

but since the body conserves equally either state, why should it not be said to be indifferent to both?

52 The Peripatetics used to distinguish various kinds of motion corresponding to the variety of changes which a thing could undergo. To-day those who discuss motion understand by the term only local motion. But local motion cannot be understood without understanding the meaning of *locus*. Now *locus* is defined by moderns as 'the part of space which a body occupies,' whence it is divided into relative and absolute corresponding to space. For they distinguish between absolute or true space and relative or apparent space. That is they postulate space on all sides measureless, immoveable, insensible, permeating and containing all bodies, which they call absolute space. But space comprehended or defined by bodies, and therefore an object of sense, is called relative, apparent, vulgar space.

53 And so let us suppose that all bodies were destroyed and brought to nothing. What is left they call absolute space, all relation arising from the situation and distances of bodies being removed together with the bodies. Again, that space is infinite, immoveable, indivisible, insensible, without relation and without distinction. That is, all its attributes are privative or negative. It seems therefore to be mere nothing. The only slight difficulty arising is that it is extended, and extension is a positive quality. But what sort of extension, I ask, is that which cannot be divided nor measured, no part of which can be perceived by sense or pictured by the imagination? For nothing enters the imagination which from the nature of the thing cannot be perceived by sense, since indeed the imagination is nothing else than the faculty which represents sensible things either actually existing or at least possible. Pure intellect, too, knows nothing of absolute space. That faculty is concerned only with spiritual and inextended things, such as our minds, their states, passions, virtues, and such like. From absolute space then let us take away now the words of the name, and nothing will remain in sense, imagination, or intellect. Nothing else then is denoted by those words than pure privation or negation, *i.e.* mere nothing.

54 It must be admitted that in this matter we are in the grip of serious prejudices, and to win free we must exert the whole force of our minds. For many, so far from regarding absolute space as nothing, regard it as the only thing (God excepted) which cannot be annihilated; and they lay down that it necessarily exists of its own nature, that it is eternal and uncreate, and is actually a participant in the divine attributes. But in very truth since it is most certain that all things which we designate by names are known by qualities or relations, at least in part (for it would be stupid, to use words to which nothing known, no notion, idea or concept, were attached), let us diligently inquire whether it is possible to form any idea of that pure, real, and absolute space continuing to exist after the annihilation of all bodies. Such an idea, moreover, when I watch it somewhat more intently, I find to be the purest idea of nothing, if indeed it can be called an idea. This I myself have found on giving the matter my closest attention; this, I think, others will find on doing likewise.

55 We are sometimes deceived by the fact that when we imagine the

removal of all other bodies, yet we suppose our own body to remain. On this supposition we imagine the movement of our limbs fully free on every side; but motion without space cannot be conceived. None the less if we consider the matter again we shall find, 1st, relative space conceived defined by the parts of our body; 2nd, a fully free power of moving our limbs obstructed by no obstacle; and besides these two things nothing. It is false to believe that some third thing really exists, *viz.* immense space which confers on us the free power of moving our body; for this purpose the absence of other bodies is sufficient. And we must admit that this absence or privation of bodies is nothing positive.\*

56 But unless a man has examined these points with a free and keen mind, words and terms avail little. To one who meditates, however, and reflects, it will be manifest, I think, that predications about pure and absolute space can all be predicated about nothing. By this argument the human mind is easily freed from great difficulties, and at the same time from the absurdity of attributing necessary existence to any being except to the good and great God alone.

57 It would be easy to confirm our opinion by arguments drawn, as they say *a posteriori*, by proposing questions about absolute space, *e.g.* Is it substance or accidents? Is it created or uncreated? and showing the absurdities which follow from either answer. But I must be brief. I must not omit, however, to state that Democritus of old supported this opinion with his vote. Aristotle is our authority for the statement, *Phys.* Bk. 1, where he has these words, 'Democritus lays down as principles the solid and the void, of which the one, he says, is as what is, the other as what is not.' That the distinction between absolute and relative space has been used by philosophers of great name, and that on it as on a foundation many fine theorems have been built, may make us scruple to accept the argument, but those are empty scruples as will appear from what follows.

58 From the foregoing it is clear that we ought not to define the true place of the body as the part of absolute space which the body occupies, and true or absolute motion as the change of true or absolute place; for all place is relative just as all motion is relative. But to make this appear more clearly we must point out that no motion can be understood without some determination or direction, which in turn cannot be understood unless besides the body in motion our own body also, or some other body, be understood to exist at the same time. For *up*, *down*, *left*, and *right* and all places and regions are founded in some relation, and necessarily connote and suppose a body different from the body moved. So that if we suppose the other bodies were annihilated and, for example, a globe were to exist alone, no motion could be conceived in it; so necessary is it that another body should be given by whose situation the motion should be understood to be determined. The truth of this opinion will be very clearly seen if we

\* See the arguments against absolute space in my book on *The Principles of Human Knowledge* in the English tongue published ten years ago.