

According to Hobbes, when an enthusiast feels connected to God, or feels moved by the Holy Spirit to reject the teachings of the established church or the commands of the king, he's only responding to the effects of his physical senses. People who think that God is speaking to them are mistaken; they are being led astray by their minds.

Hobbes's Politics

Because people's minds are not reliable, according to Hobbes, people can't be trusted to coexist peacefully with one another. They're naturally prone to fight with one another unless they have a strong government to keep them in line. Without government, said Hobbes, we would all be living in "the state of nature," a dog-eat-dog world where there is no peace. In Hobbes's famous words, life in the state of nature is "nasty, brutish, and short."



FASCINATING FACT

Hobbes's idea that the people should decide how they are to be ruled sets the stage for the "social contract" proposed some years later by John Locke. According to this concept, society makes a kind of contract with itself to give power to a ruling body. (See Chapter 14.)

Therefore we need to be obedient to a strong ruler, the king, who will protect us from one another and from ourselves. In some ways, of course, this idea was very conservative, since it defended the traditional form of government.

At the same time, though, it put a new wrinkle into the idea of kingship. Hobbes revised the idea that kings ruled by "divine right." According to him, it isn't the king's majesty or God's will that make kingship what it is; it's the people who get together and say "be our king."

Hobbes's political views were more severe than those of his countryman and younger contemporary, John Locke. He recommended extreme measures in governing, much as Machiavelli did in the preceding century, to secure stability for his country, which was going through civil war. Hobbes wanted people to stop fighting and relinquish control to a single ruler.

Experimentation

The early scientists, Hobbes's contemporaries, also wanted the fighting to stop. But unlike Hobbes, they didn't think a strong ruler was the solution. Rather, it was science and the rational mind that would come to the rescue. Once people stopped fighting and took time to think, they would come to a reasonable agreement. They used science as a way to practice working out problems and disagreements.

Hobbes did not say that all of these spiritual enthusiasts were deliberately trying to fool people. Instead, he said that their ideas about God had made them crazy. In response, he developed a philosophy based on the material workings of nature in which the mind is a physical thing.

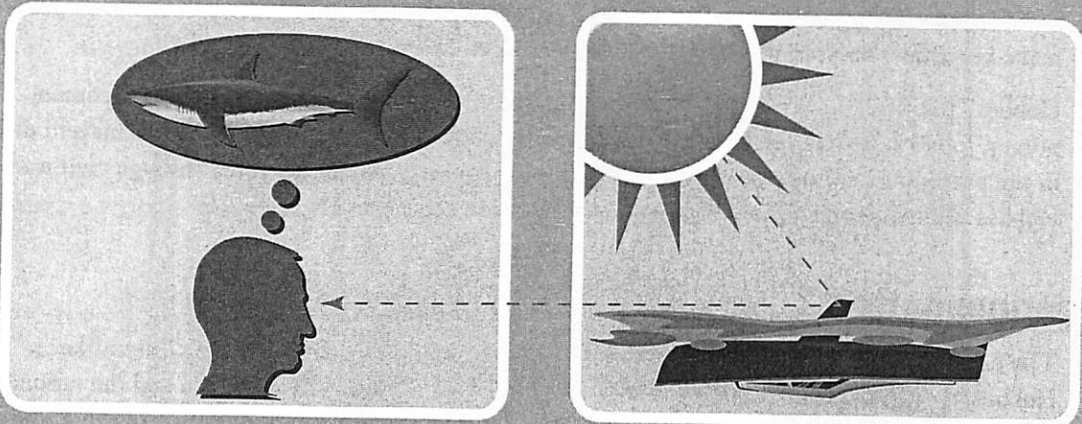
**FASCINATING FACT**

It is said that Hobbes used to sing in bed before going to sleep because he thought it was good for his lungs—a clear example of his mechanistic view of the human body.

Mind as Machine

Hobbes believed that the senses and the brain mechanically produce all thoughts and sensations. When we perceive something, let's say a dandelion, what is really happening is that light is bouncing off the plant and striking our eyes. The nerves and tissues in our eyes react to the light and send a signal to our brain that produces our impression of the dandelion. Reality, in other words, is mediated by our senses, which physically produce perceptions inside the mind.

In other words, our senses and our minds work like machines. The problem is that these machines don't always tell us the truth, but instead often tell us things that we want to believe or things that we are afraid might be true.

Thinking Machines

most of the world in terms of these natural principles, but he still left room for God and spirituality in the workings of the mind.

Even so, not everybody agreed with Descartes's view of the dualistic—spiritual and material—mind. One of the strongest opponents to the idea of spirituality was Bacon's friend, the Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679).

Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Hobbes is most famous for his political philosophy, which argues that people ought to obey the king, even if he's a tyrant. If we don't, says Hobbes, we'll all end up killing and stealing from one another. We need a strong ruler to keep us in line and we must be loyal to this ruler even if he treats his subjects harshly. This argument is set forth in Hobbes's famous work *The Leviathan*.

A leviathan is a huge beast like a whale or a sea monster. Hobbes suggests that, without a strong ruler, human society is big and monstrous. In fact, according to Hobbes's view, society is pretty big and monstrous even *with* a ruler. In his words, "the condition of man is a condition of war of everyone against everyone."

Materialism

This political philosophy is based on Hobbes's materialistic philosophy of nature and of the mind. Nature, according to Hobbes, is completely made up of material matter. There's nothing spiritual or magical about it. This view of nature is in keeping with the scientific view suggested by Bacon and later taken up by others.



REALITY CHECK

Hobbes's view of religious enthusiasts helped promote the idea that people are crazy if their way of thinking benefits them socially and economically. Today, most people think the opposite is true—if your ideas don't help you, there's something wrong with the way you think!

The mind, according to Hobbes, is completely physical. Hobbes disliked the idea of spirit in the mind, because he felt it led people to cause trouble by claiming that they were directly in contact with God. In fact, in Hobbes's day, people were using spirituality as an excuse to disobey the government and the Church.

These "enthusiasts" as they were called, did not like being told what to believe by the Church of England. They had an even bigger dislike for having to pay taxes to support the Church. Frustration with established religion and with an authoritarian government came out in the form of fervent spirituality, or as they said, *enthusiasm*.