AUTHOR'S REPLIES TO THE SIXTH SET OF OBJECTIONS

1. It is true that no one can be certain that he is thinking or that he exists unless he knows what thought is and what existence is. But this does not require reflective knowledge, or the kind of knowledge that is acquired by means of demonstrations; still less does it require knowledge of reflective knowledge, i.e. knowing that we know, and knowing that we know that we know, and so on ad infinitum. This kind of knowledge cannot possibly be obtained about anything. It is quite sufficient that we should know it by that internal awareness which always precedes reflective knowledge. This inner awareness of one's thought and existence is so innate in all men that, although we may pretend that we do not have it if we are overwhelmed by preconceived opinions and pay more attention to words than to their meanings, we cannot in fact fail to have it. Thus when anyone notices that he is thinking and that it follows from this that he exists, even though he may never before have asked what thought is or what existence is, he still cannot fail to have sufficient knowledge of them both to satisfy himself in this regard.

2. When someone notices that he is thinking, then, given that he understands what motion is, it is quite impossible that he should believe that he is mistaken and is 'not thinking but merely in motion'. Since the idea or notion which he has of thought is quite different from his idea of corporeal motion, he must necessarily understand the one as different from the other. Because, however, he is accustomed to attribute many different properties to one and the same subject without being aware of any connection between them, he may possibly be inclined to doubt, or may even affirm, that he is one and the same being who thinks and who moves from place to place. Notice that if we have different ideas of two things, there are two ways in which they can be taken to be one and the same thing: either in virtue of the unity or identity of their nature, or else merely in respect of unity of composition. For example, the ideas which we have of shape and of motion are not the same, nor are our ideas of understanding and volition, nor are those of bones and flesh, nor are those of thought and of an extended thing. But nevertheless we clearly

1 Above p. 278.  2 Ibid.

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perceive that the same substance which is such that it is capable of taking on a shape is also such that it is capable of being moved, and hence that that which has shape and that which is mobile are one and the same in virtue of a unity of nature. Similarly, the thing that understands and the thing that wills are one and the same in virtue of a unity of nature. But our perception is different in the case of the thing that we consider under the form of bone and that which we consider under the form of flesh; and hence we cannot take them as one and the same thing in virtue of a unity of nature but can regard them as the same only in respect of unity of composition—i.e. in so far as it is one and the same animal which has bones and flesh. But now the question is whether we perceive that a thinking thing and an extended thing are one and the same by a unity of nature. That is to say, do we find between thought and extension the same kind of affinity or connection that we find between shape and motion, or understanding and volition? Alternatively, when they are said to be ‘one and the same’ is this not rather in respect of unity of composition, in so far as they are found in the same man, just as bones and flesh are found in the same animal? The latter view is the one I maintain, since I observe a distinction or difference in every respect between the nature of an extended thing and that of a thinking thing, which is no less than that to be found between bones and flesh.

However, you go on to say that no one has been able to grasp this demonstration of mine.1 In case this appeal to authority may prejudice the truth, I am compelled to reply that even though not many people have yet examined the demonstration, there are nevertheless several who affirm that they understand it. One witness who has sailed to America and says that he has seen the antipodes deserves more credence than a thousand others who deny their existence merely because they have no knowledge of them. And similarly, those who give due consideration to the true force of an argument will have more respect for the authority of one person who says that he has understood a proof correctly, than they will accord to a thousand others who claim, without providing any argument to back up their case, that it cannot be understood by anyone. For the fact that such people fail to understand the argument themselves does not prevent anyone else’s understanding it; indeed, the very fact that they infer its general unintelligibility from their own failure to understand it shows that their reasoning is careless, and that they do not deserve to have their views accepted.

Lastly, my critics ask whether I have used my method of analysis to separate off all the motions of that rarefied matter of mine. Is this (they ask) what makes me certain? And can I therefore show my critics, who

1 Above p. 278.
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are most attentive and (they think) reasonably perceptive men, that it is self-contradictory that our thought should be reduced to corporeal motions? By 'reduced' I take it that they mean that our thought and corporeal motions are one and the same. My reply is that I am very certain of this point, but I cannot guarantee that others can be convinced of it, however attentive they may be, and however keen, in their own judgement, their powers of perception may be. I cannot guarantee that they will be persuaded, at least so long as they focus their attention not on things which are objects of pure understanding but only on things which can be imagined. This mistake has obviously been made by those who have imagined that the distinction between thought and motion is to be understood by making divisions within some kind of rarefied matter. The only way of understanding the distinction is to realize that the notions of a thinking thing and an extended or mobile thing are completely different, and independent of each other; and it is self-contradictory to suppose that things that we clearly understand as different and independent could not be separated, at least by God. Thus, however often we find them in one and the same subject — e.g. when we find thought and corporeal motion in the same man — we should not therefore think that they are one and the same in virtue of a unity of nature, but should regard them as the same only in respect of unity of composition.

3. The view here advanced in connection with the Platonists and their followers has now been rejected by the entire Catholic Church and is commonly dismissed by all philosophers. The Lateran Council did conclude that angels could be depicted, but did not, in so doing, grant that they were corporeal. And even if they really were believed to be corporeal, it would certainly not be intelligible to suppose their minds to be inseparable from their bodies, any more than it is in the case of men. Again, even if the human soul were supposed to be passed on in procreation, it could not be concluded from this that it was corporeal, but only that it was derived from the soul of the parents, just as the body grows from the parents' body. As for dogs and apes, even if I were to concede that they have thought, it would not in any way follow from this that the human mind is not distinct from the body; the conclusion would rather be that in other animals, too, the mind is distinct from the body. This was the view taken by those same Platonists whose authority my critics were extolling a moment ago, as is clear from the fact that they followed the Pythagoreans in believing in the transmigration of souls. But in fact the brutes possess no thought whatsoever; I not only stated this, as my critics here imply, but proved it by very strong arguments which no

1 Ibid. 2 Above pp. 278f.
one has refuted up till now. Yet those who assert, as if they were present in the animals’ hearts, that ‘dogs when awake know that they are running, and in their dreams know that they are barking,’ I am simply saying something without proving it. My critics go on to say that they do not believe that the ways in which the beasts operate can be explained ‘by means of mechanics without invoking any sensation, life or soul’ (I take this to mean ‘without invoking thought’; for I accept that the brutes have what is commonly called ‘life’, and a corporeal soul and organic sensation); moreover, they are ‘ready to wager any amount that this is an impossible and ridiculous claim’. But these remarks should not be taken to constitute an argument, for the same could be said of any other claim, however true it might be. Indeed the use of wagers in debate is generally resorted to only when there is a lack of arguments to prove the case; and since once upon a time distinguished people used to laugh at claims about the antipodes in just such a fashion, I do not think that a claim should be immediately dismissed as false just because some people laugh at it.

My critics add in conclusion: ‘There are plenty of people who will say that man himself lacks sensation and intellect, and can do everything by means of mechanical structures, without any mind, given that apes, dogs and elephants can perform all their operations by mechanical means.’ This is surely not an argument that proves anything, except perhaps that some people have such a confused conception of everything and cling so tenaciously to their preconceived opinions (which they understand only in a verbal way) that rather than change them they will deny of themselves what they cannot fail to experience within themselves all the time. We cannot fail constantly to experience within ourselves that we are thinking. It may be shown that animate brutes can perform all their operations without any thought, but this does not entitle anyone to infer that he does not himself think. Such an inference would be made only by someone who has previously been convinced that he operates in exactly the same way as the brutes, simply because he has attributed thought to them; he then remains so stubbornly attached to the sentence ‘Men and the brutes operate in the same way’ that when it is pointed out to him that the brutes do not think, he actually prefers to deny his own thought, of which he cannot fail to be aware, rather than change his opinion that he operates in the same way as the brutes. But I find it hard to accept that there are many people of this sort. It will be found that the great majority, given the premise that thought is not distinct from corporeal motion, take a much more rational line and maintain that thought is the same in the brutes as it is in us, since they observe all kinds of corporeal motions in them, just as in us. And they will add that ‘the difference,

1 Above p. 179.  2 Ibid.
which is merely one of degree, does not imply any essential difference;\(^1\) from this they will be quite justified in concluding that, although there may be a smaller degree of reason in the beasts than there is in us, the beasts possess minds which are of exactly the same type as ours.

4. As for the kind of knowledge possessed by the atheist,\(^2\) it is easy to demonstrate that it is not immutable and certain. As I have stated previously, the less power the atheist attributes to the author of his being, the more reason he will have to suspect that his nature may be so imperfect as to allow him to be deceived even in matters which seem utterly evident to him.\(^3\) And he will never be able to be free of this doubt until he recognizes that he has been created by a true God who cannot be a deceiver.

5. The assertion that it is self-contradictory that men should be deceived by God\(^4\) is clearly demonstrated from the fact that the form of deception is non-being, towards which the supreme being cannot tend. On this point all theologians are agreed, and the entire certainty of the Christian faith depends on it. For why should we believe what God has revealed to us if we thought that we were from time to time deceived by him? And although the theologians commonly say that the damned are tormented by the fires of hell, they do not therefore believe that they are deceived by the false idea of a tormenting fire which God has implanted in them; rather they think that the damned are tormented by a real fire, since 'just as the incorporeal spirit of a living man is naturally confined within the body, so after death it can easily be confined in corporeal fire, through the power of God', etc. See the Master of the Sentences, Book iv Distinction 44.\(^5\)

As for the passages cited from Scripture, I do not regard it as my job to comment on them, except when they seem to be in conflict with an opinion that is peculiar to me. For when the Scriptures are invoked against opinions which are common to all Christians, such as the opinions attacked here (e.g. that something can be known and that human souls are not like those of animals), I should be afraid of being accused of arrogance if I did not choose to be content with the replies already discovered by others, rather than thinking up new answers of my own. For I have never become involved in theological studies except in so far as they contributed to my private instruction, nor am I conscious of having so much divine grace within me that I feel a vocation for such sacred studies. So I hereby declare that in future I will refuse to comment on questions of this kind; but I will make an exception just this once, to avoid giving anyone an excuse to think that I am keeping silent because I cannot give an adequate explanation of the passages cited.

\(^{1}\) Ibid. \(^{2}\) Above p. 279. \(^{3}\) Cf. Med. i, above p. 14. \(^{4}\) Above pp. 279f. \(^{5}\) The 'Magister Sententiarum' was the twelfth-century theologian Peter Lombard, whose Sentences became a standard theological textbook.
First, then, I maintain that the passage from St Paul¹ to Corinthians, Chapter 8, verse 2, should be understood to refer only to knowledge which is not conjoined with love, i.e. to the knowledge possessed by atheists; for if anyone knows God as he should, he cannot fail to adore him or to have love. This is proved by the words that come just before those cited, ‘Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth’, and also by the words which immediately follow: ‘If anyone loveth God, the same (i.e. God) is known by him.’ Thus the apostle does not mean that we cannot possess any knowledge, for he admits that those who love God know him, i.e. have knowledge of him. He merely says that those who do not have love, and hence do not have sufficient knowledge of God, do not know things as they ought to know them, even though they may think they have some knowledge in other matters; for we must begin with knowledge of God, and our knowledge of all other things must then be subordinated to this single initial piece of knowledge, as I explained in my Meditations.² Thus this very passage which is invoked against me so openly confirms my own opinion on the subject that I do not think that those who disagree with me can possibly give a correct explanation of it. If anyone maintains that the phrase ‘the same’ refers not to God but to the man who is known and approved of God, then a passage from another apostle, namely St John, in the First Epistle, Chapter 2, wholly supports my interpretation. Verse 2 reads as follows: ‘And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.’³ Again, Chapter 4, verse 7 reads: ‘Everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.’

The same reasoning applies to the passages cited from Ecclesiastes.⁴ It should be noted that in this book Solomon is not adopting the role of an unbeliever but speaking in his own right, as a sinner who had previously turned away from God and is now repenting. He says that while he merely employed human wisdom and did not refer it to God, he was unable to find anything that was wholly satisfying, or which did not contain vanity. Because of this he warns us in various passages that we should turn to God, and he makes this explicit in Chapter 11, verse 9: ‘Know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to judgement’; the message is continued in what follows up to the end of the book. More specifically, in Chapter 8, verse 17, the words ‘then I understood that of all the works of God man can find no reason for those that are done under the sun’ are to be taken to refer not to any man, but to the man described in the preceding verse: ‘There is a man that neither by day or night taketh sleep with his eyes.’ It is as if the prophet wanted to warn us here that

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¹ Above p. 280.
³ The verse in question is in fact verse 3.
⁴ Above p. 280.
those who are too assiduous in their studies are not suited to the pursuit of truth; and those who know me will certainly find it hard to suppose that this saying applies to me. But we should pay special attention to the phrase 'those things that are done under the sun'. This phrase frequently recurs in the book, and always refers to natural things, leaving out their subordination to God; this is because God is above all things, and hence is not included in those which are under the sun. Thus the true sense of the passage cited is that man cannot achieve correct knowledge of natural things so long as he does not know God, which is just what I too have asserted. Finally, in Chapter 3, verse 19, the statements 'The death of man is as the death of the beasts' and 'Man hath no pre-eminence above a beast' are obviously intended to apply only to the body; for the passage mentions only things which belong to the body. Immediately afterwards we find a separate comment about the soul: 'Who knoweth if the spirit of the sons of Adam goeth upward and if the spirit of the beasts goeth downward?' In other words, who knows whether human souls are destined to enjoy celestial bliss, so long as man relies on human reasoning and does not turn to God? Now I have certainly tried to prove by natural reason that the human soul is not corporeal, but I grant that only faith can enable us to know whether it will ascend above.

6. As for the freedom of the will, the way in which it exists in God is quite different from the way in which it exists in us. It is self-contradictory to suppose that the will of God was not indifferent from eternity with respect to everything which has happened or will ever happen; for it is impossible to imagine that anything is thought of in the divine intellect as good or true, or worthy of belief or action or omission, prior to the decision of the divine will to make it so. I am not speaking here of temporal priority: I mean that there is not even any priority of order, or nature, or of 'rationally determined reason' as they call it, such that God's idea of the good impelled him to choose one thing rather than another. For example, God did not will the creation of the world in time because he saw that it would be better this way than if he had created it from eternity; nor did he will that the three angles of a triangle should be equal to two right angles because he recognized that it could not be otherwise, and so on. On the contrary, it is because he willed to create the world in time that it is better this way than if he had created it from eternity; and it is because he willed that the three angles of a triangle should necessarily equal two right angles that this is true and cannot be otherwise; and so on in other cases. There is no problem in the fact that the merit of the saints may be said to be the cause of their obtaining eternal life; for it is not the cause of this reward in the sense that it

1 Above pp. 286ff.
determines God to will anything, but is merely the cause of an effect of
which God willed from eternity that it should be the cause. Thus the
supreme indifference to be found in God is the supreme indication of his
omnipotence. But as for man, since he finds that the nature of all
goodness and truth is already determined by God, and his will cannot
tend towards anything else, it is evident that he will embrace what is
good and true all the more willingly, and hence more freely, in
proportion as he sees it more clearly. He is never indifferent except when
he does not know which of the two alternatives is the better or truer, or
at least when he does not see this clearly enough to rule out any
possibility of doubt. Hence the indifference which belongs to human
freedom is very different from that which belongs to divine freedom. The
fact that the essences of things are said to be indivisible is not relevant
here. For, firstly, no essence can belong univocally to both God and his
creatures; and, secondly, indifference does not belong to the essence of
human freedom, since not only are we free when ignorance of what is
right makes us indifferent, but we are also free — indeed at our freest —
when a clear perception impels us to pursue some object.

7. My conception of the surface by which I think our senses are
affected is exactly the same as the normal conception which all
mathematicians and philosophers have (or should have), when they
distinguish a surface from a body and suppose it to be wholly lacking in
depth. But the term ‘surface’ is used in two senses by mathematicians. In
one sense they use the term of a body whose length and breadth alone
they are studying and which is considered quite apart from any depth it
may have, even though the possession of some degree of depth is not
ruled out; alternatively, they use the term simply for a mode of body, in
which case all depth is completely denied. So to avoid this ambiguity I
stated that I was thinking of the surface which is merely a mode and hence
cannot be a part of a body. For a body is a substance, and a mode cannot
be a part of a substance. But I did not deny that the surface is the boundary
of a body; on the contrary it can quite properly be called the boundary of
the contained body as much as of the containing one, in the sense in
which bodies are said to be contiguous when their boundaries are
together. For when two bodies are in mutual contact there is a single
boundary common to both which is a part of neither; it is the same mode
of each body, and it can remain even though the bodies are removed,
provided only that other bodies of exactly the same size and shape take
take their places. Indeed, the kind of place characterized by the Aristotelians
as ‘the surface of the surrounding body’ can be understood to be a
surface in no other sense but this, namely as something which is not a

1 Above p. 281. 2 Ibid.
substance but a mode. For the place where a tower is does not change even though the air which surrounds it is replaced, or even if another body is substituted for the tower; and hence the surface, which is here taken to be the place, is not a part either of the surrounding air or of the tower.¹

In order to demolish the doctrine of the reality of accidents, I do not think we need to look for any arguments beyond those I have already deployed. First, since all sense-perception occurs through contact, only the surface of a body can be the object of sense-perception; yet if there were real accidents they would have to be something different from the surface, which is nothing but a mode; and hence, if there are any real accidents, they cannot be perceived by the senses. But surely the only reason why people have thought that accidents exist is that they have supposed that they are perceived by the senses. Secondly, it is completely contradictory that there should be real accidents, since whatever is real cannot exist separately from any other subject; yet anything that can exist separately in this way is a substance, not an accident. The claim that real accidents cannot be separated from their subjects 'naturally', but only by the power of God, is irrelevant. For to occur 'naturally' is nothing other than to occur through the ordinary power of God, which in no way differs from his extraordinary power – the effect on the real world is exactly the same. Hence if everything which can naturally exist without a subject is a substance, anything that can exist without a substance even through the power of God, however extraordinary, should also be termed a substance. I do admit that one substance can be attributed to another substance; yet when this happens it is not the substance itself which has the form of an accident, but only the mode of attribution. Thus when clothing is the attribute of a man, it is not the clothing itself which is the accident, but merely 'being clothed'. But the principal argument which induced philosophers to posit real accidents was that they thought that sense-perception could not be explained without them, and this is why I promised to give a very detailed account of sense-perception in my writings on physics, taking each sense in turn. Not that I want any of my results to be taken on trust; but I thought that the explanation of vision which I had already given in the Optics would make it easy for the judicious reader to guess what I was capable of accomplishing with regard to the remaining senses.²

8. If anyone attends to the immeasurable greatness of God he will find it manifestly clear that there can be nothing whatsoever which does not depend on him³ This applies not just to everything that subsists, but to

³ Cf. above p. 281.
all order, every law, and every reason for anything’s being true or good. If this were not so, then, as noted a little earlier, God would not have been completely indifferent with respect to the creation of what he did in fact create. If some reason for something’s being good had existed prior to his preordination, this would have determined God to prefer those things which it was best to do. But on the contrary, just because he resolved to prefer those things which are now to be done, for this very reason, in the words of Genesis, ‘they are very good’; in other words, the reason for their goodness depends on the fact that he exercised his will to make them so. There is no need to ask what category of causality is applicable to the dependence of this goodness upon God, or to the dependence on him of other truths, both mathematical and metaphysical. For since the various kinds of cause were enumerated by thinkers who did not, perhaps, attend to this type of causality, it is hardly surprising that they gave no name to it. But in fact they did give it a name, for it can be called efficient causality, in the sense that a king may be called the efficient cause of a law, although the law itself is not a thing which has physical existence, but is merely what they call a ‘moral entity’. Again, there is no need to ask how God could have brought it about from eternity that it was not true that twice four make eight, and so on; for I admit this is unintelligible to us. Yet on the other hand I do understand, quite correctly, that there cannot be any class of entity that does not depend on God; I also understand that it would have been easy for God to ordain certain things such that we men cannot understand the possibility of their being otherwise than they are. And therefore it would be irrational for us to doubt what we do understand correctly just because there is something which we do not understand and which, so far as we can see, there is no reason why we should understand. Hence we should not suppose that eternal truths depend on the human intellect or on other existing things; they depend on God alone, who, as the supreme legislator, has ordained them from eternity.

9. If we are to get a clear view of what sort of certainty attaches to the senses, we must distinguish three grades of sensory response. The first is limited to the immediate stimulation of the bodily organs by external objects; this can consist in nothing but the motion of the particles of the organs, and any change of shape and position resulting from this motion. The second grade comprises all the immediate effects produced in the mind as a result of its being united with a bodily organ which is affected in this way. Such effects include the perceptions of pain, pleasure, thirst, hunger, colours, sound, taste, smell, heat, cold and the like, which arise from the union and as it were the intermingling of mind and body, as

1 Cf. above p. 281.
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explained in the Sixth Meditation.1 The third grade includes all the judgements about things outside us which we have been accustomed to make from our earliest years – judgements which are occasioned by the movements of these bodily organs.

For example, when I see a stick, it should not be supposed that certain 'intentional forms' fly off the stick towards the eye,2 but simply that rays of light are reflected off the stick and set up certain movements in the optic nerve and, via the optic nerve, in the brain, as I have explained at some length in the Optics.3 This movement in the brain, which is common to us and the brutes, is the first grade of sensory response. This leads to the second grade, which extends to the mere perception of the colour and light reflected from the stick; it arises from the fact that the mind is so intimately conjoined with the body that it is affected by the movements which occur in it. Nothing more than this should be referred to the sensory faculty, if we wish to distinguish it carefully from the intellect. But suppose that, as a result of being affected by this sensation of colour, I judge that a stick, located outside me, is coloured; and suppose that on the basis of the extension of the colour and its boundaries together with its position in relation to the parts of the brain, I make a rational calculation about the size, shape and distance of the stick; although such reasoning is commonly assigned to the senses (which is why I have here referred it to the third grade of sensory response), it is clear that it depends solely on the intellect. I demonstrated in the Optics how size, distance and shape can be perceived by reasoning alone, which works out any one feature from the other features. The only difference is that when we now make a judgement for the first time because of some new observation, then we attribute it to the intellect; but when from our earliest years we have made judgements, or even rational inferences, about the things which affect our senses, then, even though these judgements were made in exactly the same way as those we make now, we refer them to the senses. The reason for this is that we make the calculation and judgement at great speed because of habit, or rather we remember the judgements we have long made about similar objects; and so we do not distinguish these operations from simple sense-perception.

It is clear from this that when we say 'The reliability of the intellect is much greater than that of the senses',4 this means merely that when we are grown up the judgements which we make as a result of various new observations are more reliable than those which we formed without any reflection in our early childhood; and this is undoubtedly true. It is clear that we are not here dealing with the first and second grades of sensory

1 Above pp. 16ff.
2 Cf. footnote, p. 174.
3 See Vol 1, pp. 169ff.
4 Above pp. 281f.
response, because no falsity can occur in them. Hence when people say that a stick in water 'appears bent because of refraction', this is the same as saying that it appears to us in a way which would lead a child to judge that it was bent — and which may even lead us to make the same judgement, following the preconceived opinions which we have become accustomed to accept from our earliest years. But I cannot grant my critics' further comment that this error is corrected 'not by the intellect but by the sense of touch'. As a result of touching it, we may judge that the stick is straight, and the kind of judgement involved may be the kind we have been accustomed to make since childhood, and which is therefore referred to as the 'sense' of touch. But the sense alone does not suffice to correct the visual error: in addition we need to have some degree of reason which tells us that in this case we should believe the judgement based on touch rather than that elicited by vision. And since we did not have this power of reasoning in our infancy, it must be attributed not to the senses but to the intellect. Thus even in the very example my critics produce, it is the intellect alone which corrects the error of the senses; and it is not possible to produce any case in which error results from our trusting the operation of the mind more than the senses.

10. My critics' remaining comments\(^2\) are put forward as doubts rather than as objections, and I am not so confident of my powers as to venture to guarantee that I shall be able to give a satisfactory explanation of matters which I see still give rise to doubt in the minds of many learned and highly intelligent men. But nevertheless, so as not to desert the cause, I will do what I can and give a frank account of how it happened that I managed to free myself entirely from these same doubts. In so doing, I shall be delighted if my comments are perhaps of some help to others; and if they are not, I shall at least not feel myself to have made any rash promises.

When, on the basis of the arguments set out in these Meditations, I first drew the conclusion that the human mind is really distinct from the body, better known than the body, and so on, I was compelled to accept these results because everything in the reasoning was coherent and was inferred from quite evident principles in accordance with the rules of logic. But I confess that for all that I was not entirely convinced; I was in the same plight as astronomers who have established by argument that the sun is several times larger than the earth, and yet still cannot prevent themselves judging that it is smaller, when they actually look at it. However, I went on from here, and proceeded to apply the same fundamental principles to the consideration of physical things. First I attended to the ideas or notions of each particular thing which I found

\(^1\) Above p. 282.  \(^2\) Ibid.
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within myself, and I carefully distinguished them one from the other so that all my judgements should match them. I observed as a result that nothing whatever belongs to the concept of body except the fact that it is something which has length, breadth and depth and is capable of various shapes and motions; moreover, these shapes and motions are merely modes which no power whatever can cause to exist apart from body. But colours, smells, tastes and so on, are, I observed, merely certain sensations which exist in my thought, and are as different from bodies as pain is different from the shape and motion of the weapon which produces it. And lastly, I observed that heaviness and hardness and the power to heat or to attract, or to purge, and all the other qualities which we experience in bodies, consist solely in the motion of bodies, or its absence, and the configuration and situation of their parts.

Since these opinions were completely different from those which I had previously held regarding physical things, I next began to consider what had led me to take a different view before. The principal cause, I discovered, was this. From infancy I had made a variety of judgements about physical things in so far as they contributed to preserving the life which I was embarking on; and subsequently I retained the same opinions I had originally formed of these things. But at that age the mind employed the bodily organs less correctly than it now does, and was more firmly attached to them; hence it had no thoughts apart from them and perceived things only in a confused manner. Although it was aware of its own nature and had within itself an idea of thought as well as an idea of extension, it never exercised its intellect on anything without at the same time picturing something in the imagination. It therefore took thought and extension to be one and the same thing, and referred to the body all the notions which it had concerning things related to the intellect. Now I had never freed myself from these preconceived opinions in later life, and hence there was nothing that I knew with sufficient distinctness, and there was nothing I did not suppose to be corporeal; however, in the case of those very things that I supposed to be corporeal, the ideas or concepts which I formed were frequently such as to refer to minds rather than bodies.

For example, I conceived of gravity as if it were some sort of real quality, which inhered in solid bodies; and although I called it a 'quality', thereby referring it to the bodies in which it inhered, by adding that it was 'real' I was in fact thinking that it was a substance. In the same way clothing, regarded in itself, is a substance, even though when referred to the man who wears it, it is a quality. Or again, the mind, even though it is in fact a substance, can nonetheless be said to be a quality of the body to

1 Lat. gravitas, literally 'heaviness'.
which it is joined. And although I imagined gravity to be scattered throughout the whole body that is heavy, I still did not attribute to it the extension which constitutes the nature of a body. For the true extension of a body is such as to exclude any interpenetration of the parts, whereas I thought that there was the same amount of gravity in a ten foot piece of wood as in one foot lump of gold or other metal—indeed I thought that the whole of the gravity could be contracted to a mathematical point. Moreover, I saw that the gravity, while remaining coextensive with the heavy body, could exercise all its force in any one part of the body; for if the body were hung from a rope attached to any part of it, it would still pull the rope down with all its force, just as if all the gravity existed in the part actually touching the rope instead of being scattered through the remaining parts. This is exactly the way in which I now understand the mind to be coextensive with the body—the whole mind in the whole body and the whole mind in any one of its parts. But what makes it especially clear that my idea of gravity was taken largely from the idea I had of the mind is the fact that I thought that gravity carried bodies towards the centre of the earth as if it had some knowledge of the centre within itself. For this surely could not happen without knowledge, and there can be no knowledge except in a mind. Nevertheless I continued to apply to gravity various other attributes which cannot be understood to apply to a mind in this way—for example its being divisible, measurable and so on.

But later on I made the observations which led me to make a careful distinction between the idea of the mind and the ideas of body and corporeal motion; and I found that all those other ideas of 'real qualities' or 'substantial forms' which I had previously held were ones which I had put together or constructed from those basic ideas. And thus I very easily freed myself from all the doubts that my critics here put forward. First of all, I did not doubt that I 'had a clear idea of my mind', since I had a close inner awareness of it. Nor did I doubt that 'this idea was quite different from the ideas of other things', and that 'it contained nothing of a corporeal nature'.¹ For I had also looked for true ideas of all these 'other things', and I appeared to have some general acquaintance with all of them; yet everything I found in them was completely different from my idea of the mind. Moreover, I found that the distinction between things such as mind and body, which appeared distinct even though I attentively thought about both of them, is much greater than the distinction between things which are such that when we think of both of them we do not see how one can exist apart from the other (even though we may be able to understand one without thinking of the other). For example, we can

¹ Above p. 283.
understand the immeasurable greatness of God even though we do not attend to his justice; but if we attend to both, it is quite self-contradictory to suppose that he is immeasurably great and yet not just. Again, it is possible to have true knowledge of the existence of God even though we lack knowledge of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, since the latter can be perceived only by a mind which faith has illuminated; yet when we do perceive them, I deny that it is intelligible to suppose that there is a real distinction between them, at least as far as the divine essence is concerned, although such a distinction may be admitted as far as their mutual relationship is concerned.

Finally, I was not afraid of being so preoccupied with my method of analysis that I might have made the mistake suggested by my critics: seeing that there are ‘certain bodies which do not think’ (or, rather, clearly understanding that certain bodies can exist without thought), I preferred, they claim, to assert that thought does not belong to the nature of the body rather than to notice that there are certain bodies, namely human ones, which do think, and to infer that thought is a mode of the body. In fact I have never seen or perceived that human bodies think; all I have seen is that there are human beings, who possess both thought and a body. This happens as a result of a thinking thing’s being combined with a corporeal thing: I perceived this from the fact that when I examined a thinking thing on its own, I discovered nothing in it which belonged to body, and similarly when I considered corporeal nature on its own I discovered no thought in it. On the contrary, when I examined all the modes of body and mind, I did not observe a single mode the concept of which did not depend on the concept of the thing of which it was a mode. Also, the fact that we often see two things joined together does not license the inference that they are one and the same; but the fact that we sometimes observe one of them apart from the other entirely justifies the inference that they are different. Nor should the power of God deter us from making this inference. For it is a conceptual contradiction to suppose that two things which we clearly perceive as different should become one and the same (that is intrinsically one and the same, as opposed to by combination); this is no less a contradiction than to suppose that two things which are in no way distinct should be separated. Hence, if God has implanted the power of thought in certain bodies (as he in fact has done in the case of human bodies), then he can remove this power from them, and hence it still remains really distinct from them.

It is true that, before freeing myself from the preconceived opinions acquired from the senses, I did perceive correctly that two and three

1 Cl. p. 283.
make five, and that if equals are taken from equals the remainders are
equal, and many things of this kind; and yet I did not think that the soul
of man is distinct from his body. But I do not find this surprising. For I
can easily see why it happened that, when still an infant, I never made
any false judgements about propositions of this sort, which everyone
accepts; the reason was that I had no occasion to employ these
propositions, since children do not learn to count two and three until
they are capable of judging whether they make five. But, by contrast, I
had from my earliest years conceived of my mind and body as a unity of
some sort (for I had a confused awareness that I was composed of mind
and body). It happens in almost every case of imperfect knowledge that
many things are apprehended together as a unity, though they will later
have to be distinguished by a more careful examination.

What does greatly surprise me is that learned men who have 'practised
metaphysical studies for thirty years' and have read my Meditations
'seven times' consider that if I re-read them in the spirit of analytical
scrutiny which I would adopt if they had been put forward by an
opponent, I would not believe that the arguments contained there had the
kind of 'weight or strength' that ought to lead everyone to assent to
them. It is surprising that my critics should say this even though they
themselves cannot point to any flaw whatsoever in these arguments of
mine. They certainly give me more credit than they should, or than
should be given to anyone, if they think that the kind of 'analysis' I
employ is one which enables true demonstrations to be overthrown and
false ones to be so disguised and tricked out that no one is capable of
refuting them. On the contrary, I declare that the only method I have
sought is one which will enable the certainty of true arguments to be
known and the flaws in false ones to be detected. Hence I am struck not
so much by the fact that there are learned men who do not yet accept my
conclusions as by the fact that, after a careful and repeated re-reading of
my arguments they can point to no false assumptions or invalid
inferences in what I have written. As to their reluctance to accept the
conclusions, that can easily be attributed to the inveterate habit of
making different judgements on these matters; they are just like the
astronomers who, as noted earlier, do not find it easy to picture the sun
as being bigger than the earth although they can demonstrate this by
most reliable arguments. But the only possible reason that I can see why
neither these critics, nor, as far as I know, any others, have so far been
able to fault my arguments is that they possess complete truth and
certainty; in particular, they are deduced step by step, not from principles
which are obscure and unknown, but, in the first place, from total doubt

1 Above p. 283.  2 Above pp. 283f.
Sixth Set of Replies

about all things, and, in the second place, from principles which appear to be utterly evident and certain to the mind, once it has been set free from preconceived opinions. It follows from this that there cannot be any mistakes in my arguments which would not be noticed without difficulty by anyone of even moderate intelligence. Hence I think I can justly conclude that if these learned gentlemen cannot yet accept my conclusions after several close readings, their authority does not so much weaken what I have written as strengthen it, since after such a careful and repeated examination, they have failed to note any errors or fallacies in my demonstrations.