If I am thinking,

Then there must be a subject doing the thinking.

And therefore I exist.

But the subject of an action has to be a corporeal thing.

In his own treatise on human nature, politics, and religion, titled Leviathan, Hobbes claimed that the mind and its activity is just matter in motion.

There is no such thing as a soul distinct from the body.

Hobbes's materialism extended to all states of consciousness.

Descartes had little patience for people like Hobbes.

Our ideas, our sense perceptions, our feelings, our imaginings, our volitions — they are all just motions in the body.

This Englishman is a nasty piece of work. I'd best not have anything more to do with him, or we will become enemies.
In the 1640s, Thomas Hobbes had more pressing matters to deal with than mind-body metaphysics.

He was in Paris to debate the merits of Descartes's philosophy because there was civil war on the horizon in England.

Imagine a time when there is no commonwealth, no organized society, no justice.

Just a lot of people living without laws or leaders.

With Parliament pitted against King Charles I, Hobbes—a Royalist and fearing for his safety as the king's enemies gained the upper hand—had gone into exile in 1640.

Nothing to keep them from cheating, stealing, or even killing each other.

The king should not have to answer to anyone!

I gotta get out of here.

He wrote Leviathan to show that the authority of a sovereign must be absolute.

He began his argument by depicting a life without any government.

In such a condition, every man has a right to everything, even another's body.

If I can get it, it's mine.

If you can take it from me, it's yours.

It's not a pretty picture.
Everyone is acting only for their own welfare. Motivated by fear, each does what they can to survive.

These people are frightened but rational.

In the state of nature, might makes right, and life will be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

They realize that if they are going to survive and flourish, they need to organize and find protection.

They will decide that it would be better for everyone to give up the unlimited right to whatever they can lay their hands on.

I hereby relinquish my right to kill you. And I you.

Let's get it together, folks!

And they will agree to institute a sovereign to impose some order on an anarchic state of affairs.

The sovereign will have the absolute power to make laws and compel people to obey them.

Hobbes's absolute sovereign governs all affairs of state.

A legitimate sovereign is empowered by the citizens who authorize him, not by God.

No one has the right to disobey the sovereign, no matter how much they dislike the laws.

And they will obey, out of fear. The alternative would be a return to the state of nature, and no one wants that.

What do I do?

The best kind of sovereignty is popular, since all laws come from one person and all power is invested in a single authority.

My word is law.

Nonsense!
Well, unless the sovereign tries to kill you, then you have the right to resist.

Since the whole point of having a sovereign is to protect your life and property.

—and definitely not to some guy in Rome!

Hobbes had some especially unkind things to say about Catholicism.

Ow!

He discusses it in the final chapters of Leviathan, for which he had a special title.

"The Kingdom of Darkness!"

The civil sovereign, as head of his Commonwealth's church, will alone determine what counts as Holy Scripture...

Hmm...

Even religion falls under the authority of the civil sovereign.

Not to your preachers or priests...

As well as who is permitted to interpret these sacred writings for the people...

Hmm...

...and even what is or is not a miracle.

If the sovereign says it is so, then no citizen may contradict it.

It's a miracle!
As for Hobbes's own religious beliefs, these are not entirely clear.

Hobbes's Leibniz was a bold and radical effort to reveal the contractual and secular foundations of political authority.

There are no incorporeal substances. God would have to be a body.

Demonstrate the importance of absolute obedience to the civil sovereign.

And severely limit ecclesiastic power.

The Englishman was not one to mince words, and his treatise was widely condemned as a dangerous book filled with "Godless" ideas.

But even Hobbes was astounded at what he read some years later in a new book by an excommunicated Jew living in Holland.

It will corrupt the souls of readers!

1670
Arnauld and Malebranche would fight it out with much passion for the next ten years.

Their debate was one of the great intellectual events of the 17th century.

It seems to me that Mr. Arnauld has too hot a temper, and that Mr. Malebranche is a little out of his mind.
In 1683, an Oxford-trained English philosopher left his homeland in a hurry. John Locke was suspected of participating in a conspiracy to assassinate King Charles II and his brother, James Duke of York (later James II).

While he was no friend of the Stuart monarchy, Locke was probably not a part of the conspiracy. Cheers!

Still, better safe than sorry.

I'd better get out of here before they come for me.

Along with his patron and friend the Earl of Shaftesbury, Locke took off for the Netherlands.

He would not return to England until six years later, just behind William of Orange and his conquering army.

Once settled in Amsterdam, and concerned for England's future after the Catholic James II took the throne, Locke put quill to paper to add the finishing touches on his Treatises on Government.

In these essays, Locke explains the theoretical origin and true purpose of civil society.

It's time to put the "divine right of kings" to rest for good.

Locke, like Hobbes, sees the basis of society in an agreement that emerges from a state of nature.
But Locke's original condition is a more benevolent place than what his older English colleague conceived.

It's just people living according to reason without a common and superior authority to judge between them.

The state of nature is not a state of war.

It is a condition of perfect freedom and equality, where everyone may order their lives as they see fit.

They do not, however, have absolute license to do whatever they want.

Even in the state of nature, where there is no sovereign, lord, or master, there are still laws.

And punish those who transgress it.

Certain moral principles are valid for all human beings no matter who they are or when or where they live.

No one may harm another in his life, liberty, health, or possessions.

In the absence of government, anyone has the right to enforce the law of nature.

Natural law is discoverable by reason alone and governs life in the state of nature.

It proclaims that each person must strive to preserve himself and to preserve others as much as he can.

In this anarchic but generally peaceful condition, a person acquires property by "taking his labor" with something.
He also acquires a right to whatever he thereby makes his own - land he has cultivated.

An inconvenience of the state of nature and a threat to its peace is that, in the absence of an acknowledged central authority, every person is the judge of his own case.

Unfortunately, the state of nature is not always so peaceful. Inequalities will arise...

...and there will inevitably be disputes over property.

Hey! That's mine!

Individuals guided by reason will thus seek to leave the state of nature by forming a civil society that can protect their natural rights to life, liberty, and property.

The purpose of the state is not to abolish or restrain freedom, but to preserve and enlarge it.
A commonwealth is created when each person voluntarily gives up his natural power to enforce his rights and hands it over to the community-at-large. Whenever a number of people unite into one society so as to quit every one his executive power of the law of nature and resign it to the public, there and there only is political or civil society.

Only through consent of the governed - and never through force or divine decree - is there legitimate government, authorized to make and enforce laws for the public good.

Through this original compact, every person obliges himself to submit to the determination of the majority.

For Locke, absolute monarchy, with no separation of executive, judicial, and legislative powers, is inconsistent with civil society.

In this, Locke differs from Hobbes. An absolute monarch lives in a state of nature with his subjects. Sometimes it’s the only recourse you have.

He also departs from Hobbes in allowing for rebellion against a sovereign.

When a government fails to uphold its end of the bargain and protect life, liberty, and property, the citizens may seek to replace it.

Locke hoped this lesson would be taken to heart in England.

When a king becomes a tyrant, the people have the right to resist.