

Trent Wilde



Hello! I'm the current president of the Branch Davidian Seventh

Day Adventists (as of 2013), and I'm also the creator of this website. My mission is to teach a message that can be summarized as follows:

1. Materialism

Materialism is the idea that all existence is exclusively material/physical. I'll unpack what this means in a moment, but first, it's important to realize that this position is addressing the fundamental nature of reality, and as such, it has significant implications for virtually every area of belief and practice. If you measure the importance of a subject by how many others it impacts (and to what degree), it's hard to think of a subject more important than the basic nature of reality. The nature of reality determines the nature of truth, so what you think about the nature of reality has the potential to change what you think is true when it comes to anything and everything else. Most obviously are questions related to the nature of consciousness and death. Can consciousness survive the death of the body? Or even more basic, do we have a non-physical part to us at all? But there are also questions like, Is there a realm of existence beyond time and space? Can something happen without a physical cause? Do we have free will? The questions go on and on, ranging from cosmology to psychology, to medicine, to history, to politics, etc. Your beliefs in each of these domains are affected by what you think about the basic nature of reality.

The most foundational claim of the message I advocate is that reality is solely material. Negatively stated: non-physicality doesn't exist. This might surprise you since materialism is popularly imagined to be tied to atheism and anti-religious ideology. Historically and cross-culturally, however, this simply isn't the case. While there have been atheists who are materialists, most atheists (past and present) are not materialists. Furthermore, the most influential materialists in the English-speaking world have been Christians. This includes the likes of Thomas Hobbes, Joseph

Priestley, and Thomas Jefferson. And the largest organized movement of materialists in modern times was a Christian movement (the early Seventh-day Adventists). Importantly, the position of Christian materialists is not that materialism is merely compatible with Christianity; it is that materialism is the philosophical bedrock of Jesus's teachings. The claim is that Jesus and his early followers were actually materialists, as were the Hebrew prophets before them. I and those working with me have created a series of videos providing evidence for this very position. It's called [Before Spirit Was Spiritualistic: Philosophical Materialism from Genesis to Jesus](#).

Now, saying "materialism is the idea that only matter exists" is perhaps understandable enough, but really, to fully understand the idea, a more complete explanation is needed. And the place to start is defining *matter* since that is what materialism posits as the sole "stuff" of existence. While the word *matter* can mean different things in different contexts, in the context of philosophical materialism, it is equivalent to *body*. So, in the next few paragraphs, we'll unpack what *body* is and see that this basic notion implies a suite of attributes that inescapably belong to all bodies (all matter) and thus, if materialism is correct, to all reality. As we go through this, please pay attention to how each attribute is logically demanded by the basic notion of *body*.

To be *body* is to have *spatial extension*, to occupy space in three dimensions—length, width, and height.

Having length, width, and height entails having *volume* since volume is simply the measure of three-dimensional extent. Another term for volume is "three-dimensional size." So every body must have *size*.

Next, since every body occupies space, every body must have a *place* since a thing's place is simply the space it occupies. And, to state the obvious, something's place is its *location*.

Let's take a moment to consider the distinction between these last two attributes in order to prepare ourselves to more easily comprehend the next attribute. *Size* is the *amount of space* a thing occupies *in comparison* to other things (an elephant is big in comparison to an ant, but small in comparison to a planet). Place/location, on the other hand, is *where* something is *in relation* to other things. In other words, location refers to the space something occupies in terms of its position and proximity relative to other things.

Now, *shape*. While location is the space something occupies *in relation to other things*, shape is the space something occupies *in relation to itself*. On this point, an example should help. Imagine a ball. To describe its shape, one would need to refer to how one point of the ball relates to other points of the ball. Most simply, you could say that if you start from the center and measure the space outward from that point, the amount of space occupied will be the same in every direction. For a cube, or another shape, the measurements of the occupied space from one point of the object to another will be different. This illustrates that the shape of something truly is the space it occupies in relation to itself—it is the combination of where each part of a thing is in relation to all other parts of that thing. And again, take note that having shape is a natural and unavoidable consequence of occupying space (being *body*), so shape is an inherent attribute of bodies.

A necessary component of what determines the shape of a thing is its internal structure, that is, the arrangement of its parts. This is true whether we're talking about discrete parts, such as the parts of a car engine, or continuously interconnected parts, like the fibers of a tree. In all cases,

where there is shape, there is internal structure that consists of parts organized in some sort of arrangement. While it may be easiest to think of examples when considering solids, this principle applies to matter in all states. Take, for example, liquids: water and oil differ due to differences in their internal structures (the arrangement of their parts).

The very fact of having parts logically leads to another unavoidable attribute of *body*: *divisibility*. No matter how challenging it may be in practice, where there are parts, they are theoretically divisible since a part is a distinct, separable component of the whole.

Lastly, where there is divisibility, there is potential for *change*. If parts can be divided, they can be moved, thus changing their arrangement. And potential for change is nothing short of subjection to *time* since time *is* the continuous sequence of changes.

So, to summarize, matter is *body* and *body* is three-dimensional spatial extension. And, as weâ??ve seen, there are a number of attributes that necessarily follow from this: size, location, shape, internal structure, parts, divisibility, and potential for change, which is subjection to time. Materialism is the position that all of reality is characterized by these attributes, without exception. To state this in the negative, materialism says that there is no such thing as an immaterial (non-physical) existence. There are no bodiless entities, attributes, or essencesâ??no realities without size, location, shape, and parts. Nothing is â??beyond the bounds of space and time.â?• All things are *exclusively* matter in motion. What this implies regarding the nature of truth is that truth is whatever corresponds to *material reality* since that is the *only reality*. Again, the consequences of this are far-reaching and all-encompassing since it impacts every search for truth, no matter the subject.

What Iâ??ve stated here is simply an explanation of what materialism is. If you want to go beyond this to consider the arguments in favor of the truth of materialism, youâ??ll find them in some of the writings below. A good starting place is [Materialism or Immaterialism?](#)

2. Morality (this section is coming soon)

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The author is Trent Wilde unless otherwise specified.

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