

Okay, now we come to another great figure: Thomas Hobbes. Much less celebrated in the 17th century, rather notorious in fact. He was called the "monster of Malmesbury". His various works were signed "Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury". Hobbes incidentally is claimed as an alumnus by Hartford College because he attended Maudlin Hall, which was an earlier name of the College. Well, Hobbes took this mechanist view of nature to its extreme. He said yes, material substance does work in more or less the way that Descartes thought, but that's all there is. The only thing there is in nature is physical stuff. There is no immaterial substance at all. So he denied immaterial substance, he denied witchcraft, he denied the existence of magic, that kind of thing. He denied that we should rely on religious revelation. Instead, he wanted to say that the world was basically a mechanical system. And he asserted universal determinism. Accordingly, everything acts in accordance with deterministic physical laws. So, one thing follows another by a causal pattern in which every detail is inevitably determined by what went before. Famously, he also said that one should obey a sovereign in everything, both in religion and morals. And the work he's most famous for is not a work in theoretical philosophy, it's a work in political philosophy: *Leviathan* (1651). This is a very famous frontispiece of *Leviathan*. So Hobbes is particularly notorious for enunciating this very pessimistic view of human nature. Human nature, left to itself, is a war of all against all. We're all desperately striving for what we can get. So the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. How do we avoid that? Well, according to Hobbes' political theory, the only way of avoiding it is for us to club together and agree to erect an absolute sovereign who will have power over us, and whose role is to keep the peace. It helps to understand Hobbes' political theory if you realize that he was around during the English Civil War. He saw the avoidance of civil war as the ultimate thing, the thing more important than anything else, and in order to avoid that civil war, it was worth subjecting oneself to absolute sovereignty. Hobbes is still very much studied today amongst political theorists. He's left a legacy in things like game theory, a general talk. He is notable because he attempts to understand society as a system which has grown out of the solution of practical problems. He doesn't want to appeal to divine revelation. Why not? Because, as we saw last time, different interpretations of divine revelation can lead to people going around killing each other. He doesn't want to appeal to any sort of god-given authority of a king. For the same reason, very practical. He wants to establish political authority on purely naturalistic foundations. So, as I've said, Hobbes is a materialist, and this is the thing, more than anything, that made him notorious at the time. So Descartes, remember, had distinguished between material and immaterial substance. The physical world is made of stuff whose essence is pure extension. But does that mean there's no place for mind? No, Descartes thought that mind, whose essence is thinking, is made of immaterial substance. But Hobbes would have none of that. So he gives this example of abusive words: when men make a name of two names whose significations are contradictory and inconsistent, the result is but insignificant sounds; as this name, an incorporeal body, or, which is all one, an incorporeal substance. Now, you might think Hobbes is having a bit of a joke at Descartes' expense here, because he's giving us an example of an abuse of words. The combination of "body" and "incorporeal" means bodily material, so he's simply saying an incorporeal body is a contradiction in terms. And so, when Descartes tries to appeal to the idea of an immaterial substance as making room for mind, Hobbes just denies it. What about free will? If we are essentially material, if everything we do is determined by material causation, does that leave any room for freedom? Well, you might think not. Many people think not. But Hobbes was a compatibilist. He thought free will and determinism are compatible. And he achieves that by defining freedom in an appropriate way. "Liberty, or freedom, signifies properly the absence of opposition. By opposition, I mean external impediments of motion. A free man is he that, in those things which by his strength and wit he is able to do, is not hindered to do what he has a

will to." So, suppose there's something I want to do. I want to take a drink of water, for example. Well, am I hindered in doing so? No, I'm able to do it. So, I'm free. The fact that my wanting that and all the movements of my body in achieving it were physically determined doesn't in any way prevent my being free, according to Hobbes' definition. So, Hobbes is the first classic compatibilist. We'll be seeing that later when we come to discuss free will, a very, very influential position. Now, materialism is obviously rather difficult to reconcile with traditional religious beliefs. Most people do not think of God and the Angels as being material. Hobbes did, or seems to have done. Clearly, there's a major problem with immortality. If you believe that everything is material, we know what happens to material bodies after people die. If the material body is all there is, it's hard to see how there can be any afterlife, let alone immortality. So, it's not surprising that many at the time took Hobbes to be an atheist. In 1666, the English Parliament cited his atheism as the probable cause of the plague and the Fire of London. So, there was a debate in Parliament as to whether he should be arrested and punished for having been the cause of this divine displeasure. In 1683, his books were publicly burned in Oxford because of their "damnable doctrines, false, seditious, and impious, and most of them also heretical and blasphemous and destructive of all government." A rather amusing episode in Cambridge, well, not amusing for Daniel Scargill, who got expelled from his fellowship for being a "Hobbist," in other words, a follower of Hobbes. He tried to get it back by recanting, by saying, "Okay, I fess up, I was a Hobbist, but "I'm not anymore." And his recantation is really rather funny. "I have lately ventured and publicly sworn "to certain diverse wicked, blasphemous, "and atheistic opinions, professing that "I glory to be anti-Mahometam beast, "and an atheist, agreeably unto which principles "I have lived, in grapes, lice, urine, nests, "swearing rashly, drinking intemperately, "corrupting others." So the assumption at the time, of course, was that if you were an atheist, there was nothing to make you moral. Morality, most people assumed, comes from God. And moreover, the safeguard of morality is punishment in an afterlife for those who are wicked. So most people at the time tended to assume that if you were an atheist, you were bound to be wicked. And here, Daniel Scargill was going along with that idea. So Hobbes was very much a bogeyman, and he remained a bogeyman for a long time. Even David Hume, who was influenced quite a lot by Hobbes in various ways, hardly mentions him. If you were influenced by Hobbes, you didn't say so. Hobbes was only to be mentioned in order to be refuted. Hence, "monster of Malmesbury." So, how was he to be refuted? Well, the main argument that was used against materialism was to insist that there were certain things that matter could not do. Remember the key role of inertia? Aristotle thought that things have natural desires, strivings, that lead them to do certain things, like striving to reach the center of the universe. Galileo and Descartes replaced that with the idea of inertia. Matter is passive. It just keeps going in the same direction at the same speed until it's acted upon by a force. So remember the sledge moving over flat ice? What requires explanation is not why it keeps going, but why it stops. Well, if matter is necessarily passive, and that seemed very much to be supported by the physical theory, then activity cannot come from matter. Activity must come from mind. So there must be something other than matter. And in particular, mental activity, thought, seems entirely beyond the capacity of matter. Matter, well, that's just bits of stuff in motion, bashing into each other and so forth. How can that give rise to thought? And this argument was a very popular one. I mean, look at those dates. And these are just the big figures. Okay, there were dozens of people writing against materialism by appeal to this sort of argument.