As we stated in the 'Introduction', the main purpose of this dissertation is not to critically assess the doctrines either of Marcel's philosophy or the Descartes' philosophy. Instead, it is to make a limited attempt to establish a meaningful relationship between Marcel and Descartes; and, through them, between the Existentialist Philosophy and the Traditional Systematic Philosophy. Because, as we saw, each is responding constructively to the challenges of modern science against religion. And yet, they are so critical of and so antagonistic to each other that each thinks that the other is not - does not deserve the name of - philosophy. Hence, each directly or indirectly characterises the philosophical problem of the other in derogatory terms.

The more specific statement of this antagonism that we have considered in our thesis is that of Marcel's criticism of systematic philosophy. In the previous three chapters, we saw that, in order to consider the grounds of Marcel's criticisms of the systematic philosophy, (here, the
philosophy of Descartes), the former's account of the question, method and answer to a philosophical problem, according to himself and Descartes, provided us with the grounds of his denying that Descartes' kind of thinking is a genuine or relevant philosophical thinking. And this is partially, if not fully, explained by Marcel's claims that his understanding of the question, method and answer of a philosophical problem is concrete, personal and existential. As against this, Descartes' systematic philosophy's understanding of the question, method and answer of a philosophical problem is abstract, impersonal and non-existential. This could generally be expressed by saying that, according to Marcel, his own problem is a practical human problem, whereas Descartes' is a theoretical, logical problem. The sharpness of the distinction claimed by Marcel suggests that Descartes' theoretical problem has no practical aspect or that Marcel's practical problem has no theoretical basis.

But our discussion of Marcel's claims brought out that the distinction that are drawn by Marcel are not as sharp as he makes them out to be. In fact, the characterisation of practical and theoretical, concrete and abstract, personal and impersonal, existential and non-existential are applicable to both kinds of thought. In the case of
Descartes, when we consider the question, the method of dealing with the question and the answer without reference to the context in which the question has arisen, the approach is theoretical - abstract, impersonal and non-existent. But, if we consider the context which has given rise to the question and the discussion, it cannot be regarded as merely theoretical. The challenge of science and mathematics had raised doubts about religion, and therefore doubts about religious life. In so far as Descartes' thought has bearing on these doubts, it has its practical consequences.

In the case of Marcel, when we consider the question, the method of dealing with the question and the answer, the question is a concrete one - that of meeting a situation of mechanisation, etc., the method is concrete - that of approaching the problem in a particular way; the answer is concrete - it is the life of an individual. But, in this concrete process, theoretical considerations are present in two ways. One, this kind of thought involves making a distinction between one conception of man and another; and accepting one as true, and rejecting the other as false. For example, Marcel rejects the conception of man implicit in the life of the industrialised society, and accepts the conception where man is a being in the
world, who participates fully in the life of the world including that of other human beings. This involves theoretical considerations of the relationship between man and the world. Two, in working out responses to the concrete situation, one must distinguish between the different responses and their categories, e.g., is it a response of love or is it a response of self security, and so on. This kind of distinction is also of a theoretical nature, and helps us characterise different patterns of events.

This is not to say that, as we stated in our discussions, there is no difference between these two philosophers; for we did make an attempt to state as precisely as possible the agreements and differences between them. The difference between these two philosophies lies in the fact that the theoretical and practical aspects of each kind of thought are different from those of the other. Further, the inter-relationship between the theoretical and the practical aspects of each kind of thought is also different from that of the other.

In the case of Descartes, the theoretical part consists in the presentation of a system in which various concepts are or appear to be reconciled; and thus it guarantees the
validity of the concepts that are reconciled. This reconciliation or appearance of reconciliation is sought because there is apparently some conflict or disparity between concepts, e.g., in terms of certainty, other kinds of knowledge do not seem to come up to our knowledge of mathematics. In the case of Marcel, the problem is not so much reconciliation of concepts, as the presuppositions involved in certain ways of living which are the genuine, proper or authentic ways of living, e.g., the presupposition involved is that of being in the world or being in the situation, etc. There is another important difference in the theoretical part of the two approaches, but we shall look into it later, after considering the practical part of the two approaches.

What is the practical aspect of the Cartesian approach? The system has a bearing on the contemporary challenges to religious belief. It is a general kind of consequence. It gives direction to one's concrete behaviour by encouraging it or inhibiting it in a particular direction, it does not relate itself to a specific problem of a specific individual (though, if a specific problem of a specific individual had led to the theoretical inquiry, the direction might lead the individual to a certain solution of the specific problem). As against this, Marcel's practical
aspect is not a matter of giving a direction. Rather, it is a matter of a specific problem of a specific individual. For example, the existence of God is proved, if at all, as a response to the dynamic need for fullness felt by oneself with reference to one's own specific, concrete, personal and existential situations. It is not a matter of a general direction common to many or all. In fact, it must vary from individual to individual.

However, in the case of Descartes', as also in the case of Marcel's practical aspect, we must mention a qualification. Though we have said that Descartes' thought gives practical direction only in a general manner, the generality is not so general. There is scope for differences between individual and individual. That is why different individuals adopt different systems. Though we have said that the concrete aspect of Marcel is concerned with the specific problem of a specific individual, in the process of doing so, the general pattern of a concept is also brought into focus. And this general pattern is not personal.

Now we go on to consider the relationship between the two, the theoretical and the practical in the thought of Descartes and Marcel. In this respect, too, there is a difference between the two. In the case of Descartes,
the truth of his thought is independent of the direction which it gives to the practical aspect. The truth is a matter of the logical characteristics and relationships of the propositions - e.g., whether the existence of God is proved or not is a matter of the logical relationships between the idea of perfection and the idea of existence as a factor of perfection. In Marcel's case, the validity of the theoretical pattern is not a matter of the logical characteristics of the concepts used; rather the actual living practices give validity to the theoretical pattern.

If we are right in the foregoing account, (this, as we shall see later, is to stipulate too much), or even if the direction of our thinking is right, then the hostility shown by each school of thought against the other is not justified. It is wrong to accuse systematic thought of being concerned with empty abstract logic, and lack of human relevance, though it can easily degenerate into it. It is equally wrong to accuse existentialist thought of being woolly and lacking theoretical foundations and firmness, though it can easily degenerate into it. At their best, both deal with important problems. Only these problems are different. It is possible that one interested in one kind of problem may not be interested in another kind of problem. It may also be a matter of one's personal
or historical circumstances. At the time of Descartes, the challenge was of one kind; today, the challenge is perhaps of both kinds - one kind arising from linguistic analysis, and the other from the industrialised societies of today. It is not impossible that one might be interested in both these kinds of problems.

But the question may be asked, whether both kinds of problems can be accommodated within the realm of philosophy? How can that be done if their approaches are so different? Is not the nature of a discipline determined by its technique? And A.J. Ayer is echoing the same point when he writes: "It is by its methods rather than its subject-matter that philosophy is to be distinguished from other arts or sciences". To this one may give a twofold answer. One, as we saw, the theoretical questions considered by the two approaches are different. And yet, one can say that both are concerned with conceptual considerations and limits of concepts. For example, Descartes claims that one can know one's own existence with certainty. This claim is based on the consideration that thinking necessarily implies existence. In fact, the entire system is presented as a system of propositions which are necessary. This also in some way give us the structure or limits of concepts through the interrelations of the concepts within the system.

And Marcel's work also involves this; e.g., the limits of the concepts of different kinds of love. Two, this also is common to them, that they deal with certain challenges posed by situations and circumstances to man's understanding of himself. In the case of Descartes, the challenge is provided by the scientific and mathematical developments. In the case of Marcel, it is provided by the impact of technology on human life. These challenges thus take different forms and therefore evoke different answers.

However, it must be said that in order to make the foregoing points with definiteness and clarity, much more needs to be done than has been actually done. Many of the issues need to be pursued so as to clear up further doubts. Nonetheless, the argument has moved in the right direction with some reason and degree of plausibility. A structure of issues has been presented so as to enable one to pursue the controversy between the two approaches—systematic philosophy and existentialism. And the discussion of the issues, it is hoped, has opened up further areas of explanation for me as well as for others.