

CENTRAL PROBLEMS OF DESCARTES' PHILOSOPHY

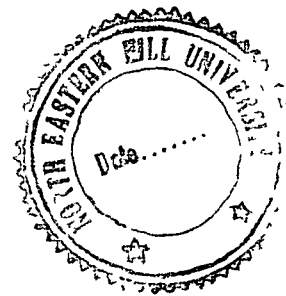
By

TANKA BAHADUR GAUTAM CHETRY

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

To



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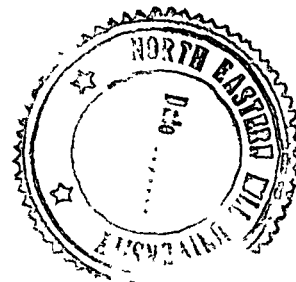
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by Tanka B.G. Chetry, that the contents of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to him, or, to the best of my knowledge, to anybody else, and that the dissertation had not been submitted by him for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character Tanka B.G. Chetry is a fit and proper person for the degree of M.Phil.

Shillong the 20th
July, 1989.

(Dr. S.C. Daniel)

Supervisor
Department of Philosophy
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II

My special thanks are due to Shri V. Murali, for doing the final typing of the manuscript with utmost care, and as speedily as possible.

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Tanka B.G. Chetry
Tanka B.G. Chetry

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rene Descartes (1596 - 1650) is considered to be the father of modern Western philosophy. Descartes is also classified as the first of the "Continental Rationalists", and he was followed by Spinoza and Leibniz, neither of whom was French. He is considered as the master philosopher because of his ^lalround achievements. He left almost nothing of ~~those~~ ^{at} which comes under the fold of philosophy. His first book was LeMonde which he kept unpublished for quite a period of time, But his first major philosophical work was Discours de la Methode, appeared in 1637. This little book of Descartes reflects the search for certainty by means of clear deductions from self-evident propositions. This search for certainty dominated the physical science and mechanistic philosophies of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The Discourse on Method is the first philosophical classic in French; which contains a remarkable literature and solid contents. His next great writing was Meditationes de Prima philosophia, which was submitted to a number

of critics, including Thomas Hobbes, and published in 1641 together with six sets of 'objections' and Descartes' "Replies to the objections". This work is considered to be one of the all time classics of philosophy, and it is his masterpiece. Descartes' Principia philosophiae and Les Passions de lame are generally considered to be much less important than these two works; however, they are not worthless writings.

¹ The main purpose of Descartes was to study everything as critically as possible so as to reach the desired consequence. He wanted to do away ^{with} the uncritical acceptance of the tradition which reached at its climax during the medieval period. Descartes was endowed with a rich intellect, and he examined all the philosophical problems critically. The purpose of such an enterprise was to reach at a conclusive answer. This he did for his own sake and also for the sake of others. His works are original, since they are the achievements of genuine intellectual efforts. In the words of Bernard Williams, "The extreme skill with which Descartes realizes this scheme, and the subtlety with which the work is organized, make the Meditations one of the most original achievements of philosophical literature."¹

¹ Bernard Williams, *Descartes - The Project of Pure Enquiry*, Page 20

Regulae of Descartes is very important for it contains some clues of the Method for the scientific advancement. The Encyclopedia of philosophy has the following to say about the Regulae : "The Regulae reveals that Descartes was already pre-occupied with method as the clue to Scientific advance -- a method of basically mathematical inspiration, though it is intended to be the method of rational enquiry into any subject matter whatsoever."²

Since, the philosophical studies of this sort are not laboratory based as Chemistry or Physics, this can never lead us to the conclusive consequences as Chemistry and Physics do. In the same way, the works of Descartes are merely the exercises in philosophy controlled by sober judgement and full blooded commonsense. The acceptance of doubt as the method to reach the indubitable, clear and distinct ideas, the ultimate truth and so on are the makings of common-sense with the help of rational capacity. Yes, it is true that commonsense is an undeniable factor in human life, but it is wrong to accept it as absolutely true. An economist, or a historian, or an anthropologist, whatever discipline may one hold, never goes to

². Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 1 and 2, Edward Paul ed.

establish a theory without making a proper judgement in his thought, likewise, Descartes, as a philosopher, has established his theories at the cost of his own judgements which he considered to be the right one. Thus, Descartes' philosophical creations are his own philosophical exercises, products of his self-controlled judgements supported by his common sense. This is not to say that Descartes' philosophy is without blemish. I shall try to point out his mistakes later on.

The philosophical works of Descartes are also critical. The word 'critical' is understood here in quite a broader sense. A.E. Taylor is worth quoting here. He remarks, "And by saying that the work must be critical, I do not mean that it must necessarily be largely devoted to criticisms of other men's thoughts, I mean that it must be something more than the construction of a brilliant but undisciplined speculative imagination."³ Needless to say that Descartes' works are critical - something more than the construction of a brilliant but undisciplined imagination.

Descartes' important and valuable contributions to philosophy can not be overemphasized. Though a philosopher of

³. Quoted in Descartes, by S.V. Keeling, p.3

seventeenth century, Descartes is still living with us in the form of his thoughts. The prominent place which is occupied by Descartes even in today's history of thought, through his masterpieces, certainly makes him a master philosopher. I am quite certain that even today one can be profited by learning important lessons from the philosophy of Descartes. The contemporary philosophers have recognized the contributions of Descartes to modern philosophy, and this becomes evident from the fact that, in recent years, interest in Descartes and Cartesian problems occupy a significant place. S.V. Keeling, Bernard Williams, Norman Malcolm, L.J. Beck, to name a few, have already done a lot of work on Descartes and the Cartesian problems. Let me quote a passage from the Landmarks For Beginners In Philosophy to substantiate this view. "The Cartesian school of philosophy became rapidly the most influential system of thought for those who wished to be free from Scholasticism. Though its physics was soon eclipsed by the Newtonian, its metaphysics dominated modern philosophy until Hume and Kant. Spinoza, Leibniz and Pierre Bayle were directly inspired by Cartesian ideas and made them serve the

cause of the Enlightenment. Even among Catholic platonists - Descartes' influence was felt and gained a foothold among the French oratorians (Malebranche) and the Jansenists and Port Royal School (Pascal).⁴

It is a fact that philosophers commit mistakes; and Descartes is no exception to this rule. However, I am fully convinced that even the mistakes of Descartes are instructive in the sense that we stand to profit from them.

I would like to give a brief but unargued outline of my dissertation before I examine the four problems from Descartes, which I consider to be more important than others. The dissertation is entitled "Central problems of Descartes' Philosophy," which discusses the following four problems, namely, methodic doubt, principle of cogito, Ideas and the Ontological argument. Accordingly, this dissertation is divided into four chapters,(five, including the introduction as the first Chapter) namely,

1. Introduction
2. Descartes and Methodic Doubt.
3. Descartes and Principle of Cogito.

⁴. Landmarks For Beginners In Philosophy, by Edman and Schneider, p.284

4. Descartes and Ideas.

5. Descartes and Ontological Argument.

These are four notable cartesian problems which have been engaging the greatest minds at the highest level. The second chapter is concerned with the methodic doubt as the title indicates. The question that Descartes raises in the First Meditation - 'Are any of One's opinion entirely certain and without doubt?' has been a standard and the fundamental question in the theory of knowledge or epistemology. This question will be discussed threadbare in this chapter. The Sceptical arguments that Descartes produces have been of great concern to philosophers, past and present. Norman Malcolm argues that in the notion of sound sleep there is no foothold for philosophical scepticism. This conclusion of his will be examined in great detail. The cartesian position that there are no criteria to distinguish the state of waking from sleep will also be looked into. Is Descartes' scepticism really empty? I will try to answer this question.

The Third Chapter is entitled 'Descartes and the Principle of Cogits', the question whether it is an inference or a

logical presupposition or performative act will be taken up for discussion. As a whole, this chapter will centre around the logic of the cogito.

The Fourth chapter, 'Descartes and Ideas', deals with the notion of Ideas in Descartes' philosophy. Although prior to him many philosophers had used this term, Descartes was the first philosopher to use it in a ^{new} ~~technical~~ sense. However, his explanations leave a number of important questions unanswered. These questions will be examined critically. Besides, Descartes' theory of error will also be considered.

The fifth Chapter deals with the Ontological argument. This argument seems to be a very simple one but it is really a very complex one, which raises problems about existence, reference and necessity. Descartes considers existence as a predicate. But, is existence a predicate? There has been an ongoing debate as to whether existence is a predicate or not. This debate will be given a prominent place in this chapter. Has ontological argument been sufficiently refuted? An attempt will be made to answer this question.

It is worth reiterating that Descartes' Meditations On the First Philosophy is a masterpiece and is one of the all

time classics of philosophy. My dissertation, therefore, will heavily rely on this work. Nevertheless, other works of his will also be referred to so as to make the discussions comprehensive. His most celebrated philosophical work, that is, Meditations was written in Latin during the period 1638 - 40, when he was living at Stantport, a corner of North Holland. By April 1640 he completed his work, and was first published in Paris in 1641 by Michel Soly under the title Meditationes de Prima Philosophiae (Meditations on the First Philosophy). He decided 'Meditations on the First Philosophy' as the most suitable title, because the discussion is not confined to only God and the Soul but to all the first things that are to be discovered by philosophising. As Descartes was not entirely satisfied with Soly as a publisher, he made an arrangement for a second edition of the Meditations. This second edition appeared in 1642 which contains a number of minor corrections to the text. Although a number of English translations of Descartes' philosophical works are available, the only tolerably comprehensive edition remains that of Haldane and Ross, which appeared in 1911 under the title The Philosophical works of

Descartes. The philosophical writings of Descartes translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch, first published in 1984, is also a ~~well~~ comprehensive work.

Descartes was never an escapist. He made no attempt to keep himself away from objections and criticisms, rather he took very bold steps to reply them as satisfactorily as it was possible for him. After the completion of the Meditations Descartes circulated them among his friends asking for comments and criticisms. On the 28 of January, 1641 Descartes wrote a letter to Mersenne, which goes as follows "I shall be glad if people make me as many objections as possible and the strongest ones they can find. For I hope that in consequence the truth will stand out all the better". "The terms 'objections' and replies were suggested by Descartes himself, who asked that his own comments should be called 'Replies' rather than 'solutions' in order to leave the reader to judge whether his replies contained solutions to the difficulties offered (Letter to Mersenne, 18March 1641).⁵ Thus it becomes clear that he ever did welcome the comments and criticisms from his reader so that he could modify his own ideas, if necessary.

⁵. The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, Translated by John Cottingham, P.63

Even a layman, infact, may be keen enough to raise the following question as regards the Meditations - what does the Meditations actually contain? An anticipatory answer to such question was already given by Descartes in his 'preface to the Reader' : "So first of all, in the Meditations, I will set out the very thought which have enabled me, in my view, to arrive at a certain and evident knowledge of the truth, so that I can find out whether the same arguments which have convinced me will enable me to convince others. Next, I will reply to the objections of various men of outstanding intellect and Scholarship....."⁶ Thus the main purpose of the Meditations is to arrive at the certain and evident knowledge of the truth. But at the same time Descartes puts certain restrictions to readers of the Meditations: "On the contrary I would not urge anyone to read this book except those who are able and willing to meditate seriously with me, and to withdraw their minds from the senses and from all preconceived opinions,"⁷ Descartes invites the reader to study the Meditations seriously, if he really wants to understand the implications of his philosophical enterprise.

⁶. Preface to the Reader of Meditations, trans. by John Cottingham, P.8

⁷. Ibid, P.8

CHAPTER II

DESCARTES AND METHODIC DOUBT

I hope that it has been already made clear in the introductory paragraphs that the first chapter of the dissertation will consist of the Methodic Doubt of Descartes' philosophy. Surely, the exposition of first meditation would be useful, I think, in order to understand the nature of methodic doubt and the problems connected with it.

(To Descartes the method of doubt is the starting point for building up our knowledge, or to reach the truth. Since he wishes to give himself entirely to the search after truth, he continued to look for a means which can ultimately lead to the fulfilment of his wished goal. To obtain a solution to his problem he thought it necessary to reject as absolutely false everything concerning which he could imagine the least ground of doubt. The First Meditation of Descartes is distinct from the rest. This distinctness is reflected in the very sentence of the First Meditation "Some years ago I was struck by the large number of falsehoods that I had accepted as true in

my childhood, and by the highly doubtful nature of the whole edifice that I had subsequently based on them."¹ It describes Descartes' effort to accustom himself not to think of the world in the imagery of the senses or according to the notions of common sense and the traditional school of philosophy. Descartes realized that it was necessary for him to demolish everything completely and start anew right from beginning so as to establish a self evident principle that is entirely certain.

✓To accomplish his goal, Descartes feels, it is not necessary for him to show that all his opinions (beliefs) are false. He thinks, not perhaps that all beliefs which he had formerly held are false; but to achieve the goal for building up a body of indisputable truth, he must exercise the same rigour toward beliefs that are merely uncertain as toward those which are demonstrably untrue. He writes, "So, for the purpose of rejecting all my opinions, it will be enough 'if I find in each of them at least some reason for doubt. And to do this I will not need to run through them all individually, which would be an endless task. Once the foundations of a building are

¹ From the 'First Meditations' in the *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol.II, trans. by John Cottingham, P.12

undermined, anything built on them collapses, on its own accord."²

Since Descartes was determined to doubt everything, his first step was to reject those opinions that depend on our senses. These opinions are about the existence of our bodies and touch. He believed that in most of the cases we are deceived by our senses. He used to hold that although we are occasionally deceived by the senses with respect to certain objects, still there are certain other beliefs quite impossible to doubt even though they are derived from the senses. He thought that how could it be doubted that ".....for example, that I am here, sitting by the fire, wearing a winter dressing gown, holding this piece of paper in my hands and so on. Again, how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine?"³ And, now, at his maturity, he denies his immature acceptance of his earlier age. Because, he finds neither certainty nor distinctness in the senses.

Nevertheless, Descartes himself claims it to be a brilliant piece of reasoning while going further to make a distinction, with the help of examples, between two states - waking and

² *Ibid.* P.12

³ *Ibid.* P.13

dreaming. He thought, in his earlier age, that the two states are quite different because we act quite deliberately when we are awake, but it is not so while sleeping. Now, he finds no criteria as regard the distinction between the two states. It is obvious that when we reflect that our dreams are sometimes attended with equal confidence, we are forced to conclude that there is no infallible criterion by which we can know true perception from false. "...., I perceive so clearly that there exist no certain marks by which the state of waking can even be distinguished from sleep, that I feel greatly astonished; and in amazement I almost persuade myself that I am now dreaming."⁴ Otherwise, his previous faulty, he would say, opinion was that, "Nonetheless, it must surely be admitted that the visions which come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things eyes, head, hands, and the body as a whole are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist."⁵ Although other things are imaginary, he thought previously, the corporeal nature in general and its extension which belongs to the class

⁴. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes Vol.II* trans. by Elizabeths. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Published in 1955; in page 34 of *Philosophic Classic* ed. by W. Kaufman.

⁵. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Vol.II*, trans. by J. Cottingham, P.13

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of simpler and more universal things are real. Basing on it he drew a conclusion that physics, astronomy, medicine, and all other disciplines which depend on the study of composite things are of doubtful character; while arithmetic, geometry and the other sciences of this kind, which deal only with the simplest and most general things, whether exist or not, contain something certain and indubitable. As he is determined to doubt everything, here too he finds no indubitable character for certainty.

The idea of an omnipotent God is firmly rooted in Descartes' mind. Yet, instead of supposing that the good providence of God sustains his thinking, Descartes resolves to hold fast to the hypothesis that he is constantly being deceived by an evil power, so that all his ordinary opinions are false. Now Descartes anticipates the atheists with their arguments that there is no God and anything is, or happens, is due to fate or chance or a continuous chain of events, or by some other means. But, argues Descartes, "Since deception and error seem to be imperfections, the less powerful they make my original cause, more likely it is that I am so imperfect as to be deceived all the time. I have no answer to these arguments, but

am finally compelled to admit that there is not one of my former opinions about which a doubt may not properly be raised, "....." So in future, I must withhold my assent from these former beliefs just as carefully as I would from obvious falsehoods, if I want to discover any certainty.⁶ As he is determined to doubt everything where he finds no ray of certainty,

Descartes says that though he is much disturbed by his habitual beliefs, as a result of long occupation and the law of custom, he is not going to accept them as indubitable until they are proved as free from doubt. Even though there are certain beliefs of which it is difficult to distrust yet Descartes declares that, "... I think it will be a good plan to turn my will in completely the opposite direction and deceive myself, by pretending for a time that these former opinions are utterly false and imaginary. I shall do this until the weight of preconceived opinion is counter balanced and the distorting influence of habit no longer prevents my judgment from perceiving things correctly."⁷ So far Descartes finds nothing that is indubitable, neither sense, nor mathematics, nor corporeal characters, ~~or~~ nor habitual customs appeared to be free from doubt. Descartes

⁶. *Ibid* P.14 - 15

⁷. *Ibid* P. 15

assures ~~to~~ himself that no danger or error will result from his plan because he will never go too far to a distrustful attitude. He is not a child or a schoolboy to accept anything without making a careful and a critical study.

At the end of the First Meditation, Descartes⁸ is prone to suppose that it is not God, who is supremely good, but some malicious demon of the utmost power is the deceiver. But how to check the demonic deception? Descartes says that, "I shall stubbornly and firmly persist in the meditation; and, even if it is not in my power to know any truth, I shall at least do what is in my power, that is, resolutely guard against assenting to any falsehoods, so that the deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, will be unable to impose on me in the slightest degree."⁸

After having given the exposition, I will try to answer the question, "what is doubt?" the term 'doubt,' called 'doubte' in French and 'dubito' in Latin means 'to be uncertain'. It is a partial disbelief, or rather, the denial of a proposition offered or formerly held as true. 'Doubt' is also understood as 'the withdrawal of belief'. The 'doubt' which is involved in Descartes' Meditation is certainly not the one of general usage. Ques-

⁸. *Ibid*, P.15

tion may be asked - can doubts be distinguished? If yes, then how? Now let me take the help from J.K. Feibleman, for he makes a distinction between definitive and provisional doubts. "Philosophical doubt has been distinguished as definitive and provisional. Definitive doubt is Scepticism. Provisional doubt is the rule proposed by the Cartesian method of voluntary suspension of judgement in order to reach a more dependable conclusion,"⁹ The provisional doubt is understood as the 'opposite of certainty'. From the standpoint of J.K. Feibleman it is quite clear that the 'doubt' proposed by Descartes naturally falls under the latter category, that is, a provisional doubt. That it is a rule or method of voluntary suspension of judgement in order to reach a more dependable conclusion.

~~Can~~ Can we say that Descartes' doubt is universal and methodical as well? Indeed, the answer is quite obvious. The doubt recommended and practised by Descartes is universal; it is universal for it is applied universally to all that can be doubted. Descartes is found to be applying this doubt to every proposition about whose truth doubt is possible. It is also methodic in the sense that it is practised not for the sake of doubting

⁹. *Dictionary of Philosophy* by James K. Feibleman, ed. by Dagobert D. Runes, P. 84.

but as a preliminary stage in the attainment of certainty and in shifting the true from the false, the certain from the possible, the indubitable from the doubtful. ^{over} For the very exposition of the First Meditation it becomes obvious that without there being a method it is impossible to reach at the certain or true conclusion of a problem. Descartes method consists in doubting everything that can be subjected to his methodic doubt. For him, this systematic doubt or rather methodic doubt is necessary for carefully avoiding 'precipitations' and 'prejudices' in judgments. When 'precipitations' and 'prejudices' are avoided, Descartes believes that it is possible to attain a principle of certainty which will have no room for doubt. Thus, the application of this precept involves the use of methodic doubt. In the 'Rules for the Direction of the Mind' Descartes writes that, -- 'by method I understand (a set of) certain and easy rules such that anyone who observes them exactly will never take anything false to be true and, without any waste of mental effort but by increasing his knowledge step by step, will arrive at a true understanding of all those things which do not surpass his capacity.'¹⁰

¹⁰. Appeared in *A History of Philosophy Vol. IV*, by Copleston, P. 72-73 .

We have seen what doubt stands for, and what Descartes' methodic doubt implies. Now let us go a bit further to see whether there is any difference between philosophical doubts and those doubts which we employ in our day to day life. Of course, the difference is obvious. It will be wrong for us if we try to justify those philosophical doubts on the basis of experiential doubt. To understand the philosophical doubts we must look at it from the view point of philosophy. Because, philosophy has its own reason to explicate the philosophical problems. Someone may raise a question - Does such doubt hold good? It has got a readymade answer, that a doubt is rational only when one has a reason for it and reasonable only when the reason is a good one.) The attention of philosophers is primarily devoted to understanding the conditions under which the doubt is reasonable and to defining the limits of reasonable doubt. "A philosopher's designation of certain propositions as dubitable is not generally to be understood as a denial that there are circumstances in which doubting these propositions would be absurd. The designation means only that given the evidence or ground for the propositions, there are achievable circumstances in which doubt would be reasonable."¹¹

¹¹ Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. by Edward Paul, vol. 1 and 2

✓ The methodic doubt of Descartes consists of certain premises for reaching a certain conclusion, that is, indubitable. These premises are the starting points, they are the means but not the ends in themselves. Thus, the doubts are avoided when the desired conclusions are reached. It is, indeed, a 'hyperbolic' doubt, which means exaggerated doubt. Hyperbolic doubts are short-lived; when the indubitables are found, the exaggerated doubts are avoided. But since, they are the premises, they can not be made to disappear for ever, for they are the starting points to land at certainty. However, the hyperbolic doubt is not practised in ordinary life. Bernard Williams is worth quoting here. He says; "There is no question, we must always remember, of hyperbolic doubt playing any rational role within ordinary life: the doubt is to be taken entirely seriously in the context of an enquiry about what can be most certainly known to us....."¹² * Descartes' doubt is called hyperbolic, also because he was after absolute - certainty, and in his opinion a necessary first stage was to doubt all that could be doubted,) eventhough the possibility of doubting might rest on a fictitious hypothesis. Thus, Descartes willingly set aside as doubtful or regarded provisionally

¹². Descartes - The Project of Pure Enquiry, by Bernard Williams. P.61

as false not only all propositions concerning the existence and nature of material things but also the principle and demonstrations of those mathematical sciences which had appeared to him to be modes of clarity and certainty. In a way, it can be treated as the test to reach the truth. In fact, Descartes' introduction of the hypothesis of the evil genius for the acquisition of metaphysical knowledge makes the doubt hyperbolic. Descartes' hypothesis of the evil genius is an admittedly voluntary and deliberate construction - it is a picturesque way of expressing the fact that intuitive conviction is a guarantee of necessary truth.

* Since methodic doubt in Descartes' philosophy is the starting point for the establishment of true knowledge, that is, indubitable, it is the starting point also of his epistemology. Descartes attempts to replace the common sense picture of nature by adopting rational investigation, taking his methodic doubt as a focusing torch. Thus the grounding of his epistemology, better known as theory of knowledge, is the methodic doubt. Descartes is well convinced that our senses often deceive us, and that our common sense does not posit anything before us with certainty. So, he is compelled to think of something

else which can be the foundation of knowledge. This is the beginning condition of Descartes' epistemology - where he is in search of an 'error proof' method which is epistemically effective, "..... The search for truth, which is also the search for knowledge, has turned into the search for certainty."¹³ Descartes' search for truth implies the epistemical search for knowledge. His theory of knowledge is based on his methodic doubt; this point will be discussed again in the third chapter. But, here, the most important point to be noted is that his is a Sceptical argument.

What is Scepticism and what is its place in Descartes' philosophy? It is an important question. Generally Scepticism is understood as the philosophical position of one who maintains that knowledge is not possible; or the view that all knowledge, is merely probable, never certain. It is a critical philosophical attitude, which questions the reliability of knowledge, originally the Greek term *skeptikos* means 'inquirers'. This sort of tendencies appeared, for the first time, in some pre-socratic views. In the case of Descartes too it is quite apparent that he starts his philosophy with sceptical arguments.

¹³. *Ibid*, P.49

It appears that Descartes is not a sceptic but at the same time it is also clear that he applies the Sceptical method more thoroughly in the beginning. Descartes claims that by applying the Sceptical method more thoroughly an indubitable truth, as well as an indubitable criterion of true knowledge and a whole system of truths about reality could be found.

The question - 'can Descartes really be considered a Sceptic?' - may be answered as follows. Since Descartes started with his methodic doubt, for the establishment of absolute certainty, as an instrument, he can rightly be called a Sceptic. He certainly falls within the definition of Scepticism - that is, scepticism is the denial of reality or the existence of valid knowledge. Now, as he reaches at the Second Meditation holding the rein of his methodic doubt, Descartes seems to be giving up his scepticism, and doubts no more the existence of God nor his own existence. Secondly, Descartes claims that his 'doubts for everything' is not a permanent or real doubt, but it is a 'supposed doubt' applied in a systematic way. Therefore, if his doubt of the reality was merely a 'supposed' one then the question whether he is a sceptic, disappears. His scepticism was a short-lived one. Thus, Descartes was a shortlived delibe-

rate sceptic; in truer sense he can not be regarded as a Sceptic. In support of this point I would like to quote the Encyclopedia of Philosophy - "Descartes' scepticism has received much attention, but it is fair to say that at no point of his argument is Descartes in any serious sense a sceptic; rather, he is one who uses sceptical arguments as an instrument of analysis. He repeatedly emphasizes - not only in the last of the Meditations but also in the First Meditation, where the doubt is being invoked - that the extravagant doubts are unreal. He regards the "hyperbolic" doubt, as he sometimes calls it, as running counter to something that is actually the case: that even among our beliefs that are not indubitable, some are, in fact, much more probable than others. The hyperbolic doubt is a device for identifying the indubitable."¹⁴

The sentence, ".....I perceive so clearly that there exist no certain marks by which the state of waking can ever be distinguished from sleep....." which I have already quoted, occurs in the First Meditation of Descartes. (While using the word 'mark' Descartes has tried to bestow a special meaning to this word; rather he is deviating from the usual meaning

¹⁴. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 1 & 2, Paul Edward, Editor in Chief, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. and the Free Press New York. P.347*

which we understand in our day to day life. Does the word 'mark' stand for sign or Symptoms? Descartes would say no, because there are reasons for saying no. "A sign is something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity"¹⁵ - it is a definition of sign made by Peirce. Sign may also be understood as 'stand for'. Certain words like sign, symbol, symptom etcetra seem to be closely related in some way, but this may be because of what Wittgenstein called 'family resemblances' rather than because of the common possession of a generic feature. A sign may stand to indicate an object or a symbol which is used to represent something else. Sign may also stand for a word or words, design etcetra, on a board or plate to give a warning or direct subject toward something, eg., traffic signs for a speed limit, a bend in the road. A sign board may stand to indicate a university campus. But it is also true that a sign and the object it stands for do not necessarily go together; for there may be a university without there being a sign board, and vice-versa. It is also not a necessary condition that a rapid pulse is a sign of fever. (Therefore, 'mark' is not equivalent to sign. *By 'mark' Descartes

¹⁵. Peirce in the *Collected Papers Vol. II, P.228*

means a definite criterion. In page twentyfive of the Blue Book Wittgenstein¹⁶ made a distinction between criteria and symptom from which a conclusion can be drawn in this way that a criterion differs from a symptom in being a decisive piece of evidence. The question of criterion with decisive is sometimes made by Norman Malcolm, who says that "the application of a criterion must be able to yield either an affirmative or a negative result."¹⁷ But Hilary Putnam, in his attack on Malcolm's theory of criterion, makes it an essential step in his argument that criterion should be "ways of setting a question with certainty."¹⁸ Thus, the point becomes clear that the evidential value of symptoms is something thought by experience, while the evidential value of criteria is something founded on a definition. If X is a criterion of Y, then it is a necessary truth that X is evidence for Y.

*By 'marks', thus, Descartes means as criteria to understand the indubitability character in the distinction of waking and sleeping state.) It is not a sign nor a symbol nor a symptom but criterion, for it carries with it the character of definiteness and necessity. *Therefore, Descartes claims that there

¹⁷. *Dreaming by Norman Malcolm, P.24*

¹⁸. *Dreaming and Depth Grammar, in Analytical Philosophy, Ronald Butter, ed. first series, P.213*

¹⁶. *Blue Book, by Wittgenstein, P.25*

is no distinguishing criterion between sleeping and waking.

(Norman Malcolm questions the validity of Descartes' Scepticism.) While criticising the physiological experiment of dreaming he asserts in Dreaming that "waking testimony is the sole criterion of dreaming."¹⁹ Moreover, Malcolm bases his reasoning on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, particularly on the dictum that "An inner process stands in need of outward criteria."²⁰ In his Dreaming And Skepticism Malcolm notes that "Descartes is clearly implying that while a man is asleep a certain thought may occur to him or he may come to believe something or to affirm something." "Descartes thinks that a man might have thoughts and make judgments while sleeping, and if those thoughts are "clear and distinct" they are true, despite the fact that he is sleeping."²⁰

(According to Malcolm, Descartes holds the idea that the same kinds of mental states and mental occurrences are present in us whether sleeping or awake. What Malcolm finds from the study of Descartes is that our dreams are the parts of our continuous mental life. Malcolm notices, "It is only because Descartes conceives of a dream as composed of thoughts and sensations, in the same sense that a period of waking life

¹⁹. *Dreaming*, Norman Malcolm, P.81

²⁰. *Philosophical Investigation*, Ludwig Wittgenstein, P.580

²⁰. *Dreaming And Skepticism*, N. Malcolm, P.54 and 55 respectively.

is, that he is able, in the First Meditation, to derive a ground for doubting his senses from the fact that sometimes he dreams The content of a dream and of a waking episode could be the same. From this it follows that there is no certain marks distinguishing waking from sleep.²² Malcolm is convinced to criticise that Descartes is mistaken. That he is ready to offer an objection seem to be clear from the fact he declares that "I will try to show that this conception is mistaken."²³

Malcolm stands firm to declare that there is nothing in whose distinction a criterion is not to be found. Likewise, even in case of waking and sleeping there are criteria available to distinguish one from another. To solve this problem he approaches from a bit different but from a familiar angle by making a distinction between being sound asleep and being half asleep. By half asleep, he means, partly awake but not clear awake. The sound asleep and half asleep problem is studied by him with the help of 'tenses'. He has rightly pointed out that the criteria we commonly use for determining whether another person is or was sound asleep are different from the criteria we use for determining whether he is or was half asleep. There are two categories under which the criteria

²². *Ibid.* P. 56

²³. *Ibid.* P. 56

of both sound asleep and half asleep are determined. That the criteria are of two sorts; 'Present tense criterion' and 'past tense criterion'. To determine whether a person is (not was) sound asleep the 'presenttense criterion' is applied, and it consists in the following that his eyes are closed, his body inert, his breathing rhythmical, (and that he is unresponsive to questions, commands and stimuli of moderate intensity. The 'past tense' criterion is applied to determine whether a person was (not is) sound asleep, and this can be satisfied only when he is awake.) After awakening if the person says that he has no idea what happened around his vicinity, while he was sleeping, then it is confirmed that he was sound asleep. Malcolm declares, "These two sorts of criterion can combine or conflict in many ways. It is possible that there should be cases in which there is no correct answer to the question 'was he sound asleep?'"²⁴ On the otherhand, if someone is half asleep, according to the present tense criteria, he will be in some degree responsive to questions, commands and disturbances, although only sluggishly or groggily so. But, according to the past tense criteria of half asleep if someone was only half asleep, he will be able to produce, when fully awake,

²⁴. *Ibid.* P. 57

some account of what took place in his immediate vicinity while he was half asleep. Such are the criteria, according to Malcolm, for distinguishing sound sleep from half sleep.

The next step through which Malcolm stresses his study is the comparison between two sentences - (1) I am sound asleep and, (2) I was sound asleep, differing grammatically in tense, of the two (1) is straight off a 'queer sentence', as he calls, because this sentence is used merely to utter in order to call attention to the sentence itself. While about the sentence (2) Malcolm writes: "..... it is obvious that sentence (2), "I was sound asleep", can be and is used to claim or affirm or assert something. I shall express this by saying that it can be "used as an assertion".²⁵ Now Malcolm may wish to raise a question, whether (1) can be used as assertion? His answer is that it will be absurd to use the sentence "I am sound asleep" as an assertion. If a person is lying in a bed and at the same time gives response to someone's enquiry as saying - "yes, I am sound asleep", then he is not sound asleep. To make assertion in this way is an absurdity. Concerning the absurdity of the sentence of (1) sort Malcolm writes that, "The absurdity that I am trying to describe does not

²⁵. *Ibid.* P. 58

lie in my uttering the words "I am sound asleep" but in my claiming or affirming or asserting that I am sound asleep..... If I use no physical signs but merely affirm in my mind that I am sound asleep (.....), it follows that I am not sound asleep.²⁶ Probably, here he is referring to the physiological criteria of dream. He also confirms that assertion "I am sound asleep" is a 'self contradictory' proposition. A proposition like "I am sound asleep" does not entail the proposition "I am not sound asleep" like that of P and not P. Malcolm says that the first person assertion "I am sound asleep" and the related third person proposition "He claims that he is sound asleep" may each be called self contradictory. But this self-contradiction is considered somewhat in a different way: if someone claims that he is sound asleep then it follows that he is not what he claims. This sort of assertions are necessarily false assertions. It is not self contradictory in the 'strict' sense. He mean to say that if a person is sound asleep then he cannot know, realize, or be aware that he is. The point which he adds here is that, "What my argument proves is that knowing-in-your-dream that you are sound asleep is not knowing

²⁶. *Ibid.* P. 59

that you are sound asleep.²⁷ Besides, Malcolm argues that he has still another principle for determining sound asleep from the waking - "If a person is in any state of consciousness it logically follows that he is not sound asleep..... which may be expressed in cartesian terms as follows; *Cogito ergo non dormio.*"²⁸ From the facts Malcolm discussed, we find the following idea - if a person is sound asleep then he can never affirm, doubt, think or question if he is sound asleep. Therefore, if one can not have thought while sound asleep, it proves that one can not be deceived while sound asleep. This proves that Descartes is wrong in saying that he was deceived in dream.

Is it possible to dream while sound asleep? Malcolm would certainly offer a positive answer. Because, the criterion for someone's having had a dream is that, after awaking he tells a dream. It is possible for one to fulfil both the past tense and the present tense criteria and yet on waking he tells a dream. Thus, it is established that he had a sound sleep and he dreamt too.. At the footnote, page 63, in Dreaming Malcolm writes that 'the proposition "I was sound asleep" has, on my view the nature of an inference. I conclude that I was

²⁷. *Ibid.* P.61

²⁸. *Ibid.* P.62

sound asleep from things that I noticed or learn after or as I wake up.' He, nevertheless, also gives a place for inference. At another place, Malcolm is quite right in stressing the importance of the report of a dream and its difference from reports of public events. For him what the dreamer says on waking is final.

Norman Malcolm blames both plato and Bertrand Russell for their failure in finding out a criterion between waking and sleeping. He blames them by saying that the manner they adopted for comparing dreaming and waking inevitably results in the skeptical question- "How can I tell whether at this moment I am awake or asleep?" and in the skeptical conclusion "I can not tell".²⁸ He claims that if this problem is stated in terms of sound sleep he can not have any sensations, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, sound sleep can not have any 'content of experience'. In support of this position he says the following: "This is so regardless of whether or not the sleeper dreams. Therefore, it is not true, but senseless, to say that sound sleep and waking are "indistinguishable" from one another, or that they are "exact counterparts"..... But one might as

²⁸. *Ibid.* P.66

well assert that a house and the mental image of a house could have the same weight; it is as meaningless to attribute sensations, impressions, thoughts, or feelings to sound sleep as to attribute weight to a mental image.²⁹ Taking help from Wittgenstein Malcolm tries to make the concept clear that while using the words of a language one must not forget that how the word is used. It is due to ordinary use of language that a dream is called an experience. Owing to such mistakes committed by the philosophers, as he would say, he reminds, but this use of the word "experience" should not mislead us. Norman Malcolm comes to the conclusion that in the notion of the dream of sound sleep there is no foothold for philosophical skepticism.....but he thought that the man has - namely, that he is sound asleep is self-contradictory (in the special sense that I explained), and a little reflection could teach him that it is. But it is also an error to say that a man can tell whether or not he is sound asleep.³⁰

Malcolm appears to be whole-heartedly applying the 'language-game' formula of Wittgenstein. He warns the philosophers not to understand the dream remembrance and the

²⁹. *Ibid.* P.66

³⁰. *Ibid.* P.67

rememberance of some other events in the same manner. Because, an event which took place yesterday, can easily be verified but a dream can not be. In ordinary sense a dream can be known only through 'telling a dream' by the person who dreamt. So, there is no verification of dream report. So is the difference between 'remembering a dream' and remembering what happend in the town yesterday.

What does Malcolm mean by saying that the problem which we call a 'dream problem' is not at all a problem. He, rather, wishes to say that the problem of what dreams are is a 'pseudo problem'. Mention has already been made that he refuses to allow that dreams can be called experiences, illusions, working of the imaginations or anything else they have been thought to be by previous philosophers. Malcolm's view that dream problem are pseudo-problems ultimately leads him to the position that Descartes' hitherto regarded waking and sleeping problem is not at all a genuine problem. Descartes found nothing as a mark to distinguish between waking and sleeping due to which he was compelled to doubt everything. Malcolm argues and wishes to conclude that there is certainly a distinguishing criterion between waking and sleeping. Waking

state is surely a sole criterion for distinguishing between the two. Last but not the least, let me conclude the point with a quotation from Malcolm: "In the sense of 'dream' that concerns us (we are not considering day dreams) if a man had a dream if follows he was asleep."³² Thus the cartesian position that there is no criterion to distinguish between dreaming and waking, has been proved wrong by Malcolm's argument.

Malcolm argues that Descartes has drawn a false conclusion ~~is it~~ because of the mistaken premise adopted ^{by} ~~of~~ Descartes. The following argument may find an affinity with that of Malcolm. Say, there is a person A, and he wishes to go to a new place P_1 . How will A be able to reach? He must have a particular route x with a particular starting point following which he can be able to be at P_1 , otherwise not. But it is seen that A has followed some other route, say Y , and instead of reaching the definite place P_1 , he found himself at some other place P_2 . Now, where does his mistake lie? Certainly at his starting point, Malcolm would say, of a wrong route; and same is the position falsely adopted by Descartes. This becomes true from Malcolm's angle. Now, the question

³². *Dreaming*. by Norman Malcolm. P.50

arises does Descartes really start with a false premise? Descartes, a great philosopher with high calibre, is not a fool to start his philosophy (or a method) blindly. Nonetheless, his attempt shows that he is trying to reach an order by systematizing all the chaos. It is wrong to blame Descartes with unjustifiable reasons. His synopsis on the First Meditation shows it quite clearly- "Now, although the utility of a doubt so general may not be manifest at first sight, it is nevertheless of the greatest, since it delivers us from all prejudice, and affords the easiest pathway by which the mind may withdraw itself from the senses; and, finally, makes it impossible for us to doubt wherever we afterwards discover truth."³³

Conclusion:

✓ According to Descartes, an item of knowledge will be considered as an item of certain knowledge if and only if the following three conditions are fulfilled, namely, one, the certainty must be so obvious compelling that everyone will accept it as certain, and it must be impossible for anyone to doubt its certainty; two, it must not depend on other knowledge more ultimate than it, in other words, there must be

³³. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes. Vol.II, trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross; appeared in Philosophic Classic (Bacon to Kant) by Walter Kaufmann. P. 30*

no other knowledge logically prior to it. It must be certain by itself and it must not require any other knowledge to guarantee its certainty; and, lastly, the knowledge must be of something of existent and not merely of something conceivably existent. It means that knowledge must be real in the sense of having a concrete existence. All these goes to show that Descartes is required to discover a judgement that he is entitled to affirm as true and certain about the existence of something other than ideas in his mind.

The precepts mentioned above will not suffice to discover a judgment which is true and certain about the existence of something other than ideas. Therefore, he must add something more to the precept which he has enumerated in Discourse of Method with the new injunction to find a judgment of this kind. This addition consists in the decision to practise doubting systematically, that is, de omnibus dubitandum.

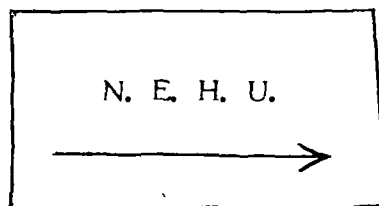
Descartes raises a very important question in the First Meditation. The question is: Are any of one's opinion entirely certain and without doubt? This question has been a standard and perhaps the fundamental question in the theory of knowledge or epistemology.

✓ Most mathematical conclusions appear to be items of absolutely certain knowledge. But it is possible that even mathematicians are sometimes mistaken? ✓ Is a systematic deception, due to some radical undiscovered defect common to all minds, beyond possibility? Descartes himself feels convince about mathematical propositions. But ought he to be so? He asks himself: is it literally impossible or logically impossible to doubt of such propositions? Descartes does not find any reason for doubting such proposition. Therefore, he feigns one. The determination to doubt is now to be in its extreme form, under the figure of demon who deceives us all the time. He does not believe in the existence of such a being, he only feigns that such a being exists. And this 'malignant demon' is simply a literary device for expressing in all its force the decision 'to doubt whenever can be doubted'. Underlying this figure is the supposition that our faculties may be such that we never can attain certain knowledge. ✓ Thus we find that Descartes has reformulated his methodological doubt in an hypothesis which is the most unfavourable to the possibility of certainty in knowledge that can be devised the assertion that 'which stands' the strongest possible doubt must be indubitable, it must be so and not merely presumed so.

Descartes' scepticism is based on two premises, namely, one, there are no certain marks distinguishing waking from sleep; and, two, one can be deceived in sleep. These two premises formed now are familiar passage which has been already quoted by me. However, it is worth quoting again in order to emphasize these two premises:

I can not, however, but remind myself that on many occasions I have in sleep been deceived by similar illusions; and on more careful study of them I see that there are no certain marks" (Italics are mine) distinguishing waking from sleep.....

Here, 'by certain marks' he does not mean 'signs', for there is no necessary connection between 'signs' and what the 'signs' stand for. For example, suppose there is an arrow sign indicating the direction in which North-Eastern Hill University is located:



The connection between the arrow sign and the university

is only contingent, and not necessary, because of the fact that the arrow sign may be there without there being North-Eastern Hill University. It is possible to conceive that the university has been razed to the ground following an earthquake and likewise, the university may be there without there being the arrow sign. The arrow sign might have been removed by a mischievous student. (By 'Certain marks', he does not mean symptoms either for the same reason)

Norman Malcolm makes an attempt to show that the above mentioned cartesian premises are invalid. If he could show these premises are invalid, it would follow then that cartesian scepticism does not have any philosophical foothold. He argues that dreams are not the sort of things that can be remembered. He bases his argument on the famous 'argument from memory' advocated by one of the greatest philosophers, Wittgenstein. The argument of his can be expressed as premises and conclusion as follows:

The concept of memory is such that it must be possible for us to distinguish correct memory from incorrect memory.

There must be, therefore, a criterion of our memory impressions.

The criterion of correctness of memory impressions must make an appeal to something other than the impression itself. Otherwise it would lead to the disturbing conclusion that whatever seems right to me is right.

A person reports a dream presumably on the basis of his memory impression of what he experienced when he had been sleeping.

But he can not have any criterion of correctness for those memory impressions of him. He can not legitimately talk about memories of dreams at all.

Therefore, dreams are not a sort of things that can be remembered.

Malcolm argues that since it is impossible to have thoughts when one is sound asleep he can not be deceived during a period of sound asleep. This is why he come to the conclusion that in the notion of dream of sound asleep there is no foothold for philosophical Scepticism.

Malcolm's argument can be represented in the forms of premises and conclusions as follows:

P: 1 It is impossible for any person to have any thought and be asleep.

P : 2 If any person has any state of consciousness, it must be possible for him to have the thought 'I have the state of consciousness now'.

P : 3 For him to have a state of consciousness while asleep, he must be capable of having a thought with regard to it (this follows from P:2).

P :4 But he can not have any thought while asleep (this follows from P:1).

P : 5 While asleep he can not have any state of consciousness.

Therefore, dreaming can not consist in having state of consciousness while asleep.

There is an ambiguous premise in this argument. The premise is P: 2. This resemble Immanuel Kant's principle, 'The I think must accompany all my representation'. P: 2 is dubious because there can be a state of consciousness and yet it is not possible for anyone to say 'I am in such and such a state of consciousness'. For example, take the case of total absorption. Therefore, I submit that Malcolm has not been successful in establishing that Descartes' scepticism does not have any philosophical foothold. ✓

CHAPTER III

DESCARTES AND PRINCIPLE OF COGITO

The primary aim of this chapter is to determine whether the principle of cogito is an inference or a performative act. In the second Meditation Descartes' doubting process comes to an end, and he finds the principle of certainty in himself. An exposition of his Meditation, I am sure, would go a long way in understanding the nature and function of this principle. A brief exposition, therefore, follows.

It is not only in the First Meditation that he applies the method of doubt, the introductory part of the Second Meditation also is not freed from his methodic doubt. "..... I will continue always in this track until I shall find something that is certain....."¹ The enterprise that lies before him in the Second Meditation is to discover some foundations of certainty which would be impregnable to doubt. He has doubted the reality of the world which is presented to him through his senses. Since nothing appears to be free from his doubt, he himself poses the following question with a tentative answer

¹ *The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. by Haldane and Ross - in W. Kaufmann's Philosophic Classic, P.36.*

before him- "What is there, then, that can be esteemed true? Perhaps this only, that there is absolutely nothing certain"² What is it that causes him to doubt? Shall we affirm that some God or evil or some other power must exist to put these ideas into his mind? ' But why suppose such a being, for it may be I myself am capable of producing them? Am I, then, at least not something? Thus, Descartes' doubt comes to a halt. If he is persuaded to suppose that there was nothing in the world, no sky and no earth, neither mind nor bodies, then this persuasion leads also to suppose that he did not exist. Descartes claims, if he was persuaded, he assuredly existed. Even if it is true that he is deceived by some evil power, at the same time the fact that he exists becomes equally true, for he is deceived. "Doubtless, then, I exist, since I am deceived; and let him deceive me as he may, he can never bring it about that I am nothing. So that it must; in fine, be maintained, all things being maturely and carefully considered, that this proposition (Pronunciation) I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind."³

². *Ibid*, P.37

³. *Ibid*, P.37

Now, Descartes says that he does not yet know with sufficient clearness what he is, though assured that he is. To know what he is through his present train of thought, he now considers anew what he formerly believed himself to be. Nonetheless, he is determined to do away his all previous beliefs if they are proved invalid through his method. Formerly, undoubtedly he thought of himself as a body possessing a countenance, hand, arms, and all other fabric of members that appears in a corpse. He thought that the nourishment, walking, perceiving, thinking are referred to the body as well as to the soul. He, rather never considered what the soul itself is; he simply imagined that it was something extremely rare and subtile, like wind, or flame, or ether, spread through his grosser parts. On the other hand, he never doubted the nature of body, rather he knew it distinctly with its attributes. But now, he faces a problem. That he supposes that there exists an extremely powerful, malignant being whose whole endeavours are directed towards deceiving him. Therefore, he raises the question to himself can I affirm that I possess anyone of all those attributes of which I have already spoken as belonging to the nature of body? After a while he seems to be convinced

that none of those attributes can belong to his self.

Can the powers of nutrition and walking be the attributes of soul? They cannot be, for they are the attributes of body. ".....besides, I have frequently, during sleep, believed that I perceived objects which I afterwards observed I did not in reality perceive"⁴ As Descartes reaches to 'thinking' as the attribute of the soul, he never doubted it. He says that the discovery of 'thinking' as an attribute of the soul is what properly belongs to his self. He can never separate thinking from himself; there is a necessary relation. The halt of his methodic doubt, thus, is followed ~~from~~^{by} the following assertion from Descartes. "I am - I exist: this is certain; but how often? As often as I think, for perhaps it would even happen, if I should wholly cease to think, that I should at the same time altogether cease to be I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thinking thing, that is, a mind (mens sive animus), understanding, or reason, - terms whose signification was before unknown to me. I am, however, a real thing, and really existent....."⁵ By this he proves all his previous beliefs as wrong, and ascertains that his 'I' is not the assemblage of members

⁴. *Ibid.* P.38

⁵. *Ibid.* P.38

called the human body. So, he is assured of his own existence.

Descartes is obliged by himself only to make a judgement of those things which he knows, and not those which are unknown to him. It is for this reason that he reveals the following line; ".....I am conscious that I exist, and I who know that I exist inquire into what I am."⁶ Does the knowledge of my existence depend on something else? Descartes' answer is an emphatic no; for the existence of things are yet unknown to him. Therefore, his existence is not dependent on any of the things which he can feign in imagination. An attempt to frame an image of his existence is to commit an error; because to imagine is to contemplate the figure or image of a corporeal thing.

Descartes endeavours to answer the question, ' what then am I?' 'What is a thinking thing?', that he repeatedly raises. He recognizes his 'I' as a thinking thing. This thinking thing, according to Descartes, is a thing that doubts, understands (conceives), affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives. "And I am as certainly the same being who imagines; for, although it may be (as I before supposed)

⁶. *Ibid.* P.39

that nothing I imagine is true, still the power of imagination does not cease really to exist in me and to form part of my thoughts.....At all events it is certain that I seem to see light, hear a noise, and feel heat; this can not be false, and this is what in me is properly called perceiving (sentire), which is nothing else than thinking. From this I begin to know what I am with somewhat greater clearness and distinctness than here to fore,ⁿ⁷

✓As regards the external objects or bodies Descartes says that it seems we know the things more clearly than what we know of ourselves. ✓ But that is not true, for they are estimated on the basis of our sense organs. ✓ The external qualities of things are subject to change. The change in taste, colour, smell and so on of a particular thing baffle the senses. To make this point more understandable let me refer to Descartes' 'wax case. Take a piece of wax: we think of it in terms of color, taste, odor, texture; but none of which are essential to the wax, place it near the fire, and all the qualities which engross the imagination are altered. All that remains unchanged are the properties like extension, motion and flexibility, that

⁷. *Ibid.* P.39-40

are known to the intellect or mind and not to the senses. The following confessing line of Descartes supports his argument well. "But when I distinguish the wax from its exterior forms, and when, as it I have stripped it of its vestments, I consider it quite naked, it is certain, although some error may still be found in my judgement, that I can not, nevertheless, thus apprehend it without possessing a human mind."⁸

Descartes admittedly holds the view that there is nothing else in the 'I' except a mind. He is sure, he has shown that the mind perceives the wax distinctly. Now the question is what 'mind' is? "Surely my awareness of my own self", says Descartes, "is not merely much truer and more certain than my awareness of the wax, but also much more distinct and evident."⁹

"But when I see, or think I see (I am not here distinguishing the two), it is simply not possible that I who am now thinking am not something. By the same token, if I judge that the wax exists from the fact that I touch it, the same result follows, namely that I exist And the result that I have grasped in the case of the wax may be applied to every-

⁸ Ibid. P.42

⁹ *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes. Vol.II.trans. by John Cottingham, P.22*

thing else located outside me. Moreover, if my perception of the wax seemed more distinct after it was established not just by sight or touch but by many other considerations it must be admitted that I now know myself even more distinctly."¹⁰ With this Descartes concludes that the bodies themselves are not properly perceived by the senses nor by the faculty of imagination, but by the intellect alone. Thus, it is the mind, through the faculty of understanding or thought, that can easily be apprehended than anything else. Through the last sentence of the Second Meditation it is conveyed that whatever beliefs are there in the mind of the people can not be altered too easily; for they are so deeply rooted that they may take a long period of time to be changed. Descartes means to say that it is necessary to have a long continued meditation to get rid of the habit of holding on to old opinions.

It is an apparent truth that the process of doubting which Descartes adopted in the First Meditation comes to a halt in his second Meditation. He employs his methodic doubt with a view to discover whether there is any indubitable truth. It is also true that Descartes found the truth in the affirmation 'Cogito, ergo sum; 'I think, therefore I am'. In the very act

¹⁰. *Ibid.* P. 22

of doubting the existence is established. One may go on doubting as ceaselessly as he can; but his doubt comes to standstill as it approaches to doubt his own existence. Thus it is obvious that the certainty of my existence is obtained only when I am thinking, or when I am conscious.

Descartes' principle of cogito states that- 'I think, therefore I am'. But the question arises, whether according to Descartes I infer or ~~infer~~^{infer} my existence? At one place, while talking about 'the wax and its nature Descartes says- "But (and this it is of moment to observe) the perception of it is neither an act of sight, of touch, nor of imagination, and never was either of these, though it might formerly seem so, but simply an intuition of the mind, which may be imperfect and confused, as it formerly was, or very clearly and distinct, as it is at present according as the attention is more or less directed to the elements which it contains, and of which it is composed"¹¹ Now, I will make an attempt to see at this problem as closely as I can.

There is a great deal of controversy among the critics and thinkers about the principle of cogito as to whether it

¹¹. *The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Vol.II. trans. by Haldane and Ross, appeared in the Philosophic Classics P.41*

is an inference. Gassendi, while raising his objections against the principle of cogito states that the cogito argument of Descartes is based on inference. Gassendi writes, "Turning to the second Meditation, I see that you still persist with your elaborate pretence of deception, but you go on to recognize at least that you, who are the subject of this deception, exist, I am, I exist, is true whenever it is put forward by you or conceived in your mind. But I do not see that you needed all this apparatus, when on other grounds you were certain, and it was true, that you existed. You could have made the same inference from anyone of your other actions, since it is known by the natural light that whatever acts exists,"¹² Although Descartes does not object to the point that was raised by Gassendi, he denies that any action other than thought would do. Descartes finds not a least metaphysical certainty in any other actions except in 'thought'. Although this seems to indicate that he accepted the principle as an inference, but actually it is not so. A reference to S.V. Keeling's writings will make this position clearer. "The form of language or ambiguity in the words used in communicating a belief may easily cause us to be deceived concerning the real character of the

¹². *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol.II, trans. by John Cottingham, P.180*

fact the statement of it should express".¹³ Keeling is convinced that Gassendi is misled by the language Descartes uses. "Fastening on the word 'therefore' in the dictum, 'I think, therefore I exist, he thought he had scented a step of inference in his view, *sum* was a conclusion syllogistically deduced from the minor, *cogito*, and a supposed major, *qui cogitat est* - whatever thinks exist."¹⁴ Keeling argues that if Gassendi is right then Descartes needs a separate evidence for his major premise, that everything that thinks exists. And the separate evidence should be both certain and independent of that which warrants the joint assertion of *cogito* and *sum*. On the otherhand, Descartes is not doing this. The general position of Descartes is this: I intuit in my own case the necessary connection between my thinking and my existing. ".... in asserting 'I think, therefore, I am' he is propounding no argument whatever, but simply expressing a fact which he reads off',.... by a direct act of intuition'. It is a primitive act of knowledge derived from no syllogistic reasoning; / Language is ambiguous; 'therefore', it is true, sometimes marks a step of inference, but it also sometimes marks independently a necessary connection between

¹³. Descartes, by S.V. Keeling. P.102

¹⁴. Ibid. P.103

terms (e.g. motion entails space).....In his dictum it is the latter, not the former, that 'therefore' expresses: a relation of entailment that so connects consciousness with existence that whatever is conscious must exist."¹⁵ I am in agreement with Keeling that Descartes needs, for his dictum, no reasoning to pass from the knowledge of doubting to the knowledge of existing.

If Gassendi holds the view that the proposition (If who think, exist' is derived from the premiss 'whatever thinks, exists' then he is mistaken about the principle of cogito. Descartes is not thinking of drawing a conclusion from a general premise. If I say 'I think, therefore I am or exist', here I do not deduce my existence by means of a syllogism, but by a simple act of mental vision, I recognize it as if it is a thing which is known through itself. It is evidently known from the fact that if it were deduced syllogistically, the major premise, that 'everything which thinks is or exists' would have to be known previously; but existence is learnt from the individuals experience - it is learnt intuitively. Question may be raised as to how this is possible. We have a readymade answer from Descartes, 'It is quite sufficient that we should know

¹⁵. *Ibid.* P.103

it by that internal awareness which always precedes reflective knowledge. This inner awareness of one's thought and existence is so innate in all men that, although we may pretend that we do not have it if we are overwhelmed by preconceived opinions and pay more attention to words than to their meanings. We can not in fact fail to have it."¹⁶ Although Descartes is not expressing it with perfect clarity but his general position is quite clear - he intuits in his own case the necessary connection between his thinking and existing. That is, to say, he intuits in a concrete case the impossibility of his thinking without his existing. And he expresses this intuition in the proposition cogito, ergo sum. It so appears that, this principle presupposes a general premise. Nonetheless, this does not mean that Descartes first thinks of a general premise and then draws a particular conclusion. Descartes, while replying the sixth set of objections, writes: "On the contrary, my explicit knowledge of the general premiss follows my intuition of the objective and necessary connection between my thinking and my existing."¹⁷

16. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. by John Cottingham. P.285*

17. *Descartes, edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris, Vol. V. P.147*

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I will now take up the three major thinkers

concerning the position of the principle of cogito.

Although Ayer does not deny the principle of cogito, his interpretation of it is certainly not at par with that of Descartes. He tries to prove that 'I think' and 'I exist' are, neither intuitive nor inferential, but matters of fact. It is true, Descartes allows that there is a malignant demon who deceives him. To this Ayer shows his utmost dissatisfaction: "The hypothesis of being such an arch deceiver is indeed empty, since his operation could never be detected; but it may be regarded as a picturesque way of expressing the fact that intuitive conviction is not a logical guarantee of truth."¹⁸ This of course, is an open challenge posited by Ayer. In the same breath he also denies that there is a necessary relation between 'thinking' and 'existing'.

According to Ayer, the statement I am thinking is not the expression of a necessary truth. And even if it seems to be necessary it is only because of the absurdity of denying it. The following point of Ayer in his article 'I think, therefore

¹⁸. Descartes, edited by Doney, P.80

I am' supplements the above: "To say 'I am not thinking' is self-stultifying since if it is said intelligently it must be false: but it is not self-contradictory. The proof that it is not self-contradictory is that it might have been true. And the same applies to the statement that I exist. It would be absurd for me to deny that I existed. If I say that I do not exist, it must be false. But it might not have been false. It is a fact that I exist, but not a necessary fact".¹⁹ Nonetheless, to deny that 'I exist' is an absurdity.

No doubt, Descartes' cogito argument is a privileged one; but Ayer finds no such characteristic in it. Besides, Descartes' mere consciousness is not sufficient to prove his existence. For these are certain other statements which can be known independently even if I may not have any knowledge about my own self-consciousness. This point of Ayer shows that he makes an appeal to those things and knowledge which is acquired through the media of senses.

Are 'I think' and 'I exist' are truths of logic? According to Ayer they are not. Even if they are, they are not indubitable. What makes them indubitable is their satisfying a condition

¹⁹. *Descartes, edited by Doney, P.81*

which Descartes himself does not make explicit, though his argument turns upon it. The sense in which I can not doubt the statement that I think is just that my doubting it entails its truth: and in the same sense I can not doubt that I exist. There was therefore, no need for Descartes to derive 'sum' from 'Cogito'; for its certainty could be independently established by the same criterion.²⁰ Thus he makes it clear that ✓ for Descartes inference or logical truth has no much role to play. ✓ If I think, then I think; or if I exist, then I exist, for this no further logical explanation is needed.

Ayer points out that it is hard to answer questions such as 'how do you know that you are conscious?' and so on. He is of the view that it is almost impossible to give evidence that somebody exists. ✓ The question would appear, according to him, 'to be a joke, a parody of philosophical cautiousness'. ✓ He argues with Hume that there is nothing that would count as having an experience of one's self. ✓ According to Ayer the sentences like 'I exist; 'I am conscious', 'I know that I exist, 'I know that I am conscious' do not express genuine propositions. He points that the sentence 'I exist' is not only a

²⁰ Ibid, P.81

peculiar statement, but also a degenerate one. He says: "It is, therefore, a peculiar statement, and not only peculiar but degenerate. ✓ It is degenerate in the way that the statement which are expressed by such sentences as 'this exists' or 'this is occurring now' are degenerate. In all these cases the verbs which must be added to the demonstratives to make a grammatical sentence are sleeping partners."²¹ This sort of statement if actually expressed, then it must be true, though not necessarily true. It is something like an analytic statement that once we understand the demonstrative use the addition of a predicate will tell us nothing. "Divorce from its context the whole statement has no meaning".²²

From the above discussions it is quite clear that Ayer's view is completely different from that of Descartes. ✓ According to him, the certainty of one's own existence is not the outcome of intuition, but it is the case that if anyone claims to know that he exists, or that he is conscious, he is bound to be right. Again, if anyone claims to know that he exists or that he is conscious, his claim must be valid, simply because its being valid is a condition of its being made. ✓²³ However unacceptable it may be for the followers of Descartes, Ayer is not going

²¹. *Ibid*, P. 85

²². *Ibid*, P. 86

²³. *Ibid*, P. 86.

to listen to anyone. This can be learned from the concluding sentence of his article 'I think, therefore I am' : "This is the ground for saying that statements like ' I exist' are certain, but it is also the proof of their degeneracy: they have nothing to say beyond what is implied in the fact that they have a reference."²⁴

Ayer's view is thus that the principle of cogito is a syllogistic inference with a suppressed major premise. But this is not a valid syllogistic inference, for ' I think' and ' I exist' can be independently established.

✓ The certainty of Cogito, an article of Bernard Williams, holds the view that the cogito is a kind of inference though not syllogistic in form. Bernard Williams agrees with Ayer that the statements associated with the cogito are neither logical nor necessary truths. He holds the opinion that the relation between 'I think' and 'I exist' is based upon the logical relation of presupposition.

In order to show that the cogito is not a syllogism with a suppressed major premise, Bernard Williams quotes the following from Descartes: "When we say that it is impossible for

²⁴. *Ibid*, P. 87

the same thing at the same time to be and not to be, that what has been done can not be undone, that who thinks can not fail to be or exist while he thinks, and numerous other things of this sort, these are eternal truth and not things existing outside our thought(principles 1, 49)²⁵ By taking help from P.T. Geach Bernard Williams attempts to show the relation between the cogito and sum - the relation as a presupposition. [✓]with regard to the point that interests us, it is enough to say that when we are concerned with a proposition of the form "f(a)", where 'f' stands for the predicate and 'a' for a proper name, a pronoun, or a definite description (leaving aside difficult cases), the proposition "f(a)" characteristically presupposes that there exists something corresponding to a.²⁶ However, he, at this juncture, for a better understanding, makes a distinction between presupposition and implication. For this symbolic argument he refers to the proposition provided by P.T. Geach: if P implies Q and Q is false, it follows that P is also false, whereas if P presupposes Q and Q is false, then P is neither true nor false.²⁷ To accept this kind of relation of presupposition is to accept that it is a kind of inference since there is a movement from a predicative proposi-

²⁵. Descartes, edited by Willis Doney. P.92

²⁶. Ibid. P. 95-96

²⁷. P. T. Geach, "Russells' Theory of Descriptions", *Analysis*, 1949, and P.F. Strawson, "On Referring", *Mind*, 1950, quoted in Descartes, ed. by Doney, P. 05;

tion to an existential proposition. Furthermore, "if P presupposes Q and P is true, Q must also be true. For since "P presupposes q" means "q must be true for P to be either true or false," it follows a fortiori that q must be true for P to be true; in other words, if P is true q is also true. And this I take to be the principle of the cogito,"²⁸ Still at another place of the same article he writes that, "I do not see why we should not also be justified in considering the relation of presupposition between 'I think' and 'I exist' as the basis of a principle of inference and hence of the cogito itself in so far as it is an inference - not, of course, in the sense of a syllogism with a suppressed major premise."²⁹ Bernard Williams does not agree with Copleston that the cogito principle is an inference with a suppressed major premise. Thus, both of them accept the cogito principle as an inference but in a different way.

However, Bernard Williams seems to say that there is a close relation between Descartes' eternal truth' or 'maxim' and a rule of language. He also shows that 'I' is clearly a referring term. To say 'you; I, he - we are all dark' is to

²⁸. *Ibid*, P. 96

²⁹. *Ibid*, P. 97

refer to three different persons. "What differentiates "I" from "you" and from third person pronouns is that, unlike the others, it appears to be incapable of failing in its mission of referring. I may say ' he is dark' but it is discovered that there is no one to refer as dark. I may say, ' "you....." realize that I am talking to a void. But "I" always points in the right direction and never misses its mark. So long as it introduces an intelligible expression, the 'I' used grammatically in uttering the expression invariably points to the Speaker."³⁰ Thus according to Bernard Williams 'you', 'he' may fail to refer for an actual assertion, but that 'I' refers to someone can not be doubted. The certainty of the cogito is, thus, established. But, that 'I' refer to someone does not amount to saying that "I think" or "I exist" is a logical truth. It is not a logical truth because, by 'I think' Descartes is not saying it as "Any thinking thing thinks. Nevertheless, ✓ Bernard Williams says about the cogito that, "it appears, rather, to be a kind of inference from one proposition that is certain to another and to be based not only on the principle of presupposition and the unique properties of the word 'I' but also on the autonomy of "I think",³¹ / Consequently his principle of presupposition runs

³⁰. Descartes, edited by Doney, P. 97

³¹. Ibid. P. 102-103

as following: "If the use of referring words like "I" presupposes the existence of what is designated, the presupposition at work in the case of "I" in "I exist" is such that the proposition will presuppose itself."³²

✓ After so much of analysis of Descartes' cogito principle, Bernard Williams, unlike A.J. Ayer, appreciates the conclusion of Descartes. The following statement of him bears a remarkable evidence in support of Descartes' position. "In a solipsistic universe, in which nothing and no one exists except in me and "for me", what function can it fulfil?..... the world appears to Descartes at the crucial point at which the cogito is situated."³³ It seems, this is a sort of sympathy towards Descartes

✓ Is the dictum 'Cogito, ergo sum' be considered a performative act as advocated by Prof. Hintikka? He argues that Cogito, ergo sum represents a perfectly valid statement on the part of Descartes or anyone else uttering this sentence, provided it is interpreted as a performance. His main point is that, because I can not intelligently, that is, without making an 'existentially' inconsistent or self-defeating statement, deny

³². *Ibid.* P. 106

³³. *Ibid.* P. 106

that I exist or that I am thinking.³⁴

Prof. Hintikka's article 'Cogito ergosum: Inference or performance?' clearly shows that the cogito principle is not based on the formal logical argument; and that it is not an expression of a syllogistic inference. Simply speaking it is not an inference but a performance. ✓

For Descartes, cogito, ergo sum is intuitively evident. Intuition, here, for Descartes, is not an irrational event but an act of thinking mind; or that when I say 'I think' (cogito) my 'existence' (sum) is immediately apprehended. Therefore, it is an intellectual intuition. Hintikka points out that it is unfair to criticise Descartes for certain views which are not held by him, Hintikka Writes: "As we saw, Descartes sometimes dinies that in the cogito argument sum is deduced from cogito. But on the view we are criticising the argument is a deduction. The view is therefore unsatisfactory."³⁵ He is certainly stating this argument only against those who are condemning Descartes for thinking that his cogito argument is a ~~deduction~~^{deduction}. Again, this sort of study is unsatisfactory because it neither helps us to understand the role of the cogito, nor

³⁴. *Seventeenth Century Metaphysics*, by W.Von.Leyden.P.114

³⁵. *Descartes*, ed. by Willis Doney, P.122

to appreciate the consequences Descartes endeavours to draw from his method.

In his article, it is found, Hintikka tries to understand the content of the dictum in quite a systematic way. At the very outset he expresses his satisfaction that the relation of the cogito to sum is not that of formal syllogistic inference even if it appears to be so. He refers to Gassendi's comparison of walking and thinking. "A part of the burden of his remarks is perhaps that although the inferences 'ambulo, ergo sum' and ' cogito, ergo sum' are parallel..... their premises are essentially different. Ambulo is not an indubitable premise in the way cogito may be claimed to be."³⁶

✓ Hintikka is convinced that the principle of cogito is not an inference, but a performative act. To maintain his point of 'performatoriness' Hintikka provides us with certain supplementary arguments. So, he talks of existential inconsistency. According to him an existentially inconsistent statement is nothing more than 'fictional utterance', to use his own words. If I say that 'I am writing my dissertation; and actually writing it, then, my uttering the sentence carries no inconsistency.

³⁶. *Ibid.* P.112

But if the statement "De Gaulle does not exist" is uttered by De Gaulle himself then the statement will turn out to be an existentially inconsistent statement. He writes: "The inconsistency (absurdity) of an existentially inconsistent statement can in a sense be said to be of performatory (Performative) character. It depends on an act or "performance", namely 'on a certain persons' act 'of uttering a sentence..... The sentence is perfectly correct as a sentence, but the attempt of a certain man to utter it assertively is curiously pointless."³⁷ It is exactly the case with 'De Gaulle' example. This example like that of 'De Gaulle' case clearly shows a 'destructive effect'. "The pointlessness of an existentially inconsistent statement is therefore due to the fact that they automatically destroy one of the major purposes which the act of uttering a declarative sentence normally has.....This destructive effect is of course conditional on the fact that the hearer knows who the maker of the statement is,"³⁸ Therefore, the sort of utterances like 'I don't exist' are self-defeating in character. The point that Hintikka tries to bring out is that - to make others believe something it is necessary for one

³⁷. *Descartes, edited by Willis Doney, P.118*

³⁸. *Ibid, P. 118-119*

to make such attempts which are being capable of being by the person whom it is prescribed to. "But in trying to make myself believe something there is no need to say anything aloud or to write anything on paper."³⁹ Such an inconsistency can occur, according to Hintikka, in both the cases, whether it be 'public speech acts' or be it 'private thought acts.'

Now, the question is - what does it mean when we say a sentence is existentially self-verifying?. Hintikka gives an answer in the following manner: ".....as existentially inconsistent sentences defeat themselves when they are uttered or thought of, their negations verify themselves when they are expressly uttered or professed. Such sentences may therefore be called existentially self verifying. The simplest example of a sentence of this kind is "I am", in Descartes Latin *ego sum, ego existo*⁴⁰ Therefore, if I utter or profess a sentence like 'I exist,' and would like to offer a proof to it, then the simple answer will be to utter or to profess a negation of it, namely, 'I don't exist'. The very negating sentence 'I don't exist' verifies the existence of 'I exist.' This is the proof that Hintikka offers. ✓

³⁹. *Ibid.* P. 119

⁴⁰. *Ibid.* P. 121

Hintikka brings out the function of the principle of cogito as follows: "It serves to express the performatory character of Descartes' insight; it refers to the "Performance" (to the act of thinking) through which the sentence "I exist" may be said to verify itself".⁴¹ I would like to augment the argument of Hintikka with the following examples, which exhibit the self-defeating character.

1. I don't exist.
2. De Gaulle does not exist; if it is uttered by De Gaulle himself.
3. You don't exist; it is absurd because there is no one whom it could conceivably addressed.
4. In the same way to utter the sentence 'I am writing' is self defeating if actually I am not at all writing.

Therefore an existentially inconsistent sentence may defeat itself either through an 'external speech act' or through 'internal thought act'.⁴ Hintikka thinks that the performance of the cogito contains in it a dual role: "In the cogito it is presupposed that a man not only can converse with his fellowmen but is also able to discourse with himself without spoken sound."⁴²

⁴¹. *Ibid.* P. 123

⁴². *Ibid.* P. 125

It is because of this latter reason that Hintikka talks of the connection of cogito and introspection, "what makes us connect the cogito with introspection is the "Spiritualization" which takes place when an "external" speech act is replaced by a thought act."⁴³

At the very next step he offers a picture, but it appears to be an unclear one, it is about the application of the first person 'I' "..... appreciating the cogito argument pre-suppose an ability to appreciate the logic of the first person 'I'. And although mastering the latter is not the same thing as the capacity for introspection, the two are likely to be connected with each other conceptually (logically). The cogito insight is essentially connected with one's own case, in the same way introspection is, we might say."⁴⁴ Further, he seems to deny cogito as a case of mere introspection. "It is very misleading, however, to appeal to introspection in explaining the meaning of the cogito, although there is likely to be a connection between the notion of introspection and the peculiarities of the cartesian argument."⁴⁵ The peculiarity of the cartesian argument according to Hintikka is that it deals with a particu-

⁴³. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴. *Descartes, ed. by Doney, P. 126*

⁴⁵. *Ibid. P. 125*

lar case, that is, with his own. From this it follows that "Descartes' insight is not generalizable. Thus is of course due to its performatory character..... each of us can formulate for himself" a sentence in the first person singular that is true and indubitable.....ego sum ego existo. But since its indubitability is due to a thought act which each man has to perform himself, there can not be any general sentence which would be indubitable in the same way without being trivial."⁴⁶ Thus Hintikka conclusively shows that by no means the cogito principle of Descartes is generalizable.

Consequently, Hintikka says on the basis of his argument, that the cogito (thinking) is nothing more than an act or performance in mind. And this performance is beyond the influence of doubt. This can not be doubted. Thus, if the cogito as performance can not be doubted, then it certainly is the proof of my sum (existence). Not to perform the cogito is equal to that of non-existent, at least for that particular moment. That is why he comes forward to repeat the sentence of Descartes - I exist as long as I think. In order to support his argument Hintikka introduces the term 'existentially inconsistent'

⁴⁶. *Ibid.* P. 127

- he introduces it to show the negations of those propositions, namely, 'cogito' and 'sum' (negation of which being 'I do not exist'). This is a novel method adopted by Hintikka.

The notion of 'performatory' or 'performative' interpretation of the cogito is not free from objections. Let us see what Bernard Williams has to say about this. To attend his purpose as regards ~~to~~ cogito ergo sum he uses a new term 'incorrigibility', and he defines it in the following way: "The simplest definition of such a kind of proposition would be this: a proposition which is such that if someone believes it, then it logically follows that his belief is true. I shall call such a proposition incorrigible."⁴⁷ Since Descartes claims both cogito and sum to be certain and indubitable, Bernard Williams makes the following observation: "Both possess the property....., of being incorrigible: if anyone believes that he is thinking, or again, that he exists, then necessarily he has a true belief. Moreover, they both have another property which is closely related to their incorrigibility, contributes to it: each of them is self-verifying, in the sense that if anyone asserts the proposition, then that assertion must be true."⁴⁸ He anticipates a

⁴⁷. Descartes, by Bernard Williams, P. 49

⁴⁸. Ibid. P. 73-74

question -- what makes a true belief? -- and gives an answer that "....the self verifying property of cogito as asserted gives him inevitably a true belief..... The denials of ' I am thinking' and 'exist' are not logical falsehoods, but pragmatically self--defeating or self-falsifying....."⁴⁹.

Bernard Williams points out that as regards the incorrigibility aspect that Hintikka has used the notion of a 'performatory' or 'performative' interpretation of the cogito is not a satisfactory one. Bernard Williams is certainly dissatisfied with this sort of interpretation made by Hintikka; he rather takes it to be 'seriously misleading; why misleading? Because, according to Bernard Williams, the use of 'performative' is made only to cover certain uses of language. "The main use of 'performative' in recent philosophy has been to cover certain uses of language by which the very act of uttering a sentence, in a correct context, constitutes the act to which the sentence refers: 'I hereby warn you.....; 'I bid; 'I promise; are well known examples. If the term 'performatory' is applied to the cogito, this might suggest, by a kind of analogy to these examples, that it is the very act of thinking the proposition that makes the proposition true."⁵⁰ Thus, according to

⁴⁹. *Ibid.* P. 74

⁵⁰. *Descartes, by Bernard Williams, P. 75*

Bernard Williams, the use of the term 'performative' by Hintikka is not correct.

~~say that~~

✓ It seem from the angle of Descartes' 'Meditations', that neither Ayer, nor Bernard Williams nor Hintikka are right as critics against the cogito principle. For we have already seen in this very chapter that Descartes' fundamental instrument to grasp the cogito principle is his intuition. ✓

To conclude I would like to attend, once more, to the following few lines, that go to support Descartes. A number of thinkers are coming forward to discuss the cogito principle in accordance with their own interpretation. While, Descartes' claim of his argument is quite distinct. For he is neither claiming it to be an inference, nor a logical presupposition nor a performatory act. Nor he is permitting the readers to interpret the cogito principle on the basis of generalization. Therefore, we are forced to admit that according to Descartes the proof for my existence is a result of intellectual intuition.

Conclusion:

In the Second Meditation Descartes' doubt comes to a halt, and he finds the principle of certainty that he has

been looking for hitherto in himself. This is the famous principle of cogito. In this principle Descartes finds his desired certain foundation on which all other knowledge is to rest. The principle of Cogito has been evoking a considerable interest in the highest minds at the highest level. A.D. Lindsay has the following to say about this argument, I think, therefore I am, this argument proves at once too little and too much. It proves too little, because thinking and doubting, being transitive verbs, must have some objects. This argument also proves too much, as is seen when we consider what Descartes means by 'I'. For what is really implied in the fact of doubting is a subject that doubts. Descartes assumes without proof that a subject that doubts must have personal identity, or must be what he calls a substance. He implies that what doubts at one moment must be the same as that which doubts at another. But the unity of the self which this implies as Locke, and Hume afterwards pointed out depends upon memory; and memory, Descartes insists, gives only probability. I am of the opinion that Descartes goes wrong in considering memory as the criterion of personal identity. I agree with Bishop Butler that memory cannot be a criterion of personal identity because

memory presupposes identity.

Is the principle of Cogito an inference? If it is not an inference what is it? These are some of the fundamental questions that are connected with this principle. Some philosophers like Hobbes believe that it is an inductive inference. This cannot be an inductive inference, because if it were so it would be contrary to the primary intention of Descartes. It can be said with certainty that Descartes is not looking for a probable inductive generalization, but for a necessary statement. Some philosophers take it to be a deductive inference. A.J. Ayer, for example, considers this principle as a *syllogistic inference in which the major premise is suppressed*. He argues that the certainty of this principle does not amount to much. He also argues that there is no need to deduce 'I exist' from 'I think', for these two can be established independently of each other. Bernard Williams also takes this principle to be a case of deductive inference but not as a syllogistic inference, but as an inference based on the relation of logical presupposition. He rightly points out that in the Aristotelian inference the major premise carries necessarily an existential proposition. He argues, therefore if the principle is considered

as a syllogistic inference, it would defeat the very purpose of Descartes. Moreover, he points out that Descartes has nothing but contempt for Aristotelian syllogism.

✓/Jakko Hintikka believes that the principle of cogito is not an inference, but a performance. He tries to show that the relation between the 'cogito' and the 'sum' is one that of the relation between a process and the product, thinking being the process, and existence the product. ✓

✓It is almost impossible to come to a definite conclusion as regards the principle of cogito. However, I believe that this principle is an inference. The text of Descartes especially the Discourse on Method and the Meditations bear ample testimony to this but it is not a syllogistic inference as Ayer assumes it to be. Therefore, I am inclined towards the position held by Bernard Williams that it is a deductive inference based on the logical relation of presupposition. Though Hinkka's position is novel and interesting it fails to convince me that the principle is not an inference. ✓

CHAPTER IV

DESCARTES AND IDEAS

In the Third Meditation Descartes begins with an examination of the properties of ideas which he has in his mind. The aim of this chapter is to explicate the notion of idea in the philosophy of Descartes. He is the first philosopher to use the term Idea in a ^{new} ~~technical~~ sense, although his explanations leave a number of important questions unanswered. If considered only as subjective modifications or modes of thought then, according to Descartes, all the ideas are alike. But if the ideas are considered in their representative character, according to content, they differ very much from one another, some containing more objective reality than others. Let me give an exposition of the Third Meditation, in which he discusses the notion of idea, prior to undertaking a critical examination of the same.

Descartes is sure that he will accept only those things of which he can have clear and distinct ideas. Previously,

he accepted as wholly certain and evident many things which he afterwards realized were doubtful. These are earth, sky, stars, and everything else that he apprehended with the senses. But, now, he says that there is something which he perceives clearly. And that they are the ideas, or thoughts, of such things appeared before his mind. Even now he does not deny that these ideas occur within himself. What he used to assert previously was that he was pre-occupied by some habitual beliefs; and he realizes that it was his mistake. "There was, however, another thing which I was affirming, and which, being habituated to belief in it, I supposed myself to be apprehending clearly, although in truth I was not so apprehending it, namely that there were things outside me, from which these proceed and to which they are altogether similar. It was in this that I was mistaken; or if I was perhaps judging correctly, assuredly this was not due to any knowledge conveyed to me by way of direct apprehension."¹

Descartes brings forth the questions about arithmetic and geometry, like - two and three added together makes five: He also claims that in this regard he sees their truth

¹. Descartes: *Philosophical Writings*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, appeared in *The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche*, ed. by Monroe C. Beardsley, P.41

very clearly. He is, at the same time, also tempted to make doubt about the truth or falsity concerning the arithmetical questions. He writes, "Indeed, the only reason for my later judgment that they were open to doubt was that it occurred to me that perhaps some God could have given me a nature such that I was deceived in matters of which seemed most evident."² He thinks in this way because he believes that God possesses the Supreme power to do anything. This means that there is a deceiving God. But at the very next moment he makes this point too, that how can he say of a God as the cause of truth or error, for His existence is yet not known. "And since I have no cause to think that there is a deceiving God at all, any reason for doubt which depends simply on this supposition is a very slight and, so to speak, metaaphysical one."³ Descartes, with this view, now proceeds further to find out a solution in an orderly way. The whole problem about God will be discussed in the next chapter, for the present chapter concerns only with ideas, and, truth and error.

What can be entitled as ideas? This is an important problem with which Descartes continues his discussion in the

²•*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol.II, trans. by John Cottingham, P.25*

³• *Ibid.*

Third Meditation. He classifies thoughts into some definite kinds, and asks which of them can properly be said to be the bearers of truth and falsity. As regards to 'idea' he says the following: "Some of my thoughts are, as it were, the images of things, and it is only in these cases that the term 'idea' is strictly appropriate - for example, when I think of a man, or a Chimera, or the Sky, or an angel, or God. Other thoughts have various additional forms: Thus when I will, or am afraid, or affirm, or deny, there is always a particular thing which I take as the object of my thought, but my thought includes something more than the likeness of that thing. Some thoughts in this category are called volitions, or emotions, while others are called judgments.....as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false"⁴ Descartes seems to certify those, that images of goat or chimera, or will and emotions, of whom the question of falsity does not arise. Falsity and mistakes may arise only while making judgements of ideas. If a careful attention is not paid while making a judgment then only there remains the possibility

⁴. *Ibid.* P. 25-26

of mistake or error. The mistake consists in judging that the ideas are similar or conform to things located outside the thinker. But without referring to anything else, if the ideas are considered in themselves simply as the mode of thoughts, then there is no possibility for error. It follows from this that the problem of error arises only in those judgments where ideas are considered to resemble with the external world or the world of phenomena.

Descartes, while going further to find out truth and falsity of ideas, classified the ideas into innate, adventitious, and factitious. He says, "To consider now the ideas, some appear to me to be innate, others to be adventitious, that is to say foreign to me and coming from without, and others to be made or invented by me".⁵ To understand those three ideas clearly it will be, I think, better to study them in a reverse order, that is, with the ideas produced by me. These ideas are also called as factitious or manufactured ideas. When a person produces an idea by putting together some old ideas that he already had, then the newly produced idea is called factitious idea. According to Descartes, the idea of a hippogriff

⁵ Descartes: *Philosophical Writings*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith; appeared in 'The European Philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche', ed. by Monroe C. Bredsley, P.43.

is an example of factitious idea. It is created by joining together the idea of a horse and the idea of a griffin. Griffin itself is created by joining together the idea of an eagle and the idea of a lion.

The adventitious ideas are those that enter into the mind involuntarily from the outside things. "But my hearing a noise, as I do now, or seeing the sun, or feeling the fire, comes from things which are located outside me, or so I have hitherto judged."⁶ Many of our such ideas arise suddenly and without any effort. They seem as if they are imposed upon us by some external sources or that this sort of ideas are caused by the external world through our sense organs. It is so because they arise suddenly, involuntarily, and seemingly from some outside objects.

Finally, the first class of ideas consists of innate ideas, which are inborn qualities of a man. These innate ideas, according to Descartes, as inborn ones, are not derived from sense-experience nor they are manufactured by putting together other ideas already in the mind.

Now, let us consider the problem in detail. Descartes is chiefly concerned about those ideas, at least for a while,

⁶. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II* trans. by J Cottingham. P. 26

which seemed to be derived from things existing outside himself. He raises the question: what is my reason for thinking that they (advertitious ideas) resemble these things? In support of this question he finds two grounds as forcing him to believe that the ideas are similar to the outside things. He says, "The first of those grounds is that I seem to be so taught by nature; and the second, that I experience in myself that these ideas are not in anywise dependent on my will, nor therefore on myself, often they present themselves to me inspite of myself, as for instance, at the present moment, whether I will or not I feel heat..... of the fire near which I am sitting. And as it has seemed to me, nothing is more obvious than that I may therefore, judge that what this external thing is impressing on me is not anything different from itself, but its similitude."⁷ Obviously enough, Descartes is not going to be satisfied with the above mentioned grounds. He now wants to find out whether they are sufficiently strong and convincing. Descartes makes a distinction between the two meanings of the word "nature" one as certain 'Spontaneous impulse' and the other as 'natural light. "When I here say that I am so taught by

⁷•*The European philosophers from Descartes to Nietzsche*, ed. by Monroe C. Beardsley, P.43

nature I understand by the word "nature" only a certain spontaneous impulse which constrains me to this belief, and not a natural light enabling me to know that the belief is true."⁸ Among these two different things the latter's truth can never be called into doubt. There is nothing, no faculty at all, that can falsify the truth given by the natural light. There is no power which is as trustworthy as the natural light. There is no power which is as trustworthy as the natural light. From the fact that I am doubting it follows that I exist, and so on can not in anyway be open to doubt because it is revealed to me by the natural light. Descartes says that he was often misled by the spontaneous impulses, in the past, particularly when the question of choosing right and wrong arose. That he means to say that he was too often deceived by the senses as regards the external objects. Thus, natural impulses can not be counted as a valid ground with regard to truth and error. According to Descartes, the natural inclination is not going to help. He rejects the adventitious ideas by pointing out, in a dream, we often get adventitious ideas that presumably are not caused by the things they represent. For instance,

⁸. *Ibid.* P. 43.

while dreaming, one might suddenly and involuntarily have the idea of some strange monster. This idea is adventitious, but there is no reason to suppose that it is caused by a real monster. Descartes argument runs in the following way: "For just as the natural impulses, notwithstanding the fact that they are not always in accordance with my will, are nonetheless in me, so likewise it may be that I have in me, though indeed unknown to me, some faculty of power capable of producing the ideas and of doing so without the aid of any external things."⁹

Let us grant that the so called adventitious ideas do come from the outside things. But, this is not going to help us. Because even if these ideas do come from things other than myself; it does not follow that they must resemble those things. In quite a few instances it is found that a thing can differ from our ideas of it. Concerning this case Descartes takes 'sun', for example. 'Sun' can be known through two different ways: one through the senses, where the sun looks very small. The other idea is based on astronomical reasoning. The former belongs to the class of adventitious ideas while the

⁹• *Ibid.* P.44

later is derived from certain notions which are constructed by me in some other way. "Certainly, these two ideas of the sun cannot both resemble the same sun; and reason constrains me to believe that the one which seems to have emanated from it in a direct manner is the more unlike".¹⁰ Thus, according to Descartes, those ideas of the adventitious class are unlike the objects they are purported to represent and thus misleading. All the above mentioned considerations are sufficient enough to convince him that hitherto made judgments, based on the senses, are not reliable. The belief that there exist things distinct from myself which transmit to me ideas or images of themselves through the senses, are merely some blind impulses. The belief that there exist things distinct from myself is also a false belief.

At this stage Descartes changes the direction of his investigation in order to know if some of the things of which he possesss ideas exist outside himself. If ideas are considered simply as certain ways (or modes) of thinking then, says Descartes, there arises no recognizable differences or inequality; "They all appear to me to proceed from me in the same manner. When, however, they are viewed as images, of which

¹⁰. *Ibid.*

one represents one thing and another some other thing, it is evident that they differ greatly one from another. Those which represent substances are without doubt something more, and contain in themselves, so to speak, more objective reality (that is to say participate by representation in a higher degree of being or of perfection) than those which represent only modes or accidents."¹¹ In the very first paragraph of this chapter I did make some points about this representational character. To add as to what sort of substances does contain more objective reality Descartes says that the idea of God certainly has in it more objective reality than the ideas that represent finite substances. John Cottingham produces some points about the objective reality:i.e. participate by representation in a higher degree of being or perfection.....According to the scholastic distinction invoked in the paragraphs that follow, the 'formal' reality of anything is its own intrinsic reality, while the 'objective' reality of an idea is a function of its representational content. Thus, if an idea A represents some object X which is F, then F-ness will be contained 'formally' in 'X' but objectively in A".¹²

¹¹. *Ibid.* P. 44-45

¹². *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. by J. Cottingham, P. 28 f.n.*

Descartes, further tries to understand the problems about ideas on the basis of cause effect relationship. He is sure as it is manifested by the natural light, that there must be at least as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in the effect. Descartes raises two questions: from where does the effect get its reality if not from the cause?, and how a cause can give reality to an effect if it is not already possessed by the cause? From this it follows that something can not come out of nothing. And also that something more perfect (contains more reality) can not come out of less perfect. Concerning ideas Descartes states in the following manner: "And this is transparently true not only in the case of effects ✓ which possess (what the philosophers call) actual or formal reality, but also in the case of ideas, where one is considering only (what they call) objective reality." He provides us with example ".....a stone which previously did not exist, can not begin to exist unless it is produced by something which contains, either formally or eminently everything to be found in the stone."¹³ In the same way he also talks of heat. But there must be a cause to place the ideas of stone and heat in me. The ideas of stone and heat can not exist in me unless

¹³. *Ibid.* P.28

it is placed in me by a cause. At the same time that cause (that which produces the idea in me) must contain in itself at least as much reality as I conceive to be in the heat or stone. To quote Descartes: "For although this cause does not transfer any of its actual or formal reality to my idea, it should not on that account be supposed that it must be less real. The nature of an idea is such that of itself it requires no formal reality except what it derives from my thought, of which it is a mode."¹⁴ On the otherhand, for an idea to contain one (particular) objective reality (than some other), it must undoubtedly derive it from some cause. Because, the cause contains at least as much formal (that is actual) reality as there is objective (representational) reality in the idea. Since something can not come out of nothing, an idea too can not contain something what was not previously in its cause. The mode of being is always objectively (representatively) in the understanding by way of representation through its idea. This mode of being may however be imperfect, we can not declare it to be in itself nothing, because something can not come out of nothing.

¹⁴. *Ibid.*

And although the reality which I am considering in my ideas is merely objective reality, I must not, on that account, suppose that the same reality need not exist formally in the causes of my ideas, but that it is enough for it to be present in them objectively.¹⁵ It is the very nature that the objective mode of being belongs to ideas and the formal mode of being belongs to the causes of ideas (or at least to the first and chief of their causes). Descartes still adds some arguments to get rid of the infinite regress. He says that one idea may originate from another idea, but this does not mean that there is an infinite regress here. Because eventually one must reach a primary idea, the cause of which will be like an archetype which contains formally (and in fact) all the reality (or perfection) which is present only objectively (or representatively) in the idea....that the ideas in me are like (pictures) images which easily fall short of the perfections of the things from which they are taken, but which can not contain anything greater or more perfect.¹⁶

Descartes, to arrive at some conclusion, raises the question - what is my conclusion to be? This question arises only when

15. *Ibid.* P. 29

16. *Ibid.*

he finds that a more careful examination of things leads him to recognize clarity and distinctness of their truth. He is almost sure that he himself cannot be the cause of his ideas. There must be some other cause to implant some of those ideas in him. Descartes writes, if the objective reality of any of my ideas turns out to be so great that I am sure that the same reality does not reside in me, either formally or eminently, and hence that I myself cannot be its cause, it will necessarily follow that I am not alone in the world, but that some other thing which is the cause of this idea also exists.¹⁷

Descartes is quite confident that there exists clear and distinct ideas in him; furthermore, he can not imagine the absence of them.

Descartes holds that there are ideas of different kinds, as I have already mentioned. Among my ideas some are those which give me a representation of myself. Besides, in addition to them there are ideas which variously represents God, corporeal and inanimate things, angels, animals and other men like myself. The ideas representing about other men, or animals, or angels are compounded from the ideas I have of myself,

¹⁷. *Ibid.*

of corporeal things and of God. These ideas can be produced even if there exist outside myself neither men, animals, nor angels.

The ideas of Corporeal things are originated in myself, for there is nothing impossible here. Talking about the ideas concerning the corporeal things he refers back to the wax example. Like in the wax example the ideas of corporeal things, when scrutinized carefully, also possesses very few member of clarity and distinctness in their perception. In the words of Descartes, ".....I find that there is but little in them which is clearly and distinctly apprehended, viz, magnitude or extension in length, breadth and depth, shape which results from the limitation of extension, the location which bodies have in relation to one another, and motion or change of location, to which may be added substance, duration, and number. As to other things such as light and the colours, sounds, odors, tastes, heat and cold, and the other tactual qualities they present themselves to me so confusedly and obscurely that I can not tell whether they are true or false, i.e., whether the ideas I have of them are ideas of real things or whether

they present only chimerical beings which are incapable of (independent) existence."¹⁸ So according to Descartes, the problem of formal falsity (falsity properly so called) arises only in judgments. Apart from this, certain material falsity are also arise in the ideas. There arise material falsity when the ideas represent what is nothing as something. Thus, the material falsity occurs in ideas when they represent non-things as things. In this regard he talks of the difficulties for deciding truth and falsity of the ideas because they contain very little clarity and distinctness. By referring to the examples of Cold and heat he goes a step further to say that "The ideas which I have of heat and cold contain so little clarity and distinctness that they do not enable me to tell whether cold is merely the absence of heat or vice-versa or whether both of them are real qualities, or neither is."¹⁹ Descartes has already assured that ideas are nothing but images; or that images of something. So, upto this the point of representing something appears quite alright. But if cold is regarded as a privation of heat (and if it is true), then the idea which represents it to me as something real and positive may quite properly be called

¹⁸. *The European Philosophers From Descartes to Nietzsche*, ed. by Monroe C. Beardsley; P.47

¹⁹. *Descartes. Vol.II trans. by J. Cottingham. P. 30.*

false. Descartes says that this will also be the same for other ideas of this kind. To produce this kind of ideas I do not need any help from the external things that are distinct from me. In this regard, Descartes places two points before us: "For, if they are false, i.e., if they represent what is not a thing, then by the light of reason (natural light) it is known to me that they proceed from nothing, i.e. that they are in me only because of some lack of perfection in my nature. On the other hand, even supposing them to be true, if what they exhibit to me has such little reality - so little that I can not even distinguish the thing thus represented from not being - I do not see why they may not have been produced by myself."²⁰

Descartes, now, goes to discuss again about the clear and distinct ideas of corporeal things. The ideas which I have of myself e.g. those of substance duration, number and the like, are clear and distinct. Descartes thinks that such clear and distinct ideas about the corporeal things may also be understood by borrowing from the ideas I have of myself. And, he goes to make a comparison between a stone and himself, taking both as substances. Descartes argues as follows. I am a thing and a stone is also a thing. Let me also think that

²⁰ *The European Philosophers From Descartes to Nietzsche*, ed. by Monroe C. Beardsley, P. 48

a stone is a substance and it is capable to exist independently. There is an agreement in between a stone and myself, for both are substances. But, an enormous difference lies here when I consider two things like thinking and extension. I am a thing that thinks but no extension; while, on the other hand I conceive that the stone is an extended thing but does not think. Thus, these two conceptions differ from each other. But how do I acquire the ideas of duration and number? ".... I perceive that I now exist, and remember that I have existed for sometime; moreover, I have various thoughts - which I can count; it is in these ways that I acquire the ideas of duration and number which I can then transfer to other things."²¹ There are other elements for making ideas of corporeal things; they are extension, shape, position and movement, which of course do not formally (actually) contain in me. They does not formally contain in me because I am nothing but a thinking thing. "..... but since they are merely modes of a substance and I am a substance, it seems possible that they are contained in me eminently."²² According to Descartes, it is due to the deficiency or lack of perfection in (my) nature

²¹. Descartes. Vol.II, trans. by J. Cottingham, P.30-31'

²². Ibid. P. 31

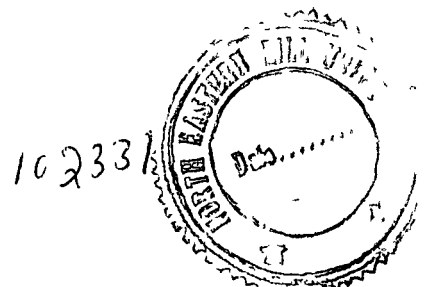
that the confusion in judgments easily occurs. So is the case when a comparison is made between myself and a corporeal thing both as substances. Actually, the modes of corporeal substances do not contain in me eminently.

Descartes, lastly, takes the idea of God for a detail consideration. 'God' is a substance that is infinite, immutable, independent, all knowing, all powerful, and the creator of everything, if there exists such things. Such great and eminent attributes of God can not be regarded or proceeding from myself. Because I am a finite entity, a finite substance; while God is an infinite substance. So, the idea of an infinite substance can not be proceeded from a finite substance. Ideas of such qualities must proceed from some substance which is in itself infinite. Descartes says that the infinite substance contains more reality than the finite one. He says, "The argument can not be met by supposing that I apprehend the infinite not through a true idea but only by negation of that which is finite, in the manner in which I apprehend rest and darkness by the negation of motion and light.....my awareness of the infinite must therefore be in some way prior to my awareness

of the finite, that is to say, my awareness of God must be prior to that of myself.²³ Without having first the idea of a perfect being it is not possible on my part to know that something is lacking in me and that I am not wholly perfect. Only by having the prior knowledge of a perfect being I may recognize my deficiencies by a comparison.

As in the case of the ideas of heat and cold, it can not be said that the idea of God is perhaps materially false and come from nothing. On the contrary, the idea of God is more true because it is utterly clear and distinct and it also contains in itself more objective reality than any other idea. It is also impossible to suppose that the idea of God exhibits to me nothing real. Descartes writes in the following way to show that the idea of God is true, most clear and distinct from all ideas. He says, "The idea is also completely clear and distinct for the further reason that whatsoever I apprehend clearly and distinctly of the real and of the true, and of what purports some perfection, is in its entirety contained in it. This holds true, even though it be that I do not comprehend the infinite, and that in God there is an infinitude

²³. *The European Philosophers. From Descartes to Nietzsche.* ed. by M.C. Breadsley, P. 48.



of things which I can not comprehend, or even reach in any way by thought." Because the nature of the infinite is such that the finite being, which is always under some limitations, can not comprehend the infinite. Descartes says that this much is enough for him to understand the infinite substance.

Perhaps, it may also be true that I am something more than what I suppose myself to be. It may be that, all the perfections which are attributed to God, are also potentially in me, or that they are yet to be actualized. He finds a gradual increase in knowledge and also sees no prevention in its increasing more and more to infinity. Descartes also thinks that these increase in knowledge may possibly lead him to acquire all the perfections of God. And, if the potentiality for these perfections is already within me, then it is quite enough to have the idea of such perfections. Therefore, there is an idea of an infinite substance in myself. But, he says that this is impossible. After a closer examination he recognizes that this cannot be allowed. It is true that my knowledge increases little by little, and I possess many things potentially that are yet to be actualized, on the other hand, there is

²⁴. *Ibid.* P. 49

nothing as potential in God, in God all is actual and operative. God is perfect while my knowledge is not; there is nothing as increase or decrease in God's perfection. In the words of Descartes, "There can indeed be no more convincing evidence of the imperfection of my knowledge than that it gradually increases?.....And lastly, I comprehend that what is objective in an idea can not be produced by a being that exists potentially only -- which properly speaking is nothing -- but only by a being that is formal, that is to say actual."²⁵ Thus, according to Descartes the gradual increase in knowledge is itself the surest sign of imperfection. A careful consideration will show us openly that everything is manifest by the natural light. But when I divide or relax my attention and also let the sensible things to blind my mental vision, it becomes difficult for me to remember why the idea of a being more perfect than myself must necessarily proceed from some being which is in reality more perfect. So the question arises -- whether I myself, who have this idea, could exist if no such being exist? It is seen that Descartes ultimately blames the senses and sensible things for misleading him.

²⁵. *Ibid.* P. 49-50

Can I derive my existence from myself? Descartes will immediately answer 'no' If 'yes' then, he says- "I should have given myself all those perfections of which I had any idea and should thus be God."²⁶ But this is not the case. On the contrary I am deprived of 'many other things and qualities. This very fact forces me to recognize most clearly that I depend on some being distinct from myself. That there must be a cause to an effect' and at the same time the cause must not be less than the effect. It is most appropriate to quote some lines from the Meditations: "And therefore whatever kind of cause is eventually proposed, since I am a thinking thing and have within me some idea of God, it must be admitted that what caused me is itself a thinking thing and possesses the idea of all the perfections which I attribute to God."²⁷ According to Descartes, God is uncaused cause, that is, there is no greater cause than Him. So, here ends the causal link, that there can not be add infinitum of the causal system, God is the ultimate cause and cause of all things. That God is the uncaused cause, but the cause of everything must be the cause of my ideas. Since God is the holder of

²⁶. *Ibid.* P. 50

²⁷. *Descartes. Vol.II, trans. by J. Cottingham, P. 34*

all perfections and cause of everything, my innate qualities are implanted in me by the same God. According to Descartes, this is an undeniable fact.

I am a thing that thinks and possesses some kinds of ideas. I also possess in me an innate idea of a perfect being. But how do I receive this idea of perfection from God? For these ideas are not given to me by the senses, nor they are invented by myself. Descartes says, "The only remaining alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me..... And indeed it is no surprise that God, in creating me, should have placed this idea in me to be, as it were, the mark of the craftsman stamped on his work -- not that the mark need be anything distinct from the work itself."²⁸ The very idea that I have of God proves that I am created, including my ideas, by Him in His own image and likeness. Thus, Descartes proves, in this way, that we possess certain innate ideas which are derived from our very nature. That we have these inborn or innate qualities, is made known to us by the natural light and not by any spontaneous impulses. And, whatever is taught by the natural light can never in

²⁸. *Ibid.* P. 35

any way be open to doubt. For, the natural light or the natural reason is the most trustworthy faculty for us than any other faculty.

As regards to the truth and error the following points are apparently found in Descartes' Meditations. He is sure that he has proved about the self-evident truths, for instance, 'I exist' - for whatever is clearly and distinctly perceived is true. But, from where does error come? The source of error is the clash between the finitude of human intellect and the infinitude of the human will. Errors are due to our failure to restrain the will from judging a thing when we do not conceive it with sufficient clearness and distinctness. Descartes seems to say that by choosing the false instead of the true the will falls into error.

This is what I find in the exposition of Descartes' Meditations about ideas in particular. Let me now examine Descartes argument to see whether he is right in holding this view. In doing so, of course, it is quite natural to come across thinkers who support Descartes as well as thinkers who oppose him.

First of all let us take up the article 'Descartes on Ideas' by Anthony Kenny. He offers a critical discussion. What we

will find in this article is, that Kenny attempts to give a distinctive study of ideas rather than a straight criticism. In course of his explanation he brings forth different words of distinction; like 'act', 'object,' 'episode', 'capacity', 'concepts', 'pictures', 'image' and many others. This implies that Kenny's endeavours is to provide with a comparative study. Concerning clarity and distinctness of ideas Kenny finds a sort of reduplication in Descartes' argument. Kenny in his article 'Descartes on Ideas', while referring to the idea of God, openly points out to such reduplication. He writes, "This reduplication is the fruit of the ambiguity of "idea" which means sometimes an act and sometimes its object."²⁹ Now let us turn into the real depth of Kenny's understanding about Descartes' arguments on ideas and truth and error together.

The modern use of the word 'idea' is mainly derived from Descartes. Prior to Descartes, this word was used to refer to archetypes in the divine intellect. Kenny finds, indeed, nothing as novel in the word 'idea', it is rather a word like "quality" and "intention". He also does not find any coherence in the several explanations offered by Descartes as to the

²⁹. Descartes, *A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by W. Doney, p. 249

meaning of this word 'idea'. Kenny understands that according to Descartes corresponding to every significant word there is an idea. And according to Descartes if someone conceives anything at all while using the word 'God' and 'Soul' then he also knows what the ideas of these things stand for. Kenny, from this argument of Descartes, draws the following points; although they are originally propounded by Descartes:

- "1. It seems, however, that there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between words and ideas.
2. We are told that, strictly speaking, no idea corresponds to the word "nothing". (ATV, 153, to Burman) and,
3. We learn that two ideas correspond to the word "Sun" (ATVII, 39; H.R. 1,161)."³⁰

"But the idea of existence is displayed not only when I use the word "existence" but also when I say "I exist." Some ideas seem to correspond not to particular words, but to whole sentences. Thus, Descartes speaks of ideas of "Common notions."³¹ It is also true that according to Descartes words are invented by human beings, so one or more words can be used to express the same thing.

³⁰•*Descartes, ed. by Doney, P. 228*

³¹•*Ibid.*

One notable thing which Anthony Kenny finds in Descartes' argument is that Descartes describes an idea differently in different cases. It is due to the differences in circumstances. Kenny points out that, according to Descartes an idea varies from being a remote capacity to an actual sensory episode. (a) To have an idea of God means to possess an ability to come to know God; (b) To have an idea of truth means to understand what truth is; (c) To have an idea of a Syren mean to refer to imaginative Creation; and (d) to have an idea of heat means to think of a case where some one is actually feeling the heat of a particular fire. Besides, ideas are sometimes used by Descartes as capacities or the ability to use the words and sometimes as episodes or that ideas are operations of the intellect.

Kenny sees a sort of inconsistency and ambiguity in the manner in which Descartes speaks of ideas. Because, he sometimes takes the ideas as an operation or act of the mind, and act at other times as the object or content of such an act. To point out this ambiguity Kenny cites the preface to the Meditations. "In this term idea there is an equivocation: it may either be taken materially, as an act of my understanding.....or objectively, as what is represented by this act (AT

VII,8; HR, 138; of L.J. Beck, the *Metaphysics of Descartes*, P.152).³² But according to Kenny, in no way the distinction

between act and object is a solution to the problem of ideas.

This distinction can not be a solution to the problem of ideas.

~~This distinction can not be a solution to the problem of ideas.~~

This distinction can not be a solution is because there are many different relationships between acts and their objects.

Some acts are identical with their objects - namely, to score a goal; some objects are produced by acts - namely, a poem; Some objects are modified by acts - namely, alteration of the colour of a chair; some objects modify the agent namely, a spider changes an agent. As regards to the relation between man and ideas Descartes says; Kenny quotes, "I form or construct them; grasp them; find them in myself; bring them out of my consciousness, they present themselves to me; I notice them, perceive them and my mind looks at them."³³ This sort of explanations, at most cases, leads one to a problem as to which formulation is correct. Therefore, Kenny is compelled to raise a question - when two formulations clash, have we to deal with alternative metaphors, or an inconsistent theory?

³². *Ibid.* P.229

³³. *Ibid.* P. 229-230

Kenny shows that Descartes' argument for the classification and exemplification of ideas bears no stability in it. He rather finds ambiguities in them. According to Descartes ideas are of "three kinds according to a difference of origin. But when he goes on to give examples, it seems that the ideas of the different classes are entities of different kinds quite apart from the differences in their origin".³⁴ Thus, the innate ideas are nothing but those capacities within which the concepts of thing, truth and consciousness fall. On the other hand, the acquired ideas are nothing else than particular sensations.

Kenny, while talking about the innate ideas, brings forth the various examples and concepts given by Descartes at some other places. He refers to the cases where the innate ideas of adults and infants are alike. He says: "From this it appears that though an unborn baby does not actually think of God, it understands very well what God is, and when it is later taught the word 'God' it merely learns to give an expression to a concept which it has always possessed."³⁵ But Kenny finds some contradictions in Descartes description of innate ideas. Because, elsewhere Descartes is found saying that -

³⁴. *Ibid.* P. 231

³⁵. *Ibid*

ideas were innate only in the sense of the word that we say generosity is innate in certain families; or again that in other certain diseases, e.g. gout and the stone, are innate; not that infants of these families suffer from these diseases in their mother's womb, but because they are born with a certain disposition or liability to contract them (A.T.VIII, 357;HR 1, 442).³⁶ Kenny's problem is - if it is granted that an unborn baby possesses the idea of God in the same way as an adult, who is of course not thinking of God, then the baby has something more than a mere faculty of thinking. According to Descartes, Kenny says, the idea of God is neither the ability to learn what God is, nor is it the ability to exercise the knowledge of what God is. But, an idea can not merely be the thinking faculty, it must be distinct from the thinking faculty. He borrows some ideas from Aristotle and tries to criticise Descartes by saying that "there is no room in his system for the concept of learning."³⁷ "Descartes, with his contempt for the Aristotelian notion of potentiality, was unable to distinguish between the unrealized capacity to acquire knowledge and the non-exercise of knowledge already acquired."³⁸

³⁶. *Ibid.* P. 232

³⁷. *Ibid.* P. 232

³⁸. *Ibid.*

The term potentiality is explained by Aristotle in the following way: "When a man possesses knowledge as an unexercised disposition, he is still in a state of potentiality, though not in the same way as before he learnt what he knows (De Anima III, 4, 429, b6-10)."³⁹

Kenny feels that as there is no room, in Descartes' system, for the concept of learning there is also no actual distinction between the adventitious ideas and the innate ideas. Taking clues from the Notes Against a Programme and Descartes' writings to Mersenneⁿ, Kenny presumes that even the so called adventitious ideas are in a sense innate. He quotes from the Notes Against a Programme: "In our ideas there is nothing which was not innate in the mind, or faculty of thinking, except only those circumstances which concerns experiences - the fact, for instance, that we judge this or that ideaby means of an innate faculty For nothing reaches our mind from external objects through the organs of sense beyond certain corporeal movements but even these movements, and the figures which arise from them are not conceived by us in the shape they assume in the organs

³⁹. Ibid.

of sense..... Hence it follows that the ideas of the movements and figures are themselves innate in us (AT VIII, 358, HR I, 443).⁴⁰ Besides this Kenny finds some more clues from Descartes letter to Mersenne where he says that all the ideas which involve no affirmation or negation are innate. For this quality is not presented by sensation; therefore it must have been in us before hand (A.T.III,418).⁴¹

Now, let us see in what sense does Kenny see that a same idea is innate at one time and also adventitious at some other time. His argument is: "No matter what X may be, the idea of X is innate in the sense that the capacity to think of X, imagine X, feel X, experience x is inborn in us and is not given us by the stimulus..... But if the idea of x is in my mind in such a way that I accompany the idea with a judgment (affirmation or negation) that its occurrence is due to extramental reality, then this occurrence of the idea, this exercise of the capacity, is an adventitious idea. So, the distinction..... is not that there are some ideas (....of God) which are innate, and others (of heat) which are adventitious, but that the one and the same idea (eg., that of heat) is qua-capacity innate and qua episode accompanied with extramental

⁴⁰. Descartes, ed. W. Doney, P. 232-233

⁴¹. Ibid. P. 233

judgment, adventitious.⁴² Although Kenny is trying to establish his argument against Descartes' adventitious and innate ideas, yet his use of 'qua capacity innate' and 'qua episode adventitious' are highly complicated and unclear. He offers no scientific proof for his own argument against Descartes.

Descartes's comparison between ideas (thoughts) and images (or pictures), says Kenny, is misleading. Because, "Ideas qua-capacities may plausibly be held to be innate; but capacities are not like pictures. Ideas quo-episodes may plausibly be compared to pictures before the mind, but ideas qua-episodes are not innate."⁴³

Descartes asserts that ideas are likenesses of things, nonetheless, he says it is an error to believe that ideas in the mind are similar to things outside. Kenny writes that according to Hobbes we have no any real idea either of angels or of soul. But to Descartes this sort of objection by Hobbes carries no weight at all. He also denies to take those images as ideas if they are considered as pictures in the corporeal fancy. When he points out that Descartes denies that ideas are images, we can not be quite sure that he is denying that

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.* P. 234

ideas are mental images in the sense of pictures in the brain. Kenny is ~~so much~~ ^{greatly} puzzled ~~that even his argument seems to~~ ^{by this position of Descartes.} ~~be proceeding beyond compromise.~~ For it is also known to Kenny that - Descartes believes that the exercise of the imagination or fancy consists in looking at pictures in the brain. Kenny seems to know that though mental images are in a sense material, they are not material pictures in the brain. Again mental pictures can be only of things of which there can be real pictures. Besides, there can be mental pictures of justice and eternity. But there cannot be any mental picture of an abstract entity without representing first of all something perceptible. There is also an affinity between mental images and material pictures, that is, both last for a period of time and have spatial parts like top, bottom and so on. The contrast is that the mental images are immaterial - not made out of any stuff. Although Kenny criticises Descartes, he seems to be supporting him when he says: "Having mental images is no doubt connected with events in the brain.....but nonetheless is not the perception of any cerebral entity."⁴⁴ What is found here is that his distinction between mental images and mental pictures is not clear.

⁴⁴. Descartes, ed. Doney, P. 235

Making a distinction between mental image and concepts. Kenny also seems to say that Descartes' ideas are unlike concepts, Kenny wants to say that the acquisition and use of a concept is not the same as the acquisition and inspection of a representation. Thus, ideas are representations, while concepts are not. There is a greater possibility of vicious regress in case of representations. On the other hand concepts need no further representation to explain the ability, the ability to make distinction between, or the ability to use a word. It is Descartes' claim that the intelligent use of words presupposes the presence of innate ideas. In contrast Kenny says that the intelligent use of words presupposes the possession of concepts but not the presence of something like idea or picture. Concepts are not inborn but are acquired. "In general, the concepts expressed in words are acquired when language is learnt; what is inborn is not the concepts themselves but the ability to acquire them, the faculty of linguistic intelligence in which men surpass other animals."⁴⁵

What actually does Descartes mean by his key term? Kenny finds that Descartes uses it sometimes to refer to epis-

⁴⁵. *Ibid.* P. 237

des and sometimes to capacities, sometimes for acts of thinking, and sometimes for objects of thought, and that Descartes' ideas have some of the characteristics of material pictures but also characteristics of mental images and of concepts.⁴⁶

Kenny's attempt now is to study the relation between thought and ideas. According to him Descartes commonly takes both words in their episodic senses as conscious events. Descartes writes, mentions Doney, 'the two are synonyms (AT VI, 559, HRI, 102); ideas are modes of thought (AT VII, 40, 44); ideas are the forms of thought (AT, VII, 160) - non material representations of things. Still, will, fears, assertion, denial are the topics of thought (AT. 37, HRI, 159)'.⁴⁷ Kenny's understanding of the above points goes as following: it "gives the impression that the pure thought of x, the desire for x, and the fear of x, all involve the idea of x; but the first consists of this idea alone; while the second and third consist of the same idea plus something extra."⁴⁸ Now, Kenny's question is - is this something extra itself an idea? And he convinces himself by saying that "the natural way of reading the passage suggests that it is not; what makes the difference between

⁴⁶. *Ibid.* P. 237

⁴⁷. *Ibid.* P. 237-238

⁴⁹. *Ibid.*

the thought of *x* and the fear of *x* is not itself an idea, though it is like an idea in being a "form". However this would make it difficult to understand the definition of "idea"....For there it is said that it is by the awareness of the idea that I am conscious of a thought; but awareness merely of the idea of *x* will not suffice to make me conscious that I fear *x*.⁴⁹

When puzzled by this difficulty Hobbes brought the instance of lion - that the fear of a lion (an onrushing lion) makes one run away. But the motion of running away is not a thought. To this Descartes replies that seeing a lion and at the same time fearing it is different from just seeing. He replies to Hobbes of how he count volition and fear among ideas. "I take the term 'idea' to stand for whatever the mind is directly aware of. For instance, when I wish or am afraid I am at the same time aware of wishing or being afraid; thus I count volition and fear among ideas (AT VII, 181, HR, 2, 68)."⁵⁰

Kenny is distressed by a question for which he finds no answer - Does Descartes mean that among ideas there are ideas of volition and ideas of fear? or, are volition and fear themselves ideas?.

⁴⁹. *Ibid.*

⁵⁰. *Ibid.* P. 239

A possible reconciliation in the following way is made by Kenny. To be conscious of *x*, or to think of *x* is to have an idea of *x*. If *x* is something other than my own mental activity - say, the heat of the fire, or God - then this idea is something distinct from *x* which represents *x*. If *x* is one of my own mental activities - say, willing, or fearing - then I am directly aware of *x*; that is to say, the idea of *x* is not a representation of *x*, but is *x* itself. If I think of a lion, my thought simply is the occurrence of the idea of a lion in my mind; and I am aware of my thinking simply by perceiving that idea....on the other hand, if I am afraid of a lion, there occurs in my mind not only the idea of the lion, but also the fear. Moreover fear is not a representation; it is directly perceptible; and in this way the fear itself can be called an idea. The ambiguity with which Kenny confronts is - that which differentiates being afraid of the lion from merely thinking of the lion, in one sense is, and in another sense is not, an idea.⁵¹ Here the ambiguity is that of "idea" as between act and object - ambiguity of a lion qua act of the mind, and not qua object of such an act. For Kenny this is identical

⁵¹. *Ibid.* P. 240

with the thinking of a lion. He, now, proceeds further to investigate the notion of "object".

Till now Kenny has been considering ideas as properties or events in mind. He wants to look at them from a reverse point of view of considering the 'sun' example. That he takes the Sun in two ways, namely, 'seeing the Sun' and 'thinking of the Sun'. It is in the latter that a genuine property of the real sun is brought to a relation to the mind. The scholastics understanding this property as that of 'being objectively in the understanding (objectively' means an object of thought) is also accepted by Descartes. According to Descartes the objective existence of the sun in the mind does not mean the existence of the sun itself in the mind but some proxy for the sun. Again, to have an idea of the sun means - "The idea of the sun will be the sun itself existing in the understanding, not indeed formally, as it exists in the sky, but objectively, i.e., in the way in which objects are wont to exist in the mind (AT VIII, 102; HR, 2, 3)."⁵²

Considering the 'Sun' case Kenny says that Descartes' argument is false and contradictory, or rather it is a reduplication. According to Kenny, Descartes is wrong because he fails

⁵². *Ibid.* P. 241-242

to make a distinction between the phrases 'to think of the sun' and 'to think of an idea of the Sun'. 'An idea of the sun has objective existence in me' can not be treated as 'the sun objectively exists in my mind'. Because of this, Kenny writes: "An extra entity has been spirited into existence..... Descartes actually contradicts himself, saying first of all that what exists in the mind in the way in which objects exist in the mind is not the sun, but the idea of the sun, and then going on to say that the idea of the sun is the sun itself existing in the mind in the way in which objects are wont to exist in the mind."⁵³

Among the various properties of ideas, according to Kenny, two types are most important. 'First, an idea may be true or false, and secondly, it may be either clear and distinct, or obscure and confused.'⁵⁴ In the Third Meditation Descartes says that ideas considered in themselves can not be false. Even the imagination of a 'She-goat' or a 'Chimera' is a true imagination. Falsity crops up only in making judgments. But, Kenny, instead of accepting it, calls it an odd piece of reasoning. Kenny seems to tell us that even a layman

⁵³. Descartes, ed. Doney. P. 242

⁵⁴. *Ibid.*

possesses the knowledge to say that judgment in itself neither true nor false. If a judgment is always a real judgment, why does kenny calls it an odd piece of reasoning? His reasoning is as follows: Descartes may say anything about things, or rather about imaginary things; but, 'would he have said that a judgement about God, if there is no God, is not really a judgment about God?

An idea can be materialy false one; and this is called a defective idea. Materially false means an idea can, Descartes says, represent what is not a thing as if it were a thing. For instance, that cold is merely the absence of heat, and, I take it for a reality in its own right. In that case I have a "materially false" idea of cold.⁵⁵ Descartes says that the idea of cold furnishes with the material for error. For, both cold and heat are-presented by sense; so they are not errorfree. They furnish no reality; nor can we know more about them by referring to something else. It is certainly confusing, 'that the idea of cold is a genuine idea, but materialy false one' is not made clear.

Kenny still continues to raise question against Descartes -- what does Descartes think that the idea of cold is really

⁵⁵. *Ibid.* P. 243

an idea of? As a reply Descartes refers to something other than that of which it is actually the idea. So according to Descartes there is no extra-mental existent similar to the idea of cold. Regarding this Kenny has the following to say: "The correct judgment would be that the idea is a sensation which has no existence outside the mind. In that case, it seems, the idea can not be the idea of anything but itself."⁵⁶

What makes a particular idea the idea of Cold? Kenny, further recalls Descartes' comparison between ideas and pictures and raises the question - what makes a particular picture a picture of Napoleon? And the answer is dependent upon its resemblance with Napoleon. In the words of Kenny, "A picture is a picture of Napoleon if it is meant to resemble Napoleon."⁵⁷ On the other hand, according to Kenny, Descartes is unable to find out the criterion for the object of an idea. As regards cold, mere its resemblance to cold is not enough to convey the argument. "The idea of cold does not resemble cold. Nonetheless it really is the idea of Cold. The criticism which settles this, then, cannot be its resembling cold, but must be its being believed by its possessor to resemble cold,

⁵⁶. *Ibid.* P. 245

⁵⁷. *Ibid.*

i.e. its being "referred to cold."⁵⁸ But even to judge an idea on the basis of "reference" is to land on inconsistency. Kenny attacks: "if an idea is the idea of whatever it is "referred to", then it can not be the case that the idea of cold is referred to something other than that of which it is in truth the idea.....The comparison between ideas and pictures has led Descartes into incoherence."⁵⁹

Kenny considers clarity and distinctness as the important properties which Descartes attributes to ideas. Kenny takes three separate elements from Descartes' account - the pain, the perception of the pain, and the judgment about the pain. Kenny sees that the perception of the pain is something which is distinct both from the pain and the judgment. Because, the properties like clarity and distinctness belong only to the perception but not to the pain. Besides, the judgment is an act of the will which is in our power to make or withhold. Nonetheless, we are urged to restrict our judgment to what we clearly and distinctly perceive.

Kenny repeats the points given by Descartes and does so to reach the aimed destination. Pain is a cogitatio, and

⁵⁸. *Ibid.*

⁵⁹. *Ibid.* P. 246

pain can not occur without being perceived. Now Kenny's question is - can the pain occur without being perceived clearly? He refers to the two answers seemingly coming from Descartes. "On the one hand, he says that "when a man feels great pain, he has a very clear perception of pain", "On the other hand, he says that we have a clear perception of our sensations only if we carefully restrict our judgement about them, and this is a condition most difficult to observe..... A perception may be clear without being distinct though not distinct without being clear (AT, III, 22; HR, 1, 237)"⁶⁰ Descartes has clearly shown that judgment is an act of the will concerns with extra-mental reality and that it is being liable to error. On the other hand, the faculty of perceiving is infalible, that of asserting can err (AT, VIII, 21; HR 1, 236)"⁶¹ "Judgement may occur without perception; that is precisely the cause of error.....people form judgments about what they do not perceive and thus fall into error (AT,21;HR,1,236)."⁶²

Can clear and distinct perception occur without judgment? Descartes says that it is the very nature of human beings, or taught by the natural light, that we are so disposed to

⁶⁰. *Ibid.* P. 247

⁶¹. *Ibid.*

⁶². *Ibid.*

give our assent to things that we clearly perceived, that we cannot possibly doubt of their truth. Kenny argues that this can be doubted because Descartes' method of doubt empowers us to do so. Descartes argument contains inconsistencies, because, "the clear and distinct perception of pain is not in fact identifiable separately from the occurrence of pain and the judgement about the origin of the pain."⁶³ Kenny sees two elements in clarity. One, the object of perception be manifest; two, that the perceiving faculty be attentive. And his point is that this sort of distinction is possible only in the case of sight, but in the case of pain it becomes illusory. It is illusory, I think, because pain is not subject to sight. What is distinctness about pain? "...to perceive a pain distinctly is simply to make the correct judgment about one's pain. It is to make the correct, cautious, judgment that I feel is caused by I know not what, rather than the incorrect judgment that what I feel is something in my foot."⁶⁴ Referring to the distinction between the distinct and the confused perception and clarity and distinctness the final argument of Kenny runs in the following way: "The perception of pain, then, is not

⁶³. *Ibid.* P. 248

⁶⁴. *Ibid.*

a genuine intermediary between the occurrence of pain and the judgment of pain. Of the two properties of the perception, one clarity, is really a property of the pain which occurs, and the other, distinctness, is really a property of the pain which occurs, and the other, distinctness, is really a property of the judgment made about it.⁶⁵ According to Kenny, Descartes' use of clarity and distinctness is quite incoherent: Because, the Third Meditation tells us that clarity and distinctness are properties of our perception of ideas and thoughts; it is as looking with the eyes of the mind; sometimes they are properties of what is looked at, the idea itself, the idea of God is itself clear and distinct. These multi-meaning character of clarity and distinctness is nothing but, for Kenny, a puzzle. The term 'idea' itself is an ambiguous one. Why reduplication then? "This reduplication is the fruit of the ambiguity of "idea" which means sometimes an act and sometimes its object. That ambiguity, as we have said, was pointed out by Descartes himself; but he did not realize that it had fatal consequences for his epistemology."⁶⁶ It is fatal because such an interpretation leads the argument, so to say, nowhere. No conclusive

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.* P. 249

result, or fruitful consequences can be expected from such an interpretation possessing reduplication-character. As a whole, Anthony Kenny, in his article Descartes on Ideas, seems to say that the interpretation of the term 'idea' is an ambiguous one, because his explanation of the same do not logically cohere.

The indubitable truth that Descartes discovered is none other than 'Cogito, ergo sum'. Next to this he inquires what is required in a proposition for it to be true and certain or in another way, what is the general criterion of certainty. In Copleston's opinion the following is the criterion discovered by Descartes: "And he comes to the conclusion that there is nothing in the proposition, 'I think, therefore I am', which assures him of its truth except that he sees very clearly and distinctly what is affirmed."⁶⁷ Thus, for Descartes truth is that which is perceived (or conceived) clearly and distinctly. 'clear' is that which is present and apparent to an attentive mind; while 'distinct' is that which is so precise and different from all other objects, containing within itself nothing but what is clear.) Like Kenny, Copleston also brings forth the example

⁶⁷. A History of Philosophy, Vol. IV, by Copleston, P. 97.

of pain to discuss the distinction between clear and distinct. Copleston writes that a sufferer may very clearly perceive a severe pain, but the same pain may be confused by him with the false judgment which he makes about its nature. This means that the perception can be clear without being distinct, but it can not be distinct without being clear. Copleston says: "A true mathematical proposition imposes itself, as it were, on the mind: when it is seen clearly and distinctly, the mind can not help assenting to it. Similarly, I affirm the proposition, I think, therefore I am, not because I apply some extrinsic criterion of truth but simply because I see clearly and distinctly that so it is."⁶⁸ At the same time, Copleston is well familiar with the awareness of Descartes - namely, what are those things which we distinctly perceive; and is it God who causes me to err? But it was already shown in the preceding chapter that I can not be deceived unless I exist. Thus, the Cogito, ergo Sum, eludes all doubt, even hyperbolic doubt. In Copleston's view, "It is necessary to prove the existence of God who is not a deceiver if I am to be assured that I am not deceived in accepting as true those

⁶⁸. *Ibid*, P. 98

propositions which I perceive very clearly and distinctly,⁶⁹
The problem about the existence of God will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. God is the cause of my ideas of infinity, but I myself is not the cause of myself. "Indeed, in some way the idea of the infinite must be prior to that of the finite,....., although I do not comprehend the nature of the infinite, my idea of it is sufficiently clear and distinct to convince me that it contains more reality than any other idea and that it can not be a mere mental construction of my own."⁷⁰ Copleston anticipates such questions as raised by Anthony Kenny in his article Descartes on Ideas - I am conscious that my knowledge increases, and it might possibly increase to infinitude? This sort of problem was never thought of by Descartes, for he knew its impossibility. He openly declares that this is a fallacious objection. Because, the very thinking of the possession of potentiality and the ability to increase in perfection are imperfections. This point of Copleston alongwith Descartes is a sure sign against what Kenny tells that there is no room for knowledge in Descartes' method. Descartes has never denied the possibility of the increase of knowledge.

⁶⁹. *Ibid.* P. 99

⁷⁰. *Ibid.* P. 100

As a whole, the aim of Copleston is to show that the innate ideas are nothing more than the imprinted work upon us by God. The idea of the infinite is a positive idea; clear and distinct; not derived from sense perception; not a mental fiction - variable at will; 'and consequently the only alternative is that it is innate in me, just as the idea of myself is innate in me' (Meditation, 3AT VIII 51, cf. IX, 41)⁷¹ This idea is in fact the image and likeness of God in me; it is like the mark of workman imprinted on his work.⁷² Therefore, by nature we possess innate potentiality due to which we know God. Contrasting the innate ideas from all other ideas Copleston compares Descartes with Leibnizian conception - that we are capable of forming the idea of God from within, without reference to external world. "In so far as innate ideas are contrasted with ideas derived from sense perception we can say that the idea of God is innate in the sense that it is produced by a natural and inborn capacity of the mind, being thus potentially rather than actually innate"⁷³ Besides, Kenny's reproach to Descartes that there is no room for knowledge in Descartes' theory appears to be meaningless. As a reply Copleston quotes

71. *Ibid.* P.102

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.* P. 103

the Third Meditation: "In the Third Meditations Descartes speaks of my knowledge as a thing which incessantly aspires after something which is better and greater than myself."⁷⁴

Copleston is also convinced by the view of Descartes that error is not caused by God. Free will, that man possess might be the cause of error - under certain circumstances. By 'under certain circumstances' I mean the absence of 'clarity' and distinctness. There is no error where 'free will' is used rightly. If one is capable of refraining himself from making judgment about something which he does not see clearly and distinctly, it is certain that he will not fall into error. From this it can be concluded that error crops up due to the misuse of free will, and making judgments even about those that are not clearly and distinctly perceived.

Like Kenny Bernard Williams is also of the view that the three fold classification of ideas in terms of their origin is far from being clear. Let me ask a question - are the ideas of a man, a Chimera, the sky, an angel, or God, pictures of something? A sort of reply to such question can be obtained from Bernard Williams: "These ideas he compares to 'pictures

⁷⁴. *Ibid.*

of objects', but this comparison is not to be taken literally - it is not at all Descartes view that ideas are necessarily pictorial images."⁷⁵ At the same place he also mentions that according to Descartes an idea by itself does not contain either truth or falsehood. He also makes a complimentary statement in the following way: "To have an idea in one's mind is just to think of something, and just to think of something does not involve any claim that can be either true or false."⁷⁶ He also refers to the "materially false" ideas, namely, the ideas of cold, which appears as a positive quality of object, actually it is merely a privation of heat. But this qualification, says Bernard Williams, does not mean that ideas are not intrinsically true or false. To find falsehood mind must move to ascertain or judgment.

As regards the classification of ideas Bernard Williams picks up the argument given by Descartes. He says that there is no certain sign by means of which an idea can be placed under one class rather than another. But it is certain that the adventitious ideas arise involuntarily. As against this involuntariness here is an warning: "although the involuntariness

⁷⁵. *Descartes, by Bernard Williams, P. 130*

⁷⁶. *Ibid. P. 130-131*

of those ideas which he calls sensations or sense perceptions naturally tends to make him believe that they are caused in him by objects outside himself, this tendency must be resisted, for this belief does not stand up to the rigorous tests of clearness and distinctness. It is merely a natural tendency, not an illumination of the natural light."⁷⁷ It is due to this fact that Descartes is forced to say that there are certain cases of adventitious ideas where they can not all resemble or be really conformable to their external cause. For instance, we may have two ideas of the same sun. To this account the following sentence needs careful reading to have a better understanding of the same. "Perhaps neither of these represents any object existing independently of him; what is certain is that both can not represent it as it really is."⁷⁸ It is specially due to all these reasons that Bernard Williams is forced to say that Descartes views are far from being clear. Here is an important question: why does mind determine the nature of certain adventitious ideas about their causes? According to Descartes, the sensation of pain, heat, colour etc. are the paradigm examples of adventitious ideas. It is with regard

⁷⁷. *Ibid.* P. 132-133

⁷⁸. *Ibid.* P. 133

to these that Descartes emphasizes the presence of innate components. Descartes emphasizes about the innate components because, Bernard Williams thinks, those sensations do not resemble their corporeal causes, and hence that the mind itself determines their nature.

Bernard Williams names the innate ideas, namely of God, or self, also as abstract ideas. In another way the abstract ideas are innate. He says, "In saying that the abstract ideas are innate, he refers rather just to certain capacities that the mind possesses to come to use these ideas". Bernard Williams is dissatisfied by this type of thing and writes, "An appeal to this kind of capacity seems clearly too insubstantial for a theory which claims the actual possession of the ideas."⁷⁹

According to Descartes, even an innate idea requires a cause and this cause is made known through the 'natural light'. It is the natural light that manifests that there must be at least as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect. Bernard Williams, here, finds a historical gap between Descartes and other's thought. To sum up: "This is a piece of scholastic metaphysics, and it is one of the most

⁷⁹. *Descartes*, by Bernard Williams, P. 134

striking indications of the historical gap that exists between Descartes' thought and our own, despite the modern reality of much else that he writes, that he can unblinkingly accept this unintuitive and barely comprehensible principle as self-evident in the light of reason."⁸⁰

According to Kenny, Descartes is unable to give a consistent and a satisfactory answer to the question - how, according to the definitions of clarity and distinctness an idea can fail to be clear and distinct? But unlike him Alan Gewirth sees an answer to it: ".....Gewirth sees the answer in the notion that he attributes to Descartes of the "interpretive content" of an idea - the interpretive content being distinguished, on the one hand, from the "direct content" and on the other, from a judgment relating to the idea. According to this interpretation, an idea is clear and distinct if, and only if, there is "equality" between direct content and interpretive content."⁸¹

Leibniz and others are not satisfied with the general rule of Descartes that 'Whatever is clearly and distinctly per-

⁸⁰. *Ibid.* P. 135

⁸¹. *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Willis Doney, P. 22

ceived is true'. Leibniz's criticism against Descartes is mentioned by Gewirth in this way: Clearness and distinctness are of no value as criteria of truth unless we have criteria of clearness and distinctness; but Descartes gives none.⁸² They also criticise by saying that Descartes' criteria of truth is psychological rather than logical. But Alan Gewirth is against this view. He holds that the standard of truth placed by Descartes is purely logical or philosophical. This point of Gewirth will be made clear in the course of my discussion.

Allan Gewirth's explanation of the distinction between perception and idea; object and act may be taken as a reply to the confusions confronted by Anthony Kenny. Pointing out to Descartes' definition of clearness and distinctness with an analogy to sight, Gewirth writes that the word which is used here by Descartes is "perception" and not "idea". The word perception stands for the "perceived" rather than "perceiver" and the 'object' but not the 'act'. This is made apparent by Descartes' analogy which he draws from sight. "Perception" is given the same relative status as "Things seen by us". Since, however, idea and perceptive act are correlative, the requirements indicated for either will to a certain extent belong

⁸². *cf.* C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 5.391

to the other as well.⁸³

According to Descartes, it is correct to say that those ideas which are clear and distinct represent essences of things. But on the other hand, Descartes faces a problem from the methodological context. It is a problem from the methodological context because, 'he can not consult the essences of things in order to specify the clearness of an idea, because things themselves can not be directly perceived. It is only after the nature of clearness and distinctness has been determined, and the veracity of God' demonstrated, that Descartes is able to assert that clear and distinct ideas are true.'⁸⁴ It is from this problem or rather methodological problem, that an important question again cropup: How can any idea whatsoever fail to be clear and distinct? Gewirth, of course, finds a straight answer to this question directly from Descartes' interpretation of ideas. Whenever there is no equality between the direct content and the interpretive content, then the idea arising under such situation will naturally fail to be clear and distinct.

Let us see the whole thing in some detail. Gewirth makes an examination of some of the instances of Descartes' obscure

⁸³. Descartes, ed. Willis Doney, P. 255

⁸⁴. Ibid, P. 256

and confused ideas. Although the best known obscure and confused ideas of Descartes' are sense perceptions, yet he finds clearness and distinctness in them in two different contexts: "(1) When they are viewed only as sensations or thoughts" and (2) when they are used as "Signifying to the mind what is helpful or harmful to the composite of which it is a part". They are called obscure and confused, however when viewed as representing the essence of material things outside the mind."⁸⁵ This example of sense perception carries an important meaning in it. "From this example we may infer that the clearness and distinctness, or obscurity and confusion, of an idea are neither intrinsic to the idea nor explicable in terms of a simple relation between idea and perceptive act: for the same ideas of sensation may be both clear and obscure, distinct and confused."⁸⁶ We have already come across two factors of clearness and distinctness of sense perception, Gewirth borrows a third factor, the sensations are "viewed", from Descartes and combines with the two. Why all these factors are necessary will easily be understood from the following quote: "For the situation in which these enter clearness and

⁸⁵. *Ibid.* P. 257-258

⁸⁶. *Ibid.* P. 258

distinctness involves not merely the passive apprehension of a directly perceived content, but also some interpretation with regard to that content.⁸⁷ Even if as many instances of the perception of ideas of sensation be given, in each instance the same content will directly be perceived. But the problem of dissimilarity arises only as regard to the interpretation. Talking of the three instances we find that ---" in the first case the ideas (eg. colours) were "viewed" or interpreted simply as sensations, in the second case as having some biologically symbolic function, and in the third as being "Similiar" or cognitively adequate to external material things".⁸⁸ Thus the "equality" of the direct content and the interpretive content is necessary for an idea to be clear and distinct.

The process also goes in the same way as regard to the ideas of the modes, thought and extension. These things can clearly and distinctly be understood if they are not taken as modes of things. If they are taken otherwise then there arises confusion. This is what Descartes says. In this manner, the problem arises in those ideas where a clear distinction between essential and non-essential representation of sense

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

perception is not made. How can an idea of God be obscure and confused? As an answer to this question Gewirth quotes Descartes: ".....the idolaters" idea of God", which in its direct content representatively includes, together with perfection, such attributes as vindicativeness and corporeality, is obscure and confused.⁸⁹

Gewirth is convinced with the fact that Descartes' clearness and distinctness as the criterion of truth is a normative characterization, but not psychological as understood by some philosophers. This is what he has shown through the 'equality of direct content and interpretive content'. That the direct content which is required to be 'present and open to the attending mind' should rather be that content which shall be "integral and complete" in relation to the mind's interpretation of it. That the clearness and distinctness of an idea consist in the "equality" of its direct and interpretive content can be learnt from the following quote: "When the interpretive content is taken as basic, then, an idea is clear if its direct content (eg. "incorporeal", "good") includes all that which is included in the interpretation ("God"), and distinct if the direct

⁸⁹. *Ibid.* P. 259

content includes nothing other than this. And similarly, when the direct content is taken as the point of reference, an idea is clear if its interpretive content (eg. "having biological utility") includes all that which is included in its direct (sense qualities), and distinct if the interpretation includes nothing else.⁹⁰ Thus, whichever content may be taken as the basic one, there must be an equality between the two. All the above mentioned discussion of Gewirth proves that the relation of equality is a logical relation.

It is learnt from Gewirth's interpretation of Descartes's 'idea' that the clear and distinct perception is always "integral and complete". According to Descartes an idea can be more clear, that is, even more "complete". Human knowledge though can tend to more complete one, yet its limit lies upto there only. On the other hand, an "adequate idea" is one which contains all the properties absolutely. According to Descartes man is not destined to possess the "adequate idea". Only God can have such adequate knowledge. Although men may have a complete knowledge, human mind is incapable for an "adequate knowledge". Alan Gewirth, thus, is never found disagreein

⁹⁰. *Ibid.* P. 260

with Descartes particularly concerning ideas. He rather tries to justify the position of Descartes as regards 'clearness and distinctness'.

Conclusion:

The aim of this as it has been already pointed out is to explicate the notion of idea in the philosophy of Descartes. Credit must be given to Descartes for using this term in a novel way. But his explanations as regards the notion of idea do not logically cohere. Kenny has rightly pointed out that the term in the philosophy of Descartes is full of ambiguities. Descartes thinks that there is a simple one to one correspondence between words and ideas but he himself goes contrary to this view that there may be two ideas corresponding to one word, and that there may not be corresponding ideas to certain words. I agree with Kenny that Descartes is rather confused about the relation between act and object. Descartes fails to recognize the different relationships between acts and their objects. Descartes gives the impression in the Third Meditation that he regards the three classes of ideas as not only exhaustive but inclusive. But we find that these three different kinds of ideas are not mutually exclusive, for

example, an adventitious idea can be in a sense an innate idea being a qua-capacity. Kenny points out that there is no room for the concept of learning in the philosophy of Descartes. Copleston does not agree with this view of Kenny. He is of the view that Descartes does not deny to possibility of the increase in knowledge. It may be noted here that in the considered opinion of Descartes, the idea can be made more and more complete but never adequate, which is possible only to God.

Descartes is not clear about the distinction between materially false ideas and formally false ideas. He also does not make any distinction between idea and image. On one hand, an idea and concept on the other, Descartes' other technical terms such as 'thought' are also affected by the ambiguities of the term idea.

Descartes offers 'clearness and distinctness' as the criteria of truth. Many philosophers are convinced that clearness and distinctness can not serve as the criteria of truth. Leibniz is one of them. He is of the view that clearness and distinctness are of no value as criteria of truth unless we have criteria of clearness and distinctness, which Descartes fails to provide.

Some critics point out even if they were considered as the criteria of truth, they would be only psychological rather than logical. Alan Gewirth does not agree with this view. He produces an ingenious argument to show that clearness and distinctness are in fact logical criteria of truth. According to Descartes an idea may be clear without being distinct but a distinct idea is always clear. Alan Gewirth makes a distinction between direct content and interpretive content of idea. He points out that when there is an 'equality' between direct content and interpretive content of an idea, the idea will be clear and distinct. He emphasizes the point that this sort of relation of equality is a logical relation, and not a quantitative relation.

I agree with the criticism that Descartes has failed to explicate the notion of idea with clarity. He gives many explanations but these explanations are not only different from one another but seem to contradict one another. However, the contribution of Descartes to the theory of knowledge by introducing the term idea in a new way can not be overemphasized. Philosophers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume were immensely benefited by this contribution. I am convinced that clearness and distinctness are criteria of truth though Descartes is not

very clear in his explanation of this criteria. It is the duty of the philosophers to provide suitable explanations. Alan Gewirth has done exactly that. I am in agreement with ^{the} interpretation of Alan Gewirth.

CHAPTER V

DESCARTES AND THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This is the last chapter of my dissertation which deals particularly with ontological argument of Descartes' 'Meditations'. Although this argument appears to be very simple, it is really a complex argument which raises problems about existence, reference and necessity. Moreover, (in the Meditations Descartes consider existence to be a predicate. Is existence really a predicate? - This is the main debate in the minds of the philosophers. This debate will be given a prominent place in this chapter. Quite a number of thinkers have criticised the cartesian ontological argument.) But how far their refutation is justifiable? Have they successfully refuted it? An attempt will be made to answer these questions.

The Fifth Meditation contains an argument for the existence of God, which is generally called "The ontological Argument". This argument is based on the claim that God has all perfections; since necessary existence is a perfection, God must exist. We superficially touched about the existence of God in the preceding chapter, nevertheless, the principle of

ideas will be of much help especially with the problem taken up in this chapter.

Let us, first of all, concentrate on the Fifth Meditation and see what Descartes actually says about the ontological argument. It was already seen in the previous chapter that all the clear and distinct ideas are true.¹ In continuation of this he makes the following point: ".....I find within me countless ideas of things which even though they may not exist anywhere outside me still cannot be called nothing; for although in a sense they can be thought of at will, they are not my invention but have their own true and immutable natures. When, for example, I imagine a triangle, even if perhaps no such figure exists,.....there is still a determinate nature, or essence, or form of the triangle which is immutable and eternal, and invented by me or dependent on my mind. This is clear from the fact that various properties can be demonstrated of the triangle, for example, that its three angles equal two right angles."¹ The inclusion of this quotation will, as I see, be of much help to understand the ontological argument of Descartes. For according to him, not only a triangle but even

¹. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. J. Cottingham, P. 44-45*

God possesses essences in Him.

We may think, like a triangle, a countless other shapes; and Descartes claims that he can demonstrate various properties of these shapes. According to him all these properties are true and are something and not nothing; it is because he is clearly aware of them.) Thus in connection with this he writes "....I always held that the most certain truths of all were the kind which I recognized clearly in connection with shapes, or numbers or other items relating to arithmetic or geometry, or in general to pure and abstract mathematics."²

(How to prove the existence of God? This has been replied by Descartes in the form of a question: "But if the mere fact that I can produce from my thought the idea of something entails that everything which I clearly and distinctly perceive to belong to that thing really does belong to it, is not this a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God?"³ The argument may be simplified as follows. The idea of something can be produced from the thought or thinking. And the properties, of that something, which are clearly and distinctly perceived do really belong to that something.

²• *Ibid.* P.45

³• *Ibid*

This argument is applicable to everything whatever it may be, if the problem is of this kind. Likewise; according to Descartes, this argument is equally applicable concerning the existence of God. ⁴ Certainly, the idea of God, or a supremely perfect being, is one which I find within me just as surely as the idea of any shape or number. And my understanding that it belongs to his nature that he always exists is no less clear and distinct than is the case when I prove of any shape or number. And my understanding that it belongs to his nature that he always exists is no less clear and distinct than is the case when I prove of any shape or number that some property belongs to its nature. ⁴

(According to Descartes, he may distinguish between existence and essence in everything else, but he can never separate existence from the essence of God. To make his argument a stronger one he gives the following two examples: it is of the essence of a triangle that its angles should add up to two right angles; it belongs to the essence of a mountain that it should be accompanied by a valley. "Hence it is just as much of a contradiction to think of God (that is, a supremely perfect being) lacking existence (that is, lacking a perfec-

⁴. *Ibid.*

tion), as it is to think of a mountain without a Valley."⁵ The same thing can also be understood as that we can no more think, without contradiction, of a supremely perfect being which lacks existence than of a triangle which lacks three sides. From this it follows that, for Descartes regarding God, existence is an attribute or predicate on the other hand, Descartes denies that his argument for the existence of God contains Sophism.

Sophism lies only there where the argument is thought otherwise; that is, if I consider that my thought imposes necessity on anything. His argument runs in this way: "From the fact that I can not think of a mountain without a valley, it does not follow that a mountain and valley exist anywhere, but simply that, a mountain and a valley, whether they exist or not, are mutually inseparable. But from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing, it follows that existence is inseparable from God, and hence that he really exists. It is not that my thought makes it so, or imposes any necessity on anything; on the contrary, it is the necessity of the thing itself, namely the existence of God, which determines my

⁵. *Ibid.*

thinking in this respect. For I am not free to think of God without existence (that is, a supremely perfect being without a supreme perfection) as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings.⁶ This passage stands as an answer to some extent, to the anticipatory objection -(from the fact that in order to be a triangle a figure must have three sides it does not follow that there actually are any triangles; and likewise in the case of the concept of the supremely perfect being. Descartes' straight forward answer is that the essence of a triangle does not include the attribute of existence, while that of a supremely perfect being does.)

(Descartes also makes a distinction between a 'false supposition' and the 'true ideas'. A supposition may become a false one when it is taken for granted without any demonstration. For example, it is a wrong supposition to think that all quadrilaterals can be inscribed in a circle, or rather that quadrilaterals are same as the circles. Therefore, as regards God, Descartes says, "it is a wrong supposition to hold the view that I attribute all perfections to him as if from the treasure house of my mind."⁷)

⁶ Descartes, Vol. II, trans. J. Cottingham. P. 46.

⁷ Ibid.

According to Descartes, the first and most important innate idea is the idea of God. He says that the idea of God is an image of a true and immutable nature. Descartes is never ready to accept that perfection is not a necessary attribute of God. This argument relies on the following statement: "Now, admittedly, it is not necessary that I ever light upon any thought of God; But whenever I do choose to think of the first and supreme being, and bring forth the idea of God from the treasure house of mind as it were, it is necessary that I attribute all perfections to him, even if I do not at that time enumerate or attend to them individually. And this necessity plainly guarantees that, when I later realize that existence is a perfection, I am correct in inferring that the first and supreme being exists. In the same way, it is not necessary for me ever to imagine a triangle; but whenever I do wish to consider a rectilinear figure having just three angles, it is necessary that I attribute to it the properties which license the inference that its three angles equal no more than two right angles, even if I do not notice this at the time."⁸ The only difference which appears from his Fifth

8. *Ibid.* P. 46-47

Meditation is this that existence is not a necessary attribute of a triangle. But, God is the beholder of all perfections; and that 'God necessarily exists' is a perfection of God.) In support of this argument and as against the opinion that the idea of God is not something fictitious, the following three points are available in Descartes' Meditation: "First" of all, there is the fact that, apart from God, there is nothing else of which I am capable of thinking such that existence belongs to its essence. Second, I can not understand how there could be two or more Gods of this kind; and after supposing that one God exists, I plainly see that it is necessary that he has existed from eternity and will abide for eternity. And finally, I perceive many other attributes of God, none of which I can remove or alter."⁹ (That the supreme being exists is, according to Descartes, a self-evident truth. That existence is an essence of God, this essence can belong only to God and nothing else. Thus, this proves that God, a perfectly supreme being exists. ✓ Descartes is certainly convinced that his idea of God is clearly and distinctly known to him.) One notable thing that he writes is that, ".....I see that the certainty of all other things depends

⁹. *Ibid.* P. 47'

on this, So that without it nothing can ever be perfectly known."¹⁰ (But, at the same time, it is our nature that, if we possess no knowledge of God then there is a greater possibility of falling into error. In the absence of the knowledge of God there may arise some new argument and undermine the previously established argument. But the possession of the knowledge of God never takes one away from the right track. If I do not possess the knowledge of God then "... I should thus never have true and certain knowledge about anything, but only shifting and changeable opinions."¹¹ This is same even as regards the 'triangle' case. As soon as the mind's eye is away from the proof, there is a greater possibility of falling into doubt about its truth. The last and most remarkable point which is found in the Fifth Meditation can be) quoted as follows: "...even if I am no longer attending to the arguments which led me to judge that this is true, as long as I remember that I clearly and distinctly perceived it, there are no counter-arguments which can be adduced to make me doubt it, but on the contrary(I have true and certain knowledge of it.)"¹² (Thus, the knowledge of God is a perfect knowledge.)

¹⁰. *Ibid.* P. 48

¹¹. *Ibid.*

¹². *Ibid.*

(Without being able to have the knowledge of the perfectly supreme being it is impossible, says Descartes, to attain full and certain knowledge of countless matters.)

It is equally true that there are various theories as to prove the existence of God; namely, moral argument, teleological argument, cosmological or causal argument. Descartes is, but, particular about the Ontological argument as Anslem is.¹³ From the exposition of his Meditations it has become quite apparent that his causal argument entailed in the ontological argument occupies a prominent place. He has proved it, as he thinks, by following the route of methodic doubt and the cogito principle.) This shows that how important his doubt and cogito principles are. In a way Descartes' cogito is the pathway through which his ontological argument emerges -- that there is an interlink particularly between the two. How? David H. Calhoun answers this in the following: "In Descartes, the cogito leads to the ontological argument as a direct methodological progression, for it is the certain knowledge of God that alone provides a verificational grounding for experiencing the world and other selves."¹³

¹³. *God and Self: Ontology and intersubjectivity, an article by David H. Calhoun, The Journal of Value Inquiry. Vol. 22, No.1, Jan. 1988, P. 24*

As regards the perfect being 'existence' as an attribute of Him becomes a necessity as the three angles of a triangle. It is impossible to think of a being, who creates the whole, without being existent. According to Descartes, necessary existence can be talked only of God and of nothing else.⁹ Replying to Gassendi he writes: "Moreover, in the case of God necessary existence is in fact a property in the strictest sense of the term, since it applies to him alone and forms a part of his essence as it does of no other thing. Hence the existence of a triangle should not be compared with the existence of God, since the relation between existence and essence is manifestly quite different in the case of God from what it is in the case of the triangle."¹⁴

There has been a great deal of controversy among the thinkers as to whether God's existence carries any meaning. (Some of them also raise questions against Descartes' argument that existence is a predicate.⁹ But for the theists, from the religious point of view, there is not a single doubt about God's existence: they simply believe that God exists and that is that.)

In the article, 'Is Existence a Predicate'? G.E. Moore

¹⁴. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. J. Cottingham, P. 263*

refers to Kneale and writes, Kneale "says that the word "predicate" has two different senses, a logical sense and a grammatical one."¹⁵ He also finds that according to Kneale existence is not a predicate and this is so in not a grammatical sense but in a logical sense. By analysing Kneale's 'tame tiger' example Moore reaches at the point that "some tame tiger's don't growl" and "some tame tigers don't exist" are not the propositions carrying same meaning. Moore sees a puzzle in case of the latter expression. He writes, "the former, whether true or false has a perfectly clear meaning - a meaning just as clear as that of "some tame tigers do growl", and it is perfectly clear that both propositions might be true together. But with "some tame tigers don't exist" the case is different. "Some tame tigers exist" has a perfectly clear meaning: it just means "there are some tame tigers". But the meaning of "some tame tigers don't exist," if any, is certainly not equally clear."¹⁶ If any existence occurs in the imagination or in hallucination, or in dream or in a fiction, then propositions expressed about them, whether true or false, can not be denied. Therefore, according to Moore, the sentence "there are some

¹⁵. *The Philosophical papers*, by G.E. Moore. P. 114

¹⁶. *Ibid.* P. 117

tame tigers which do not exist" is significant only if it means that there are some imaginary tigers. Thus, in this sense, in reality, 'growl' stands for an attribute while 'exist' does not.

Pointing out to Russells' understanding of the problem, which we are now concerned, Moore writes in his article that "We can say, then that one feature about our use of 'growl' is that, if we consider a "value" of the propositional function which is such that "some tame tigers growl" means that at least two values of it are true, then the singular of "growl" can be used, with the same meaning, in the expression of such a value. And perhaps this may be part of what is meant by saying tht "growl" stands for an "attribute". It may perhaps be meant that to point at an object which you are seeing, and utter the words. "This object growls", is significant - that the words and gesture together with the object pointed at do really express a proposition true or false."¹⁷ In this sense if we say that 'God exists', here 'God exists', does not really fulfil the requirements of a proposition. It is simply because 'God exists' can not be pointed at as an object nor can it

¹⁷. *Ibid.* P. 121

be seen. Therefore to utter the words 'God exists' is insignificant. Here it seems, almost openly, that this argument has been compiled on the basis of empirical knowledge.

From the above discussion it appears, Moore considers that 'exists' can be taken in two different ways - 'exist' either in the 'real world' or in the 'non-real world'. The real world implies the physical existence which is known easily through the sense organs, while the non-real existence stands for those whose existence is found in the imagination, hallucination, fiction and so on. Taking this stand of G.E. Moore a question can be raised against Descartes' ontological argument for the existence of God. And surely, Descartes' argument is not about the real existence of the empirical type, but on the other hand, if this 'exist' is about the non-real world then, certainly, it carries no meaning at all. Therefore, the question that 'is existence a predicate?' does not at all arise. Thus, according to Moore, as his chapter 'Is existence a predicate?' reveals, existence is not a predicate.

What does William P. Alston say? No doubt for the philosophers like St. Anselm and Descartes existence is certainly a predicate. Contrary to them ✓ Alston argues in his article,

✓

The ontological Argument Revisited, that existence is not a predicate. Although the refutation had already been made by some other philosophers Alston finds faults in the way in which the criticisms were made against Descartes' ontological argument. It is faulty because the critics have failed to have a careful look into the basic features of the concept of existence. And, so, Alston attempts to establish his argument so as to show that the existence is not a predicate and ultimately to show also that the ontological argument is refutable. He does his work by analysing first the criticisms presented by his predecessors. ✓

"Before we attach any predicate to anything (round, heavy, in my pocket, belongs to Jones, difficult to understand), we must presuppose that it exists, if we were not making that assumption we could not even raise the question whether a given predicate attaches to it."¹⁸ This is what he finds in the traditional kind of criticism against the aforesaid cartesian problem. Indeed, he promises that, ".....without going beyond the orbit of the traditional critique I want to try to give it a stronger and more fundamental formulation than it usually

¹⁸. Descartes, ed. Willis Doney, P. 280

receives".¹⁹ It is, on the other hand, impossible to make any predication unless there exists something to be predicated. "There is no pie in the oven, and the pie in the oven is sweet' can not be used to make a predication, though it might be used to propound a riddle, be ironical, or test one's voice."²⁰ Alston thinks that simply considering 'presupposition' as an instrument to refute the 'existence as a predicate' is not enough. For presupposition may give birth to deception. It becomes obvious from the following sentence: "If the existence of the subject must be presupposed before we can set about attaching (with-holding, wondering whether to attach) any predicate to (from) it, we will always be too late either to apply or to withhold a predicate of existence."²¹ He seems to say that it is a blunder to refute anything without proving the existence of the same. Alston's example concerning this will be of much help: "However true it may be that being unmarried is contained in the notion of bachelorhood, I can not conclude that it is necessarily true that the bachelor next door is unmarried, unless I have been assured that there is a bachelor next door."²² This is how he criticises the traditional criticism. 6

19. *Ibid.*, P. 280

20. *Ibid.*, P. 281

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, P. 282

By contending that their criticism is vitiated by the neglect of important distinction Alston clearly points out that, "the heart of the argument, let us remember, was a claim that any attempted predication of existence where positive would be trivial, and where negative would be self-defeating....but this is not always so."²³ The following passage of Alston sufficiently shows how he demonstrates against the so-called 'triviality' and 'self defeating'. "Nevertheless the triviality of (1A) "the P exists" can be most clearly exhibited by making the pre-supposition explicit and showing the redundancy of (2A) "There is one and only one P and it exists". And it would be true to say that the triviality of (1A) rests on the redundancy of (2A). In the same way the self-defeating character of (1B) "The P does not exist" could be said to rest on the contradictoriness of (2B) "There is one and only one P and it does not exist."²⁴ According to Alston, but, neither (2A) form of statements are always redundant, and nor the (2B) form of statements are always self-contradictory.

One may make an assertion about the subject predicate whether they occur in the places like, 'in literature', or 'in fic-

²³. *Descartes*, ed. W. Doney, P. 282

²⁴. *Ibid.* P. 283

tion', or even 'in reality', but he must at least know the mode of existence to set up the subject predicate diversity. Alston's argument, concerning this, runs as: "At least, once we recognize diverse modes of existence, the standard arguments are powerless to prevent this."²⁵

m The existence is a predicate can not even be expressed through linguistic articulation. It can, says Alston, be a predicate neither in a standard literary language nor in a revised ordinary language. It seems that Alston is of the view that those who are really devoted to the belief in the Ontological argument accepts it uncritically, or blindly. According to him, the translation method of a language is not going to hold good. In a way, he feels, he is constrained to bring forth language in the discussion of the ontological argument. He writes, "The apparent use of "exists" as a predicate, and its most famous offspring, the ontological argument, arose in language as we actually have it. It is in the course of using that language that we have fallen under the spell of this argument."²⁶

Alston finds, to certain extent, no problem with the predication of a perfect being in many other aspects. But

²⁵. *Ibid.* P. 285-286

²⁶. *Ibid.* P. 289

a sort of debate and denial arises as regards predicating real existence of a perfect being, the perfect being which exists in the mind. In his words, "We can say of this being that it is infinite, wise, just, merciful, all knowing and so forth. But when we add "and really exists", something jars us; we are seized with a logical vertigo. This, we want to say, is different.....well, in all other vertigo. This, we want to say, is different.....well, in all other cases, we remained within the sphere of ideas or concepts, but when real existence is asserted we step outside that sphere, and this cannot be done solely from an examination of its contents. We must look outside and see what is there. Dissection of what is in the understanding can never tell us what is in the real world,...."²⁷

Neither dream analysis nor the literal analysis tells us anything about their content; likewise the analysis of understanding also falls under the same fold. Thus, for Alston the ontological argument is nothing more than a metaphor. The whole ontological argument is based on the misapprehension of the kind of existence, or rightly quoting: ".....a subject predicate statement was misunderstood because of a misapprehension as to

²⁷. *Ibid.* P. 289-290

the kind of existence being pre supposed.²⁸ Among his many examples one is, I think, enough to convey the requirements, - "Whether or not the statement" that ghost is in the house again "implies that abnormal phenomena are to be expected in the house in the immediate future depends on whether the assumption on which that statement rests is that a certain ghost exists in your imagination, or that a certain ghost really exists."²⁹ In doing so, according to Alston, in general the logical status of the predication is delimited and not the possible predicates themselves. He summarises his argument as follows: "Thus an existential statement determines a logical framework which predications can be made of what has been said to exist. It can be construed as a license to make certain sorts of subject predicate statements, and not others. In fact we might take the determination of such logical frameworks as a principle of differentiation for modes of existence. If the same logical status is conferred, then there is only one mode of existence in question. It is on this kind of ground that we might refuse to distinguish between existing in the understanding and existing in the mind, or between the mode

²⁸. *Ibid.* P. 291

²⁹. *Ibid.* P. 292

of existence involved in existing in Australia and existing in South America, while insisting on a distinction between either of the first pair and either of the second."³⁰

While discussing about the non-real mode of existence Alston brings forth two defining features', as he calls it. They are 'the real correlate of a non-real existent' and 'the real archetype of the non-real existent.' His definition of these two, while criticising Anslem goes as the following: "Whenever something exists in my dreams, there must be a real conscious dream state;.....whenever something exists in my understanding, there are real thoughts, ideas, images and so forth, in my mind which would ordinarily be said to be about this thing, perhaps 'real dispositions to behave in certain ways toward things of this kind, and so forth. It is this entailment which lends plausibility to the project of reducing all other modes of existence to real existence. Let us call such a real existent the real correlate of a non-real existent. Second, we can specify something which really exists and has all the characteristics (excluding existence, if that exclusion is necessary) of the non-real existent. Let us call this the real archetype of the

³⁰. *Ibid.* P. 292-293

non-real existent. Thus, the real archetype of a mountain in my dream would be a real mountain of the same size, shape, and so forth.....³¹

Thus Alston denies the real existence of a perfect being considered by both Anslem and Descartes. According to him existence in the mind does not mean the existence also in reality. Therefore, their argument only proves the 'real-correlate of a non-real existent'. 'Now it seems to be a defining feature of all non-real modes of existence that any statement about something which exists in such a mode will have no implications with respect to real things, except for its real correlate and any implications that might have. In particular it has no implications concerning the real archetype.'³² More importantly the aim of Alston is to show that there can be no necessary existential statements. And if there are no such necessary existential statements then that there does not exist a perfect being. So the subject predicate problem about the most perfect being does not at all arise.

The arguments that have been presented by William P. Alston are not sufficient to refute the ontological argument

³¹• *Ibid.* P. 294-295

³²• *Ibid.* P. 295

of Descartes. Moreover, he gives no satisfactory and a conclusive solution even in support of his own argument. Thus, from this angle he remains to be a failure. Alvin Plantinga in his article 'Alston on the ontological Argument' clearly shows that neither Alston nor his predecessors have succeeded in refuting the argument of Descartes.

Plantinga's argument is that both Alston and Anslem (and naturally Descartes also comes) understood that many beings exist both in the understanding and in reality. Although their use of the phrase runs in the same way, Plantinga finds an important difference between the two.

What he finds in Anslem's use of this kind of phrase is that, "from the fact that someone hears and understands the name "The Taj Mahal", it follows that the Taj Mahal exists in the understanding. But of course it also exists in reality;....- Anslem's proof is designed to show that God has just this status. But if being often exist both in the understanding and in reality, there seems to be no reason why a statement might not pre-suppose such dual existence for its subject; a statement like 'the Taj Mahal generally but mistakenly believed to be pink' is a good candidate for this status."³³ To certain extent

³³. *Ibid.* P. 307

Plantinga supports the argument forwarded by Anslem. There he finds that 'God exists in reality', formally follows from 'God exists in the understanding, together with the principle that existence in reality is greater than the existence in the understanding alone. This principle according to Anslem (and later to Descartes) is necessarily true and need not be supposed to be a truth of logic."³⁴

Plantinga nowhere sees Alston arguing further against Anslem to show that there are no necessary existential statements. Plantinga's strength lies in the following sentence in support of Anslem: "And if Anslem is treating real existence as a predicate merely by arguing that God exists in the understanding but not in reality is necessarily false, then anyone, in arguing that any proposition of the form X exists in the understanding but not in reality is necessarily false, is guilty of the same discretion."³⁵ The final statement of Plantinga as against Anslem goes in such a way that: "We have no reason to believe, therefore, either that existence in reality can not be predicated of a being presupposed to exist in the understanding, or that Anslem's argument necessarily involves predicating

³⁴. *Ibid.* P. 308

³⁵. *Ibid.* P. 309

real existence of such of being. I think the conclusion to be drawn is that we do not yet have a general refutation of Anselm's Ontological argument."³⁶ This implies that there is no such an argument so as to refute the Ontological argument of Descartes, for the ontological argument of both Anselm and Descartes are of the same kind.

Although Bernard Williams too does believe that Descartes' argument to prove the existence of God is not a successful one, he still accepts Descartes in comparison to that of other modern advocates. This is true particularly concerning the ontological argument. He says, "Descartes at least offered his argument to readers who shared with him a world of which the existence of God was a formative and virtually unquestioned feature; moreover he thought that the premises of the argument are exceedingly straight forward. Modern advocates have neither excuse."³⁷ I think Bernard Williams is right. I do not see any conclusive outcome in the criticisms offered against Descartes by many other philosophers. Descartes had over and again reiterated through his Meditations that one need to meditate deeply to understand his arguments. There is nothing except

³⁶. *Ibid.* P. 311

³⁷. *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry; Bernard Williams, P. 162*

meditation, as an instrument to understand the ultimate truth. Once the knowledge about God is acquired, all other possible knowledges becomes easier. At the end of the Fifth Meditation Descartes writes: "...the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends uniquely on my knowledge of the true God, to such an extent that I was incapable of perfect knowledge about anything else until I knew him."³⁸

I am of the opinion that the ontological argument has not sufficiently been refuted by any critic. Therefore, this argument still retains its stronghold intact.

Conclusion:

The Fifth Meditation contains the ontological argument. This argument has been subjected to serve criticisms by both traditional and modern philosophers. The fact that this argument which stood such criticisms clearly proves the tenacity and the strength of this argument. Descartes' argument may be proved succinctly as follows. God is a perfect being, therefore, he must possess all actual and possible perfections. Since necessary existence is a perfection. God must exist. It is a well known fact that Descartes

³⁸. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Vol. II, trans. John Cottingham, P. 49*

draws a logical parallel between a perfect being and one of the properties of a triangle. Descartes is convinced that we can never separate existence from the essence of God.

It is generally argued that Descartes is guilty of considering existence as a predicate. G.E. Moore argues that existence is not a predicate. W.P. Alston is also of the same opinion that existence is not a predicate. However, he thinks that the traditional criticism of the ontological argument has failed to deny that existence is not a predicate. Since it does not take into account certain basic features of the concept of existence. He believes that by taking into account certain basic features of the concept of existence, it would be possible to give new and sounder reason for denying that existence is predicate, and thereby rejecting the ontological argument outright. He believes that there are different modes of existence although there is only one kind of existence. He formulates the traditional criticism in its strongest form as follows. Any attempted predication of existence where positive would be trivial, and where negative would be self--defeating. He tries to establish that any predication of

existence where positive need not be trivial, and where negative need not be self-defeating. This he does by setting up one mode of existence in the first conjunct and another mode of existence in the second conjunct.

Alston asks for real archetype in the real world of God. I am sure that he is guilty of asking for an empirical evidence for an a priori argument. Moreover, he has not been able to deny the existence of necessary existential proposition. Plantinga points out that the existence about God is a necessary existential statement. Plantinga thinks, it is possible to produce an a priori argument about the existence of God without talking about the existence of such a being in the mind or in the understanding. This he does by means of the logical method, *reductio ad absurdum*.

Philosophers like Hume hold the view that it is not possible to produce a philosophical argument for the existence of God. But I am convinced that it is not only possible to produce a philosophical argument for the existence of God but also it is the task of philosophers to provide rational basis for the existence of God. I am of the opinion

that Ontological argument is one of the most powerful arguments, perhaps the most powerful. In my considered opinion the ontological argument still stands since it has not been sufficiently refuted hitherto.

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