nature* tell us that they are the effects of a mind that is stronger and wiser than human spirits. The latter are said to have more reality in them than the former: by which is meant that they are more forceful, orderly, and distinct, and that they are not fictions of the mind that perceives them. In this sense, the sun that I see by day is the real sun, and what I imagine by night is the idea of the former. In the sense I am here giving to 'reality', it is evident that every plant, star, rock, and in general each part of the system of the world, is as much a real thing by my principles as by any others. Whether you mean by 'reality' anything different from what I do, I beg you to look into your own thoughts and see.

37. You will want to object: 'At least it is true that you take away all corporeal substances.' I answer that if the word 'substance' is taken in the ordinary everyday sense - standing for a combination of perceptible qualities such as extension, solidity, weight, etc. - I cannot be accused of taking substance away. But if 'substance' is taken in a philosophic sense - standing for the support of qualities outside the mind - then indeed I agree that I take it away, if one may be said to 'take away' something that never had any existence, not even in the imagination.

38. 'But', you say, 'it sounds weird to say that we eat and drink ideas, and are clothed with them.' So it does, because the word 'idea' is not used in ordinary talk to signify the combinations of perceptible qualities that are called *things*; and any expression that differs from the familiar use of language is bound to seem weird and ridiculous. But this does not concern the truth of the proposition, which in other words merely says that we are fed and clothed with things that we perceive immediately by our senses. The hardness or softness, the colour, taste, warmth, shape

and such like qualities, which combine to constitute the various sorts of food and clothing, have been shown to exist only in the

mind that perceives them; and this is all I mean by calling them 'ideas'; which word, if it was as ordinarily used as 'thing', would sound no weirder or more ridiculous than 'thing' does in the statement that we eat and drink things and are clothed with them. My concern is not with the propriety of words but with the truth of my doctrine. So if you will agree with me that what we eat, drink, and clothe ourselves with are immediate objects of sense that cannot exist unperceived or outside the mind, I will readily agree with you that it is more proper - more in line with ordinary speech - to call them 'things' rather than 'ideas'.

39. Why do I employ the word 'idea', rather than following ordinary speech and calling them 'things'? For two reasons: first, because the term 'thing', unlike 'idea', is generally supposed to stand for something existing outside the mind; and secondly, because 'thing' has a broader meaning than 'idea', because it applies to spirits, or thinking things, as well as to ideas. Since the objects of sense exist only in the mind, and also are unthinking and inactive - which spirits are not, I choose to mark them by the word 'idea', which implies those properties.

40. You may want to say: 'Say what you like, I will still believe my senses, and will never allow any arguments, how plausible they may be, to prevail over the certainty of my senses.' Be it so, assert the obvious rightness of the senses as strongly as you please - I shall do the same! What I see, hear, and feel *exists* - that is, *is perceived by me* - and I do not doubt this any more than I doubt my own existence. But I don't see how the testimony of the senses can be brought as proof of the existence of anything that is *not* perceived by sense. I do not want anyone to become a sceptic, and to disbelieve his senses; on the contrary, I give the senses all the emphasis and assurance imaginable; and there are no principles more opposed to scepticism than those I have laid down, as will be clearly shown later on.