

A street scene in Newcastle, England, featuring a brick building with a bay window and a street lamp. The text is overlaid on a black background in the top left corner.

**MARGARET
CAVENDISH
DUCHESS
OF NEWCASTLE**

**PHILOSOPHICAL
LETTERS:
OR, MODEST
REFLECTIONS
UPON SOME
OPINIONS
IN NATURAL
PHILOSOPHY**

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TO HER EXCELLENCY
The Lady Marchioness of NEWCASTLE
On her Book of Philosophical Letters.

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'Tis Supernatural, nay 'tis Divine,
To write whole Volumes ere I can a line.
I 'mplor'd the Lady Muses, those fine things,
But they have broken all their Fidle-strings
And cannot help me; Nay, then I did try
Their Helicon, but that is grown all dry:
Then on Parnassus I did make a sallie,
But that's laid level, like a Bowling-alley;
Invok'd my Muse, found it a Pond, a Dream,
To your eternal Spring, and running Stream;
So clear and fresh, with Wit and Phansie store,
As then despair did bid me write no more.

W. Newcastle.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY
The Lord Marquis of NEWCASTLE.

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My Noble Lord,

Although you have, always encouraged me in my harmless pastime of Writing, yet was I afraid that your Lordship would be angry with me for Writing and Publishing this Book, by reason it is a Book of Controversies, of which I have heard your Lordship say, That Controversies and Disputations make Enemies of Friends, and that such Disputations and Controversies as these, are a pedantical kind of quarrelling, not becoming Noble Persons. But your Lordship will be pleased to consider in my behalf, that it is impossible for one Person to be of every one's Opinion, if their opinions be different, and that my Opinions in

Philosophy, being new, and never thought of, at least not divulged by any, but my self, are quite different from others: For the Ground of my Opinions is, that there is not onely a Sensitive, but also a Rational Life and Knowledge, and so a double Perception in all Creatures: And thus my opinions being new, are not so easily understood as those, that take up several pieces of old opinions, of which they patch up a new Philosophy, (if new may be made of old things,) like a Suit made up of old Stuff bought at the Brokers: Wherefore to find out a Truth, at least a Probability in Natural Philosophy by a new and different way from other Writers, and to make this way more known, easie and intelligible, I was in a manner forced to write this Book; for I have not contradicted those Authors in any thing, but what concerns and is opposite to my opinions; neither do I anything, but what they have done themselves, as being common amongst them to contradict each other: which may as well be allowable, as for Lawyers to plead at the Barr in opposite Causes. For as Lawyers are not Enemies to each other, but great Friends, all agreeing from the Barr, although not at the Barr: so it is with Philosophers, who make their Opinions as their Clients, not for Wealth, but for Fame, and therefore have no reason to become Enemies to each other, by being Industrious in their Profession. All which considered, was the cause of Publishing this Book; wherein although I dissent from their opinions, yet doth not this take off the least of the respect and esteem I have of their Merits and Works. But if your Lordship do but pardon me, I care not if I be condemned by others; for your Favour is more then the World to me, for which all the actions of my Life shall be devoted and ready to serve you, as becomes,

My Lord,

Your Lordships

honest Wife, and humble Servant,

M. N.

TO THE MOST FAMOUS UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

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Most Noble, Ingenious, Learned, and Industrious Students.

Be not offended, that I dedicate to you this weak and infirm work of mine; for though it be not an offering worthy your acceptance, yet it is as much as I can present for this time; and I wish from my Soul, I might be so happy as to have some means or ways to express my Gratitude for your Magnificent favours to me, having done me more honour than ever I could expect, or give sufficient thanks for: But your Generosity is above all Gratitude, and your Favours above all Merit, like as your Learning is above Contradiction: And I pray God your University may flourish to the end of the World, for the Service of the Church, the Truth of Religion, the Salvation of Souls, the instruction of Youth, the preservation of Health, and prolonging of Life, and for the increase of profitable Arts and Sciences: so as your several studies may be, like several Magistrates, united for the good and benefit of the whole Common-wealth, nay, the whole World. May Heaven prosper you, the World magnifie you, and Eternity record your same; Which are the hearty wishes and prayers of,

Your most obliged Servant

M. NEWCASTLE.

A PREFACE TO THE READER.

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Worthy Readers,

I did not write this Book out of delight, love or humour to contradiction; for I would rather praise, then contradict any Person or Persons that are ingenious; but by reason Opinion is free, and may pass without a pass-port, I took the liberty to declare my own opinions as other Philosophers do, and to that purpose I have here set down several famous and learned Authors opinions, and my answers to them in the form of Letters, which was the easiest way for me to write; and by so doing, I have done that, which I would have done unto me; for I am as willing to have my opinions contradicted, as I do contradict others: for I love Reason so well, that whosoever can bring most rational and probable arguments, shall have my vote, although against my own opinion. But you may say, If contradictions were frequent, there would

be no agreement amongst Mankind. I answer; it is very true: Wherefore Contradictions are better in general Books, then in particular Families, and in Schools better then in Publick States, and better in Philosophy then in Divinity. All which considered, I shun, as much as I can, not to discourse or write of either Church or State. But I desire so much favour, or rather Justice of you, *Worthy Readers*, as not to interpret my objections or answers any other ways then against several opinions in Philosophy; for I am confident there is not any body, that doth esteem, respect and honour learned and ingenious Persons more then I do: Wherefore judg me neither to be of a contradicting humor, nor of a vain-glorious mind for differing from other mens opinions, but rather that it is done out of love to Truth, and to make my own opinions the more intelligible, which cannot better be done then by arguing and comparing other mens opinions with them. The Authors whose opinions I mention, I have read, as I found them printed, in my native Language, except *Des Cartes*, who being in Latine, I had some few places translated to me out of his works; and I must confess, that since I have read the works of these learned men, I understand the names and terms of Art a little better then I did before; but it is not so much as to make me a Scholar, nor yet so little, but that, had I read more before I did begin to write my other Book called *Philosophical Opinions*, they would have been more intelligible; for my error was, I began to write so early, that I had not liv'd so long as to be able to read many Authors; I cannot say, I divulged my opinions as soon as I had conceiv'd them, but yet I divulged them too soon to have them artificial and methodical. But since what is past, cannot be recalled, I must desire you to excuse those faults, which were committed for want of experience and learning. As for School-learning, had I applied my self to it, yet I am confident I should never have arrived to any; for I am so incapable of Learning, that I could never attain to the knowledge of any other Language but my native, especially by the Rules of Art: wherefore I do not repent that I spent not my time in Learning, for I consider, it is better to write wittily then learnedly; nevertheless, I love and esteem Learning, although I am not capable of it. But you may say, I have expressed neither Wit nor Learning in my Writings: Truly, if not, I am the more sorry for it; but self-conceit, which is natural to mankind, especially to our Sex, did flatter and secretly perswade me that my

Writings had Sense and Reason, Wit and Variety; but Judgment being not called to Counsel, I yielded to Self-conceits flattery, and so put out my Writings to be Printed as fast as I could, without being reviewed or Corrected: Neither did I fear any censure, for Self-conceit had perswaded me, I should be highly applauded; wherefore I made such haste, that I had three or four Books printed presently after each other.

But to return to this present Work, I must desire you, *worthy Readers*, to read first my Book called *Philosophical and Physical Opinions*, before you censure this, for this Book is but an explanation of the former, wherein is contained the Ground of my Opinions, and those that will judge well of a Building, must first consider the Foundation; to which purpose I will repeat some few Heads and Principles of my Opinions, which are these following: First, That Nature is Infinite, and the Eternal Servant of God: Next, That she is Corporeal, and partly self-moving, dividable and composable; that all and every particular Creature, as also all perception and variety in Nature, is made by corporeal self-motion, which I name sensitive and rational matter, which is life and knowledg, sense and reason. Again, That these sensitive and rational parts of matter are the purest and subtilest parts of Nature, as the active parts, the knowing, understanding and prudent parts, the designing, architectonical and working parts, nay, the Life and Soul of Nature, and that there is not any Creature or part of nature without this Life and Soul; and that not onely Animals, but also Vegetables, Minerals and Elements, and what more is in Nature, are endued with this Life and Soul, Sense and Reason: and because this Life and Soul is a corporeal Substance, it is both dividable and composable; for it divides and removes parts from parts, as also composes and joyns parts to parts, and works in a perpetual motion without rest; by which actions not any Creature can challenge a particular Life and Soul to it self, but every Creature may have by the dividing and composing nature of this self-moving matter more or fewer natural souls and lives.

These and the like actions of corporeal Nature or natural Matter you may find more at large described in my afore-mentioned Book of *Philosophical Opinions*, and more clearly repeated and explained in this present. 'Tis true, the way of arguing I use, is common, but the Principles, Heads and Grounds of my Opinions are my own, not

borrowed or stolen in the least from any; and the first time I divulged them, was in the year 1653: since which time I have reviewed, reformed and reprinted them twice; for at first, as my Conceptions were new and my own, so my Judgment was young, and my Experience little, so that I had not so much knowledge as to declare them artificially and methodically; for as I mentioned before, I was always unapt to learn by the Rules of Art. But although they may be defective for want of Terms of Art, and artificial expressions, yet I am sure they are not defective for want of Sense and Reason: And if any one can bring more Sense and Reason to disprove these my opinions, I shall not repine or grieve, but either acknowledge my error, if I find my self in any, or defend them as rationally as I can, if it be but done justly and honestly, without deceit, spight, or malice; for I cannot chuse but acquaint you, *Noble Readers*, I have been informed, that if I should be answered in my Writings, it would be done rather under the name and cover of a Woman, then of a Man, the reason is, because no man dare or will set his name to the contradiction of a Lady; and to confirm you the better herein, there has one Chapter of my Book called *The Worlds Olio*, treating of a Monastical Life, been answer'd already in a little Pamphlet, under the name of a woman, although she did little towards it; wherefore it being a Hermaphroditical Book, I judged it not worthy taking notice of. The like shall I do to any other that will answer this present work of mine, or contradict my opinions indirectly with fraud and deceit. But I cannot conceive why it should be a disgrace to any man to maintain his own or others opinions against a woman, so it be done with respect and civility; but to become a cheat by dissembling, and quit the Breeches for a Petticoat, meerly out of spight and malice, is base, and not fit for the honour of a man, or the masculine sex. Besides, it will easily be known; for a Philosopher or Philosophers is not produced on a sudden. Wherefore, although I do not care, nor fear contradiction, yet I desire it may be done without fraud or deceit, spight and malice; and then I shall be ready to defend my opinions the best I can, whilst I live, and after I am dead, I hope those that are just and honorable will also defend me from all sophistry, malice, spight and envy, for which Heaven will bless them. In the mean time, *Worthy Readers*, I should rejoyce to see that my Works are acceptable to you, for if you be not partial, you will easily

pardon those faults you find, when you do consider both my sex and breeding; for which favour and justice, I shall always remain,

Your most obliged Servant,

M. N.

Philosophical Letters.

SECT. I.

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I.

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MADAM,

You have been pleased to send me the Works of four Famous and Learned Authors, to wit, of two most Famous Philosophers of our Age, *Des Cartes*, and *Hobbs*, and of that Learned Philosopher and Divine Dr. *More*, as also of that Famous Physician and Chymist *Van Helmont*. Which Works you have sent me not onely to peruse, but also to give my judgment of them, and to send you word by the usual way of our Correspondence, which is by Letters, how far, and wherein I do dissent from these Famous Authors, their Opinions in *Natural Philosophy*. To tell you truly, *Madam*, your Commands did at first much affright me, for it did appear, as if you had commanded me to get upon a high Rock, and fling my self into the Sea, where neither a Ship, nor a Plank, nor any kind of help was near to rescue me, and save my life; but that I was forced to sink, by reason I cannot swim: So I having no Learning nor Art to assist me in this dangerous undertaking, thought, I must of necessity perish under the rough censures of my Readers, and be not onely accounted a fool for my labour, but a vain and presumptuous person, to undertake things surpassing the ability of my performance; but on the other side I considered first, that those Worthy Authors, were they my censurers, would not deny me the same liberty they take themselves; which is, that I may dissent from their Opinions, as well as they dissent from others, and from amongst themselves: And if I should express more Vanity then Wit,

more Ignorance than Knowledge, more Folly than Discretion, it being according to the Nature of our Sex, I hoped that my Masculine Readers would civilly excuse me, and my Female Readers could not justly condemn me. Next I considered with my self, that it would be a great advantage for my Book called *Philosophical Opinions*, as to make it more perspicuous and intelligible by the opposition of other Opinions, since two opposite things placed near each other, are the better discerned; for I must confess, that when I did put forth my Philosophical Work at first, I was not so well skilled in the Terms or Expressions usual in *Natural Philosophy*; and therefore for want of their knowledg, I could not declare my meaning so plainly and clearly as I ought to have done, which may be a sufficient argument to my Readers, that I have not read heretofore any *Natural Philosophers*, and taken some Light from them; but that my Opinions did meerly issue from the Fountain of my own Brain, without any other help or assistance. Wherefore since for want of proper Expressions, my named Book of *Philosophy* was accused of obscurity and intricacy, I thought your Commands would be a means to explain and clear it the better, although not by an Artificial way, as by Logical Arguments or Mathematical Demonstrations, yet by expressing my Sense and Meaning more properly and clearly than I have done heretofore: But the chief reason of all was, the Authority of your Command, which did work so powerfully with me, that I could not resist, although it were to the disgrace of my own judgment and wit; and therefore I am fully resolved now to go on as far, and as well as the Natural strength of my Reason will reach: But since neither the strength of my Body, nor of my understanding, or wit, is able to mark every line, or every word of their works, and to argue upon them, I shall onely pick out the ground Opinions of the aforementioned Authors, and those which do directly dissent from mine, upon which I intend to make some few Reflections, according to the ability of my Reason; and I shall meerly go upon the bare Ground of *Natural Philosophy*, and not mix Divinity with it, as many Philosophers use to do, except it be in those places, where I am forced by the Authors Arguments to reflect upon it, which yet shall be rather with an expression of my ignorance, than a positive declaration of my opinion or judgment thereof; for I think it not onely an absurdity, but an injury to the holy Profession of Divinity to draw her to the Proofs in *Natural*

Philosophy; wherefore I shall strictly follow the Guidance of *Natural Reason*, and keep to my own ground and Principles as much as I can; which that I may perform the better, I humbly desire the help and assistance of your Favour, that according to that real and intire Affection you bear to me, you would be pleased to tell me unfeignedly, if I should chance to err or contradict but the least probability of truth in any thing; for I honor Truth so much, as I bow down to its shadow with the greatest respect and reverence; and I esteem those persons most, that love and honor Truth with the same zeal and fervor, whether they be Ancient or Modern Writers.

Thus, *Madam*, although I am destitute of the help of Arts, yet being supported by your Favour and wise Directions, I shall not fear any smiles of scorn, or words of reproach; for I am confident you will defend me against all the mischievous and poisonous Teeth of malicious detractors. I shall besides, implore the assistance of the Sacred Church, and the Learned Schools, to take me into their Protection, and shelter my weak endeavours: For though I am but an ignorant and simple Woman, yet I am their devoted and honest Servant, who shall never quit the respect and honor due to them, but live and die theirs, as also,

MADAM,

Your Ladiships

humble and faithful Servant.

M. N.

II.

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MADAM,

Before I begin my Reflections upon the Opinions of those Authors you sent me, I will answer first your Objection concerning the Ground of my Philosophy, which is Infinite Matter: For you were pleased to mention, That you could not well apprehend, how it was possible, that many Infinites could be contained in one Infinite, since one Infinite takes up all Place Imaginary, leaving no room for any other; Also, if one Infinite should be contained in an other Infinite, that which contains, must of necessity be bigger then that which is contained, whereby the

Nater of Infinite would be lost; as having no bigger nor less, but being of an Infinite quantity.

First of all, *Madam*, there is no such thing as All in Infinite, nor any such thing as All the Place, for Infinite is not circumscribed nor limited: Next, as for that one Infinite cannot be in an other Infinite, I answer, as well as one Finite can be in another Finite; for one Creature is not onely composed of Parts, but one Part lies within another, and one Figure within another, and one Motion within another. As for example, Animal Kind, have they not Internal and External Parts, and so Internal and External Motions? And are not Animals, Vegetables and Minerals inclosed in the Elements? But as for Infinites, you must know, *Madam*, that there are several kindes of Infinites. For there is first Infinite in quantity or bulk, that is such a big and great Corporeal substance, which exceeds all bounds and limits of measure, and may be called Infinite in Magnitude. Next there is Infinite in Number, which exceeds all numeration and account, and may be termed Infinite in Multitude; Again there is Infinite in Quality; as for example, Infinite degrees of softness, hardness, thickness, thinness, heat and cold, &c. also Infinite degrees of Motion, and so Infinite Creations, Infinite Compositions, Dissolutions, Contractions, Dilations, Digestions, Expulsions; also Infinite degrees of Strength, Knowledg, Power, &c. Besides there is Infinite in Time, which is properly named Eternal. Now, when I say, that there is but one Infinite, and that Infinite is the Onely Matter, I mean infinite in bulk and quantity. And this Onely matter, because it is Infinite in bulk, must of necessity be divisible into infinite Parts, that is, infinite in number, not in bulk or quantity; for though Infinite Parts in number make up one infinite in quantity, yet they considered in themselves, cannot be said Infinite, because every Part is of a certain linked and circumscribed Figure, Quantity and Proportion, whereas Infinite hath no limits nor bounds: besides it is against the nature of a single Part to be Infinite, or else there would be no difference between the Part and the whole, the nature of a Part requiring that it must be less then its whole, but all what is less hath a determined quantity, and so becomes finite. Therefore it is no absurdity to say, that an Infinite may have both Finite and Infinite Parts, Finite in Quantity, Infinite in Number. But those that say, if there were an Infinite Body, that each of its Parts must of necessity be Infinite

too, are much mistaken; for it is a contradiction in the same Terms to say One Infinite Part, for the very Name of a Part includes a Finiteness, but take all parts of an Infinite Body together, then you may rightly say they are infinite. Nay Reason will inform you plainly, for example: Imagine an Infinite number of grains of Corn in one heap, surely if the number of Grains be Infinite, you must grant of necessity the bulk or body, which contains this infinite number of grains, to be Infinite too; to wit, Infinite in quantity, and yet you will find each Grain in it self to be Finite. But you will say, an Infinite Body cannot have parts, for if it be Infinite, it must be Infinite in Quantity, and therefore of one bulk, and one continued quantity, but Infinite parts in number make a discrete quantity. I answer it is all one; for a Body of a continued quantity may be divided and severed into so many Parts either actually, or mentally in our Conceptions or thoughts; besides nature is one continued Body, for there is no such *Vacuum* in Nature, as if her Parts did hang together like a linked Chain; nor can any of her Parts subsist single and by it self, but all the Parts of Infinite Nature, although they are in one continued Piece, yet are they several and discerned from each other by their several Figures. And by this, I hope, you will understand my meaning, when I say, that several Infinities may be included or comprehended in one Infinite; for by the one Infinite, I understand Infinite in Quantity, which includes Infinite in Number, that is Infinite Parts; then Infinite in Quality, as Infinite degrees of Rarity, Density, Swiftnes, Slowness, Hardness, Softness, &c. Infinite degrees of Motions, Infinite Creations, Dissolutions, Contractions, Dilations, Alterations, &c. Infinite degrees of Wisdom, Strength, Power, &c., and lastly Infinite in Time or Duration, which is Eternity, for Infinite and Eternal are inseparable; All which Infinities are contained in the Onely Matter as many Letters are contained in one Word, many Words in one Line, many Lines in one Book. But you will say perhaps, if I attribute an Infinite Wisdom, Strength, Power, Knowledg, &c. to Nature; then Nature is in all coequal with God, for God has the same Attributes: I answer, Not at all; for I desire you to understand me rightly, when I speak of Infinite Nature, and when I speak of the Infinite Deity, for there is great difference between them, for it is one thing a Deitical or Divine Infinite, and another a Natural Infinite; You know, that God is a Spirit, and not a bodily substance, again that Nature is a Body,

and not a Spirit, and therefore none of these Infinities can obstruct or hinder each other, as being different in their kinds, for a Spirit being no Body, requires no place, Place being an attribute which onely belongs to a Body, and therefore when I call Nature Infinite, I mean an Infinite extension of Body, containing an Infinite number of Parts; but what doth an Infinite extension of Body hinder the Infiniteness of God, as an Immaterial Spiritual being? Next, when I do attribute an Infinite Power, Wisdom, Knowledg, &c. to Nature, I do not understand a Divine, but a Natural Infinite Wisdom and Power, that is, such as properly belongs to Nature, and not a supernatural, as is in God; For Nature having Infinite parts of Infinite degrees, must also have an Infinite natural wisdom to order her natural Infinite parts and actions, and consequently an Infinite natural power to put her wisdom into act; and so of the rest of her attributes, which are all natural: But Gods Attributes being supernatural, transcend much these natural infinite attributes; for God, being the God of Nature, has not onely Natures Infinite Wisdom and Power, but besides, a Supernatural and Incomprehensible Infinite Wisdom and Power; which in no wayes do hinder each other, but may very well subsist together. Neither doth Gods Infinite Justice and his Infinite Mercy hinder each other; for Gods Attributes, though they be all several Infinities, yet they make but one Infinite.

But you will say, If Nature's Wisdom and Power extends no further then to natural things, it is not Infinite, but limited and restrained. I answer, That doth not take away the Infiniteness of Nature; for there may be several kinds of Infinities, as I related before, and one may be as perfect an Infinite as the other in its kind. For example: Suppose a Line to be extended infinitely in length, you will call this Line Infinite, although it have not an Infinite breadth; Also, if an infinite length and breadth joyn together, you will call it, an infinite Superficies, although it wants an infinite depth; and yet every Infinite, in its kinde, is a Perfect Infinite, if I may call it so: Why then shall not Nature also be said to have an Infinite Natural Wisdom and Power, although she has not a Divine Wisdom and Power? Can we say, Man hath not a free Will, because he hath not an absolute free Will, as God hath? Wherefore, a Natural Infinite, and the Infinite God, may well stand together, without any opposition or hinderance, or without any detracting or derogating from the

Omnipotency and Glory of God; for God remains still the God of Nature, and is an Infinite Immaterial Purity, when as Nature is an Infinite Corporeal Substance; and Immaterial and Material cannot obstruct each other. And though an Infinite Corporeal cannot make an Infinite Immaterial, yet an Infinite Immaterial can make an Infinite Corporeal, by reason there is as much difference in the Power as in the Purity: And the disparity between the Natural and Divine Infinite is such, as they cannot joyn, mix, and work together, unless you do believe that Divine Actions can have allay.

But you may say, Purity belongs onely to natural things, and none but natural bodies can be said purified, but God exceeds all Purity. 'Tis true: But if there were infinite degrees of Purity in Matter, Matter might at last become Immaterial, and so from an Infinite Material turn to an Infinite Immaterial, and from Nature to be God: A great, but an impossible Change. For I do verily believe, that there can be but one Omnipotent God, and he cannot admit of addition, or diminution; and that which is Material cannot be Immaterial, and what is Immaterial cannot become Material, I mean, so, as to change their natures; for Nature is what God was pleased she should be; and will be what she was, until God be pleased to make her otherwise. Wherefore there can be no new Creation of matter, motion, or figure; nor any annihilation of any matter, motion, or figure in Nature, unless God do create a new Nature: For the changing of Matter into several particular Figures, doth not prove an annihilation of particular Figures; nor the cessation of particular Motions an annihilation of them: Neither doth the variation of the Onely Matter produce an annihilation of any part of Matter, nor the variation of figures and motions of Matter cause an alteration in the nature of Onely Matter: Wherefore there cannot be new Lives, Souls or Bodies in Nature; for, could there be any thing new in Nature, or any thing annihilated, there would not be any stability in Nature, as a continuance of every kind and sort of Creatures, but there would be a confusion between the new and old matter, motions, and figures, as between old and new Nature; In truth, it would be like new Wine in old Vessels, by which all would break into disorder. Neither can supernatural and natural effects be mixt together, no more then material and immaterial things or beings: Therefore it is probable, God has ordained Nature to work in her self by

his Leave, Will, and Free Gift. But there have been, and are still strange and erroneous Opinions, and great differences amongst Natural Philosophers, concerning the Principles of Natural things; some will have them *Atoms*, others will have the first Principles to be *Salt, Sulphur* and *Mercury*; some will have them to be the four Elements, as *Fire, Air, Water,* and *Earth*; and others will have but one of these Elements also some will have *Gas* and *Blas, Ferments, Ideas* and the like; but what they believe to be Principles and Causes of natural things, are onely Effects; for in all Probability it appears to humane sense and reason, that the cause of every particular material Creature is the onely and Infinite Matter, which has Motions and Figures inseparably united; for Matter, Motion and Figure, are but one thing, indivisible in its Nature. And as for Immaterial Spirits, there is surely no such thing in Infinite Nature, to wit, so as to be Parts of Nature; for Nature is altogether Material, but this opinion proceeds from the separation or abstraction of Motion from Matter, viz. that man thinks matter and motion to be dividable from each other, and believes motion to be a thing by its self, naming it an Immaterial thing, which has a being, but not a bodily substance: But various and different effects do not prove a different Matter or Cause, neither do they prove an unsettled Cause, onely the variety of Effects hath obscured the Cause from the several parts, which makes Particular Creatures partly Ignorant, and partly knowing. But in my opinion, Nature is material, and not any thing in Nature, what belongs to her, is immaterial; but whatsoever is Immaterial, is Supernatural, Therefore Motions, Forms, Thoughts, Ideas, Conceptions, Sympathies, Antipathies, Accidents, Qualities, as also Natural Life, and Soul, are all Material: And as for Colours, Sents, Light, Sound, Heat, Cold, and the like, those that believe them not to be substances or material things, surely their brain or heart (take what place you will for the forming of Conceptions) moves very Irregularly, and they might as well say, Our sensitive Organs are not material; for what Objects soever, that are subject to our senses, cannot in sense be denied to be Corporeal, when as those things that are not subject to our senses, can be conceived in reason to be Immaterial? But some Philosophers striving to express their wit, obstruct reason; and drawing Divinity to prove Sense and Reason, weaken Faith so, as their mixed Divine Philosophy becomes meer Poetical Fictions, and

Romancical expressions, making material Bodies immaterial Spirits, and immaterial Spirits material Bodies; and some have conceived some things neither to be Material nor Immaterial but between both. Truly, *Madam*, I wish their Wits had been less, and their Judgments more, as not to jumble Natural and Supernatural things together, but to distinguish either clearly, for such Mixtures are neither Natural nor Divine; But as I said, the Confusion comes from their too nice abstractions, and from the separation of Figure and Motion from Matter, as not conceiving them individable; but if God, and his servant Nature were as Intricate and Confuse in their Works, as Men in their Understandings and Words, the Universe and Production of all Creatures would soon be without Order and Government, so as there would be a horrid and Eternal War both in Heaven, and in the World, and so pitying their troubled Brains, and wishing them the Light of Reason, that they may clearly perceive the Truth, I rest

Madam,
Your real Friend
and faithful Servant.

III.

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MADAM,

It seems you are offended at my Opinion, that *Nature* is Eternal without beginning, which, you say, is to make her God, or at least coequal with God; But, if you apprehend my meaning rightly, you will say, I do not: For first, God is an Immaterial and Spiritual Infinite Being, which Propriety God cannot give away to any Creature, nor make another God in Essence like to him, for Gods Attributes are not communicable to any Creature; Yet this doth not hinder, that God should not make Infinite and Eternal Matter, for that is as easie to him, as to make a Finite Creature, Infinite Matter being quite of another Nature then God is, to wit, Corporeal, when God is Incorporeal, the difference whereof I have declared in my former Letter. But as for *Nature*, that it cannot be Eternal without beginning, because God is the Creator and Cause of it, and that the Creator must be before the Creature, as the

Cause before the Effect, so, that it is impossible for *Nature* to be without a beginning; if you will speak naturally, as human reason guides you, and bring an Argument concluding from the Priority of the Cause before the Effect, give me leave to tell you, that God is not tied to Natural Rules, but that he can do beyond our Understanding, and therefore he is neither bound up to time, as to be before, for if we will do this, we must not allow, that the Eternal Son of God is Coeternal with the Father, because nature requires a Father to exist before the Son, but in God is no time, but all Eternity; and if you allow, that God hath made some Creatures, as Supernatural Spirits, to live Eternally, why should he not as well have made a Creature from all Eternity? for Gods making is not our making, he needs no Priority of Time. But you may say, the Comparison of the Eternal Generation of the Son of God is Mystical and Divine, and not to be applied to natural things: I answer, The action by which God created the World or made Nature, was it natural or supernatural? surely you will say it was a Supernatural and God-like action, why then will you apply Natural Rules to a God-like and Supernatural Action? for what Man knows, how and when God created Nature? You will say, the Scripture doth teach us that, for it is not Six thousand years, when God created this World, I answer, the holy Scripture informs us onely of the Creation of this Visible World, but not of Nature and natural Matter; for I firmly believe according to the Word of God, that this World has been Created, as is described by *Moses*, but what is that to natural Matter? There may have been worlds before, as many are of the opinion that there have been men before *Adam*, and many amongst Divines do believe, that after the destruction of this World God will Create a new World again, as a new Heaven, and a new Earth; and if this be probable, or at least may be believed without any prejudice to the holy Scripture, why may it not be probably believed that there have been other worlds before this visible World? for nothing is impossible with God; and all this doth derogate nothing from the Honour and Glory of God, but rather increases his Divine Power. But as for the Creation of this present World, it is related, that there was first a rude and indigested Heap, or Chaos, without form, void and dark; and God said, *Let it be light; Let there be a Firmament in the midst of the Waters, and let the Waters under the Heaven be gathered together, and let the dry Land appear; Let the Earth bring forth Grass, the*

Herb yielding seed, and the Fruit-tree yielding Fruit after its own kind; and let there be Lights in the Firmament, the one to rule the Day, and the other the Night; and let the Waters bring forth abundantly the moving Creature that hath life; and let the Earth bring forth living Creatures after its kinde; and at last God said, Let us make Man, and all what was made, God saw it was good. Thus all was made by Gods Command, and who executed his Command but the Material servant of God, Nature? which ordered her self-moving matter into such several Figures as God commanded, and God approved of them. And thus, *Madam*, I verily believe the Creation of the World, and that God is the Sole and omnipotent Creator of Heaven and Earth, and of all Creatures therein; nay, although I believe Nature to have been from Eternity, yet I believe also that God is the God and Author of Nature, and has made Nature and natural Matter in a way and manner proper to his Omnipotency and Incomprehensible by us: I will pass by natural Arguments and Proofs, as not belonging to such an Omnipotent Action; as for example, how the nature of relative terms requires, that they must both exist at one point of Time, viz. a Master and his Servant, and a King and his Subjects; for one bearing relation to the other, can in no ways be considered as different from one another in formiliness or laterness of Time; but as I said, these being meerly natural things, I will nor cannot apply them to Supernatural and Divine Actions; But if you ask me, how it is possible that *Nature*, the Effect and Creature of God, can be Eternal without beginning? I will desire you to answer me first, how a Creature can be Eternal without end, as, for example. Supernatural Spirits are, and then I will answer you, how a Creature can be Eternal without beginning; For Eternity consists herein, that it has neither beginning nor end; and if it be easie for God to make a Being without end, it is not difficult for Him to make a Being without beginning. One thing more I will add, which is, That if *Nature* has not been made by God from all Eternity, then the Title of God, as being a Creator, which is a Title and action, upon which our Faith is grounded, (for it is the first Article in our Creed) has been accessory to God, as I said, not full Six thousand years ago; but there is not any thing accessory to God; he being the Perfection himself. But, *Madam*, all what I speak, is under the liberty of Natural Philosophy, and by the Light of Reason onely, not of Revelation; and my Reason being not infallible; I will not declare my Opinions for an

infallible Truth: Neither do I think, that they are offensive either to Church or State, for I submit to the Laws of One, and believe the Doctrine of the Other, so much, that if it were for the advantage of either, I should be willing to sacrifice my Life, especially for the Church; yea, had I millions of Lives, and every Life was either to suffer torment or to live in ease, I would prefer torment for the benefit of the Church; and therefore, if I knew that my Opinions should give any offence to the Church, I should be ready every minute to alter them: And as much as I am bound in all duty to the obedience of the Church, as much am I particularly bound to your Ladship, for your entire love and sincere affection towards me, for which I shall live and die,

Madam,
Your most faithful Friend,
and humble Servant.

IV.

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MADAM,

I have chosen, in the first place, the Work of that famous Philosopher *Hobbs* called *Leviathan*, wherein I find he sayes,^[1] *That the cause of sense or sensitive perception is the external body or Object, which presses the Organ proper to each Sense.* To which I answer, according to the ground of my own *Philosophical Opinions*, That all things, and therefore outward objects as well as sensitive organs, have both Sense and Reason, yet neither the objects nor the organs are the cause of them; for Perception is but the effect of the Sensitive and rational Motions, and not the Motions of the Perception; neither doth the pressure of parts upon parts make Perception; for although Matter by the power of self-motion is as much composable as divideable, and parts do joyn to parts, yet that doth not make perception; nay, the several parts, betwixt which the Perception is made, may be at such a distance, as not capable to press: As for example, Two men may see or hear each other at a distance, and yet there may be other bodies between them, that do not move to those perceptions, so that no pressure can be made, for all pressures are by some constraint and force; wherefore, according to my Opinion, the Sensitive and

Rational free Motions, do pattern out each others object, as Figure and Voice in each others Eye and Ear; for Life and Knowledge, which I name Rational and Sensitive Matter, are in every Creature, and in all parts of every Creature, and make all perceptions in Nature, because they are the self-moving parts of Nature, and according as those Corporeal, Rational, and Sensitive Motions move, such or such perceptions are made: But these self-moving parts being of different degrees (for the Rational matter is purer then the Sensitive) it causes a double perception in all Creatures, whereof one is made by the Rational corporeal motions, and the other by the Sensitive; and though both perceptions are in all the body, and in every part of the body of a Creature, yet the sensitive corporeal motions having their proper organs, as Work-houses, in which they work some sorts of perceptions, those perceptions are most commonly made in those organs, and are double again; for the sensitive motions work either on the inside or on the out-side of those organs, on the inside in Dreams, on the out-side awake; and although both the Rational and the Sensitive matter are inseparably joyned and mixed together, yet do they not always work together, for oftentimes the Rational works without any sensitive paterns, and the sensitive again without any rational paterns. But mistake me not, *Madam*, for I do not absolutely confine the sensitive perception to the Organs, nor the rational to the Brain, but as they are both in the whole body, so they may work in the whole body according to their own motions. Neither do I say, that there is no other perception in the Eye but sight, in the Ear but hearing, and so forth, but the sensitive organs have other perceptions besides these; and if the sensitive and rational motions be irregular in those parts, between which the perception is made, as for example, in the two fore-mentioned men, that see and hear each other, then they both neither see nor hear each other perfectly; and if one's motions be perfect, but the other's irregular and erroneous, then one sees and hears better then the other; or if the Sensitive and Rational motions move more regularly and make perfecter paterns in the Eye then in the Ear, then they see better then they hear; and if more regularly and perfectly in the Ear then in the Eye, they hear better then they see: And so it may be said of each man singly, for one man may see the other better and more perfectly, then the other may see him; and this man may hear the other

better and more perfectly, then the other may hear him; whereas, if perception were made by pressure, there would not be any such mistakes; besides the hard pressure of objects, in my opinion, would rather annoy and obscure, then inform. But as soon as the object is removed, the Perception of it, made by the sensitive motions in the Organs, ceaseth, by reason the sensitive Motions cease from paterning, but yet the Rational Motions do not always cease so suddenly, because the sensitive corporeal Motions work with the Inanimate Matter, and therefore cannot retain particular figures long, whereas the Rational Matter doth onely move in its own substance and parts of matter, and upon none other, as my Book of Philosophical Opinions will inform you better. And thus Perception, in my opinion, is not made by Pressure, nor by Species, nor by matter going either from the Organ to the Object, or from the Object into the Organ. By this it is also manifest, that Understanding comes not from Exterior Objects, or from the Exterior sensitive Organs; for as Exterior Objects do not make Perception, so they do neither make Understanding, but it is the rational matter that doth it, for Understanding may be without exterior objects and sensitive organs; And this in short is the opinion of

Madam,

Your faithful Friend

and Servant.

V.

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Madam,

Your Authours opinion is,[1] that when a thing lies still, unless somewhat else stir it, it will lie still for ever; but when a thing is in motion, it will eternally be in motion, unless somewhat else stay it; the reason is, saith he, because nothing can change it self; To tell you truly, Madam, I am not of his opinion, for if Matter moveth it self, as certainly it doth, then the least part of Matter, were it so small as to seem Individable, will move it self; 'Tis true, it could not desist from motion, as being its nature to move, and no thing can change its Nature; for God himself, who hath more power then self-moving Matter, cannot change himself from being God; but that Motion should proceed from another exterior Body, joyning with, or touching that body which it moves, is in my opinion not probable; for though Nature is all Corporeal, and her actions are Corporeal Motions, yet that doth not prove, that the Motion of particular Creatures or Parts is caused by the joining, touching or pressing of parts upon parts; for it is not the several parts that make motion, but motion makes them; and yet Motion is not the cause of Matter, but Matter is the cause of Motion, for Matter might subsist without Motion, but not Motion without Matter, onely there could be no perception without Motion, nor no Variety, if Matter were not self-moving; but Matter, if it were all Inanimate and void of Motion, would lie as a dull, dead and senseless heap; But that all Motion comes by joining or pressing of other parts, I deny, for if sensitive and rational perceptions, which are sensitive and rational motions, in the body, and in the mind, were made by the pressure of outward objects, pressing the sensitive organs, and so the brain or interior parts of the Body, they would cause such dents and holes therein, as to make them sore and patched in a short time; Besides, what was represented in this manner, would always remain, or at least not so soon be dissolved, and then those pressures would make a strange and horrid confusion of Figures, for not any figure would be distinct; Wherefore my opinion is, that the sensitive and rational Matter doth

make or pattern out the figures of several Objects, and doth dissolve them in a moment of time; as for example, when the eye seeth the object first of a Man, then of a Horse, then of another Creature, the sensitive motions in the eye move first into the figure of the Man, then straight into the figure of the Horse, so that the Mans figure is dissolved and altered into the figure of the Horse, and so forth; but if the eye sees many figures at once, then so many several figures are made by the sensitive Corporeal Motions, and as many by the Rational Motions, which are Sight and Memory, at once: But in sleep both the sensitive and rational Motions make the figures without patterns, that is, exterior objects, which is the cause that they are often erroneous, whereas, if it were the former Impression of the Objects, there could not possibly be imperfect Dreams or Remembrances, for fading of Figures requires as much motion, as impression, and impression and fading are very different and opposite motions; nay, if Perception was made by Impression, there could not possibly be a fading or decay of the figures printed either in the Mind or Body, whereas yet, as there is alteration of Motions in self-moving Matter, so there is also an alteration of figures made by these motions. But you will say, it doth not follow, if Perception be made by Impression, that it must needs continue and not decay; for if you touch and move a string, the motion doth not continue for ever, but ceaseth by degrees; I answer, There is great difference between Prime self-motion, and forced or Artificial Motions; for Artificial Motions are onely an Imitation of Natural Motions, and not the same, but caused by Natural Motions; for although there is no Art that is not made by Nature, yet Nature is not made by Art; Wherefore we cannot rationally judg of Perception by comparing it to the motion of a string, and its alteration to the ceasing of that motion, for Nature moveth not by force, but freely. 'Tis true, 'tis the freedom in Nature for one man to give another a box on the Ear, or to trip up his heels, or for one or more men to fight with each other; yet these actions are not like the actions of loving Imbraces and Kissing each other; neither are the actions one and the same, when a man strikes himself, and when he strikes another; and so is likewise the action of impression, and the action of self-figuring not one and the same, but different; for the action of impression is forced, and the action of self-figuring is free; Wherefore the comparison of the forced motions

of a string, rope, watch, or the like, can have no place here; for though the rope, made of flax or hemp, may have the perception of a Vegetable, yet not of the hand, or the like, that touched or struck it; and although the hand doth occasion the rope to move in such a manner, yet it is not the motion of the hand, by which it moveth, and when it ceases, its natural and inherent power to move is not lessened; like as a man, that hath left off carving or painting, hath no less skill then he had before, neither is that skill lost when he plays upon the Lute or Virginals, or plows, plants, and the like, but he hath onely altered his action, as from carving to painting, or from painting to playing, and so to plowing and planting, which is not through disability but choice. But you will say, it is nevertheless a cessation of such a motion. I grant it: but the ceasing of such a motion is not the ceasing of self-moving matter from all motions, neither is cessation as much as annihilation, for the motion lies in the power of the matter to repeat it, as oft it will, if it be not overpowered, for more parts, or more strength, or more motions may over-power the less; Wherefore forced, or artificial and free Natural motions are different in their effects, although they have but one Cause, which is the self-moving matter, and though Matter is but active and passive, yet there is great Variety, and so great difference in force and liberty, objects and perceptions, sense and reason, and the like. But to conclude, perception is not made by the pressure of objects, no more then hemp is made by the Rope-maker, or metal by the Bell-founder or Ringer, and yet neither the rope nor the metal is without sense and reason, but the natural motions of the metal, and the artificial motions of the Ringer are different; wherefore a natural effect in truth cannot be produced from an artificial cause, neither can the ceasing of particular forced or artificial motions be a proof for the ceasing of general, natural, free motions, as that matter it self should cease to move; for there is no such thing as rest in Nature, but there is an alteration of motions and figures in self-moving matter, which alteration causeth variety as well in opinions, as in every thing else; Wherefore in my opinion, though sense alters, yet it doth not decay, for the rational and sensitive part of matter is as lasting as matter it self, but that which is named decay of sense, is onely the alteration of motions, and not an obscurity of motions, like, as the motions of memory and forgetfulness, and the repetition of the same

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were removed out of the World (as the phrase is:) But for the mind to move backward, to Time past, is more then it can do; Wherefore in my opinion, Remembrance, or the like, is onely a repetition of such Figures as were like to the Objects; and for Thoughts in Particular, they are several figures, made by the mind, which is the Rational Part of matter, in its own substance, either voluntarily, or by imitation, whereof you may see more in my Book of Philosophical Opinions. Hence I conclude, that Prudence is nothing else, but a comparing of Figures to Figures, and of the several actions of those Figures; as repeating former Figures, and comparing them to others of the like nature, qualities, proprieties, as also chances, fortunes, &c. Which figuring and repeating is done actually, in and by the Rational Matter, so that all the observation of the mind on outward Objects is onely an actual repetition of the mind, as moving in such or such figures and actions; and when the mind makes voluntary Figures with those repeated Figures, and compares them together, this comparing is Examination; and when several Figures agree and joyn, it is Conclusion or Judgment: likewise doth Experience proceed from repeating and comparing of several Figures in the Mind, and the more several Figures are repeated and compared, the greater the experience is. One thing more there is in the same Chapter, which I cannot let pass without examination; Your Authour says, That *things Present onely have a being in Nature, things Past onely a being in the Memory, but things to come have no being at all*; Which how it possibly can be, I am not able to conceive; for certainly, if nothing in nature is lost or annihilated, what is past, and what is to come, hath as well a being, as what is present; and, if that which is now, had its being before, why may it not also have its being hereafter? It might as well be said, that what is once forgot, cannot be remembred; for whatsoever is in Nature, has as much a being as the Mind, and there is not any action, or motion, or figure, in Nature, but may be repeated, that is, may return to its former Figure, When it is altered and dissolved; But by reason Nature delights in variety, repetitions are not so frequently made, especially of those things or creatures, which are composed by the sensitive corporeal motions in the inanimate part of Matter, because they are not so easily wrought, as the Rational matter can work upon its own parts, being more pliant in its self, then the Inanimate matter is; And this is the reason, that there are so

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