



Dante running from the Three Beasts, by William Blake

COURTESY: NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA/BRIDGEMAN

FREEDOM

What do we have to do to protect liberty? Simply keep watch, and make a loud noise whenever we see it being threatened.

I have no philosophy of liberty, because I have no philosophy of anything. However, I know that I have various attitudes, of many of which I'm unaware; attitudes that govern the way I think and speak and act, and if these attitudes were dragged out into the open and put into some kind of order they'd pass for a ragged, shambling, half-baked philosophy of a kind. They'd make up a sort of template for the person I am. No doubt that philosophy would be full of contradictions and ambiguities and some downright nonsense, but I don't mind that: I'm English, and the English can tolerate a great deal of nonsense.

But occasionally I do try and make the things I believe clearer to myself, and when I last did so, I set them down in

a series of propositions. So here are the propositions I hold to. Each one comes with a line or two from William Blake, who taught me much of what I know.

1 The physical world, the matter of which we're made, is amorous by nature. Matter rejoices in matter, and each atom of it falls in love with other atoms and delights to join up with them to form complex and even more delightful structures: *...and shew you all alive this World, where every particle of dust breathes forth its joy.*

2 Things arise from matter-in-love-with-matter that are not themselves matter. The unimaginable, the non-disentangle-able complexity of the