CHAPTER III

THE WORLD, GOD AND THE SOULS AS CONCEIVED BY

DESCARTES:

(1) THE WORLD:

(a) About the Knowledge of the External World:

We have already discussed the nature of the two substances, viz., mind and matter. We have now to know how we acquire a knowledge of the world and the nature of the objects of which it is composed.

The first thing for Descartes, in this context, is to give us an idea as to how we acquire the knowledge of the world. Senses cannot be relied upon. The commonest of errors, as Descartes points out, is to think that one's sense perceptions, are like outside things. The distant turrets which are square, look small and circular through the naked eye. In the same way, sounds and other sensations may deceive us.

The external world consists of objects which are material in substance. We form an idea about them by seeing their qualities only, such as size, quantity, colour, roughness or smoothness of their surfaces, their odours, if any, their taste, if they have it. These qualities give us only an
appearance of the objects which we perceive. They do not exist objectively in corporeal substances, but they are 'dispositions of the objects,' which stimulate the nerves in various ways, which carry the impressions to the mind where they are ascertained and interpreted. In the 'Notes against a Programme,' Descartes asserts "that nothing reaches our minds from external objects through the sense- organs beyond certain corporeal movements."

He, therefore, comes to the conclusion that even the ideas of such qualities of objects, as colour, taste, etc. are innate and not adventitious. This theory is known as the "Representative Theory of Perception." It assumes that what is perceived is in the mind, though it represents what is outside the mind. It appears that Descartes first intended innate ideas only to be those which are inherent in the mind, distinguishing them from ideas which are adventitious. After giving a final shape to his "Representative Theory of Perception" he came to conclude that all ideas are innate.

2. Descartes' Notes against a certain Programme published in Belgium - Page 443 (Vol. 1)
Our external senses perceive in passivity alone just in the way that a plate of wax receives the impression from a seal. The external objects stimulate the ends of the sense- organs causing modifications in the sentient body, in the same way as the seal alters the surface of the wax. This is true of all the sense organs. To give an illustration from the sense 'seeing', Descartes explains that the first opaque structure in the eye receives the figure impressed upon it by the light with its various colours. The structure of the eye has a modification which is carried off to some other part of the body, called the common-sense, in the very same instant. The common-sense has a function like that of a seal and impresses on the fancy or imagination, as though on wax, those very figures which come from the external objects. These very impressions are conveyed through the nerves to the mind where they are examined and interpreted in the light of the innate ideas already existing there.

In his 'Notes against a Programme', Descartes further says,

1. Descartes' Rules for the Direction of the mind - Rule XII. Page 37
2. The example given in Descartes' Rule XII (under Rules for the Direction of the mind) Pages 38.
"No ideas of things, in the shape by which we envisage them by thought, are presented to us by the senses. In the impressions which we have of the external objects there is nothing which is not already present in the shape of innate ideas. Our task, then, is to find out what figures or impressions of external objects correspond to the innate ideas already in the mind. It is not true that the external things transmit the ideas to the brain through the senses. What they transmit are the stimuli which give the mind "occasion" to refer them to the innate ideas for verification. It follows that all ideas pertaining to the qualities of external objects are, in nature, innate.

The external stimuli, causing movement in the sense organs, cannot originate innate ideas which are inherent in the mind. Answering the anonymous critic who drafted the Programme, Descartes says, "I should like my friend to instruct me as to what corporeal movement it is which can form in our mind any common notion, e.g., the notion that 'things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another', or any other he pleases, for all these movements are particular, but notions are universal, having no affinity with movements and no relation to them."

1. Descartes' Notes against a Programme. Page 442
2. Ibid. Page 443
In the light of the 'Representative Theory of Perception,' described above, Descartes' knowledge of the external world is related to his innate ideas. There seems to be no apprehension that this knowledge will ever prove erroneous. But this is not so.

Now the question arises as to how we get wrong knowledge of the objects. Descartes explains this phenomenon by saying that human understanding is limited and will, on the other hand, is unlimited. So, when we form judgments about the things which we do not know clearly, we are deceived. He indicates that "the will is more extended than the understanding and that our errors proceed from this cause!"

It appears that Descartes has made a distinction between popular knowledge and philosophical knowledge. Popular knowledge is the knowledge of the objects, which we receive from the senses. Philosophical knowledge, on the other hand, is given by reason. It is the true knowledge of the objects, which is higher than the knowledge we have in the popular sense.

So, on the basis of the knowledge in the philosophical sense, let us now examine the nature of external objects.

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1. Descartes - Principles of Philosophy - Part I - Principle No. XXXV. Page 233
(b) The Nature of External Things:

While describing the nature of external things, Descartes starts with the presumption that God is not a deceiver and that the objects which he perceives with his senses are real bodies. One characteristic that he notices about them is that they are extended, i.e. they have length, breadth and height. This is the attribute of matter.

Further, he can number in them many different parts and attribute to each of these parts all sorts of figure and shape, size, colour, place or motion. These particular features of objects are not their attributes but are their modes or modifications. Modes have been defined by Spinoza 'as the affections or modifications of substance'. They account for the multiplicity of objects. These objects do not appear new to Descartes. He has innate ideas about them.

Descartes' problem now is to consider how different bodies could be carved out from the uniformity of the extension in which they continue to participate, when extension is continuous, indivisible and homogeneous. How is their individuality determined?

Descartes explains that although there is one matter in the whole universe, it is divisible in parts and

1. Spinoza.
is movable in respect of these parts. It is, then, capable of having those 'modes' and 'affections' which can arise from the motion of its parts. Thus "all the variations in matter depend on motion."

Further, to clarify the same point, Descartes says, "I am not able to apprehend motion fully and perfectly apart from the thing in which motion exists, nor finally can I feign that motion can exist in a thing incapable of motion."

Descartes considers motion as a mode of the body moved not as the action by which it is moved. Motion is not force but only one of the manifestations of force. All motion is caused by God and is a constant quantity in the universe. This conception of Descartes is similar to the principle of Conservation of Energy.

Another factor determining the differentiation of objects is heat. Heat produces both fire and light. Very fine particles of matter separated from an object by the action of fire, fly in the air and form other objects. Heat has its effect on soil, air and water, and helps in forming


2. Descartes at the close of the Replies to the First Objection. Vol II P. 22

new objects by the process of transformation of matter from one shape to the other.

Next, Descartes considers the solidity and fluidity of bodies. He starts with the axiom that solidity depends on the particles of matter being so close together that there is no space whatsoever between them, and that no particle of that object is in action to move itself apart from the others. Says Descartes,

"For what bond, what cement, other than this can be imagined that would hold them more firmly together."

Similarly, he has indicated the nature of fluids, such as milk, wine and water etc. The particles in a liquid have no space in between, and move, when the liquid is shaken, at a certain speed so long as the motion in the liquid lasts. Each existing body approaches more or less to one or other of these extremes, and is thereby to be judged to be solid or liquid.

The nature of external things depends also on their composition. Although Descartes believes that matter is homogenous, he yet recognises three elements, viz., fire, air and earth, with the help of which all objects are made.

1. Descartes - Trait de la Lumière XI Page 138 (From Kemp Smith's New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes Page 107)
and are of different nature, according to the proportion in which the elements mix to form an object. Thus differentiation takes place and we have a variety of multitudinous objects in the universe, composed of the particles of the elements coming together by the laws of motion. Modifications in the objects take place and we have new objects by these changes.

Thus we come to the conclusion that for Descartes, the objects are real, but not eternal. They are changeable and perishable. Descartes believes in the real existence of the world.

(C) The Origin of the World:

If the world is real and not a figment of imagination or, as the Vedāntists say, 'māyā', we should try to understand how it came into existence. Was it a single act of God to create this world? Or else, did the world evolve according to certain laws? The problem of the origin of the world is as old as human civilization.

While myth attempts to give a fabled account of the formation of the world, and religion tells its own story, science has attempted to fix this question in the conception of the cosmic matter or world-stuff.

The first great thinker in western philosophy to formulate his cosmological ideas in a systematic manner, was
Plato. According to him, there are two worlds, viz., the world of Ideas, and the world of sensible objects, in which we live. The great architect, Demiurge, makes these objects, which are the copies of the true forms existing in the world of Ideas. This is one view of creation which was held by almost all the Platonic thinkers. Plotinus, a neo-Platonist, who lived in the 3rd century A.D., was influenced by the teachings of the Christian religion, and consequently held somewhat different views about the creation of the world. According to him, although the world emanates from God, He is not its Creator, nor has it evolved from Him. It proceeds from Him as a stream issues forth from a perennial spring. There is, however, another viewpoint of creation, which we find in the Christian religion. In the Book of Genesis we read that the world and all nature, animate and inanimate, were brought into existence by a single act of creation. The whole world was created in six days. The Christian view is represented by St. Augustine who says that the world has been created out of nothing. God's creation is a continuous process, so that the world may not dissolve by the sheer end of the process. Matter does not emanate from Him. He creates it. God does not include within Him created nature. "The creaturely is not co-substantial with the divine."

We have now to see here whether Descartes propounded his theory of creation according to the notions prevailing in Greek philosophy or he based them on religious conceptions or else he had his own theory of creation which was different from either of them or was the synthesis of both.

Descartes believed only in the efficient cause of the world. It is enough for us to know that God has created the world. We have no right to suggest the purpose of His creation, because it would be against the spirit of religion to enter into His motives and purposes. St. Thomas of Aquinas, who held the purely Christian view stressed on the final cause of God's creation.

Descartes has held that there are two kinds of substances - created and uncreated. God is the uncreated substance, whereas mind and matter are created substances. All will agree that these two created substances account for the whole of God's creation. Evidently, there was nothing in the universe before these two substances were created. It seems from this that Descartes' position is that of a believer


2. Descartes' Principles Nos LII, LIII, LIV. (Part I)
in the wellknown Christian theory, 'that the world has been created out of nothing.' Descartes also believed in continuous creation for two very good reasons. In the first place, the continued process of creation is necessary for the preservation of God's own creation. Secondly, the idea itself will be considered a self-evident proof of the greatness and glory of God and our absolute dependence on His mercy and goodwill.

Descartes' views, expressed in the Principles of Philosophy, Part III are interesting reading on the subject. He says that God created the world in its full perfection. There were the sun, the moon, the stars and the earth, all created by Him. There were not only seeds of plants, but also plants and flowers of different kinds. Says Albert G.A. Balz, while commenting on this passage,

"But how do we know what God has not produced beyond this earth, the sun, the moon and the stars etc.? And how do we know whether God produced an infinity of species? Does He not pour forth His power in the creation of things?

1. Kemp Smith - New Study in the Philosophy of Descartes - Page 167. (From his own translation- "Descartes' Philosophical works Page 233.)

2. Ibid (His re-statement of Thomist Theology.)

3. Descartes' Principles of Philosophy - Part III.
Certainly, all of this completely escapes us, because the ends of God are hidden from us."

Descartes admits that he is repeating the commonly-believed notions of the Christian World. He is reported to have said that this is the teaching of the Christian faith and natural reason convinces us that it is so, for, considering the infinite power of God we cannot think He ever made anything which was not unique.

Descartes, however, was a rationalist, and he could not confine himself to the teachings of his religion. In order to understand the nature of things we should also study the laws of nature, pertaining to different branches of science.

It is his belief that all bodies in the universe consist of one and the same matter, that it is divisible into parts and is actually divided by the laws of motion, that their motion is circular and the quantity of motion is a constant factor. We cannot imagine how big these pieces of matter, such as the heavenly bodies are, how quickly they


2. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach - The Visible World (Descartes' Works) Page. 224.
move in paths determined by the Laws of Physics and Mathematics. Science gives us the knowledge of the world as well as indicates to us the nature of external things.

We have also read in the Book of Genesis that, besides the material objects of the world, God also created Adam and Eve. All human beings are their progeny. Their nature as well as all matters pertaining to them can be studied in such sciences as Physiology and Psychology of which Descartes had rudimentary knowledge, as is evident from his book Traité de l'homme.

In his book, 'Traité de la Lumière', published as a part of La Monde in 1644, he discusses mainly Physics. He mentions three elements, viz., 'fire', 'air' and 'earth', out of which all objects of the world have been created by the laws of heat and motion. It is not only surprising but also seems to be inexplicable as to why Descartes did not mention water as the fourth element in his scheme of creation. All heavenly bodies also have been created by the same laws out of the particles moving in space. For example, the sun, the moon and the stars have been mainly formed by the particles of fire, mixed with the particles of the other two elements.

1. Published as a part of 'La Monde' in 1644.
2. Ibid.
If Descartes had been living today, how happy would he have been to find that the pieces of rocks brought from the moon are composed of almost the same kinds of particles as we see in the rocks on the earth.

In part IV of the Principles of Philosophy, we find a detailed account of the earth, including the 'generation' of the earth, its division into three regions, and a long description of each region. He has discussed some important principles of Physics, such as gravity, action of heat etc., which explain the universe.

In Part III of the Principles of Philosophy, he discusses the 'Visible World' including the Heavenly Bodies, such as the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets. All heavenly bodies are governed by the laws of Physics. They have been formed out of the particles moving in space. For example, the sun, the moon, the stars and planets are formed by the particles of fire.

According to Descartes, there is only one universe, consisting of our own earth and all the heavenly bodies.

1. Philosophical Works of Descartes (Translation by Haldane and Ross - Principles of Philosophy Part IV).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid Page 270-79 (Principles of Philosophy) Part III.
All that we can say now about Descartes' cosmological conception is that he has formed a synthesis between religious beliefs and scientific principles. God created the world by His power, but it developed on the basis of the laws of Physics and other sciences, discovered by man. Most of the objects of the world are made by man by his technical knowledge.

From what we have studied about the creation of the world with its manifold objects, we come to the conclusion that its Creator is the Supreme Being whom we call God. It is now a matter of pure commonsense to understand that we should study the nature of such a being and also to find out the proofs of His existence.

(ii) **GOD:**

(a) **The Nature of God:**

We have seen the nature of external things and also the process through which we get our knowledge. Moreover, while discussing the origin of the world, as we have seen, Descartes believes that the fundamental constituents of this world have been created by God out of nothing. Not only this, but for the validity of innate ideas, Descartes takes the help of God. In this way God seems to be the pivot in cartesian philosophy.
Let us, therefore, discuss, in brief, the nature of God and the arguments by which Descartes tries to prove His existence. Some commentators of Descartes' philosophy, such as Copleston and Gibson have discussed the various attributes of God and for them God is known through these attributes. Really speaking, they are not merely attributes but they constitute the nature of God. In other words these attributes are His nature.

Different thinkers have had different conceptions of God, according to the traditions prevalent in their countries or their notions based on their imagination or their personal experiences. Xenophanes is reported as saying,

"Mortals deem that gods are begotten as they are. If oxen or horses or lions had hands, they could paint gods in the image of their several kinds. The Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed, the Thracians say that they have blue eyes and red hair."

There is bitter irony in this remark, but it contains a good deal of sober truth.

Great thinkers have had their own ideas of God. Plato has identified God with the supreme idea of 'the Good', Aristotle has designated Him as the 'Pure Form', the 'Prime Mover,' who is eternal, immortal and immutable, but who is the cause of all generation and change.

St. Thomas Aquinas is of the opinion that "No idea of God's essence could be formed adequately. Wise men know more of His essence than do the ignorant, and angels know more than either, but no creature knows enough of it to be able to deduce God's existence from His essence."

From a perusal of the philosophies of different thinkers preceding Descartes, we find that most of them have common notions about the conception of God. Even in the Age of Science, which marks the beginning of modern philosophy, there has been little change in their notions. Rene Descartes (1596-1650), a rationalistic thinker of France, has mentioned in his works almost all the conventional attributes of God. Descartes says, "By the name, 'God', I understand a substance which is infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful and by which I myself and every thing else, if anything else exists, have been created."

1. B. Russell - A History of Western Philosophy, Page, 454.
2. Meditation III.
Elsewhere, in the same Meditation, he has enumerated almost the very same attributes, simply to give a clearer and more distinct idea of God's Perfection by laying stress on those attributes.

"God is eternal, immutable, infinite, omniscient and all-powerful. He is also the Creator of all which is outside of Him. He is uncreated."

The first attribute in his second list is God's being eternal. He is not limited by time. Time, according to Descartes, is a succession of moments which will remain in continuity by the supreme power of God. Time is the conception of duration for the temporal objects, so it cannot be an attribute of God. His existence transcends all notions of time. Time, as a measure of motion, is merely a mode of thinking and cannot apply to God. God's character is substantial. His existence is eternal.

The second attribute of God is that He is immutable. This attribute implies the stability of His power of Creation and preservation of His created objects within the limits of time. Immutability of God denotes His nature of stabilising the order and system of the universe.

1. Meditation III.
God is infinite. He is not bound down by the limits of time and space. To have an idea of infinite, we should conceive, according to our imagination, a vast space or a long duration of time. These notions will be definitely finite. If we venture to think of their infinite magnitude, we can at least have a very insufficient glimpse of God's infinity. It can never be, by any stretch of imagination, even a tolerable idea of God. The terms, 'Infinite' and 'indefinite' are used in different senses. The word 'Infinite' is applied to God alone; we can use the word 'indefinite' for temporal objects, the limits of which we do not know.

Gibson has remarked that we can have some idea, at least, of God, if we only make a sincere effort. He says,

"Though God in many respects is incomprehensible, there are indeed many things in God or pertaining to God which our minds can attain; therefore, in this sense, God is supremely knowable."

1. Descartes' Principles of Philosophy, XXVII.
2. Descartes' letter to Chanut, V, on Infinity.
God is called omniscient because He knows everything, and, as such, is the "rational ground of the universe."

We call Him omnipotent because His power is manifest in His vast creation. He has not only the power to create, but also to preserve. If He had not these powers, all His creation would have gone to pieces. His creation is continuous. Every act of God which relates to the world indicates Him as the efficient cause. He is, therefore, omnipotent.

Descartes has not described God only in positive terms but also negatively.

"God is not corporeal and does not perceive by means of the senses as we do, nor is He the originator of sin." He is not a deceiver. He is not malicious.

Corporeal nature implies divisibility which is included in local extension and which is a mark of imperfection. It is certain that God does not possess a body. Our senses are of great use to us but God neither possesses these senses nor needs them. In all sensation there is passivity and that indicates dependence on some object. He possesses the power of comprehension. He does not originate sin, because sin is an evil and God is not an evil-doer, as He

2. Descartes - Principles of Philosophy Part I Principle No. XXIII.
has no malice. "God is not the cause of our errors. The first of God's attributes is that He is absolutely true. He is the source of all light. All errors come from our wrong judgments."

The number of attributes of God may be multiplied, but whatever may be the number, we cannot have a correct and complete comprehension of God.

It is still more difficult to prove the existence of God. Thinkers, since days immemorial, have tried to give proofs of the existence of God, but these have not been found to be quite satisfactory. Let us see what Descartes has to say about the existence of the Supreme Being.

(b) The Arguments Advanced in Favour of the Existence of God:

Descartes has not given us only the nature of God, but he has made a sincere effort to prove His existence with the help of certain arguments. So, it is in the fitness of things to discuss them here.

The first proof starts with the idea of God in the mind. The question naturally arises how the idea of God came into the mind. Descartes has enumerated three kinds of

1. Descartes 'Principles' - Principle No. XXIX.
ideas. "The idea of God," says he, "is an innate idea - the only idea of which I could not be an efficient cause." The reason is that the idea is that of an All-Perfect Being while Descartes is in every respect imperfect. There should be no doubt that the idea has been imparted to him by nature truly more perfect than his own.

It may be argued that as the idea of God is of intellectual nature, it may be possible that it might have originated from the idea of human spirit raised to infinity.

This objection may not bear scrutiny. We cannot possibly ignore the transcendental majesty which the idea of God conveys to us. Human ingenuity cannot raise human qualities to the level of the attributes of God. Gibson stresses the same point when he says that "the gulf between the finite and the infinite is itself infinite, that the approximation of man to God never blossoms into attainment." It is therefore absurd to think that we make a God by magnifying human qualities to the level of the attributes of God. Thus Descartes is seeking the cause of the idea of God which he finds ingrained in human reason and by seeking the cause of this idea of the infinite he reaches the infinite,


2. Descartes.

i.e., God. Hence this argument is called the causal argument to prove the existence of God.

The second proof starts from the real existence of the thinking self which depends on a supreme real author. 'Cogito ergo sum' is the basis of this proof. Self-realisation gave him the idea that he is imperfect. Descartes could not have this consciousness if he did not have in his mind the conception of a most Perfect Being. He searches for the cause of this conception and traces it to the most Perfect Being who must exist to prove this conception of perfection in his mind. In other words, Descartes, by being conscious of himself as imperfect and dependent on the most perfect being, came to have the notion of the existence of God who is all-perfection.

This proof has two initial advantages. In the first place, it does not start from an idea as did the first proof, but from a reality, which is his own self. Secondly, there is no distinction of plane, as between his own soul and the supreme soul of God.

Gibson further clarifies this point when he says,

"If we are to discover the nature of supreme reality, we must at least set out from something which is
fully real.\textsuperscript{1} If the soul is real, it may be possible to pursue further into the greatest reality, viz., God, by expanding and magnifying the conception of our first intuition.

This proof, as the previous one, proceeds from the method of exclusion. In the first proof, the contention is if God did not produce the idea of an All-Perfect Being in his mind, then who did? Similarly, if God did not produce me who did? My body can be produced by my parents but the soul cannot. It can be produced only by God.\textsuperscript{2}

The entire argument seems to be fallacious. It does not rule out the possibility of my having existed from eternity. If it were so there was no necessity of searching for the cause of my being. Therefore there was no need of proving the existence of God as the efficient cause of my existence. To meet this objection, Descartes had adopted the theory of continuous creation. According to this theory, the self is discontinuous and is sustained and preserved by God from moment to moment. The theory presumes, on the one hand that the soul is not eternal and on the other hand proves

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} A. Boyce Gibson - The Philosophy of Descartes Page. 124.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Descartes.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Descartes' firm conviction is that "God's existence is absolutely necessary as the self stands in need of perpetual repair."

This theory lands Descartes in another difficulty. Descartes has no choice but to believe in two contradictory theories, viz., the identity of self as a unit, which is implied in his 'Cogito ergo sum', and self as it exists, from moment to moment. It seems difficult to reconcile these two contradictory views, although Descartes has tenaciously held both. Moreover, the theory of Continuous Creation presupposes perpetual intervention of God in preserving the life of an individual. This total dependence of man on the mercy of God, tends to produce in him lack of self-confidence and to reduce his determination to live by his own efforts and exertions.

Both the proofs seem to suffer from the fallacy of arguing in a circle. In the first proof, Descartes asserts that God has implanted innate ideas in his mind. It is then by the help of the innate ideas that he claims to prove the existence of God. Similarly, when Descartes says that God creates the self, how can he derive the proof of the existence of God from the existence of self.

1. Meditation III.
The third proof of the existence of God, as expounded in Meditation V, is known as the Ontological proof. This proof has a history behind it.

St. Anselm (1033-1109) is supposed to be its originator. He puts it thus

"We define God as the greatest possible object of thought. Now, if an object of thought does not exist, another exactly like it which does exist is greater. Therefore the greatest of all objects of thought must exist, since otherwise another, still greater, would be possible. Therefore God exists."

Descartes has made no mention of the name of St. Anselm when he used an argument quite similar to his. Descartes' argument is slightly different from that of St. Anselm. Descartes does not, in the manner of Anselm, regard the ontological argument as an independent self-sufficient argument. Even if the idea of God be an essence, and, as such, justify certain conclusions, these conclusions could not have been considered valid unless it has been proved that the idea is divinely conditioned. As to this, Descartes is quite clear. He says,

1. From B. Russell - A History of Western Philosophy-Page 417.
"The consideration of the efficient cause is the first and principal means of proving the existence of God."

As he has a firm belief in Mathematics, he starts with the idea of a triangle. As it is in the nature of its essence, the sum of the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. The triangle may not exist, but its essence is an innate idea. Not so in the case of God. As the nature of God is all-perfection and existence is a kind of perfection, it is conclusively proved that essence and existence in the case of God are Co-existent. It is not necessary that we should constantly have the idea of God in our minds, but it is absolutely necessary that we should have the idea of His existence as soon as we think of his perfections or His essence. Descartes is fully convinced of the truth of this proposition when he says, "Is there anything more evident than that there is a God, that is to say, a sovereign Being, and that of all beings He alone has existence as appertaining to His essence."

Descartes himself does not seem to be quite satisfied with this type of argument, unless he makes certain exceptions in the case of God. He remarks that his thought imposes no necessity on things.

1. Vide reply to Objection IV.
2. Meditation V.
3. Descartes.
There may be a connection between the thought of essence and the thought of existence, but there seems to be no connection between the thought of essence and the actual existence of God. We may imagine an island in the sea possessing all the features of an island, but the island may not exist in actuality, although its existence may be imagined. He meets the objection by the argument that in the privileged case of God, the mere fact that I conceive Him as existing it follows that existence is inseparable from Him and therefore that He truly exists.

Kant has severely criticised the ontological proof on the grounds that existence cannot be inferred from the idea of essence. If one imagines that he has three hundred pounds in his pocket, it does not mean that this money is actually present there.

The ontological proof does not suffer from the fallacy of Petitio principii or arguing in a circle. In the opinion of Gibson, it is a trump card in the hands of Descartes to prove the existence of God. "The essence of God in us is a revelation of God Himself. 'Thou wouldst not seek Me, if thou hadst not found Me.'" The ontological argument satisfies the religious demand of the devotees of

1. Descartes.
God. Gibson says,

"In worship we require a God, in moral action, a moral standard, in thinking a criterion of truth." We believe in the existence of God and we need no proof of it, because His very essence implies all moral principles, all criteria of truth, and all-perfection.

Descartes has given these proofs to establish the existence of God, which has been the greatest mystery of all times. It is very difficult to say that Descartes has been successful in his attempt. His arguments, as we have seen, have been criticised by different philosophers. Here, we may point out, with all humility, that it is not easy to prove or to disprove the existence of God by reason alone. Arguments and counter-arguments can be advanced from either side and there shall be no end to the controversy.

Now, of the two substances created by God, one, viz. matter, has already been discussed briefly when we described the nature of external things. The other created substance is the soul which has so much importance in Descartes' philosophy. We are anxious to know what it is and also whether we can prove its existence.
(a) The Nature of Souls:

In Descartes, as we have seen above, God is the creator of both mind and matter. Souls have been created by God. We have to study their nature and to give proofs of their existence.

It is not only interesting, but also extremely necessary, that we should have a glimpse into the conception of soul as held by western thinkers before Descartes. It may be presumed that Descartes, who had deeply studied classical and mediaeval philosophy, might have been influenced by the views of the previous thinkers.

Among the early Greeks, the soul was the moving force. The whole world was full of souls. They were the parts of the world-soul. "According to Plato, the souls of men came to them at birth from elsewhere, having existed ever since the creation."

The conception of the soul as held by the theologians of the mediaeval ages may be gathered from the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas.

1. B. Russell - A History of Western Philosophy - Page 327.
St. Augustine says that man is a union of soul and body. He distinguishes the soul from the body, as being immaterial, while body is the material substance. He rejects the doctrine of souls' pre-existence, but he does not seem to have said anything definite as to how the soul was created. In his days, two doctrines regarding the creation of souls were prevalent among the christians. One was that God creates a new soul for every child that is born, the other was that souls of children were born out of the souls of their parents at birth. St. Augustine could not take decision as to which view was correct. He believed that the soul has a beginning, but it is immortal. St. Thomas. Aquinas held that a new soul is created for every child that is born. It is united with the body as soon as the body is fit to be united with the soul. The soul is immortal.

We are now in a position to form an idea as to what Plato thought about the souls as also what the christian theologians said on this subject. Descartes does not seem to have substantially subscribed to any of these views. He has discovered the soul by self-realization. He has not found it in books, nor in fables, but by his own thinking. His discovery is "cogito ergo sum."

By the process of doubting he comes to this conclusion. He asks,
"Is there not something of which one cannot have the slightest doubts? I have already denied the senses and body. But am I so dependent on body and senses that I cannot exist without these? Not at all, of a surety. I myself did exist since I persuaded myself of something."

We note how he is gradually proceeding to distinguish between mind and body, soul being the thinking substance. And all this through his personal experience. By his presence, says Paul Valery, in the prelude to his philosophy, he has given it a personal touch. It is the use of the "I" and the "me" and the sound of his human voice which is in sharpest contrast to what we read in Plato and Aristotle or hear even today from the pulpit. Descartes' conception of the soul has a touch of reality in it. It is neither a repetition of what the great thinkers of ancient Greece said about soul nor is it based on Christian theology.

He again asks, "But what am I? The things which pertain to the body, such as walking, are not the attributes of soul. So I find that thought is an attribute which belongs to me. It alone cannot be separated from me. I am not more than a thing which thinks, that is to say, a mind or a soul,

1. Descartes - Meditation II
2. Paul Valery - The Living Thoughts of Descartes.
or an understanding, or a reason, which are terms whose significance was formerly unknown to me.

Descartes distinguishes very clearly the attributes which pertain to the body, such as walking, nourishment, sensation etc. from those which pertain to the soul. He says emphatically,

"If it is so that I have no body, it is also true that I can neither walk nor take nourishment. What, then, of thinking?—-It may be that if I ceased to think, I should likewise cease to exist."

Overjoyed at the discovery which he made in the realm of metaphysics, Descartes asks the same question again "But what then am I"? In answering this question he summarises some more of the attributes of soul. He says, "I am a thing which thinks. It is a thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels."

This is most assuredly, Descartes' conception of the soul. Soul, therefore, according to Descartes, is a substance which thinks and doubts, judges, reasons, feels and wills.

2. Ibid Pages 151-52
3. Ibid.
The question now arises as to how soul comes into being. Descartes says that "the human mind does not come by traduction, but is created by God." Descartes has said nothing concerning the time of its creation, since the soul can exist without the body. It is, however, clear that the soul does not arise by traduction, for it would then have a place only in things already created.

Descartes has a curious notion about the place in the body where the soul resides. He says, "The soul resides in the pineal gland from where it performs all its functions!" The gland is in the middle of the brain. The advantage of this position of the gland is that the impressions of the objects which we see, hear and smell, unite in the gland, "instead of remaining as the impressions apart from each other," and are perceived as one.

Descartes also believes that the soul does not die with the body. The soul does not change although the body changes. He says in the synopsis of his meditations,

"For although all the accidents of mind be changed, although, for instance, it think certain things, will others,

2. Descartes' Passions of the soul - First Part - Art XXXI - Page 345.
perceive others, etc., despite all this it does not emerge from these changes another mind. the human body, on the other hand, becomes a different thing." It may be inferred from this that human body is perishable, but the soul, which is the thinking substance is immortal.

Descartes has been reported as saying, "It follows that we are compelled to believe from the laws of nature that the soul is immortal. But God who has created soul can also destroy it."

His conviction about the immortality of the soul was based on religious grounds, too. He says, "It is quite enough for us, faithful ones, to accept by means of faith the fact that the human soul does not perish with the body."

Descartes believes in individual minds. They do not emanate from God nor do they merge in God. They are not parts of the world soul as some Greek thinkers believed them to be.

So we find that Descartes' ideas about the human soul are not the faint echoes from the metaphysics of Plato.

1. Descartes' works - (H. & R's translation) Synopsis of the six following meditations - Page 141.

2. B. De Spinoza- "The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy" (Translated from Latin by Halbert Hains Britain - Chicago) Page 171.

3. From a letter to the Dean and Doctors of the sacred faculty of theology in Paris.
and Aristotle, nor are they blindly based on Christian theology. He has tried to justify his religious convictions on the basis of laws of nature. He has cleared his position on this point when he says,

"From all this we conclude with certainty that God has revealed His immutable will concerning man's immortality not only by revelation, but also by natural reason. God does not act contrary to, but above, nature, and God is its author."

After studying the nature of soul, as given by Descartes, we shall now try to find out what proofs, if any, he has given of the existence of soul.

(b) Proofs of the Existence of Soul:

"The problem of the self is one of the most persistent as one of the most difficult problems of philosophy. The permanent interest, which attaches to it, arises from the fact that there is nothing so dear to a man as the self."

The self seems to be the culminating point of all human desires, ambitions, aims and ideals. In ordinary

1. B. De. Spinoza- "The Principles of Descartes' Philosophy" (Translated from Latin by Halbert Hains Britain- Chicago-Page 172.

2. V.R. Shrikhande in his essay, "On the nature of the Soul," read at the Indian Philosophical Congress at Calcutta in 1926.
thinking, the distinction between the self and not-self is drawn between consciousness and matter. Says Shrikhande, "The line between the self and not-self is generally drawn at the surface of the body, though sometimes we talk and behave as if our property, family, reputation and other things are parts of our selves." All this is in the nature of uncritical thinking. Only consciousness, taken apart from all objects, is the essential nature of the self. This experience of the self as the conscious subject or as consciousness is involved in all our conscious life.

The problem of Descartes — rather the most important problem of his life — seems to be how to prove that there is a soul in us. Thinkers before him tried to prove the existence of soul by its functions in the body, by its very nature that we seem to perceive in our every day life.

Aristotle defines 'psyche' (or soul) as the principle of life in virtue of which the living beings perform the characteristic functions which distinguish them from non-living things. Body and soul are the two correlative terms by which we explain or formulate the characteristic mode of a person's existence. To know what soul is, and

1. V.R. Shrikhande in his essay, "On the nature of the Soul," (read at the Indian Philosophical Congress at Calcutta in 1926.)
also whether it exists, we have only to conceive the notion of a human being who is dead or who has no soul in him. We cannot identify the soul with the body, because the body is only the substratum of the person's existence in the world, whereas his soul is the force or potentiality that resides in his body and explains all his activities.

Soul resides only in the body meant for it and each body is the dwelling place or 'seed-plot' of such and such a soul. We may ask ourselves if it is possible for any one of us to question the existence of a soul in one's body.

We, therefore, conclude that, according to our experience, the chief characteristics of a soul are its unity of conscious experiences, integrity and individuality. That the mind or self does exist as such a system, a system of memories and associations, perceptions and prejudices, desires and ambitions, hopes and illusions - is a fact of which each one of us seems to be conscious. All this relates to our daily experience, and it seems to be a positive proof that the soul exists in the living body. When a man is dead, the negative proof of the soul's existence is that all experiences, feelings and aspirations terminate, all signs of consciousness depart.

This is the empirical proof of soul's existence which has been given by philosophers and ordinary men alike.
Mechanism breaks down utterly when it tries to explain human behaviour solely on the basis of reflexes. Without mind or soul, all of us will behave like automata. Our feelings for one another, our hopes and aspirations, convictions and ideals, moral sense and all the charms of life, will disappear, if we were reduced to machines. In everyday life we have instances where mind plays an important part. In deciding a complicated case, a judge will have to use reason and discretion at every step. He will not be governed by the physical laws.

But by far the most important argument which Descartes advances to prove the existence of the soul, is couched in his well-known dictum, 'Cogito ergo sum'. It is a dictum which originated from his methodic doubt. We find the beginning of this idea in Regulae III where it receives mention as being one of the many indubitable truths.

The uniqueness of Cogito ergo sum consists in being our sole, primary, certainty in respect of real existence. Its fruitfulness lies in determining the true nature of the self in its distinction from the body.

It has enabled him to define more correctly than has hitherto been done, the nature of the soul in its distinction from all that is corporeal. Previously, he wrongly identified the self with the body and its parts.

1. Kemp Smith.
The growth of the idea of soul in Descartes can be traced in his own writings. Prof. Kemp Smith has quoted a passage from Descartes' works in his own book which runs as follows:

"But what the soul might be, I did not stop to consider or, if I did, I imagined as being something extremely rare and subtle, like a wind, a flame or ether and as diffused throughout my grosser parts."

Now 'Cogito ergo sum' has made him aware of the existence of the soul. We find in his own writings an appreciation of the usefulness of this principle of self-realisation. Says he,

"By the light of this torch, I see more accurately in myself what is not visible to the eyes. I can affirm that as soon as I commenced to doubt, I commenced to know with certainty. My doubts related to the things outside me, my certainty concerned me and my doubt."

It is impossible to give a logical proof of the existence of soul. Whatever we conclude, we infer from our


2. Recherche, A.T V Pages 513 -25, also Holland & Ross Pages 319-25 Quoted by N. Kemp Smith, Page. 283.
daily experiences or from what Descartes says from self-realisation.

Prof. Gibson arrives at the same conclusion when he says,

"The real self is not fully known, but its recognised attributes are sufficient to inform me that it is a substance."

Really speaking, Descartes was so much convinced of the existence of soul or mind that he hardly took care to prove its existence. It became for him a self-evident truth—a truth which needs no proof. He was perhaps aware of the fact that human soul or mind is indeed the basis of all thinking and reasoning. It is a thing which proves, not that which is proved. It is the foundation stone of all philosophy, the starting point in Logic.

Not only that. According to Descartes, soul is not merely a thinking substance. It also feels and sometimes in such a way that its effect is visible on one’s face or in other parts of the body. It is this feature of the soul which we are going to study next.

(c) The Psychology of Emotions:—

"In the widest sense, emotion applies to all
affective phenomena, including the familiar "passions" of love, anger, fear, etc., as well as the feelings of pleasure and pain."

This dictionary definition has to be explained in the light of our daily experience and psychological knowledge. The word 'emotion' has been derived from the Latin root, movere, which means to 'move,' 'stir up,' 'agitate,' while the prefix 'e' stands for 'out' or 'forth.'

In common parlance emotion is a sudden feeling which stirs up the affective aspect of the mind with, sometimes, visible signs of feeling on the face or some other part of the body. We can have a general idea of what we mean by emotions by making a list of words which we use when one is in an emotional condition. We use such words as 'wonder,' 'fear,' 'joy,' 'sorrow,' 'love,' 'hatred,' 'terror,' 'remorse,' etc. What is the nature of experience we have when we use such words or visualise the situation in which they are used? Truly speaking, each one of these words stirs up the mind and has sudden effect on the body. An example will make this point clear. A person sees a snake in the grass. He will have the feeling of fear in the first instance. There will then be an impulse to run away. He may scream, turn pale or even fall down senseless. The cumulative effect on mind and body

of such an experience will be said to be that of the emotion of fear. Emotive situations are first perceived, then under stress of excitement they cause internal bodily changes and perceptible changes in outward behaviour. All these changes, both mental and bodily, produce a feeling complex under which the person so affected, seeks to adjust himself to the emotive situation. Descartes has very pithily said the same thing in the following words.

"We must consequently consider that what in the soul is a passion, is in the body, commonly speaking, an action."

Descartes has given examples of the movements of the body under the influence of emotions. It is not necessary that all persons will behave in the same way under an emotive situation. The sudden sight of a mad dog may cause fear in some people and they may try to run away but there may be some persons who will face the situation bravely and drive away the dog. "But the strength of the soul does not suffice without the knowledge of the truth," inspiring self-confidence in the person experiencing the situation.

1. The Passions of the soul - Part I Art II Page 332.
2. Ibid Art XLIX Page. 355.
Descartes tries to explain the causes of the passions. With the rudimentary knowledge of physiology which he possessed, he says that, "The ultimate and most proximate cause of the passions of the soul is none other than the agitation with which the spirits move the little gland which is in the middle of the brain." He explains that emotions are sometimes caused by the action of the soul or the temperament of the body in some situation causing sudden feeling.

Descartes now considers some of the important "Passions of the soul."

In the chapter dealing with the order and enumeration of the Passions, under Art L III, Descartes has mentioned six primitive passions which he calls emotions. They are wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness. Other passions are composed of these six. He describes each emotion in detail. "Wonder is a sudden surprise of the soul which causes it to apply itself to consider with attention the objects which seem to it rare." It is a passion in which there is no change in heart or blood. Its excess becomes a matter of habit when we fail to check and correct it. Curiosity causes wonder. Curiosity may be of the right type, such as knowing the mysteries of nature in which case it will

1. The Passions of the soul - Part II Art L I Page 357.
2. Ibid Part II Art LIII Page 358.
add to our knowledge. If a person is inquisitive to know the contents of any other man’s letter or peeps through the keyhole in the door, his curiosity is not desirable.

Love and hate are the two passions which are of an opposite nature and have been considered together. "Love is an emotion of the soul caused by the movement of the spirits which incite it to join itself willingly to objects which appear to it to be agreeable." "Hatred is an emotion caused by the spirits which incite the soul to desire it to be separated from the objects which present themselves to it as harmful."

As regards love, Descartes has enumerated certain subsidiary passions which are akin to it, such as simple affection, friendship and devotion.

He further comments that there are not as many kinds of hatred as of love. Love gives us delight, hatred, revulsion.

Desire is the passion which is "an agitation of the soul caused by the spirits which want to have agreeable things." It is a passion which has no opposites. We may distinguish desire into as many different species as there are different objects sought after.

1. The Passions of the Soul - LXXIX Page 366.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. Art LXXXVI - Page 369.
"Joy is an agreeable emotion of the soul in which consists the enjoyment that the soul possesses in the good which the impressions of the brain represent to it as its own." The enjoyment of good consists in joy.

"Sadness is a disagreeable languor in which there is discomfort and unrest which the soul receives from evil or from the defect which the impressions of the brain set before it as pertaining to it." These passions are excited by things, good and evil, which only concern the body.

Descartes also describes in what pleasurable stimulation consists and what connotes pain.

Leaving wonder, the five preceding passions are due to the "movements of the blood and the spirit". The effect of the emotions is visible on the face. Eyes are the windows of the soul. Their action as well as the colour of the face and facial expressions are the indications of the emotions of a man. Joy causes us to flush, sadness causes paleness. Sudden emotions cause tremors. Tears are of joy as well as of sorrow. Descartes also explains how children often become pale instead of crying and how and why people sigh in emotions.

1. The Passions of the Soul - Art X C I Page 372.
2. Ibid - Art X C II. Page 372.
Besides these six "primitive passions", which Descartes calls the general, he mentions some "particular passions" also which we may, for want of a better word, call subsidiary passions. They are Esteem and Disdain, Generosity, Humility, pride, generation, hope and fear, confidence and despair, jealousy, bravery, cowardice etc. It seems to be a long list of the secondary type of emotions.

Descartes comments on the purposes which emotions serve and the harm which they do. The utility of the emotions lies in producing good feelings and agreeable 'passions' which may provide a motive force for good actions and proper behaviour. All the harm which emotions can do is to excite the feelings so as to make one blind to reason.

Descartes prescribes the exercise of virtue as a sovereign remedy against the passions.

We have studied in the present chapter some of the important topics of Descartes' philosophy, viz. World, God and soul. It seems to be necessary that we trace how these three substances are related to each other.
(D) THE MECHANISM OF NATURE IN RELATION TO THE FREEDOM OF
GOD AND THE HUMAN SOUL:

(1) The relation between God and the world:

In different countries and at different times, the conception of God and His relation with the world has generally varied.

Philo (30 B.C. to 50 A.D.), a Jew of Alexandria, tried to reconcile his own religion with the Greek philosophy. For him, there was God who was so pure and so far above everything that He could not come into contact with matter and that there were certain spirits which radiated from God and acted as inter-mediiaries between God and matter and helped Him in the creation of the world. Plotinus, who was born in Egypt in the 3rd century of the Christian era, believed that "out of a pure God flow beings or emanations, as a stream might flow from an inexhaustible source or as light flows from the sun without effecting the sun." Some early Christian thinkers, called the 'Apologetists', taught that, like a silver lining in the clouds, there gleams through matter the light of God who is eternal and immutable. This God is the First cause of everything in the universe.

St. Augustine, who lived in the fourth century A.D. based his convictions in this matter on Christian

1. Plotinus (Quoted by S.E. Frost- Ideas of the Great Philosophers - Pages 16-17).
theology. He preached that God created matter out of nothing and then created everything in the universe. John Scotus Erigena, an Irish Churchman, who lived in the middle of the 9th century A.D., taught that God and the universe are one. All things emanate from Him, exist by His will and ultimately return to Him. The world "is only a partial unfolding of divine nature, and there is infinitely more in God than is expressed in nature. Just as one light can be seen and one voice heard without diminution of the light or sound, so all things share in God's existence, without affecting His Greatness".

Descartes seems to have been greatly influenced by Christian theology. He held that there is only one substance which is uncreated and which he calls God. There are two other substances, namely, mind and body, which are created substances.

Body in Descartes represents matter, and out of matter the objects of the world are created. Creation, as has already been pointed out, is a continuous process. So the world is ever-changing. The relation between God and the world, therefore, is quite clear from the very fact that God created the world and has also been preserving it by His

never-ceasing act of creation. We should not imagine that whatever He has created is the final limit of His creation. "Two things," says Descartes, "are to be observed," in order that we may philosophise correctly in this matter. The first is that we must ever keep before our minds the infinitude of the power and goodness of God. The second is that we should not fear to fall into error by imagining His works to be too great, too beautiful and too perfect.

Descartes starts with the presumption that our comprehension is of a limited nature, and the power of creation of God is infinite. Humility teaches us that in talking about God's creation we should never claim to have certainty of knowledge. Secondly, it will be highly presumptuous to comment on the purposes of God in creating this world. Man's gratitude to God may lead him to think that "there is nothing created from which we cannot derive some use." Descartes says that "such a supposition would be certainly ridiculous in reference to questions of Physics." He fully clarifies his viewpoint when he says that "an infinitude of things exist, or did exist, though now they have ceased to exist, which have never been beheld or comprehended by man and which have never been of any use to him!"

2. Descartes - The Visible world - Principle I P. 270.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
We can imagine, with Thomas Gray, that there are gems in the depth of the ocean and flowers blooming in the desert air, which have been of no use to man. And yet they are parts of His creation - objects of this world -which He has not created in vain, though they may not serve the purposes of man. Being a keen student of science, Descartes did not ignore the laws of physics or of other branches of science. Commenting on the views of Descartes regarding the part which nature plays in God’s creation, Prof. Kemp Smith says, "God does not ordinarily choose to operate in His own person, to the displacement of nature, where nature, if not interfered with, would itself suffice." Continues the learned Professor, "Nature, if not interfered with, would itself suffice, under the over-all supervision of the supreme power of God. Has He not decreed the seasons that the fruits of the Earth may ripen and be harvested." If the contention of the Professor is conceded, we may give due place to the laws of nature. God has so created them that they seem to function independently. They can restore order from chaos and confusion.

Motion, in Descartes, explains the working of the cosmos. Motion causes bodies to pass from one place to

1. Thomas Gray - From his Elegy written in a country churchyard.

another. Motion in the universe is constant. In the beginning of creation, God gave the world a certain definite amount of motion, which remains the same in the Universe and cannot be destroyed. If one object slows up, another must move faster. All changes take place according to laws of nature.

Belief in the existence of the world is based on the belief in God. "All things," says Descartes, "which I apprehend clearly and distinctly can be created by God as I apprehend them." It is therefore of a great advantage to him that he can apprehend them apart from one another clearly and distinctly. Descartes is fully conscious of the fact that it is by the omnipotence of God, "that differentiation in matter has taken place, leading to the formation of separate objects in the world. Descartes observes this in the world but he cannot explain by what power other than that of God this separation is made.

We may conclude from what has been said above that the relation between God and the world is that of the creator and a created substance. One who creates can add to, or take away from what He has created — nay, He may even destroy it altogether. Such is the power of God in relation to the world we live in. Descartes' dualism did not appeal to

1. Meditation VI Page 190.
2. Ibid.
Spinoza. He declared that there is only one substance, namely, God. Mind and matter are its attributes. The relation between God and the world has been completely changed from what Descartes thought about it. In the case of Spinoza, says Prof. Frost, "Body and mind represent the two sides of the shield. If it is seen in one way, it is body, if seen from another position, it is mind. All objects of the world are parts of God, nay, they all are God. Everywhere in the universe we find body and soul together. There is nobody without mind, and no mind without body." This is no doubt an extreme view about the world which has been identified with God.

(ii) The Relation between God and Souls:

The discussion of the relation between God and world brings us, naturally, to the relation between God and souls. All discussion of the present topic is primarily based on Descartes' conviction that God is the creator of souls as He is of bodies. If God has created souls, Descartes argues, He also preserves them. He says in the synopsis of the six following meditations:

"All things which cannot exist without being created by God———-I can never cease to exist unless God reduces them to nought........"
From this standpoint he traces the relation between God and souls.

Our discussion of this relation requires at least some knowledge of the background of Descartes' thought. As Descartes was steeped in Greek philosophy, being a keen student of Plato and Aristotle, it is highly probable that he was influenced by their metaphysics. On the other hand, he was a devout Roman Catholic and as such he could not escape the inspirations of his own religion.

Let us now see which of these influences inspired Descartes to establish his own views about the relation of God and souls.

Most of the Greek thinkers thought that all nature is alive and that man also has a soul. Plato, however, believed that Demiurge has created the souls of all the planets and also all individual souls. These individual immortal souls are eternal, having existed even before they came into the bodies.

Aristotle taught that soul is to be found wherever there is life. Soul is throughout nature. The lowest is the 'plant' soul and the highest is the 'human' soul. The soul of man has the power to reason. Reason is of two kinds, passive and active. The passive reason is the matter part of
the soul, and will perish with the body, when the man is dead, but the creative reason is a part of God which will return to God.

According to Plotinus, a neo-Platonist, the human soul is a part of the world soul. At first this human soul lives in the kingdom of God, where it sees the pure 'world' soul and draws inspiration from it, but when it turns towards matter, it is debased and defiled. As soon as it frees itself from matter, it returns to God and thereby it realises its true worth.

Thomas Aquinas gave to Descartes a purely christian point of view. According to it, the human soul is the vital part of the body and is added to it at birth. The soul does not depend on the body for its existence, but continues to act even after the body has perished. Soul is eternal and lives in a spiritual body throughout eternity.

This view about the soul - its origin from God and immortality by His will and concurrence its final absorption into the spiritual body of God - was the pattern which the orthodox Catholic Christianity accepted and based its belief on it.

Rene Descartes propounded the theory that soul is a single principle which expresses itself in all sorts of
feelings and emotions, actions and determinations, thinking and reasoning. This soul is the creation of God. As Descartes has nowhere said that all souls which are ever to come into existence have been created all at once by the power and grace of God, it may be inferred that Descartes has followed the traditional Christian belief that new souls are created to dwell in bodies of men newly born. Souls are immortal and are not affected by the death or disintegration of the body.

We have seen that Descartes has all along maintained that thinking is an attribute of the soul. His firm conviction is that there are some ideas in our minds which are clear and distinct. They enrich the souls of men and give them a vision and an understanding by which they perceive, feel and act. Much has been said by Locke against the existence of such ideas in our minds, but, according to Descartes, the naked truth remains that they form the basis of our intuitive knowledge. It seems to be the purpose of God that the human mind may function with the help of innate ideas. The innate ideas are given to the souls of men, so that they may understand the real nature of things, and act accordingly. It may be remembered here that the innate ideas are in the nature of eternal truths, such as the axioms in Geometry or the belief in the existence of God.
God's relations with human souls are not of a dictatorial nature. He has given them liberty to think and to act. In our daily life there are many occasions when we use our own discretion, and there is no interference from the side of God. It is probably about such matters that Descartes has given his views in the following extract:

"Is there not some God, or some other being, by whatever name we call it, who puts these reflections into my mind? That is not necessary, for is it not possible that I am myself capable of producing them? I myself, am I not at least some thing?"

Such is the intimate relation between God and the souls of men that by His divine grace, He has given freedom of the will which may be reconciled to the supreme will of God. We shall have smooth sailing in this world, if we only recollect that our thought is finite and that we are likely to make mistakes, if we judge and act on the basis of hazy ideas. We know that God has the power of detecting our shortcomings and failures, but we do not know to what extent. He has given us freedom to exercise our will.

1. Meditation II page 150.
So closely related are our souls to God that by self-realization we can prove the existence of God. Descartes, therefore, seems to have come to the conclusion that as his soul is a thinking substance he can always realize the perfection of God, and thus feel that there is un-breakable relation between God and the souls of men.

It seems that Descartes inspired even Spinoza who tries to establish a new kind of relation between God and souls. Spinoza said that the soul of man is an attribute of God. The close relationship between God and souls of men is apparent from this assumption of Spinoza.

Thus we find that God and souls are intimately related in Descartes' philosophy. Souls, in a way, depend on God, even for their existence, and God gives them those innate principles which form the very foundation of human knowledge.

So, we can maintain that Cartesian soul loses all its significance without the presumption of universal spirit or God who creates and sustains it. We may or may not agree with Descartes about souls and their relations with God, but the fact remains that the establishment of such a relationship between God and souls indicates a close affinity between traditional Christian thought and Descartes' philosophy.
(iii) The Relation between World and Souls:

It has already been stated that God has created two substances, namely, soul and body. We have, in this chapter, already discussed the relation of God with these two substances, separately. Now, we have to see how these two created substances are related to each other.

It cannot be denied that body has extension as its attribute. Other objects of the world also are material and, so have extension. It may, therefore, be presumed that they are not, in this respect, ultimately different from body.

We know how body and soul are intimately related to each other; man's body is the tenement of his soul. The soul resides in the body not as a pilot, who guides the ship, but as a conscious substance which permeates and saturates every atom of his body. In our everyday life, we come across occurrences when we are rudely reminded of the close relationship between mind and body. A blow on the nose makes one unconscious, while a severe mental shock may cause paralysis. There seems to be a causal relation between what happens to the mind or body, and the effect produced on the other substance.
Descartes was guided by his personal experience that there could not be a divorce between mind and body. The soul does not merely guide the body, but with its presence in it makes it function like a living being.

Descartes has propounded the theory of interactionism to establish the closest possible relation between these two opposite substances. He explains that "the soul has its principal seat in the 'pineal gland' which exists in the middle of the brain from whence it radiates forth through all the remainder of his body by means of the animal spirits, nerves and even the blood." So the soul of man is related to his body. If a person's shoe pinches his foot, he says without hesitation that it pinches him. He never cares to distinguish between his 'self' and a part of his body, namely, the foot.

From the body, Descartes proceeds to the consideration of objects which he perceives around him. He has innate ideas of these objects in his mind. The images of these objects cause modifications in the sense-organs which send impulses to the brain and the motor actions start. The soul of man thus comes in contact with the objects of the world.

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2. Descartes - Passions of the soul - Art XXIV, Page 347.
William James, while discussing the function of 'self' in one's life, has remarked that the conception of 'I' is the first notion which underlies all subject-object relations. In his "Talks to Teachers", he has given a vivid description of how a child is bewildered when it is born and notices for the first time the booming, buzzing world, around it. Gradually, is developed in it the conception of self-hood, which is the basis of all relations with the external world. It begins to feel that it has a body which is its own, and is different from the bodies of other people with whom he comes in contact. It begins to recognise that it has a mother who looks after it and that it has a father and other relations who treat it with affection. Gradually, the feeling of self-hood becomes a matter of its daily life. It has an attachment with its toys and tinsels, with its milk-bottle, with the people that come to feed it and also with its clothes, bed and cradle. This is how the soul of a normal child feels the warmth of affection from the other people since it is born into this world, and also begins to have the feeling of ownership of what is near it.

Not only that. It is also interested in the various objects of nature. "The meadow, the grove and the stream" appear to it "apparelled in celestial dream." The

1. William James.
2. Wordsworth - Ode to Immortality.
different sights and sounds attract its notice and it begins to attach some meaning to them.

By and by, the child grows into a man, and his relation with the outside world widens. He now tries to explain the mysteries of nature. His thoughts are centred on the external things which he perceives and he tries to understand them. Descartes realises this when he says,

"Our senses manifest many things to us, e.g., colours, odours, sounds, etc. If I were to pass over these in silence, I might be thought to have left out an important part of the explanation of the natural phenomena."

Thereafter he gives a long list of objects, under the headings "the Visible World" and "the Earth," in Parts III and IV of the Principles of Philosophy. In Part III, Descartes deals generally with heavenly bodies, such as the sun, the moon, the stars and planets. In Part IV, he gives a graphic description of the regions into which the earth has been divided by him. He has also mentioned the three elements which constitute the world, namely 'air,' 'fire' and 'earth,' and also the laws of gravitation and other laws of nature.

1. Descartes - A selection from Principles of Philosophy - Part IV - The Earth (Translated from French by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach) - Page 229.


3. Ibid Part IV, Pages 280-88.
In his book, 'La Monde', Descartes has discussed some of these laws of nature in detail. It is obvious that his discussions could not cover all aspects of nature, but he tries to view things in their right perspective. How vividly has Descartes described his method of approach. "Just as a painter," he observes, "can-not represent equally well, on a plain surface, all the various sides of a solid body, but can only represent prominently what is in the light from some angle of vision, in the same way, he would focus his attention on the salient aspects of nature." He describes in that book all those objects of nature with which the souls of men are vitally concerned and are closely related. He has also dealt with certain sciences relating to the human body, such as physiology and anatomy, because "man is the spectator of all.

Descartes is so sure of the working of the laws of nature, that "if God had created other worlds, he could not have created any in which these laws would fail to be observed. Descartes is quite sure that there is matter enough constituting the chaos with which our earth is surrounded that new worlds may be created out of it. He has described the various phenomena such as the tides, the winds, the ocean currents, etc. He has also explained how the moon causes tides in the sea, by flux and reflux of its waters.

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Descartes has covered almost all aspects of nature with which the souls of men can ever be concerned. Besides describing the products of the fields and the mines, he has discussed how all bodies called mixed and composite may arise.

Later on, he shows how light and heat transform the objects of the universe. Heat produces fire, burns all objects to ashes from which again new objects are formed, such as glass.

Descartes, in this long description of the formation of the world out of matter, has not lost sight of the fact that man also is a part of nature. In 'la Homme', the second part of his book 'la Monde', he has dealt with topics pertaining to man and his life on this earth.

The question now arises why has God created the universe and so many objects in it? What is the place of man in this universe? These questions have been answered in various ways by the thinkers of all times and countries. Many centuries ago, a Hebrew Psalmist is reported to have thus addressed God,-

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him?"
The answer he gave to this question is significant and has a direct bearing on the present topic. His remark reveals a high opinion of man's dignity and his important place in God's creation. He is reported to have said that God has made men but little lower than Himself and crowned them with glory and honour. He has made them to have dominion over the work of God who put all things under his feet. He is the crowning creation of God and the world is made for him. The entire world is an arena in which he struggles for his existence, and with each victory which he has, he becomes, to that extent, the master of the world.

Descartes, however, has rather a slightly different point of view regarding the creation of all things for the use of man, says he -

"It is yet not at all probable that all things have been created for us in such a manner that God has had no other end in creating them." Descartes all along has held the opinion that we should not try to understand the purposes of God's creation because He has not admitted us into His counsels as friends or advisors.

2. Frost - From his Ideas of the Great Philosophers.
From the scheme which Descartes has followed in propounding his speculative thoughts, it appears, beyond the shadow of doubt, that he visualised intimate relations between the world and souls of men. Religious philosophers have tried to construct a universe which has moral values for man. Scientific philosophers "take the universe as they find it in the laboratory". They see nothing in it but scientific laws which govern both men and nature alike. It is to the credit of Descartes that he has shown that the souls of men are a part of nature and that they are vitally concerned with the manifold objects of the world.