

## **Hobbes: Objections to Descartes’ Meditations and Descartes’ Replies (1641)<sup>1</sup>**

Descartes had the manuscript of the *Meditations* circulated in order to solicit objections; he then published the *Meditations*, together with the *Objections* and his *Replies*. The person distributing the manuscript for Descartes was Marin Mersenne, a Minim monk who served as Descartes’ link to the learned world while Descartes lived in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> Descartes initially requested a first set of objections from friends in the Netherlands. Mersenne then collected sets from Thomas Hobbes, Antoine Arnauld, and Pierre Gassendi, and put together two sets out of the objections of various philosophers and theologians; a seventh set was received from the Jesuit Pierre Bourdin and published with the second edition of the *Meditations* (in 1642).<sup>3</sup> The *Objections* and *Replies* allow Descartes to extend some of his arguments, which were so compactly given in the *Meditations*. The *Second Set of Objections* contains the following remark forwarded by Mersenne (probably initiated by Jean-Baptiste Morin):<sup>4</sup> “It would be worthwhile if you set out the entire argument in geometrical fashion, starting from a number of definitions, postulates, and axioms. You are highly experienced in employing this method, and it would enable you to fill the mind of each reader so that he could see everything as it were at a single glance.” That remark produced an extended reply from Descartes about the geometrical manner of writing, the order of demonstration, and its two divisions, analysis and synthesis. Descartes further appended a

*rewritten portion of the Meditations arranged in geometric fashion.*

*Perhaps the most intriguing function of the Objections and Replies is that they enable us to see genuine philosophical debate conducted on the spot. This is especially true for Descartes’ confrontation with Hobbesian materialism in the Third Set of Objections and Replies. Hobbes accepts none of Descartes’ arguments, and the debate gets increasingly heated.*

### **Third Set of Objections (by Hobbes) with Descartes’ Replies**

#### **Against Meditation I: Concerning Those Things That Can Be Called into Doubt**

*Objection I* [by Hobbes]: It is sufficiently obvious from what has been said in this Meditation that there is no κριτήριον [criterion] by which we may distinguish our dreams from the waking state and from true sensation; and for this reason the phantasms we have while awake and using our senses are not accidents inhering in external objects, nor do they prove that such objects do in fact exist. Therefore, if we follow our senses without any other process of reasoning, we will be justified in doubting whether anything exists. Therefore, we acknowledge the truth of this Meditation. But since Plato and other ancient philosophers have discussed this same uncertainty in sensible things, and since it is commonly observed that there is a difficulty in distinguishing waking from dreams, I would have preferred the author, so very distinguished in the realm of new speculations, not to have published these old things.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: The reasons for doubting, which are accepted here as true by the philosopher,

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Latin by Donald Cress.

<sup>2</sup> Mersenne’s main contribution to the philosophy and science of his day was his tireless promotion of scientific activity. He was educated at the Jesuit College of La Fleche (which Descartes also attended). He then entered the order of the Minims, and from his cell at their convent in Paris, acted as the center of a vast correspondence network, bringing together notable philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists. He championed the new science, publishing translations (or paraphrases) of Galileo’s early mechanics and his *Two New Sciences*. For more on Mersenne, see Peter Dear, *Mersenne and the Learning of the Schools* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the *Objections* and *Replies*, see Roger Ariew and Marjorie Grene, eds., *Descartes and His Contemporaries: Meditations, Objections and Replies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Morin was an astrologer, part of the circle around Mersenne, and author of *Quod Deus Sit (That God Exists)*, a short treatise constructed on Euclidean principles, with Definitions, Axioms, and Theorems. For more on Morin, see Daniel Garber, “J.-B. Morin and the *Second Objections*,” 63–82, in R. Ariew and M. Grene, eds., *Descartes and His Contemporaries*.

were proposed by me as merely probable; and I made use of them not to peddle them as something new, but partly to prepare the minds of readers for the consideration of matters geared to the understanding and for distinguishing them from corporeal things, goals for which these arguments seem to me wholly necessary; partly to respond to these same arguments in subsequent Meditations; and partly also to show how firm those truths are that I later propose, given the fact that they cannot be shaken by these metaphysical doubts. And thus, I never sought any praise for recounting them again; but I do not think I could have omitted them any more than a medical writer could omit a description of a disease whose method of treatment he is trying to teach.

### Against Meditation II: Concerning the Nature of the Human Mind

*Objection II* [by Hobbes]: According to Descartes, “I am a thing that thinks”; quite true. For from the fact that I think or have a phantasm, whether I am asleep or awake, it can be inferred that I am thinking, for “I think” means the same thing as “I am thinking.” From the fact that I am thinking it follows that I am, since that which thinks is not nothing. But when he adds “that is, a mind, or soul, or understanding, or reason,” a doubt arises. For it does not seem a valid argument to say, “I am thinking, therefore I am a thought” or “I am understanding; therefore, I am an understanding.” For in the same way I could just as well say, “I am walking; therefore, I am an act of walking.” Thus M. Descartes equates the thing that understands with an act of understanding, which is an act of the thing that understands. Or he at least is equating a thing that understands with the faculty of understanding, which is a power of a thing that understands. Nevertheless, all philosophers draw a distinction between a subject and its faculties and acts, that is, between a subject and its properties and essences; for a being itself is one thing and its essence is another. Therefore, it is possible for a thing that thinks to be the subject in which the mind, reason, or understanding inhere, and therefore this subject may be something corporeal. The opposite is assumed and not proved. Nevertheless, this inference is the basis for the conclusion that M. Descartes seems to want to establish.

In the same passage he says, “I know that I exist; I ask now who is this ‘I’ whom I know. Most cer-

tainly, in the strict sense, the knowledge of this ‘I’ does not depend upon things of whose existence I do not yet have knowledge.”

Certainly, the knowledge of the proposition “I exist” depends on the proposition “I think,” as he rightly instructs us. But what is the source of the knowledge of the proposition “I think”? Certainly, from the mere fact that we cannot conceive any activity without its subject, for example, leaping without one who leaps, knowing without one who knows, or thinking apart from one who thinks.

And from this it seems to follow that a thing that thinks is something corporeal, for the subjects of all acts seem to be understood only in terms of matter, as he later points out in the example of the piece of wax, which, while its color, hardness, shape, and other acts undergo change, is nevertheless understood always to be the same thing, that is, the same matter undergoing a number of changes. However, it is not to be concluded that I think by means of another thought; for although a person can think that he has been thinking (this sort of thinking being merely a case of remembering), nevertheless, it is utterly impossible to think that one thinks, or to know that one knows. For it would involve an infinite series of questions: How do you know that you know that you know that you know?

Therefore, since the knowledge of the proposition “I exist” depends on the knowledge of the proposition “I think,” and the knowledge of this latter proposition depends on the fact that we cannot separate thought from the matter that thinks, it seems we should infer that a thing that thinks is material rather than immaterial.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: Where I said “that is, a mind, or soul, or understanding, or reason,” and so on, I did not understand by these terms merely the faculties, but the thing endowed with the faculty of thinking, and this is what everyone ordinarily has in mind with regard to the first two terms, and the second two terms are often understood in this sense. And I explained this so explicitly and in so many places that there does not seem to be any room for doubt.

Nor is there a parity here between walking and thinking, since walking is ordinarily taken to refer only to the action itself; whereas thought is sometimes taken to refer to an action, sometimes to refer

to a faculty, and sometimes to refer to the thing that has the faculty.

Moreover, I am not asserting that the thing that understands and the act of understanding are identical, nor indeed that the identity of the thing that understands and the faculty of understanding are identical, if “understanding” is taken to refer to a faculty, but only when it is taken for the thing itself that understands. However, I also freely admit that I have used the most abstract terminology possible to signify the thing or substance, which I wanted to divest of all that did not belong to it, just as, contrariwise, the philosopher uses the most concrete terminology possible (namely, “subject,” “matter,” and “body”) to signify a thing that thinks, in order to prevent its being separated from the body.

But I am not concerned that it may seem to someone that the philosopher’s way of joining several things together may be more suitable for finding the truth than mine, wherein I distinguish each single thing as much as possible. But let us put aside verbal disputes and talk about the matter at hand.

He says that it is possible for a thing that thinks to be something corporeal, but the contrary is assumed and not proved. I did not at all assume the contrary, nor did I use it in any way as a basis for my argument. Rather, I left it completely undetermined until the Sixth Meditation, where it is proved.

Then he correctly says that we cannot conceive any act without its subject, such as an act of thinking without a thing that thinks, since that which thinks is not nothing. But then he adds, without any reason at all and contrary to the usual manner of speaking and to all logic, that hence it seems to follow that a thing that thinks is something corporeal; for the subjects of all acts are surely understood from the viewpoint of their being a substance (or even, if you please, from the viewpoint of their being matter, i.e., metaphysical matter), but it does not follow from this that it must be understood from the viewpoint of their being bodies.

However, logicians and people in general are wont to say that some substances are spiritual, while others are corporeal. And the only thing I proved by means of the example of the piece of wax was that color, hardness, and shape do not belong to the essence of the wax. For in that passage I was treating neither the essence of the mind nor that of the body.

Nor is it relevant for the philosopher to say here that one thought cannot be the subject of another thought. For who, besides him, has ever imagined that it could be? But, to explain the matter briefly, it is certainly the case that an act of thinking cannot exist without a thing that thinks, nor in general any act or accident without a substance in which it inheres. However, since we do not immediately know this substance itself through itself, but only through its being a subject of certain acts, it is quite in keeping with the demands of reason and custom for us to call by different names those substances that we recognize to be subjects of obviously different acts or accidents, and afterwards to inquire whether these different names signify one and the same thing. But there are certain acts which we call “corporeal,” such as size, shape, motion, and all the other properties that cannot be thought of apart from their being extended in space; and the substance in which they inhere we call “body.” Nor is it possible to imagine that it is one substance that is the subject of shape and another substance that is the subject of movement from place to place, and so on, since all these acts have in common the one feature of being extended. In addition, there are other acts, which we call “cogitative” (such as understanding, willing, imagining, sensing, and so on), all of which have in common the one feature of thought or perception or consciousness; but the substance in which they inhere we say is “a thing that thinks,” or a “mind,” or any other thing we choose, provided we do not confuse it with corporeal substance, since cogitative acts have no affinity to corporeal acts, and thought, which is the feature they have in common, is utterly different in kind from extension, which is the feature [*ratio*] the others have in common. But after we have formed two distinct concepts of these two substances, it is easy, from what has been said in the Sixth Meditation, to know whether they are one and the same or different.

*Objection III:* “Which of these things is distinct from my thought? Which of them can be said to be separate from myself?” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: Perhaps someone will answer this question thus: I myself who think am distinct from my act of thinking; and, though surely not separated from me, my act of thinking is nevertheless different from me, just as leaping is different from the one who

leaps, as has been said before. But if M. Descartes were to show that he who understands and his understanding are one and the same, we shall lapse into the parlance of the schools: The understanding understands, the sight sees, the will wills, and by an exact analogy, the act of walking or at least the faculty of walking will walk. All of this is obscure, untoward, and most unworthy of that astuteness which is typical of M. Descartes.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: I do not deny that I who think am distinct from my act of thinking, as a thing is distinct from a mode. But when I ask “what then is there that is distinct from my act of thinking?” I understand this to refer to the various modes of thinking that are recounted there, and not to my substance. And when I add “what can be said to be separate from myself?” I have in mind simply that all those modes of thinking are within me. I fail to see what occasion for doubt or obscurity can be imagined here.

*Objection IV*: “It remains then for me to concede that I do not grasp what this piece of wax is through the imagination; rather I conceive<sup>5</sup> it through the mind alone.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: There is a tremendous difference between imagining (that is, having some idea) and conceiving with the mind (that is, concluding by a process of reasoning that something is or exists). But M. Descartes has not explained to us the basis for their being different. Even the ancient peripatetic philosophers have taught clearly enough that a substance is not perceived by the senses, but is inferred by means of arguments.

But what are we to say now, were reasoning perhaps merely the joining together and linking of names or designations by means of the word “is”? It would follow from this that we draw no conclusions whatever by way of argument [*ratione*] about the nature of things. Rather, it is about the designations of things that we draw any conclusions, that is, whether or not we in fact join the names of things in accordance with some convention that we have arbitrarily established regarding the meanings of these terms. If this is the case, as it may well be, then reasoning will depend

upon names, names upon imagination, and imagination perhaps, as I see it, upon the motions of the corporeal organs. And thus the mind will be nothing but movements in certain parts of an organic body.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: I have explained here the difference between imagination and a concept of the pure mind when in the example of the piece of wax I enumerated those things in the wax that we entertain in our imagination and those that we conceive with the mind alone. But I also explained elsewhere how one and the same thing, say a pentagon, can be understood by us in one way and imagined by us in another. However, in reasoning there is a joining together not of names but of things signified by these names; and I marvel that the contrary could enter anyone’s mind. For who doubts that a Frenchman and a German could come to precisely the same conclusions about the very same things, even though they conceive very different words? And does not the philosopher bring about his own undoing when he speaks of conventions that we have arbitrarily established regarding the significations of words? For if he admits that something is being signified by these words, why does he not want our reasonings to be about this something which is signified rather than about mere words? And certainly by the same license with which he concludes that the mind is a motion he could also conclude that the sky is the earth, or whatever else he pleases.

### Against Meditation III: Concerning God

*Objection V*: “Some of these thoughts are like images of things; to these alone does the word ‘idea’ properly apply, as when I think of a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: When I think of a man, I recognize an idea or an image made up of shape and color, concerning which I can doubt whether or not it is the likeness of a man, and likewise, when I think of the sky. When I think of a chimera, I recognize an idea or an image, concerning which I can doubt whether or not it is the likeness of some animal that does not exist but which could exist or which may or may not have existed at some other time.

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<sup>5</sup> Hobbes here misquotes Descartes, who had said (in Med II) that he “perceives,” not conceives.

But a person who is thinking of an angel at times observes in his mind the image of a flame, at other times the image of a beautiful little boy with wings. It seems certain to me that this image bears no resemblance to an angel, and thus is not the idea of an angel. But believing that there are creatures who minister unto God, who are invisible and immaterial, we ascribe the name “angel” to this thing that we believe in and suppose to exist. Nevertheless, the idea which I use to imagine an angel is composed of the ideas of visible things.

It is the same with the sacred name “God”: We have neither an image nor an idea of God. And thus we are forbidden to worship God under the form of an image, lest we seem to conceive him who is inconceivable.

It therefore seems there is no idea in us of God. But just as a person born blind who has often been brought close to a fire, and, feeling himself growing warm, recognizes that there is something that is warming him, and, on hearing that this is called “fire;” concludes that fire exists, even though he does not know what shape or color it has, and has absolutely no idea or image of fire appearing before his mind; just so, a man who knows that there ought to be some cause of his images or ideas, and some other cause prior to this cause, and so on, is led finally to an end of this series, namely to the supposition of some eternal cause which, since it never began to be, cannot have a cause prior to itself, and necessarily concludes that something eternal exists. Nevertheless, he has no idea that he could call the idea of this eternal something; rather he gives a name to this thing he believes in and acknowledges, calling it “God.”

Now since it is from this thesis (namely, that we have an idea of God in our soul) that M. Descartes proceeds to prove this theorem (namely, that God—that is, the supremely powerful, wise creator of the world—exists), he ought to have given a better explanation of this idea of God, and he ought thence to have deduced not only the existence of God but also the creation of the world.

*Reply [by Descartes]:* Here the philosopher wants the word “idea” to be understood to refer exclusively to images that are of material things and are depicted in the corporeal imagination. Once this thesis has been posited, it is easy for him to prove that there is no

proper idea either of an angel or of God. But from time to time throughout the work, and especially in this passage, I point out that I take the word “idea” to refer to whatever is immediately perceived by the mind, so that, when I will or fear something, I number those very acts of willing and fearing among my ideas, since at the same time I perceive that I will and fear. And I used this word because it was common practice for philosophers to use it to signify the forms of perception proper to the divine mind, even though we acknowledge that there is no corporeal imagination in God; moreover, I had no term available to me that was more suitable. However, I think I have given a sufficient explanation of the idea of God to take care of those wishing to pay attention to my meaning; but I could never fully satisfy those preferring to understand my words otherwise than I intend. Finally, what is added here about the creation of the world is utterly irrelevant to the question at hand.

*Objection VI:* “Again there are other thoughts that take different forms: for example, when I will, or fear, or affirm, or deny, there is always something that I grasp as the subject of my thought, yet I embrace in my thought something more than the likeness of that thing. Some of these thoughts are called volitions or affects, while others are called judgments.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: When someone wills or fears, he surely has an image of the thing he fears or the action he wills; but what more it is that a person who wills or fears embraces in his thought is not explained. Although fear is indeed a thought, I fail to see how it can be anything but the thought of the thing that someone fears. For what is the fear of a charging lion if not the idea of a charging lion combined with the effect that such an idea produces in the heart, which induces in a person who is frightened that animal motion we call “flight”? Now this motion of flight is not thought. It remains therefore that there is no thought in fear except the one that consists in the likeness of the thing feared. The same thing could be said of the will.

Moreover, affirmation and negation are not found without language and designations, so that brute animals can neither affirm nor deny, not even in thought, and therefore they cannot make judgments. Nevertheless, a thought can be similar in both man and beast. For when we affirm that a man is running,

the thought we have is no different from the one a dog has when it sees its master running. Therefore, the only thing affirmation or negation adds to simple thoughts is perhaps the thought that the names of which an affirmation is composed are the names of the same thing in the one who affirms. This is not a matter of grasping in thought something more than the likeness of the thing, but merely the same likeness for a second time.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: It is self-evident that seeing a lion and simultaneously fearing it is different from merely seeing it. Likewise seeing a man running is different from affirming to oneself that one sees him, an act which takes place without using language. And I find nothing here that requires an answer.

*Objection VII*: “All that remains for me is to ask how I received this idea of God. For I did not draw it from the senses; it never came upon me unexpectedly, as is usually the case with the ideas of sensible things when these things present themselves (or seem to present themselves) to the external sense organs. Nor was it made by me, for I plainly can neither subtract anything from it nor add anything to it. Thus, the only option remaining is that this idea is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: If there is no idea of God (and it has not been proved that there is one), this entire inquiry falls apart. Moreover, if it is my body that is in question, then the idea of myself originates in me from sight; if it is my soul that is in question, then there is absolutely no idea of the soul. Rather, we infer by means of reasoning that there is something inside the human body that imparts to it the animal motion by which it senses and is moved. And this thing, whatever it is, we call the “soul,” without having an idea of it.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: If there is an idea of God (and it is obvious that there is), this entire objection falls apart. And when he adds that there is no idea of the soul, but rather that the soul is inferred by means of reasoning, this is the same thing as saying that there is no image of it depicted in the corporeal imagination, but that nevertheless there is such a thing as I have called an idea of it.

*Objection VIII*: “But there is another idea, one derived from astronomical reasoning; that is, it is elicited from certain notions innate in me.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: It seems there is at any given moment but a single idea of the sun, regardless of whether it is looked at with the eyes or is understood by reasoning that it is many times larger than it appears. For this latter is not an idea of the sun, but an inference by way of arguments that the idea of the sun would be many times larger were it seen at much closer quarters.

But at different times there can be different ideas of the sun: for example, if it is looked at on one occasion with the naked eye and on another occasion through a telescope. But arguments drawn from astronomy do not make the idea of the sun any greater or smaller; rather, they show that an idea of the sun that is drawn from the senses is deceptive.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: Here too what is said not to be an idea of the sun, and yet is described, is precisely what I call an idea.

*Objection IX*: “Unquestionably, those ideas that exhibit substances to me are something more and, if I may say so, contain within themselves more objective reality than those which represent only modes or accidents. Again, the idea that enables me to understand a supreme deity, eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and creator of all things other than himself, clearly has more objective reality in it than do those ideas through which finite substances are displayed.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: I have frequently remarked above that there is no idea of God or of the soul. I now add that there is no idea of substance, for substance (given that it is matter subject to accidents and changes) is something concluded to solely by a process of reasoning; nevertheless, it is not conceived nor does it display any idea to us. If this is true, how can one say that the ideas that display substances to me are something greater and have more objective reality than those ideas that display accidents to me? Moreover, would M. Descartes please give some thought once again to what he means by “more reality”? Does reality admit of degrees? Or, if he thinks that one thing is greater than another, would he please give some thought to

how this could be explained to our understanding with the same level of astuteness required in all demonstrations, and such as he himself has used on other occasions.

*Reply [by Descartes]:* I have frequently noted that I call an idea that very thing which is concluded to by means of reasoning, as well as anything else that is in any way perceived. Moreover, I have sufficiently explained how reality admits of degrees: namely, in precisely the way that a substance is a thing to a greater degree than is a mode. And if there are real qualities or incomplete substances, these are things to a greater degree than are modes, but to a lesser extent than are complete substances. And finally, if there is an infinite and independent substance, it is a thing to a greater degree than is a finite and dependent substance. But all of this is utterly self-evident.

*Objection X:* “Thus there remains only the idea of God. I must consider whether there is anything in this idea that could not have originated from me. I understand by the word ‘God’ a certain substance that is infinite, independent, supremely intelligent, and supremely powerful, and that created me along with everything else that exists—if anything else exists. Indeed, all these are such that, the more carefully I focus my attention on them, the less possible it seems they could have arisen from myself alone. Thus, from what has been said above, I must conclude that God necessarily exists.” (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: On considering the attributes of God in order thence to have an idea of God and to see whether there is anything in it that could not have proceeded from ourselves, I find, unless I am mistaken, that what we think of that corresponds to the word “God” does not originate with us, nor need it originate with anything but external objects. For by the word “God” I understand a “substance”; that is, I understand that God exists. But I understand this not through an idea but through a process of reasoning. And this substance I understand to be “infinite”; that is, it is something whose boundaries or extremities I cannot conceive or imagine without imagining still more extremities beyond these. From this it follows that what emerges as the correlate of the word “infinite” is not the idea of divine infinity, but that of my own boundaries or limits. This substance I understand to be “independent”; that is, I conceive of no cause

from which God proceeds. Whence it is manifest that I have no idea corresponding to the word “independent” beyond the memory of my own ideas beginning at various times and their resulting dependencies.

Hence to say that God is “independent” is merely to say that God is among the number of those things of whose origin I form no image. In like manner, saying that God is “infinite” is tantamount to our saying that he is among the number of those things whose limits we do not conceive. And thus any idea of God is out of the question, for what sort of idea is it that has neither origin nor boundaries?

God is called “supremely understanding.” I ask here: Through what idea does M. Descartes understand God’s act of understanding?

God is called “supremely powerful.” Again, through what idea do we understand power which is of things yet to come, that is, of things that do not exist? Certainly, I understand power from the image or memory of past actions, concluding to it thus: Something did thus and so; therefore, it was able to do it; and therefore, if it exists as the same thing, it will again be able to do thus and so; that is, it has the power to do something. Now these are all ideas that are capable of having arisen from external objects.

God is called “creator of all that exists.” I can conjure up for myself some image of creation out of what I have observed, such as a man being born or his growing from something as small as a point to the shape and size he now possesses. No one has any other idea corresponding to the word “creator.” However, to prove creation it is not enough to be able to imagine that the world was created. And thus, even if it were demonstrated that something “infinite, independent, supremely powerful, and so on” exists, it still does not follow that a creator exists, unless someone were to believe it is correct to infer from the fact that something exists which we believe to have created all other things that the world has therefore been at some time created by him.

Moreover, when he says that the idea of God and of our soul is innate in us, I would like to know if the souls of those in a deep sleep are thinking. If they are not, then during that time they have no ideas. Whence no idea is innate, for what is innate is always present.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: Nothing that we ascribe to God can originate from external objects, as from an exemplar, since nothing in God bears any resemblance to things found in external, that is, corporeal things. However, if we think of something that is unlike these external objects, it obviously does not originate from them but from the cause of that diversity in our thought.

And I ask here how our philosopher deduces [his conception of] God's understanding from external things. But I easily explain the idea I have of God's understanding by saying that by the word "idea" I understand everything that is the form of some perception. For who is there that does not perceive that he understands something? And thus who is there that does not have that form or idea of an act of understanding, and, by indefinitely extending it, does not form an idea of the divine act of understanding? And the same applies to the rest of God's attributes.

But we used the idea of God which is in us to demonstrate God's existence, and such immense power is contained in this idea that we understand that, if in fact God does exist, it would be contradictory for something other than God to exist without having been created by him. And because of these considerations, it plainly follows, from the fact that his existence has been demonstrated, that it has also been demonstrated that the entire world, that is, all the things other than God that exist, has been created by him.

Finally, when we assert that some idea is innate in us, we do not have in mind that we always notice it (for in that event no idea would ever be innate), but only that we have in ourselves the power to elicit the idea.

*Objection XI*: "The whole force of the argument rests on the fact that I recognize that it would be impossible for me to exist, being of such a nature as I am (namely, having in me the idea of God), unless God did in fact exist. God, I say, that same being the idea of whom is in me." (quoted from Descartes)

[Hobbes]: Since, therefore, it has not been demonstrated that we have an idea of God, and since the Christian religion requires us to believe that God is inconceivable (that is, as I see it, that we have no idea of him), it follows that the existence of God has not been demonstrated, and much less the creation.

*Reply* [by Descartes]: When it is asserted that God is inconceivable, this is understood with respect to a concept that adequately comprehends him. But I have repeated *ad nauseam* how it is we have an idea of God. And nothing at all is asserted here that weakens my demonstrations.

### Study Questions

1. Hobbes suggests that thinking is an activity of corporeal substances. How does Descartes respond by describing spiritual substance as the exercising of that ability?

2. How does Descartes reject Hobbes' claim that reasoning is merely stringing names together?

3. Hobbes claims that our idea of God depends on imagining corporeal objects, and thus that our idea of God should involve his creation of the world. How does Descartes reject this?

4. For Hobbes, we have no "idea" of the soul, only ideas of motions of the body. Why does Descartes reject this?