As we said earlier in the "Introduction", our objective is to consider Marcel's understanding of the nature of the philosophical problem according to himself and according to the systematic philosophers. This we shall do by considering the question, the method and the solution of a problem, both according to Marcel, and according to the systematic philosophers. In this chapter, we shall consider Marcel's understanding of the question of philosophy according to himself and according to the systematic philosophers.

It has been pointed out that, in order to consider the nature of the philosophical question, it is not enough to consider merely the formulation of the question. The formulation of the question can be the same; and yet the method of dealing with it and the kind of answer one gets could be very different. In such a case, though the questions are expressed in the same words, they are really different from each other. This has led to a certain ambiguity in the use of the term 'problem'. Sometimes,
it is used to mean the problem together with the method and the solution; and sometimes it is used to mean only the problem - the formulation of the question. What is meant by the term becomes clear through the context; though sometimes the word question is also used.

It is also necessary to point out that in this chapter we are considering the differences in the problem, on account of the context and not on account of the method or the answer, though the method and the answer are affected by the context in which the question is formulated.

A

MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM

In the course of his work, every philosopher considers a number of problems; though, sometimes, one or more problems are regarded as central. We shall consider the nature of Marcel's philosophical problem with reference to what, according to Marcel himself, is the main problem of his philosophy.

I. The Problem of Philosophy According to Marcel:

Marcel's main philosophical problem is to answer the question 'Who is man?' And this can also be formulated
as a philosophical inquiry into the self-identity of man. But is not this also the problem that many philosophers of the past and the present have raised? We shall cite only two or three instances. There was the Socratic maxim, 'Know Thyself', which really is an exhortation to seek an answer to 'Who is man?' Then there was the Stoic endeavour to gain mastery of oneself in the face of the dialectics of the Sophists. Even when a philosopher does not raise the question in a direct form, very often the enquiry is into the nature of man. For example, in the case of Descartes, the enquiry into the knowledge of certain existence is an enquiry into the nature of man. A more recent past witnessed Pascal, the precursor of modern existentialists, who posed the problem of self-identity of the concrete individual against those who emphasized the theoretical issues of science.

However, the similarity of verbal form should not mislead us into thinking that they are all concerned with the same problem or the same aspect of a problem. Each one of them has its specific aspects which can be understood only when we put the problem in the context in which it was raised and the purpose for which it was raised and tackled. And Marcel's case is not an exception to it.
It is the specific context as well as the specific purpose of Marcel's thought that determine or make his question 'Who is man?' what it is. Let us, therefore, consider the specific context in which his philosophical problem was raised.

II. The Context of Marcel's Problem:

Once we grasp the context of Marcel's philosophy, we should realise that there was a gradual development or evolution of certain central philosophical themes or issues in which his thought represents a particular stage. Hence, we divide the context of Marcel's philosophy into two parts: (A) The historico-philosophical context; and (B) The context of contemporary social life.

(A) The Historico-philosophical Context:

By the historico-philosophical context of Marcel's philosophy we mean the philosophical development that had taken place from Descartes to Hegel; and not the tradition to which Marcel himself belongs - for example, Pascal, Schopenhauer, Frederick Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard and so on. The main motive behind the selection of this philosophical context is to bring out the nature of the
problem against which Marcel too actually raises the problem of his philosophy and tackles it.

If things are viewed from a particular angle, we can see that philosophical thought from Descartes to Hegel was a response to developments in science and mathematics, and their impact on medieval philosophy and religion. The developments of science and mathematics created doubts not only about certain particular philosophical beliefs, but also about the philosophical method, namely, about the ability of philosophy to provide certain knowledge. For, in philosophy there was dispute and confusion about every proposition, or about every answer to a question. Any method of enquiry that led to such a situation cannot be satisfactory.

Moreover, the scientific developments directly created doubts about some particular points of medieval philosophy, which were in many ways connected with religious beliefs. The means of true knowledge, the infallibility of the Bible, the belief in God as the creator, were some of those controversial points. Let us take, at first, the point of contention concerning the means of true knowledge. To the Schoolmen, the Bible and the dogmas of the Catholic Faith were above question. Reason was supposed to interpret
the Reality within the framework of faith and the truths revealed in the Bible. On the other hand, the scientist relies on the evidence of the senses and maintains "only such doctrines as they believed to be based upon facts which were patent to all who chose to make the necessary observation". In this matter, science could score over the Schoolmen because of certain scientific developments. For example, there was a tug-of-war between the mediaeval theology and philosophy and science concerning some astronomical points - whether the earth revolves round the sun, or the sun round the earth. For, the cosmology of the Scholastics was based on a belief in a small universe of which the earth was considered to be the static centre around which the sun and the stars revolved. And it had clear Biblical support, which too was considered to be infallible. For example, in the "Book of Joshua" it is written, "Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the men of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand thou still at Gibeon, and thou moon, in the valley of Aijalon". And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the chosen people took vengeance on their enemies". Modern science,

championed by Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1649), proved this geocentric theory of Scholastic cosmology to be empirically baseless. Consequently, there was an implied challenge from the part of science, which, owing to the empirical evidence for heliocentrism, could ultimately question and so limit the infallibility of the Holy Bible. Hence, the challenge of science against philosophy, concerning the means of true knowledge; and then against religion, concerning the literal infallibility of the Bible.

As a response to this implied criticism and challenge, there came into being mainly two trends in philosophy, namely rationalism and empiricism. In meeting the challenge of science and mathematics in a constructive manner, the rationalist school took mathematical knowledge as the standard and would understand all knowledge in terms of mathematical knowledge. Rene Descartes (1596-1650), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), and Leibniz (1646-1716) belong to this school of thought. Whereas, the empiricist school seemed to take as its basic premise the view that the knowledge given by sense-experience is the only certain knowledge and would understand all knowledge in the context of this. John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776) are the proponents of this school of philosophy.
If we went through the works of these philosophers, we would realise that there are some specific features, even though they are not manifested to the same degree in the various philosophers, against whose background Marcel's philosophy made an attempt to respond constructively. These features can be divided as follows:

(1) The Problem:

To characterize the philosophical context of Marcel's thought in general, we can say that the main problems dealt with in that period were mainly of a conceptual or theoretical character. For, modern science, in the context of the philosophical controversies and the consequent uncertainties concerning the human knowledge about Reality, introduced the mathematical method in its studies and arrived at a kind of certainty. And this scientific certainty inspired the philosophies to aim at an absolutely certain knowledge in the philosophical realm. And this epistemological or conceptual preoccupation was one of the specific features of European philosophy right from the Cartesian introduction of 'methodic doubt' until well into the 19th century. The effects of this epistemological endeavour concerning the certainty of
human knowledge were being directly introduced by the philosophers concerned into such philosophical disciplines as metaphysics, theology, ethics and so on. For, they hoped that they could put a stop once and for all to the then prevailing controversies concerning philosophical truths. This was the main motive for both rationalists and empiricists in their philosophical endeavour. Hence, in sum, we could say that, according to modern philosophers, what modern science had worked in the realm of the material world, namely, the certainty of human knowledge about Reality by introducing the mathematical method in the scientific realm, philosophy too could certainly realise in its own field if the methods of modern science and of mathematics were adopted in philosophical analysis. Hence the preoccupation of modern philosophers with conceptual issues! For example, they are preoccupied with proving the existence of the constitutive elements of Reality (i.e., man, world, God and so on) through various types of proofs which, in turn, would provide man with absolutely certain knowledge about them.

(2) **The Method of Philosophy:**

As a result of the preoccupation with the search for certainty in philosophy, the modern philosophers adopted
one of two approaches. On the one hand, they adopted mathematical propositions as a model of certainty, and the mathematical method as the most suitable method for the attainment of such certainty; on the other hand, they adopted sensations or sensation statements as a model of certainty and being founded on them as a criterion of validity and therefore of certainty. The former approach is the Rationalist approach, and the latter, the empiricist approach.

(a) **The Rationalist Method:**

The main attempt of those important thinkers (i.e., the philosophers of the 17th century) was to "introduce the rigour of mathematical demonstration" into philosophy. Because the introduction of mathematical techniques, namely, "deduction from 'self-evident' axioms according to fixed rules" into philosophy was considered the only true method of philosophical discovery and exposition which can provide man with absolutely certain knowledge. That is why the method adopted by Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz is more or less deductive and *a priori*. According to Descartes,
the only arguments capable of providing absolutely certain knowledge of reality are arguments which are developed by "rigorous deduction from premises which are self-evident or known to be a priori. Hence, the 17th century can, in many ways, be characterised as the Age of Reason. For, the philosophers of that age, who claimed to be reasonable and rational, based their arguments for the validity and truth of a proposition exclusively on the evidence of human reason and its abilities, as human reason was considered to be capable of solving all human problems. For example, Descartes was convinced that the problems of science, mathematics and philosophy can be tackled by "the natural light" of human reason following its own natural order. This unlimited claim for "the natural light", and for the rational method of mathematics which went with it, in turn, turned out to be the corner stone and guiding principle of Modern Western philosophy. And it is this rational preoccupation which made also the idealist Hegel write: "The rational is real and the real is rational".¹ "All being is thought realised, all becoming is a development of thought".²

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(b) The Empiricist Method:

Instead of the mathematical model that was emphasized by the philosophers of the 17th century, the philosophers of the 18th century gave importance to the mechanical model which is more akin to that of the Newtonian system. That means, the empiricist philosophers went on with the formulation of general laws, based on empirical observation, both "inner" and "outer", corroborated by experiments. That is why Hume writes: "As the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to this science itself must be laid on experience and observation".¹ That means, Hume's specific understanding of philosophy as an empirical "science of man" is to be developed by the adoption of the methods the natural sciences actually make use of - observation of particular facts and the generalization of principles. For, like empirical natural science, philosophy was supposed to start with empirical observation and then work out whatever is founded on the observation in the final analysis.

That is why the Lockean philosophy was based on the principle that "we have no knowledge except that which comes from the senses". In a sense, his was a philosophy based on "natural powers of empirical observation and common sense judgement". It is the same motive that prompted Berkeley to work out a philosophical account of the 'outer' and 'inner' worlds, the truth of which could be attained by direct verification in normal everyday experience without recourse to special metaphysical devices or reference to occult entities beyond the bounds of the sense.  

(3) The Impersonal Approach:

These two methods have a common characteristic in general, namely, the impersonal approach. For, these two methods, whether they are rationalistic or empiricistic, were also methods which attempted to give a universal conclusion or solution to their respective problems. That means, the conclusions arrived at by them could be acceptable or applicable to all, or to a group of, people. In other words, there was no specific conclusion for a specific individual with reference to a specific situation.

in which that specific individual exists. This is the same as saying that it is impersonal, for it is general and universal.

There is another aspect to this impersonal approach, namely, an impersonal approach on the part of the philosopher to the problem concerned. For example, the scientist, in his experiments, is interested in studying the object of his experiment in itself, rather than in relation to the scientist himself. To put it in Marcel's terms, the scientist is analysing the object of his experiment as a "spectator" rather than as a "participator". And more or less the same attitude is taken by modern philosophers who are trying to adopt the scientific method in philosophy. According to the rationalists, as well as the empiricists, philosophy is supposed to analyse the object (i.e., the problem) of philosophy in its singularity, or in terms of its inner construction, rather than in relation to the philosopher himself. In another sense, we could say that it is an attitude where the subject-object dichotomy, in the strict sense of the term, is present. Hence they are very particular to apply the principle that only pure and unbiased reason could get the true and valid knowledge of the object concerned. In other words, in his probings
the philosopher is acting quite impersonally, since his aim is the knowledge of the object in its inner structure or in its singularity. Consequently, this way of philosophising eliminates the subjective or personal role of the philosopher from the act of philosophising.

(B) The Context of the Contemporary Social Life:

Now we consider the context of Marcel's thought with reference to contemporary social life. The main factor in this life is the massive industrialisation of the Western world, particularly of the French Society. According to Marcel, this industrialisation worked out some specific processes of human living in the Western world. And in his analyses of this industrialised society, three characteristics are emphasised. They are the following:

1. The mechanisation of human life.
2. The functionalisation of human life.
3. The bureaucratisation of human life.

(1) The Mechanisation of Human Life

The process of mechanisation prevalent in the modern industrialised Western world is described by Marcel as mainly the process in which a man, in his everyday life,
finds himself functioning as a machine rather than as a free person endowed with a choice of his own. Instead of seeing himself as a free person who decides for himself on the basis of his personal likes and dislikes, duties and privileges, the modern mechanised man is dictated to by external elements in his situations. Hence Marcel writes:
"The less men are thought of as beings in the sense which we have already tried to define, the stronger will be the temptation to use them as machines which are capable of a given output; this output being the only justification for their existence, they will end by having no other reality".  

For an example, let us take the case of a man who is employed in a huge automobile factory. He is one among thousands of workers in that factory. He is, let us suppose for the time being, expected to drive screws in the body of the car which will be just passing through the conveyor belt, in six places within three minutes. During every three minutes of his scheduled working time, a body of a car will be in front of him. Every three minutes he is supposed to drive six screws in the body of the same type

of car. This he repeats every three minutes of every working hour scheduled for him on every day and in every year as long as he works in that position in that factory. One hundred and twenty times he drives screws in different parts of the body of twenty cars in an hour; 960 times on 120 cars during his scheduled working time of the day, which stretches to eight hours a day.

The first point to be noted here is the monotonous and repetitive character of his work. Every three minutes he repeats this work, like a machine performing its predetermined work. He is neither asked not encouraged to develop his work except in terms of his physical efficiency. And such research work is meant for a selected few only. According to Marcel, the whole setup of the modern mechanical society is oriented in such a way that many will not take part in the human acts of discovery and creation.\(^1\) Hence, it is very likely that, slowly but steadily, he starts developing a habit of doing his work as a non-free machine discharges the mechanical work expected of it. And, slowly, this habit yields a great influence on his everyday living and behaviour, inducing in him a mechanical way of doing everything.\(^2\)

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Apart from the nature of his work, even the very situational forces contribute to the process of mechanisation. The point to be noted in this connection is that the work of this factory worker is such that he is as it were part of the machine. That this is so is also shown by the fact that, very often, owing to the process of intense automation in the industrial world, men are easily replaced by an automatic machine. And this process of automation, in turn, helps to induce in man a mechanical way of doing things. That is why Marcel writes: "There are sectors of human life in the present world where the process of automatization applies not only, for instance, to certain definite techniques, but to what one would have formerly called the inner life, a life which today, on the contrary, is becoming as outer as possible".¹

Another significant point to be noted here is that this process of mechanization is not to be restricted to those who work in factories or with machines. As a matter of fact, this process of mechanisation is part and parcel of a total life situation in the modern Western world and also affects those who are not working in factories. Owing to

this process of mechanisation, one is not free even to undertake certain personal activities. For example, one cannot entertain one's guests or one's intimate friends and relatives, because one may miss the bus or the train one boards everyday to go either to one's factory or office. Another example; if one has to call upon a doctor or tailor or advocate, one has to reach them by a particular time. Otherwise, they would have already left the place in order to catch a train or a bus in time for the purpose of attending some other cases. Hence, in the ultimate analysis, we can see that it is not man who, as a free individual, chooses for himself; but he is compelled to act in a particular way. Otherwise, his life will be very difficult, not to say dangerous and risky.

Since this way of viewing oneself and, consequently, living, prevails, the individual person is not at all proud, nay even conscious, of his personal responsibility and freedom, likes and dislikes, and so on. And this gives rise, in turn, to an undesirable factor in human society, namely, the gradual acceptance of a mechanical way of living and behaving towards others, a mechanical entity endowed with certain set purposes only. For, man now considers himself as well as others as capable of
doing things only in a repetitive or set manner, rather than in a modifiable manner, worked out by his individual effort, requirement and freedom. In sum, the main point Marcel wants to bring home to us by introducing the fact of mechanisation of contemporary human life, is how the contemporary man, who is by nature a free individual, views or looks upon himself and lives as if he was not free.

(2) **The Functionalisation of Human Life:**

Functionalisation is described by Marcel as mainly the process in which man is being considered in terms of certain functions he performs rather in terms of his whole personality. Hence Marcel writes: "The characteristic feature of our age seems to me to be what might be called the misplacement of the idea of function, taking function in its current sense which includes both vital and social functions. The individual appears both to himself and others as an agglomeration of functions. As a result of deep historical cause, he has been led to think of himself more and more as a mere assemblage of functions." That means,

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in the modern industrialised world, the recognition and revaluation of a concretely existing man is done on the basis of the different functions he performs for both the survival and the welfare of the impersonal institution that pays him.

Take, for example, the case of a ticket collector at the Railway Station. What is he in the eyes of the common man? He is identified in terms of the function he performs. Every day, at a fixed time and at a fixed place, he is there discharging the functions previously set for him. And he reports to the office only to discharge those functions. He is generally identified only with the efficient execution of his functions. The other capacities of the total personality of this ticket collector are, usually, conveniently neglected. And this becomes clearer once he is bedridden or dead. Because, at that stage, the required and expected genuine personal regard or sympathy from those individuals who were served by him is absent. Indeed, he may get sympathy and regard from the sisters who nurse him in the hospital. But those who would be expected to show sympathy and regard for him (for example, those who had enjoyed the benefit of his service) do not show it. Instead, usually, there is utter indifference on
their part. And in his place another man is appointed as if a machine were replaced after it ceased to work. It is this partial and abstract approach of a human individual towards others and their activities that Marcel characterises as the 'functionalisation of human life'.

The process of 'functionalisation of human life' is not restricted to the fact that others look upon a particular person in terms of only a particular function; it is also extended to the fact that man himself looks upon himself as a function. Take the case of a nurse. She is related to another as a nurse to a patient and not as a human person to another human person. Hence, she is quite functional in her behaviour towards the patient. At the stroke of five, that is, at the end of her predetermined duty for the day, she just gets up and leaves the hospital, whether the person whom she has been attending to needs her help or no. His well-being is no longer her concern. Her only concern is to report to the hospital in time and to discharge her predetermined functions efficiently. Beyond her schedule she is, as a rule, not ready to share her ability with the personal difficulties and grievances of others. Since that does not come into the category of her 'official functions', she is not much bothered about it,
as she is now interested in her own personal affairs. She conveniently forgets her humanity - her being a human being in relation to other human beings. Instead, she behaves as if she is related to other persons only in terms of official functions set for herself rather than as a concrete person with a free choice.

In this process of the functionalisation of man, the concept of a genuine personal regard and sympathy towards one's fellow-beings has no relevance at all, let alone any sense of genuine brotherly love. Further, once the ties of human brotherhood are severed, there is no place for anything but mutual suspicion and despair. "I need hardly insist on the stifling impression of sadness produced by this functionalised world... In such a world, there is something mocking and sinister even in the tolerance awarded to the man who has retired from his work".¹ These factors, in turn, promote a form of living in which the concrete individual human being becomes automatically isolated from personal and brotherly sharing with other fellow-beings.²

¹ Gabriel Marcel, "Philosophy of Existence", p.3.
² Gabriel Marcel, "Mystery of Being", Vol.I., p.112.
The main point Marcel wants to drive home to us here is that this trend of functionalisation holds in the case of the relationship between a man and another human individual, between an institution and a man, as well as for an individual in relation to himself. That means, Marcel wants to expose the way how, in the contemporary industrialised society, a person is viewed or looked upon by himself, by others as well as by institutions in functional and abstract terms. The total person is being considered as if made up only of some functions, which he discharges every day in the capacity of either a factory worker, an administrator, a businessman, an industrialist, a nurse or a doctor, rather than as a whole with more aspects, than his function implies.

(3) The Bureaucratisation of Human Life:

Now, we consider the third feature of the industrial society emphasized by Marcel, namely, the bureaucratisation of human life. According to him, modern institutions are interested in man as one in a crowd or one of a group, since they are preoccupied with the uniformity of the discrete data (i.e., biodata) provided to the institution by the specific individual concerned. Hence modern institutions are absolutely unconcerned about the distinctive characteristics of each concrete person. For, whatever be the
extensive character of the modern version of bio-data, still, in practice, it can never be exhaustive as regards the distinctive characteristics or features of a particular man is concerned. For, the heads under which the data are collected are not, in fact, equally fair to all concerned. Hence, the real point is that, whatever be the amount of information available regarding a particular person, the person generally eludes the data. That means, the official data do not enable us to grasp the person, for two persons with very similar data could be quite different as persons. It is this that is meant by bureaucratisation of human life. "Thus it is quite natural that in countries where a bureaucratic system prevails, there should be a tendency towards the general bureaucratisation of life".

For an example, let us take the official requirement of a Ph.D. Usually, what we do in India is to put all the Ph.D. holders of different universities under the same head, irrespective of the different standards of the different universities, and consequently their Ph.Ds. Even within the same university, the different capacities of Ph.D. holders are not always recognised. For instance, one

person may be able to talk better but write not so well. Or, one person has a retentive memory and another has not. Instead of duly recognizing the different capacities of different Ph.D. holders, the bureaucrats call for the official qualification, namely, whether one has a Ph.D., irrespective of their different capacities for manning the required post. It means, that, even if the bureaucrats claim that all the parts of a man are considered by the modern administration, still we can say that they are not considered in relation to the totality of the concrete and existential human personality; rather, each part of man is considered in itself without relating it to the totality of which it is only a part. Hence, in many cases, it enables people to make claims for themselves or to praise somebody or play him down when they do not like them for some extraneous reasons, only on the strength of some formal data, and not of their real ability. Thus, the real strength and weakness of an individual are not recognised or made use of. What is worse, this attitude affects adversely specially individuals with some unusual ability. Because, in many cases, it is very likely that such persons would not have the specific rigid qualifications that are required by an institution; and, on that count, they are not either selected or appointed or duly
recognised or appreciated. In a nutshell, the essential point of bureaucratisation is that it gives preponderance to formal data rather than to actual ability, and makes them the basis both for praising as well as for disqualifying people. This is the crux of the bureaucratic principle.

Since institutions are habitually concerned only with bio-data, their behaviour and response towards the personal qualities of the persons concerned become quite impersonal. They do not emphasize the personal relationship, but only the official and formal relationship. Hence, the modern version of administration shows no sense of personal regard and concern for the individual human being. Consequently, there is no genuine sympathy for the individual human being when he has to cope with some extra-ordinary problem in his real life situation.

Further, because of the very monolithic nature and structure of modern institutions, it is practically impossible for the bureaucrat to cultivate a personal relationship with each separate member of his institution since he has to deal with so many people. Hence, he is prone to turn down specific personal demands and requirements, however genuine, on the pretext that the office is concerned
only with official matters, like punctuality and efficiency.
As also, as an official, he has nothing to do with the
exceptional or distinctive personal qualities of a particular
individual. Even if he wants to, in practice, he cannot
show any personal consideration to any one person.

For example, let us take the case of a peon who reports
to the office late by thirty minutes. What are the reasons
for his being late? It may be the fact of his wife or child
being sick, or the train being abnormally late, or the
occurrence of a natural calamity, and so on. Even though
the reasons are genuine still, his lateness will not be
favourably considered by the office or the boss. And the
paradox of the modern industrialised situation is such
that the very attempt of the boss to bestow a personal
privilege on the peon will tell upon the efficient running
of the entire institution. For, some or other among the
thousands of people working in that situation will be
facing practically everyday some exceptional situation
which will demand personal regard and consideration on
the part of the boss or the office. That will, in turn,
definitely affect the discipline of the institution. Hence
the boss will have to have an impersonal approach towards
the peon concerned and be quite impersonal and formal in
dealing with the question. Automatically, recourse would be
had to punitive measures, irrespective of the reasons. This is the phenomenon, or trend, which is meant by "compartmentalisation" of human life and its various activities. This kind of compartmentalisation is there because man is not viewed in a personal manner, but only through his official records and bio-data, which do not cover exhaustively the total worth of the person concerned.

Once this kind of impersonal, technical and formal relationship is fostered, the individuals concerned also, slowly but steadily, come to consider themselves identified with the details of the official dossier. And this is confined, not only to oneself, but also to one's neighbours. That is why Marcel writes: "But the essential point to grasp now is that, in the end, I am in some danger of confusing myself, my real personality, with the State's official record of my activities; and we ought to be really frightened of what is implied in such an identification."¹ However, what very often happens is that a person identifies himself with the record if it suits him, and does not if it does not.

Another destructive feature of the impersonal approach of this process of bureaucratisation is that neither the concrete individual's personal 'presence' nor his creative and personal qualities and potentialities are appreciated or admired. The reason is that, first of all, the bureaucrat has no time to distinguish between genuine originality and waywardness. And, even if he had the time, he would feel threatened by the originality in his subordinates, as creativity is, in its very nature, non-administerable! Hence the creativity of subordinates is usually suspect to the boss as an attempt to pull his leg. Therefore, owing to upstart, narrow-minded, ambitious and jealous administrators, the potentiality of the individual is nipped in the bud. That is why Marcel writes: "Thus it is quite natural that, in countries where a bureaucratic system prevails, there should be a tendency towards the general bureaucratisation of life, that is to say, really, towards the abandonment of concrete and creative activities in favour of abstract, depersonalised, uncreative tasks, and even an active opposition to all kinds of creativity".  

Hence, Marcel declares that his kind of bureaucratisation of life makes man a "social nude stripped of his real dignity and personality, identifying himself with the data of the official dossier". ¹

III. Inter-relationship between Mechanisation, Functionalisation and Bureaucratisation:

In the foregoing account we have mentioned three main features of the industrial society; but this does not mean that they are independent features. They are inter-related and may even be said to be aspects of one and the same phenomenon. Through the presentation of these three features Marcel wants to illustrate the main thesis of the immediate social context of his philosophy, namely, the concept of man implicit in the process of modern industrialisation concretised through the mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of man, as a non-free, functional and indistinguishable entity in the crowd rather than a free, personal and creative individual in himself.

On this basis we should like to describe these three features very briefly and generally in the following manner. For example, the feature of mechanisation is mainly concerned with the question of how man looks upon himself as a mechanical entity, rather than as a free person, concretised in everyday living. Hence Marcel's version of the mechanisation of human life is mainly a process in which a man as an individual finds himself living as a mechanical entity, by regarding himself as a machine functioning in a repetitive manner with fixed duties and targets, rather than as a person endowed with personal priorities of likes and dislikes, privileges and duties, responsibility and freedom, and so on.

The trend of the functionalisation of human life is presented to depict how the partial or abstract way of viewing something is materialised in the interpersonal or inter-subjective realm of human life and behaviour. And this is done by delineating how the contemporary industrialised man as an individual looks at other men in terms of certain pre-determined functions rather than of the integral, total being that lies behind these functions.

At the same time, in presenting the contemporary phenomenon of 'bureaucratisation' of human life, Marcel
wants to deal with the question of how, in contemporary human living and behaviour, preponderance is given to the official and formal data rather than to the actual ability of the person concerned, and this is made the basis for assessing people. Hence, he invites our attention to the modern administrative offices by depicting how individual human beings are considered either as mere impersonal entities or as indistinguishable in a crowd, or as discrete data (i.e., biodata) by modern administration as well as by others in their everyday life. Both ignore the distinctive features and capacities of individuals.

Now let us see how these three features, in the context of the contemporary social life, are inter-related. The foregoing description of the three features of modern industrial civilization should make us realise that these are not so distinct and unrelated to each other. Instead, we should see them as inter-related features or consequences, and perhaps three different aspects, of one and the same phenomenon, i.e., the process of the massive industrialisation of the Western World. It is this phenomenon that brings about, at the same time the mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life. For, the process of industrialisation has meant the use of machines, factories,
large-scale production and whatever else goes along with it. This change in the industrial world transforms not only the economic life, but also the personal and social life of man. Instead of doing a job, the usefulness of which was clear, one does only a small part of it so many times - a monotonous and repetitive type of work which develops in him a habit of doing his work as a non-free machine. Further, contacts with other individuals become limited, both in scope and in time, and therefore hardly give any chance to know one another at the personal level. At the general or social level, the pressures of organizational life make it impossible to proceed in this direction. In the absence of intensive and extensive knowledge of individuals, one can hardly understand them, nor can one communicate with others. Consequently, there can be no love, no fidelity, no hope in relation to others, since mutual understanding and sharing are the basic minimum for the development of these qualities.

And Marcel has well delineated the above mentioned phenomena in his powerful play "Le Monde Cassé", through the soliloquy of a character named Christian. "Don't you feel", asks Christian, "sometimes that we are living... if you can call it living... in a 'broken world'? Yes, broken
like a broken watch. The mainspring has stopped working. Just look at it; nothing has changed. Everything is in place. But put the watch to your ear and you don't hear any ticking. You know what I am talking about; the world, what we call the world, the world of human creatures... it seems to me it must have had a heart at one time, but today you would say the heart has stopped beating".  
Paraphrased, this means that a contemporary mechanised, functionalised and bureaucratised French man, nay, the man of Western Europe of Marcel's time, is a prey to the process of being considered in his various parts rather than in relation to his whole personality, namely, as a non-free, functional and indistinguishable entity. To be specific, even though all the parts of his personality are considered separately and given consideration, still they are considered in themselves and not in its relation to the totality of his concrete personality. It is this additional point which Marcel wants to put through the mouth of his character named Christian.

And in this connection, Marcel characterises the man of contemporary industrialised France as a 'broken' man.

For the purpose of illustration, let us turn to interpersonal relationships of man as understood in modern times. Since contemporary industrialised man is nurturing a partial way of looking at other human individuals, his love, trust and fidelity are based on a shaky foundation - shaky, because, if you want to love a human being, you have to consider him as a whole. Then only can you have a mature and genuine relationship of love with him. Suppose you consider a man in his parts, then you cannot really know him - both the good and the bad in him. And if one does not know a person, how can one have a meaningful relationship with him? The lack of personal and intimate relationship will pave the way to the development of suspicion and distrust. Consequently, this may (in fact, does) lead you to frustration and despair. Hence, Marcel

Contemporary Frenchman, nay, the man of Western Europe of his time, as a broken man - a man of broken love, of broken faith, of broken fidelity, of broken hope. Human life in a mechanised and functionalised world began to be looked upon as either a penalty or a burden. Love and fraternity are inconceivable, let alone admirable. Trust and confidence become impossible. Liberty and responsibility lose all relevance. Son stands against father, asking him: "I have never asked to be born. By what right has life been
inflicted on me?" There is a reciprocal disavowal on the part of the father too. The father-son relationship loses its depth, glamour, intimacy and authenticity. The bonds of authentic love are snapped. Everybody is looking at everybody else as exploiter and exploited, rather than a mutual benefactor. The world in which Marcel lives is, in fact, a 'broken world', a world where an abstract or partial way of looking at human beings prevails, nay, invites increasing admiration and encouragement both from other human beings and from highly mechanised institutions, which, in turn, transform concrete man into a means to an end, i.e., an impersonal instrument. The same is depicted by Frederick Heinemann in the following manner: "The facts to which the term "alienation" refers are, objectively, different kinds of dissociation, break or rupture between human beings and their objects, whether the latter be other persons, or the natural world, or their own creations in art, science and society; and subjectively, the corresponding states of disequilibrium, disturbance, skangeness and anxiety". The net result

of such a phenomenon, according to Marcel, will be a kind
of global suicide. "Suicide, until our own times", writes
Marcel, "was an individual case. It seems now to apply
to the case of the whole human world".¹

IV. The Relationship between the Historico-Philosophical
Context And the Context of Contemporary Social Life:

In order to understand and critically appreciate
Marcel's treatment of his problem, it is necessary for us
to see how he perceives the relationship between the two
main factors of the context - the historico-philosophical
factor and the contemporary social factor. Is it the
historico-philosophical factor that has determined the
contemporary social factor, or vice versa? Or do they
mutually support each other? According to Marcel, the
relationship between them is mutual. Therefore, both
have a positive role in the formation of the total context
of Marcel's problem. That is why he writes: "... is
enough to show that there is in all this some appalling
mistake, some ghastly misinterpretation, implanted in
defenceless minds by an increasingly inhuman social order

and an equally inhuman philosophy for, if the philosophy
has prepared the way for the order, the order has also
shaped the philosophy".  

Apart from speaking about the mutual relationship in
such a general manner, Marcel does not clarify the sense
in which each bears upon the other. It is not clear how
the social reality is the result of the philosophy of
Descartes, or any other of the modern philosophies; or
even a combination of them. Nor is it clear how the kind
of social reality will give rise to the philosophies
propounded by the modern philosophers.

And one might say that the historico-philosophical
and the social contexts of Marcel's philosophy are quite
disjointed or loosely connected. Because the problems
involved in the social context are of a kind quite
different from those on the philosophical context. For
example, the problem of the social context is to break
the bonds of mechanisation; to discard the partial functional
way of looking upon others and oneself and think of them
as wholes; to give up considering them in set categories
and forms and consider each one of them as a distinct
human being.

As a matter of fact, it would be wrong to say that all modern philosophers have looked upon the human being in terms of mechanically determined being; or thought of him as a particular function, or have wanted to obliterate the distinction between individual and individual as under a bureaucracy. These tendencies were present, but one could hardly say that they were pronounced. In fact, most philosophers (Descartes, Kant, and so on) accept the idea that man is a free agent and not determined. Many of them do not think of human beings only in terms of a particular function as in the social context. Therefore, one could hardly see that they were the contributions of philosophy to social life. Nor could one say that these features of the social life led to the kind of philosophy. On the whole, the two do not seem to connect.

The best one can do is to say that the modern philosophies do not challenge the conception of man underlying the contemporary social reality; or that they do not disapprove of this kind of life. And in this sense probably the two elements mutually support each other.

V. The Purpose of Marcel's Philosophy:

We have considered the context of Marcel's philosophy
for a particular purpose, namely, to see how the context shapes or determines Marcel's problem. If that is so, then, after describing the context, we have to show how it determines or influences Marcel's understanding of his problem. If we ask that question, we see that, though Marcel is concerned with both the historico-philosophical and contemporary social parts of the context, in fact, he is concerned with the historico-philosophical part only indirectly. But he is concerned directly with the contemporary social part of the context, that is, the broken world.

Marcel is dissatisfied with what has become of man and consequently what has become of his world, for it is broken, that is, functionalised, mechanised, bureaucratised. And he thinks that, instead of all that, man has to be free, he has to be considered as a whole, he has to be considered not merely as an indistinguishable unit in a crowd, but as a specific individual person with reference to his specific traits. Hence, what Marcel does is to challenge the adequacy and validity of the concept of man implicit in modern industrialised social life. So he writes: "I think I may say without exaggeration, that my wholly philosophical career has been devoted to the production - I dislike using this physical term - of currents
whereby life can be reborn in regions of the mind which have yielded to apathy and are exposed to decomposition. It is in this context that he formulates the main problem of his philosophy as 'What is man'?

In asking the question 'What is man'? Marcel does not want to know what man actually is. Rather, Marcel's posing of the question 'What is man'? shows that he is dissatisfied with the concept of man implicitly expressed in contemporary social life. It also shows that Marcel is concerned not with giving an account of what has become of man, but of what man should become - or what is the true nature of man? Hence, in the book titled "The Existentialist Background of Human Dignity" (edited by Marcel), Marcel says that the philosopher is endowed with a specific responsibility to reintroduce the authentic image of man in its original dignity; to reinstate the worth of authentic human integrity, and consequently to save contemporary society from the modern predicament precipitated by the negative results of the modern type of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life and living. That is why he writes: "Today the first and perhaps the only duty of the philosophers is to defend man against himself, to defend man against that extraordinary temptation
towards inhumanity to which - almost always without being aware of it - so many human beings today have yielded".  
Hence, Marcel invites the 'anonymous man', or 'the de-
personalised' man of the 'broken world' of his time, to strive hard to realise his original authentic self. For the purpose of this realisation, the philosopher has to make these depersonalised men understand what it means to be an authentic human self in a 'broken world'. That means, Marcel is not describing man only in terms of certain specific distinguishing characteristics. Instead, he is, in fact, probing into what this concretely existing man of the "broken world" should be or become. To put it differently, Marcel is projecting his idea of 'What a man should be' or 'Who should a man become?' in the situation of the "broken world" which has resulted through the negative effects of the modern industrialisation of human life. That is why Frederic Heinemann, taking existentialist movement as a whole, writes: "Their point of departure is the fact and problem of alienation, their aim the liberation from estrangement".  

But if this is the problem of Marcel's philosophy, then the kind of philosophy that is there in the historico-philosophical context does not help to consider the problem. For, that kind of philosophy is neither concrete, nor personal nor existential, but only abstract, impersonal and non-existential. For example, Marcel brings home the inefficiency of the philosophies which indulge in analysing abstract and theoretical problems, namely, 'Whether man exists?', 'Whether the existence of myself can be proved?', 'Whether man has the capacity to know something?' and so on. According to him, it is their misconception about the function of philosophy that prompted them to ask these abstract questions. That is why Marcel writes that they have "the erroneous conception... that the philosopher as such ought not to concern himself with passing events, that his job, on the contrary, is to give laws in a timeless realm, and to consider contemporary occurrences with the same indifference". 1 Because of the preoccupation with these theoretical questions, philosophy in general had made a wrong impression, Marcel says, on people, so that it is losing sight of the concrete problems of human individuals existing here and now.

Further, in Marcel's opinion, these abstract philosophies cannot be of any direct help in meeting the predicament and dilemma of the contemporary human person of the 'broken world', since they place exclusive emphasis on the theoretical and epistemological questions. Even more, according to him, in tackling these theoretical questions, they place exclusive emphasis on various isolated faculties of the concrete man. That means, they isolate the problem from its concrete totality. For example, he says of Descartes: "Whatever Descartes may have thought of it (i.e., "cogito ergo sum") himself, the only certainty with which it provides us concerns only the epistemological subject as an organ of objective cognition". In another place he writes: "The cogito is the guardian of what is valid for abstract thought, not the measure of the foundation of what is real". In other words, the decision-making and feeling aspects of the person are not given their due consideration by the abstract philosophers. This is the reason why they bypass or side-track concrete, personal and existential problems of great import, namely, the threatening aspects of the

2. Ibid. p.6.
everyday human existence of the contemporary world. Hence, such philosophies, according to Marcel, do not deal with the actual problems of concrete man. Therefore, in conclusion, we can say that the main purpose of his philosophizing is to put a stop primarily to the de-humanising, or de-personalising, trends of the human way of living as expressed in contemporary social life. And then he will indirectly challenge the concept of man propounded by the abstract, impersonal and non-existential philosophies and also the way they tackle the problem of man.

VI. Some Specifications Concerning Marcel's Problem

(A) Now let us look, as the next step, at certain specific details of Marcel's problem of 'What is man?' or 'What should a man become?' Once we analyse the above mentioned discussion about the context of both historico-philosophical and social life, and also of the purpose of Marcel's philosophy, we can see, at the outset, that the problem of his philosophy, namely, 'What is man?' or 'What should a man become?', is mainly a problem concerning the everyday living of man in contemporary world. His contemporary man is oppressed in every realm of his life, one way or
another, by those de-humanising or de-personalising processes of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation. Hence, he considers it his duty as philosopher to attempt to free man from the glitches of these de-humanising or de-personalising trends. So he writes: "Today the first and perhaps the only duty of the philosophers is to defend man against himself, to defend man against that extraordinary temptation towards inhumanity to which - almost always without being aware of it - so many human beings today have yielded". That means, he wants to work out an atmosphere of human living where man has to be free, has to be considered as a whole, and has to be considered with his specific personal traits, rather than as an indistinguishable unity in a crowd or group. Hence, one can conclude that the problem of Marcel's philosophy is to replace the false understanding of man which is implicit in the life of the modern man, by a free understanding and thereby probably after the life of the modern man.

(B) Another point to be noted is that these problems, i.e., the problems of mechanisation, functionalisation, and

bureaucratisation of human life are problems which one faces in any given situation of the contemporary world. For, the whole life situation of the contemporary westerner is mechanised, functionalised, and bureaucratised, rather than in either certain realms or in certain specific situations. For example, let us take the case of clerk who is employed in an office. Prima facie, one would think that this clerk is facing only the problem of bureaucratisation of human life only in as much as it is very likely that others will consider him as an indistinguishable unity in a crowd or group - the group of clerks - so that his specific and distinctive features or abilities will not be duly recognised or admitted. For, before the administration, that is, either his superior officers or his employers, this clerk, in practice, finds himself considered as a mere number or a dossier rather than a concrete person endowed with distinctive personal likes and dislikes, as well as personal and specific responsibility and ability.

But, in fact, this clerk faces not only the problem of bureaucratisation, but also the problem of mechanisation and functionalisation. Because, in the course of his work, he has to face the problem of mechanisation, since in many ways and in various situations, his freedom will be questioned
and curtailed. He, in practice, is being dictated to, either by his employers or by his superior officers, as if he were a machine with pre-determined jobs to do, sometimes even against his likes and options. He has no alternative but to accept this job and stick to it. If, instead, he is to leave this profession because he cherishes his freedom, no alternative job is left in this modern world where his freedom can be protected or realised. For, his whole life situation is fully mechanised. Hence, he has to stick to this job or profession quite involuntarily. He cannot get out of those situations except at the risk of his welfare and personality. Hence, the fateful conditions to which he has succumbed! In sum, he is a slave, a slave who considers himself satisfied with pursuing the dictated work and life-situations. To be brief, this clerk - a free person - is forced to accept certain life-situations even though, in his heart of hearts, he wants to get out of the clutches of the situation in which he finds himself.

Then he will have to face, as a clerk, the problem of functionalisation. Owing to heavy industrialisation in the contemporary Western World, the clerk is considered and assessed by his employers or colleagues or, for that matter,
by his neighbours, only in terms of his official functions as a clerk in an institution, irrespective of the moral or immoral, social or anti-social, sympathetic or cruel character of this clerk's total personality, which is the real promoter of these official functions. Further, the habit of doing certain things repeatedly, year after year, will develop in his own attitude of considering himself as a fixed entity discharging only pre-determined functions. In sum, contemporary man has to face and tackle all of these three processes of modern industrialisation in every given situation.

(C) The third main point to be noted about Marcel's problem is that these problems will have to be tackled by the clerk not once and for all, but in the context of every incident of his life. That means, they will have to be tackled by him continuously in his everyday living. For, different situations will arise from time to time, from place to place, and from person to person. Sometimes, these problems may arise with his employer concerning the efficiency and the remuneration of his official work; sometimes with his superior officers concerning the dignity of his personality; and sometimes with his colleagues concerning the sharing of the responsibility and the
privileges attached to the official work. Some other time too, he will have to face these problems outside his own profession. For example, such problems will arise in his family concerning the rights and duties of a father or a husband. Or sometimes they may arise with his neighbours concerning co-existence or collaboration, or about ownership of property or animals. Hence, the fact that one has faced these problems once in his life with reference to a particular situation, does not mean that these problems cease to exist for him, or that he has solved them once and for all. Because, if he has solved these problems in a particular way in a particular situation, it does not mean that they will not arise in other situations, but are rather, liable to recur in everything that he does in his future life.

Further, the solution he worked out for these problems in a particular situation will not do in other situations. Hence, he will have to necessarily adapt himself in tackling these problems in various, sometimes unforeseen, situations. So, we would qualify these problems as continuous problems, to be tackled always anew, depending on the nature of the situation!

(D) The fourth point to be noted here is that it is not possible for an individual to remove simply all these
problems of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation in many areas of contemporary human life. Because, the whole of contemporary life is mechanised, functionalised and bureaucratised. So, really the whole life will have to be altered, not one's own only, but of society as a whole, if one wants to solve these. No other way will the mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of contemporary human life be removed from the contemporary world. It is impossible for an individual to do it, since it is obviously beyond the capacity of an individual to alter the complex life-styles of the whole industrialised Western World. Hence, one cannot free oneself fully from the mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of the contemporary human life. Therefore, the question is whether, in these circumstances, one, as an individual person, can be free, non-functional and non-impersonal in his every day life. That means, one can achieve these characteristics only in a part of one's life, namely, in one's private life, and not in one's public or social life, for, to remove mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation from social life, the clerk will have to leave his job. That means also that he cannot hold any job in any modern institution, since the whole of life is mechanised, functionalised and
bureaucratised. To be an unemployed will, in turn, make his life impossible. This is next to suicidal. In sum, what this clerk can do is to treat himself and others as free, whole and distinctive personal beings. That does not mean that he can avoid others treating him and other individuals as mere functions or at best, as non-free, impersonal beings. That means that the most the clerk, as an individual, can do is that, only in some areas of his own private life, he can remove these problems to a limited extent. It is for this that Marcel transformed the very problem of his philosophy namely, 'Who is man?' or 'Who should a man become?', into a personal question of 'Who am I?' or 'Who should I become?'. Hence he writes: "We are now embarking upon the question on which, really, all the other questions hang: it is the question I put when I ask myself 'Who am I?'"

But how these problems of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life are to be avoided and what, in fact, the avoidance of these problems means or implies in the concrete, personal and existential sense of the term, we shall have to see in our discussion of the solution.

VII. The Characteristics of Marcel's Problem:

Here we will try to bring out the different characteristics of Marcel's philosophical problem in terms of the criteria set by himself. According to Marcel himself, his is a concrete, personal and existential problem. Let us see why and how Marcel considers his philosophical problem as a concrete, personal and existential one.

(A) Marcel's is a Concrete Problem:

The problem of Marcel, to be brief, i.e., "Who am I?" or "Who should I become?" is mainly a problem about the everyday life of man in the contemporary world. For, since the contemporary man is, in practice, troubled by the de-humanising or de-personalising processes of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation in consequence of the massive industrialisation of the Western World, Marcel wants to get him freed from the clutches of these processes. Hence the problem of Marcel's philosophy is to be realised as an endeavour to transform the existing situations of these three processes or aspects of modern industrialisation. In other words, Marcel makes an attempt to change the prevailing negative impact of industrialisation, in order to work out an atmosphere where man in his everyday living
would live and converse or communicate with others as free, whole and personal individuals cherishing their personal responsibility and freedom, likes and dislikes, duties and privileges. Hence, one can realise that the problem of Marcel's philosophy i.e., 'Who am I?' or 'Who should I become?', is a problem of presenting an alternative form of living to the life-style of the contemporary industrialised Western World.

Further, since it is a problem of presenting an alternative to the existing life-style, it is a practical problem of actual living, to be confronted and tackled in any given situation in the modern industrialised world. As we have already seen in connection with the example of a clerk, these problems of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation are to be encountered in any given situation, namely, in his official life (employers and colleagues), his personal life (family relatives), his social life (neighbours and strangers), and so on. It is because his is a problem of actual living which is to be faced in an actual living situation, it is being characterised as a practical, rather than a theoretical problem. It is a practical problem to be met and tackled throughout one's life. Since it is a practical problem of actual living,
to be faced and solved by an individual person with reference to a particular issue as well as to a particular situation, it is being characterised as a concrete problem. This may be the reason why he writes: "Even since I realised that philosophy was my vocation, I have been at pains to keep clear of abstraction; and if we have managed to do so now, it was not by confining ourselves to the sphere of private experience". 1

Now there is another sense in which Marcel characterises his problem as a concrete one. This he does by way of pursuing the question 'How far his problem is a concrete one' in its analysis of the conception or awareness of human person. According to Marcel, in so far as man is mechanised, functionalised and bureaucratised, and so on, he is, as it were, isolated from his surroundings. Whereas he holds that man should be integrated into his surroundings. And it is in his surroundings and in relation to his surroundings that he has to become a man, and become himself fully in the authentic sense of the term. It is in this sense that the concept of the unitary phenomenon of 'being-in-the-world' is used by Marcel to be the basic structure of human existence.

1. Gabriel Marcel, "Mystery of Being", Vol.II., p.188.
That means, the objective world of things and persons with which a man lives is to be considered as essentially constitutive of human existence. That is why Marcel writes: "Myself apart from other selves quite simply is not. It comes to be in common". By insisting on the primary fact of 'incarnation', as well as by concentrating on those spiritual activities of man such as hope, love and fidelity, which involve the relationship of a person to a person, Marcel depicts man as a person essentially 'open' and not self-enclosed. Hence he writes: "What is given to me beyond all possible doubt is the confused and global experience of the world in as much as it is existence... At this point I must restrict myself to pointing out that this assurance appears to us as though constitutive of what we habitually call the subject. It is not added to it or provided for it; without this assurance the subject ceases to be anything, it disappears or at least is reduced to a logical shadow of itself".

If this is so, then the problem for Marcel will be to deal with man along with the existing, the concrete, situations.

1. Gabriel Marcel, "Being and Having", p.137.
For, his awareness of man stretches out and extends to the actual state of the concrete person as he exists in his ordinary everyday experience, namely, a being-in-a-situation or a being-in-the-world. In other words, Marcel's philosophy is not preoccupied with man in his singularity, but with a man in his intimate relation with the situations in which he actually exists. For, the party of which he is an active member, the family in which he is born, the trade union of which he is an active promoter, the actual surroundings in which he lives - all these are represented when Marcel describes man as a "being-in-the-world". These things are not something over and above man, not something in any way outside him. Man is actually constituted by his situations. What is real, is the totality. This is the basic structural truth of human existence accepted by Marcel. Man is an 'abstraction'; and an 'unreal' apart from the world or his actual situations. The concrete reality of a man resides in the union between himself and the world, or the situation. So he writes: "In abstracting myself from given circumstances, from the empirical self, from the situation in which I find myself, I run the risk of escaping into a real never-never or no-man's land". ¹

Hence, Marcel's conception of man, while raising the problem of man, becomes a conception of a total being or person in its intimate relation with the situation. And his problem is considered as a concrete one since, in actuality, man lives as a total person in his relation to the situations in which he exists. For, one can characterise something as concrete if it represents the whole thing under consideration. Therefore, the term 'concrete' is here a designation applied to the concept of man that represents all the dimensions of man.

(B) Marcel's is a personal problem:

The next point to be discussed here is the problem of 'How does Marcel characterise his problem as a personal one?' His problem is characterised as personal because, in the first instance, it is raised by him in relation to man as an individual person rather than in relation to man generally, because it is also a problem suffered or lived by him as a particular individual in his intimate personal life as a total person with reference to a particular issue and a particular situation. Hence that suffered and lived problem will be raised and tackled in relation to himself the philosopher, as a specific individual.
That is why, while characterising existentialism in general, Mary Warnock writes: "Everything is taken over, and interiorised, in Sartr's word, that is to say, made personal".¹

But here a question can be raised: the very fact that a problem arises in relation to a particular person does not make it a personal problem. For, the same problem can arise in relation to another individual, or a good number of other individuals in their own life, and can be tackled by them in the same manner. Almost all theoretical problems are of this type or nature. For example, the problem of certainty can arise either in relation to a particular individual, or in relation to a number of people, and be tackled by them in the same way. Hence, a general or universal character will be there for considering that problem, which, in turn, takes away from it its personal character. Therefore, the personal character of Marcel's problem exists, not because of the exclusive reason that it is raised and tackled by the philosopher as a problem of an individual person, but

¹ Mary Warnock, "Existentialistic Ethics", p.3.
because it is also a problem which will be of a different nature with reference to different persons. For example, the problem of altering the industrialised life-style of the clerk of our former example will be different from the problem of altering the industrialised life-style of his colleagues - other clerks of the same office. And it will not be the same with reference to his employer. Indeed, it will be different in the case of his college-going son. And it will not be the same with reference to his brother, who is a practising doctor. And it will definitely be of a different nature with reference to his illiterate wife, who is at the same time also a dominating, or virile, type. Because each one will be suffering and living the problem of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation in a particular way and attempting to tackle it in his or her own way.

We have already seen that, even with reference to the same person, the problem of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life is not of the same nature with reference to different situations in which one finds himself. The nature of the problem of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life, which he faces in the office, will not of the same nature
when one faces it as father or husband. Again, it will be of quite a different nature when one has to communicate with his neighbours. So, one can note that Marcel is raising the problem of his philosophy in relation to himself as an individual person, because the nature of this practical and concrete problem will not be of the same nature with reference to other individuals of the same modern industrialised world. In sum, therefore, Marcel's problem of philosophy is of a personal character, since the very nature of the problem demands that every person of the modern industrialised world must have his own problem of mechanisation, functionalisation, and bureaucratisation compared with the problem of others. Consequently, every one will have to face it in a specific way, for, the actual or concrete situations will definitely differ from person to person, from place to place and from time to time. Hence, the personal character of Marcel's problem!

Now, let us see how far this personal character is realised by Marcel in his philosophy. It is this personal preoccupation of Marcel which compelled him to pose the problem of his philosophy as 'Who am I?', rather, than 'Who is man?'. It is the same preoccupation with the
personal character that compelled him to write: "It was the problem of the nature of reality which obsessed me throughout those years of blind groping. What I wanted to know was not so much what reality is, as what we mean when we assert its existence, and when we say that it cannot be reduced to its outward appearances". Marcel himself has clearly written about his allergy to posing the problem in a general manner. He writes: "When I am dealing with a problem, I am trying to discover a solution that can become common property, that consequently can, at least in theory, be rediscovered by anybody at all. But from the very commencement of these lectures, we have seen that this idea of a validity for 'anybody at all' or of a thinking in general has less and less application, the more deeply one penetrates into the inner courts of philosophy". Hence, as we saw earlier, since the problem is raised with reference to oneself, because of its specific and distinctive personal nature, we can understand why Marcel raises his problem as a personal, rather than as an impersonal, one namely, 'Who am I?' Hence, in his book "Homo Viator" Marcel writes: "It is probably true to say that the only metaphysical problem is 'What am I?'". 

1. Gabriel Marcel, "Philosophy of Existence", (Italics are ours) p.80.
Marcel's emphasis on posing the problem with reference to oneself is quite evident in many of his books where he raises various other problems connected with the central problem of his philosophy. For example, let us take the problem of God. Even here, Marcel does not treat the problem of the existence of God as a general and impersonal one. The problem of the existence of God is also raised with reference to oneself, i.e., the philosopher himself, because of its distinctive impact on the person concerned. The very proof, if at all it can be called proof, for the existence of God given by Marcel, shows clearly that it was discussed only with reference to oneself. For, the existence of God is proved by Marcel through the personal communion and creative testimony he nurtures in relation to him, through his own concrete, personal and existential life. And this personal communion and creative testimony is, in turn, worked out by "ontological exigence" i.e., a "kind of dissatisfaction", or feeling of emptiness, in oneself. In other words, the existence of God is proved as the response to the dynamic need for fulness felt by oneself in one's own concrete, personal and existential life. That is why Marcel writes: "Let us accordingly lay it down once for all, as emphatically as we can, that it is only the living witness, that is to say the believing
consciousness which can decide what can or cannot be regarded as God.\(^1\) This clearly shows that the whole problem of God's existence is seen by Marcel with reference to himself, rather than to anyone in general. It is in this type of situation that Marcel writes: "And from another point of view, let us notice that reflection in this case was a personal act, and an act which nobody else would have been able to undertake in my place, or on my behalf. The act of reflection is linked, as bone is linked with bone in the human body, to living personal experience."\(^2\)

(C) Marcel's is an Existential Problem:

As the third point, we can see how Marcel is characterising his solution as an existential one. After posing the problem of 'What is man?' or 'What should a man be?' in the context of the industrialised social life, Marcel makes a clarification by saying that this problem of pointing the way to altering the industrialised way of living is to be realised in the concrete, personal and

\(^1\) Gabriel Marcel, "Mystery of Being", Vol.II., p.4.

existential situations that a person faces in his actual living. For Marcel, the problem of man being considered in terms of his functions rather than in the totality of his personality; or of man being considered as a non-free mechanical entity rather than a concrete person endowed with personal responsibility and freedom; or of man being considered as an indistinguishable entity in a crowd or a group rather than a man with distinctive capabilities, personal priorities and privileges, as well as duties and rights, arises out of his experiences in his own everyday life in relation to himself as well as in relation to his neighbours. The following statement of Marcel's shows how he, as an individual person, suffered the problem which he presents through his philosophy. He writes in his book, "The Philosophy of Existence": "The shock administered by the First World War explains the change of tone and of key which is noticeable in the second part of my Journal."¹ Ruminating over his experiences of those days (he was in charge of Red Cross activities during the First World War), he writes: "I remember very well the periods of anguish through which

I passed, more than thirty years ago now, when I was waging, in utter obscurity.... in the name of something which I felt sticking in me as sharply as a needle".  

Hence, the problem of his philosophy was part of his own actual life-situation. It is, therefore, a problem of living and of concrete human relationship. In other words, it was a problem in which he, as an actual individual human being, was involved. It was a problem which he personally felt and existentially suffered. Hence, Marcel writes: ".... I who enquire into the meaning and the possibility of this meeting, I cannot place myself outside it or before it. I am engaged in this encounter, I depend on it, I am inside it in a certain sense, it envelops me and it comprehends me".2 That is why Marcel demands that, whatever be the nature of the problem one deals with, it has to be a problem lived and suffered by oneself in one's own everyday practical and actual life.

Once the problem of his philosophy is explained as a problem suffered and lived in his actual life, we realise the relevance of Marcel's characterisation of his problem as an existential one. For, to suffer and live a problem

2. Ibid. Vol.II., p.188.
means that the problem is suffered and lived by an individual (here, the philosopher himself) in his own life. That means, it is not merely considered as a general problem, or a problem for anyone or anybody in the world, but as one affecting a particular individual in his actual life. To put it differently, we can say that the problem has to be a specific problem, suffered and lived by a specific individual in his own life. It is a problem in which the philosopher is existentially involved. Hence, the existential character of Marcel's problem!

But here one, as we saw it in the discussion of the personal character, can raise an objection of the fact that a problem is being suffered or lived by an individual person in his own life does not make it worthy of being characterised as an existential one. For, a theoretical problem, namely, the problem of building up a theoretical system of philosophy, is also being suffered in a sense by the philosopher concerned. But, normally, the latter is not characterised as an existential problem. Hence, the existential character of Marcel's problem is due not to the exclusive reason that it is suffered and lived by an individual person i.e., the philosopher himself, but to
the circumstance that suffering or living the problem will determine the kind or type of man one is. In other words, Marcel's is a problem the living (or suffering) and solving of which will determine the very nature of the man concerned. That means, Marcel's is an existential problem, not only because it is being suffered and lived by an individual in his actual life, but because, in living and suffering, and consequently tackling that problem, he is made or determined into what he is. It is, therefore, a problem which determines the very existence of the person concerned. Hence, Marcel's characterisation of his problem as an existential one! More or less the same point is brought out by M. Warnock when she characterises existentialism as a whole. She writes: "They (the existentialists) sought, all of them, to get us to see the world in a new light, and if they succeeded, this would no doubt affect, to some extent, the way we behaved, and the way we thought about our own behaviour and that of others, as much as it would affect how we thought about other things".  

As the last point of this part of the chapter, we would say that these characteristics of concreteness,

1. Mary Warnock, *Existentialist Ethics*, p.2. (Bracketed ours)
personalness and existentialness are to be seen with reference to all the three aspects, namely, mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life. For, really all these three aspects, as we saw earlier, are intimately interrelated. Hence, we cannot deal with one without dealing with the other two. For example, if we become free, that is, not mechanical, then there is no question of functionalisation and bureaucratisation. For, if we are free individuals, we are subsequently considered in the totality of our personality in its situations as well as in the distinctive features of our concrete and existential personality. And if, as against functionalisation, one is considered as a total person, then automatically one is considered as a free and personal individual with specific distinctive traits. For, the totality of one's personality implies specific traits as well as personal freedom. Further, as against the bureaucratisation, if one is considered as a person possessing specific traits, then, naturally one is considered as a free total person. For, the specific traits of one's personality imply, in the first instance, one's personal freedom, and, secondly, the specific traits of a total person. In sum, if anyone of these aspects of the process of industrialisation of human life can be dealt with, the
other two will have already been dealt with. Hence, we can conclude that these three characteristics are to be seen with reference to all the three aspects of the process of industrialisation of human life.

Now the question arises: 'Are the claims and the criticisms made by Marcel justified?' To put it differently, can the characteristics, namely, the concrete and the abstract, the personal and the impersonal, and the existential and the non-existential, enunciated by Marcel to distinguish his own philosophical problem from that of other philosophies, be held valid and relevant? What are we to do about this? To examine this issue we have also to examine the problem of other philosophers. First, we have to settle the question, 'Who are those philosophers?' This is not made very clear in Marcel's discussions. All we can assume is that they are directed against systematic philosophers in general. If it is so, then we cannot examine Marcel's claims and criticisms of all the systematic philosophers, or even a larger number of them. So, for the sake of practical convenience, we will pick up one of the more well-known among the system-builders as the representative of this tradition. Also, it would be relevant and convenient to choose one from France. Therefore, we have chosen Descartes, as illustrative of the kind of
philosophers that Marcel disapproves, and to test the validity and relevance of the Marcellian critique of systematic philosophy.

B

THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM OF RENE DESCARTES

In order to consider Marcel's claim that the problem of his own philosophy is concrete, personal and existential, whereas, the problem of philosophy like that of Descartes or the systematic philosophers, is abstract, impersonal and non-existential, we must give an account of the problem according to Descartes. For this, we shall begin with the context of Descartes' thought, as we did in the case of Marcel.

I. The Context of Descartes' Philosophy:

The context of Descartes' philosophy may be considered under two heads: (A) the philosophical context, and (B) the context of scientific and mathematical developments. We shall discuss the philosophical context first.

(A) The Philosophical Context of Descartes' Philosophy:

The philosophical context of Descartes' philosophy is, according to us, the context of the then prevalent philosophy,
During the Middle Ages, philosophy was considered as the handmaid of theology, i.e., Christian Theology. Hence, the main purpose and aim of philosophy was understood mainly to be the explanation and vindication of the theological principles of the Christian religion. Philosophers were then more or less concerned with the problem of the existence of God, His attributes, the number and ranks of the angels, the immortality of the soul, human freedom understood through Divine Providence, and so on.

Indeed, Mediaeval philosophy had, to a considerable extent, dealt with the problems of the world including man. Both the world and man were considered to be nothing but creatures of God. Qualitatively speaking, they were given a status lower than the theme of Heaven, the fatherland of man. It is in this context that St. Thomas Aquinas developed the theory of the separation, and at the same time the fundamental relationship, of the three worlds, namely, the 'world of nature', the 'world of grace', and the 'world of glory'.

* During the Middle Ages, the famous dictum generally known was "Philosophy is the handmaid of theology".
Further, man was considered as an erring and sinful creature, while to the world was assigned the character of a tempter. Hence, the life in this world was viewed as a place of exile. Man, therefore, was supposed to free himself from this land of exile in order to join his heavenly Father. Hence man was supposed to find the fulness of his personality in attaining God.

As its method mediaeval philosophy was rationalistic in a particular sense of the term. As a matter of fact, reason and the rational faculties are more or less the decisive factors through which the arguments are worked out. According to them, the philosophical truth are to be ultimately realised through deduction from apriorily known "natural principles". But the rational proofs are held valid as long as they are kept within the bounds of revelations manifested in the Bible. In other words, they do not build up a rational system of philosophy, which, "refusing to acknowledge the authority of Divine Revelation, tests all truth by the standard of reason alone". For, since man is considered as basically an erring and sinful being, he is in dire necessity of Divine Grace, which will help him attain the fulness of truth. Therefore, ultimately, even the certainty of human knowledge comes from faith or Divine revelation rather than from human
reason or other human faculties alone. In sum, we could characterise the mediaeval philosophical activities or explorations as theocentric.

As a result of this theocentric perspective, one of the main points of the mediaeval philosophy was "How to reconcile reason with revelation"? St. Thomas Aquinas answered the issue by arguing that, though the two are distinct sciences, still they need not contradict each other. At the same time, he held that there are some "mysteries of faith which lie outside the domain of philosophy and which belong to theology alone". On the other hand, there were some Scholastics, like Abelard and Roscelin, who were very zealous in advocating that "reason can prove even the supernatural mysteries of faith".

Another distinguishing element of the Scholastic method is that almost all the Scholastics make use of the dialectical method. For example, all of them adopt the "manner of treatment by which thesis, objections and the solutions to the objections stand out distinctly in the discussion of each problem". In conclusion, we could say

that reason is made use of in philosophical discussion and through a dialectical form various religious truths like God, freedom, predestination, the immortality of the soul, and so on, are established so long as rational discussion does not come in the way of the Divine Revelation.

(B) The Scientific Context of Descartes' Philosophy:

The 15th and 16th centuries represent, for the Western Philosophical world, a strong reaction against this theocentric philosophy. The heliocentric theory advanced by Copernicus (1473-1543) is considered to be the first significant development in modern scientific revolution. It is this theory that inspired scientists to reach many a modern scientific insight during the Renaissance and after. For example, the Copernican theory of heliocentrism, which explains the nature of the solar system, was corroborated by Kepler through his laws of planetary movement. Galileo (1564-1649) added credibility to it with his telescopic observations. He could also confirm that the Milky Way is a vast path of innumerable stars existing separately. These discoveries had their destructive repercussions on the Christian Mediaeval understanding of man and the universe. For, the Scholastics had believed in a small universe of which the earth was considered to be the centre,
and man was viewed as its physical and moral centre. Almost all the discoveries of modern science proved them all to be baseless. Hence, in a sense, we can say that these developments managed gradually to bring about the collapse of the whole mediaeval Christian cosmology.

Galileo in his search for the laws of nature, followed two important principles: (1) the method of observation and experimentation, and (2) the mathematical formulation of the laws of nature wherever possible.

(1) Consider the method of observation and experimenta-
tion, rather than authority, either religious (Galileo hints at the Catholic Church), or philosophical (he hints at the Aristotelian philosophy) as the criterion for valid knowledge of nature and the different characteristics of man, the world, and the universe: this is the first Galilean principle of the scientific study of reality. That means it is the human reason, its observation, and the consequent experiments that are considered to be the criteria by which man attains valid and certain knowledge of reality, rather than his religious faith and the dogmas of the Church.

(2) Galileo introduced or extended the use of mathematics in the study of natural phenomena. As a result, the true method of discovery and exposition was even
identified generally with the application of mathematical techniques and language to empirical data, which were provided by human senses. Consequently, slowly but steadily, a way of thinking was evolved which insisted on a principle, namely, that nature, including man, and the natural processes, must be analysed and studied as far as possible by the laws of nature propounded in quantitative terms. Hence, the key to the scientific study of man, world and the universe, was based on the application of mathematics and its precise method of measurement. Consequently, the universe including man himself and the natural process was probed and analysed in itself rather than as related essentially to a personal God and a world hereafter.

And this scientific approach and method of study was poles apart from the method and approach of mediaeval scholastic philosophy. And further, the actual success of science in the matter of empirical world, including man himself, affected the mediaeval outlook in philosophy both in its conclusions as well as in its method which, in turn, affected certain beliefs associated with religion. We have already discussed this problem and we do not go into it here. (vide, pages 19-22)

In our account of the historico-philosophical context of Marcel's thought, we have seen how the developments in
mathematics and science not only challenged certain beliefs of religion as well as certain theories of philosophy, but also set up an ideal of method and demonstration for religious beliefs (conception of God as a Creator, the life after this, etc.) as well as philosophical truths. For, in the first instance, there was a sense of certainty about the conclusions of mathematics, and also about the scientific conclusions, though not of the nature of mathematics, for, they were clearly supported by evidence. Since they had set up a standard of certainty, they would naturally require of other branches of knowledge, specially philosophy and religion, to have a similar standard of certainty. Hence, in a sense, the challenge of Descartes the scientist was flung at Descartes the philosopher and a loyal Catholic Christian, in the form of the problem of certainty, since he was a born mathematician, a scientist, a philosopher and a loyal Catholic Christian. In fact, Descartes was one of the first to be dissatisfied with the state of affairs that obtained in philosophy of the time, and consequently he tried to look for a true criterion of certainty. Hence the Cartesian endeavour to establish principles in philosophy which are as absolutely certain as those in science and/or mathematics!

II. Descartes' Problem of Man:

Now let us see how the above mentioned context of
Descartes' philosophy conditioned his discussion of the problem of man. We have already made clear that our purpose here is not to discuss about the main problem of Descartes and its characteristics, but to give an account of the problem of his philosophy regarding 'Who is man?' or 'Who am I?'. In fact, Descartes does not raise the question 'Who am I?' or 'Who is man?' directly. Instead, the problem of man arises in the context of his thought or in the course of his answer to the problem of certainty. Hence, let us see how he comes to the problem of man through his search for absolute certainty.

What is the problem of Descartes? In a nutshell, we can say that the problem of Descartes was to secure absolutely certain knowledge of what exists, namely, 'Of what can we say that it certainly exists?' Impressed by the certainty achieved in the realm of mathematics, Descartes was quite dissatisfied with the whole state of affairs prevailing in the world of philosophy. Hence, ultimately he wanted to construct a system of philosophy which will include nothing but certain knowledge.

In his search for certainty, Descartes considers various kinds of knowledge regarding their claim to certainty. In this search for a case he finds that our knowledge of
the existence of the material things based on our sense perception will not fit in this model, because, senses, our ordinary experiences certify, deceive us quite often grasping something.

Another realm where certainty is either assured or claimed, is in the realm of mathematics. But mathematics is a science based and developed on the basis of abstract principles. Hence it does not say anything about the existing reality. Whereas, metaphysics is the science of that which is. Hence it has to be based on a certain concrete proposition.

Descartes, at last, thinks that he has found a case which fits his model of certainty, namely, a case with reference to the knowledge of one's own existence. For the purpose, Descartes raises another question, namely, 'Can I be sure of the statement that nothing is so certain as the fact that nothing is certain?' According to him the answer has to be necessarily negative, the reason being that I would have left out of consideration things which I should have considered: this is his contention. For he finds that there is something the assertion of whose existence is certain for anyone. For example, one has not yet been persuaded that one oneself does not exist.
Can I doubt that I exist? No, because the very doubt implies the doubter. That means, even in doubting the assertion of the existence of the self, the self who doubts is involved. The self who doubts has to exist by all means. And it is this that Descartes states in the famous formula 'I think, therefore, I am'. For, doubting also is a thinking activity.

It is at this point that Descartes begins his consideration of the question, 'Who am I?' or 'What is self?'. For having done this, Descartes asks what is this I that is said to exist. What did I think I was? He considers many answers which he finds unsatisfactory. For example, he considers the following answer: 'I thought I was a man'. Then he raises the question that does it mean that 'I am a man'. The answer is formulated as 'I am a rational animal?'. But according to Descartes this is not a good answer because now I shall have to explain what is rational or what is animal, and how rationality and animality can coexist in a being like man and so on.

The next answer Descartes criticises is the following one, namely, 'I thought that I was a body'. But according to Descartes, I cannot argue that I am to be identified with my body because there is the possibility of deceit. Then
Descartes analyses another answer, namely, 'I thought of this 'I' as that to which the various actions are referred, such as walking, perception and thinking. But walking and perception require the help of the body. And he has already shown the likelihood of deceit implied in matters connected with the body. Then the alternative human action left to him is thinking. According to Descartes, thinking is what is inseparable from me. For it is already proved as absolutely certain that 'I am, I exist'. But the question is raised, namely, 'How often is it certain that 'I am, I exist'? The answer would be like this, namely, "As often as I think, I am absolutely certain that I am". Hence he concludes that I am a thinking thing, a mind, or reason. Consequently, the answer Descartes finds acceptable is that 'I' is a conscious thing or a conscious being.

But this problem of man's existence and his essence tackled in this sort of way is only the beginning. As the next step, he goes on to prove the absolute certainty of human knowledge about the existence of things other than that of himself, namely, the existence of others, of God, and so on, on the basis of the absolutely certain knowledge of his own existence as a conscious being, since so far nothing other than this, is proved certain in his system of philosophy.
For this purpose, he tries to find out the criterion of truth basing on which he can prove the existence of God, the material world and so on. Hence he proceeds, as the next step, with the question 'what is that which makes this proposition, namely, 'cogito ergo sum', so certainly true?'. In other words, what is that which assures him the truth of this first principle of his philosophy? According to Descartes it is the fact of clarity and distinctness with the help of which he affirms his existence. And the truth of a clear and distinct proposition does not depend on the empirical conditions in which it is conceived. For example, if a mathematician works out a new demonstration, the problem whether he is sleeping or not does not affect the truth of his new demonstration. Whereas, if he asserts about something about an empirical fact, namely, he walks, or he drinks, then the problem whether he is asleep or not will affect the truth of his assertion.

In brief, what Descartes emphasizes is that the fact of clarity and distinctness of a truth is based on the evidence of our reason and not on the evidence of our imagination or senses. In other words, the truth of an absolutely certain proposition "must be intrinsic to it; that means, it does not depend upon any of the external
circumstances". To put it in the Scholastic terminology it is a proposition concerning the essence of the thing concerned.

The introduction of the term 'essence' has got another purpose. It will clarify the requirements for a necessarily true proposition. For, the essence of a thing implies of "those elements which make that thing a thing in itself". In other words, the essence of something "contains intrinsically the marks of its own truth". Hence we can remain absolutely assured that the opposite of the essence of something will remain as untrue in relation to the thing concerned. For example, Descartes could contend that the essence of himself must lie in his mind or reason i.e., thinking, because he cannot think of himself as not having reason or thinking, since he is assured of existence only when he doubts. And doubting is also an act of thinking. Whereas the essence of his existence is thinking.

Descartes, in the second step of his metaphysics, makes use of this notion of essence. Like the mathematical thesis, namely, "the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles" is deduced from the clear and distinct idea of a triangle so also the idea of the existence of God can be deduced from the clear and distinct idea of a perfect
Being. For we have got the clear and distinct conception of God as the most perfect Being. But, unlike that of the ideal existence of the mathematical thesis, the actual existence of God can be deduced since the actual existence is also one of the perfection. In other words, "the existence of God is included in God's essence".

Now the next step of Descartes' metaphysics is to prove the existence of the external world. And this is realised through the nature of God. The very idea of the essence of God demands that he cannot have any defect. That is why Descartes writes: "I recognize that it is impossible that He should ever deceive me, since in all fraud and deceit there is a certain imperfection." This characteristic of God, namely, the lack of defect in Him, is the point on the basis of which Descartes deduces the knowledge of the existence of others or of the external world and that of the past.

The crux of the Cartesian argument for the proof of the existence of the external world points towards the fact that we are having a strong natural tendency to assert the existence of the external world. Suppose that there does not exist a corresponding reality, what would happen.

According to Descartes, God is to be held responsible for misleading us in our statement. For, it is God, the creator of us all, who imparted into us this strong natural tendency. But God cannot be conceived as an imperfect Being. Hence the other alternative left to us is that we are not systematically misled with regard to our strong natural tendency to believe that there is both an external world and a past. And then he goes on proving the constitutive elements of men, of the material world etc., basing on the certainty of the existence of God.

Thus the Cartesian discussion of the problem of man starts with his search for certainty, and ends with the development of a system in which God has a supreme place, because ultimately in his system of philosophy the existence, not only of the material world but also of the self, follows from the existence of God.* Thus what one gets ultimately is a system - a system in which man and the material world are subsumed under God.

* Because, one of Descartes' arguments for the existence of God runs as follows: I am absolutely certain that I exist. But how can I exist? Or what is the cause of my existence and so on. Then he brings the existence of God as the cause of his own existence.
It is not necessary or important for us to consider here whether Descartes succeeds in establishing the existence of the self. In fact, a large number of objections have been raised against it from the time of Descartes to date. For example, it has been argued out by A.J. Ayer that what is established is the existence of thought and not that of the self. For, from thinking only thinking follows, from the idea of person only an idea of person follows, and neither person nor existence of a person from the fact of mere thinking.

And it is also not necessary for us to decide whether the system of Descartes suffers from the fault of fallacy of circularity as many critics think. Our concern is to understand the nature of the problem of man as it is raised and tackled by Descartes in the context of his main problem of absolute certainty.

III. Characteristics of Descartes' Problem:

We undertook to give an account of Descartes' philosophy in order to consider whether the distinction drawn by Marcel between his own approach and Descartes' approach, as a representative of the systematic philosophers, is right. That means, is it right to say that Marcel's problem is
concrete, personal and existential, and that Descartes' is abstract, impersonal and non-existential? Let us, for a start, try to see whether the problem of Descartes' philosophy is an abstract one or no.

Before we go on to consider their distinctions, let us have a first look at the difference between the problems of Marcel and Descartes. Marcel wants to tackle the mode of man's life in industrialised society through tackling the concept of man implicit in such a life. It is a practical problem — the problem of gaining back freedom, wholeness and individuality. Whether the problem is successfully tackled is not a matter of the validity of an argument, but a matter of what situation realises the true nature of man. As against that, Descartes' problem is a theoretical problem — whether our knowledge of something satisfies certain criteria. Whether the problem is successfully solved or not depends on whether certain propositions have certain formal characteristics or not. It is not a matter of putting one solution of man against that of another. It is this difference which Marcel emphasises by his distinction between concrete, personal and existential on the one hand, and abstract, impersonal and non-existential on the other.
(A) Descartes' Problem is an Abstract One:

On closer consideration, we can say that there are mainly two reasons why Marcel characterises Descartes' problem as abstract, namely, (1) abstract in the sense of theoretical as against practical, and (2) abstract as against concrete in the sense of total and partial respectively. Let us begin our discussion about the abstract characteristic of Descartes' problem in the former sense.

(1) In the case of Descartes, the source of the question and the question are not a demand for action to meet a situation, but a demand for thinking, to meet certain difficulties in thinking. For example, we can codify it as follows: 'Of what can we say that it certainly exists? The question is not raised because some steps have to be taken in order to find out whether a thing exists or does not exist (e.g., a Yeti in the Himalayas; or life on the Mars and so on). The problem is not such an empirical problem. In fact, the problem is not of this nature at all. The problem arises when, in the ordinary course, we accept the existence with certainty; but the problem is whether this certainty is certainty. For example, we ordinarily accept that the existence of the table in
this room is certain; but can we really claim that it is certain? Is it not possible to question this certainty? The question that is raised here about certainty is a question of how strong — unquestionable—unassailable are the grounds for the claim that there is a table in this room. I may say that the ground is that I see it. But, can we say that it follows from this with certainty? I cannot say that it follows with certainty, because I cannot say that whenever I see that there is a table, there is a table. For example, when I see in a dream that there is a table, there is actually no table. Hence the problem that is before us is a theoretical problem — whether we can prove the existence of anything beyond any doubt. The question of knowledge here is made into a question of proof, or unquestionability. Thus, the problem is not a concrete problem — a problem of living; but a theoretical problem of proving something logically.

(2) Now let us see the abstract character of Descartes' problem in the sense of partial, as against total. Here there can be two possible reasons why Marcel's charge of abstractness can be applied to Descartes' philosophical problem. The first reason can be that the problem of man, or that of the self, is raised by Descartes' philosophy as if isolated from that of the world. This is quite clear
in the Cartesian 'cogito, ergo sum', that is, 'I think therefore I am'. For, in his affirmation of the logical certainty of human existence, Descartes locks the conception of man in the individual ego as understood in its singularity rather than related to other human beings. To put it differently, in the affirmation of human existence, Descartes shuts out the objective world, namely, both the external and the internal situations in which he concretely exists, which is also a necessary constitutive element of human existence as concretely understood.

Further, while stressing the nature of this 'I', Descartes emphasizes its thinking aspect, that is the human consciousness, rather than the total nature of man. Descartes himself admits this when he writes: "I thence concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature consists only in thinking." So, if the body, which does not think, is not included in my clear and distinct idea of myself as a thinking thing, it would seem to follow that the body does not belong to my essence or nature. In this case, I am a 'soul lodged in a body'. It is for the same reason that Arnauld criticised Descartes in the 'Fourth Set of Objections'.

saying that the theory of my clearly and distinctly
perceiving myself to be merely a thinking being leads
to the conclusion that "nothing corporeal belongs to the
essence of man, who is hence entirely spirit, while his
body is merely the vehicle of spirit; hence follows the
definition of man as a spirit which makes use of a body".

Marcel's criticism of Descartes' problem also runs
on the same lines; for, Marcel observes that the Cartesian
problem of man which is implied in the 'cogito, ergo sum',
signalises, not the discovery of the concretely existing
self so much as its removal from concrete reality, i.e., a
self existing here and now. To repeat our quotation:
"... the cogito is the guardian of what is valid for
abstract thought; not the measure of the foundation of
what is real". Hence Marcel criticises the Cartesian
'cogito', namely, 'self-as-a-thinker', as a subject which
has cut the umbilical cord which binds it to other things
and persons in the world as well as to the total person
in its singularity. He writes: "Whatever Descartes may
have thought of it (i.e., 'cogito, ergo sum) himself, the only
certainty with which it provides us concerns only the
epistemological subject as organ of objective cognition".1

Since the Cartesian conception of man does not represent the aspects and dimensions of the concretely existing human individual, Marcel can criticise it as an abstract, rather than a concrete conception. For, one can call something an abstract representation of something on the basis that it does not represent the whole thing under consideration, but only a part. Therefore, the term abstract is a designation applied to the concept of man which represents only some aspects, or dimensions, or facets, of man. In this sense, man as a thinking substance, can be described as an abstract concept of the individual existing in everyday life. Together with this, we can also say that man understood as an entity in himself, rather than intimately related to others in the world, can be characterised as an abstract understanding of man, who in actuality, exists in intimate relationship with both external and internal situations.

(B) Descartes' Problem is an Impersonal One:

The second point of Marcel's criticism of the systematic philosophical problems is that they are of an impersonal character. Hence, we have to see why they are so characterised. Perhaps, the best way of understanding what is impersonal is to understand a problem that is personal. In the case of a
personal problem, the answer is dependent on the particular circumstances or situations of the individual concerned. This is what we saw was true in the case of Marcel's problem. In the case of an impersonal problem, the answer is not a matter of the situation of a particular person; rather it is independent of it. This is so in the case of the problem of Descartes. The answer to the question about certainty of one's own existence does not depend on the circumstances of the individual, but on the logical characteristics of the concepts and the propositions involved.

As an example, let us take the problem of man as understood by Descartes' philosophy. The way Descartes raises the problem of man is not with reference to himself as a specific concrete individual human person, but with reference to man in general, or to all men considered in themselves as thinking substances. His purpose in tackling this problem is to find out the exact means through which any individual human being as a thinking substance can attain the certainty of his own existence, and, on this basis, the existence of God and of the world as a whole with its constitutive elements. That is why, in The Discourse on Method, Descartes clearly writes: "... I thought it best for my purpose to
consider those propositions in the most general form possible without referring them to any objects in particular".\(^1\) That means, the problem and the subsequent answer can be more or less either generally or universally applied to any individual human being endowed with thinking capacity, irrespective of what makes him different from others. Again, he writes: "... I commenced with the simplest and most general truth".\(^2\) Since the posing of the problem of man in Descartes' philosophy is not with reference to an individual person concretely existing, but to human beings in general, it is not different for different people. Hence, Marcel would characterise it as an impersonal problem. That is why Merleau-Ponty writes in the following manner: "It is indeed a question of the I, but of an ideal I that is not properly mine nor Descartes' but the I of any thinking person".\(^3\)

And this specific characteristic is there, not only with reference to the problem of the existence of the self,

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2. Ibid. p.17.
but also throughout Descartes' philosophy. For the purpose of illustration, let us take the example of the problem of the existence of God as understood by Descartes. In his philosophy, the existence of God is proved, unlike as in Marcel's philosophy, not with reference to oneself, but with reference to any self or human person in the world. It is a universal proof meant for any man, i.e., man in general rather than a particular human being. Even if anybody else is there in Descartes' place, the existence of God can be proved making use of the same rational arguments Descartes proposed. In other words, the existence of God is not proved as the result of a personal realisation by a concrete individual in his concrete, personal and existential life-situation, but as conclusion of an argument in general, or as deduced from some general premises. Hence, we can say that the problem of Divine existence is not raised with reference to oneself. Consequently, it does not represent different problems for different individuals. Therefore, on the basis of the criterion set by Marcel, at least in an indirect form, one can characterise, in the ultimate analysis, the problem of the existence of God raised by Descartes' philosophy as an impersonal one.
Descartes' Problem is a Non-existent Nature:

Now we have to see how far Descartes' philosophical problem of man is of a non-existent character, since Marcel criticises the problem of the systematic philosophies as non-existent. The issue confronted here by Descartes as regards the problem of his own existence and that of his nature is quite different from the problem of Marcel's philosophy. The question here is not one of meeting a practical problem of everyday living, like the processes of the mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life. Instead, the question is raised as an epistemological issue, or as a theoretical question. And these issues with which Descartes deals do not determine the existence or the being either of Descartes or of any other individual directly. In other words, Descartes' problems of the existence and the essence of the self are not a question of how the specific being of a specific individual, by being in a specific situation, will be determined in a specific way. It determines only his thought. And this is what a non-existent problem amounts to. Hence, the problem of his own existence as raised and tackled by him can be described as one of a non-existent nature. Descartes himself has suggested this, when he writes in the following
manner: "For I am assured that, meanwhile, there will arise neither peril nor error from this course, and that I cannot for the present yield too much to distrust, since the end I now seek is not action but knowledge".\(^1\)

Whereas, for Marcel, the living process of life has become a specific problem which will determine his very existence. Since Descartes' problem is raised as an epistemological issue, which will not determine his existence in a substantial way, Marcel would describe it as a non-existential problem.

C

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM: IS MARCEL RIGHT?

As we have already seen, there is a difference between Descartes' problem and that of Marcel's. In one case, the problem is theoretical, in the other, it is practical. But is it possible for us to dispose of the difference between the two problems or sets of problems by saying that one is theoretical, abstract, impersonal, and non-existential, and the other, practical, concrete, personal and existential? A closer examination of the problems and

\(^1\) Rene Descartes, "Discourse on Method", p.84.
their nature is necessary before we can accept this way of describing the difference.

Marcel's characterisation of the differences between himself and Descartes appears reasonable when you consider Descartes' philosophy without the context and the point of his answer to the problem. But when you consider both, it cannot, it appears, be considered in Marcel's terms without a qualification. For, it is also possible to show that Descartes' problem is a concrete, personal and existential one, and that Marcel's is an abstract, impersonal and non-existential one.

Before discussing the question, it is necessary to anticipate a little. Not only in the case of the problem, but also in the case of the method and the answer, Marcel draws the same distinctions between his view and that of Descartes. It is impossible to discuss these distinctions in total isolation from one another; and it is also impossible to discuss any one of problem, solution and method in total isolation from one another. However a separate discussion is of value in enabling us to examine the question in as great a detail as possible. This is said to point out that in this section we shall consider these characterisations by relating the problem to the context.
I. Descartes' problem of man is of a Concrete, Personal and Existential Nature:

The first question we would raise in this connection is: 'Is Descartes' problem of man or the problems of Descartes merely theoretical or are they of a practical nature, at least in implication?' We find his problem has also a practical implication. This may not be immediately obvious if one only considers the certainty of the existence of the self or the nature of the self. Instead, if one considers the fact of the rational system presented to us, then clearly its practical importance or implication cannot be missed. In order to establish this we have to go even beyond the system, that is to seek its motive i.e., what prompted him to formulate the system, as well as the context in which it was formulated. Once we determine the motive and the reason which prompted Descartes to adopt it we can show that his problem is not exclusively of a theoretical nature, but has a practical, concrete, personal and existential aspect or implication. To put it differently, even if Descartes' problem is of a theoretical nature, still it can be shown that it has at least some kind of practical implication or a close connection with practical problems or issues of the situation in which he, as an individual person as well as a social being. Now let us see how far our contention is true.
If things are viewed from a particular angle, we could say that Descartes wanted to formulate a new system for the defence of the then existing mode of living and behaviour, i.e., theocentric and inter-personal. For, in his time, the life of the people at large was more or less theocentric, in other words, religious and spiritual in content and form. But modern science and mathematics were casting a sceptical and agnostic shadow on the theoretical structure of this theocentric attitude, by raising, indirectly, theoretical difficulties against the existence of God as Creator, the existence of the soul, the belief in the after-world, and so on, on the basis that perceptual observation, experiments and logical demonstration can make nothing of them. This is because modern science considered only empirical evidence as the criterion of valid knowledge.

Further, as we saw earlier (vide pages from 9-22), the developments in mathematics and science not only challenged some particular religious beliefs but also set up an ideal of method and model of demonstrativeness for understanding and accepting religious beliefs. Since they had set up a standard of certainty in their own field, they would naturally require it of other branches of knowledge, specially philosophy and religion. Consequently a scientific outlook which tried to study the reality,
including man himself, in its inherent structure rather than through God as Creator or ultimate cause was becoming dominant.

Descartes, at once a scientist, a philosopher and a devout Christian, could see the potential dangers of the theoretical onslaughts that science and mathematics made upon the concrete life of individual religious men of that time. For example, once modern science raises certain challenges against belief in God as Creator or man and the Universe, it will start a chain reaction in the lives of millions of ordinary Christian people. The infallibility of the Bible, which presents God as the Creator, will automatically be questioned. Already, certain Biblical narrations (e.g. the revolving of the sun round the earth) were challenged directly by Galileo. Once this theoretical criticism was substantiated, the foundations of the Christian religion would be shaken. The net result would be an enormous confusion in the concrete, personal and existential lives of millions of individual Christians.

Sensing the practical dangers implied in the theoretical challenges of science and mathematics against religion, Descartes tried to work out a rational system of philosophy in which man and the world are subsumed under God - a system
as rational as mathematics. That is why Descartes writes:
"For, in the first place, even the principle which I have already taken as a rule, viz., that all the things which we clearly and distinctly conceive are true, is certain only because God is or exists and because he is a Perfect Being, and because all that we possess is derived from him: whence it follows that our ideas or notions, which to the extent of their clearness and distinctness are real, and proceed from God, must to that extent be true... But if we did not know that all which we possess of real and true proceeds from a Perfect and Infinite Being, however clear and distinct our ideas might be, we should have no ground on that account for the assurance that they possessed the perfection of being true".¹ Since this system is a reasoned structure, he could claim that the indirect objections of science and mathematics are not such as would invalidate religion and philosophy. In other words, science and mathematics do not constitute a challenge to religion, or to a belief in the existence of God. That may be why the Cartesian endeavour was directed to proving the existence and nature of man, of God and of the material

¹. Rene Descartes, "Discourse on Method", p.84.
world theoretically. That is why he writes: "... it yet assuredly seems impossible even to persuade infidels of the reality of any religion, or almost even any moral virtue, unless, first of all, these two things (that is, God and the immortality of the soul) be proved to them by natural reason". ¹ Again, he writes: "... that, I can in no way better recommend it to you than by briefly stating the end which I proposed to myself in it. I have always been of the opinion that the two questions respecting God and the soul were the chief of those that ought to be determined by the help of philosophy rather than of theology". ²

Thus, the varying life situations in which Descartes found himself led him to formulate his main theoretical problem as one of certainty and, consequently the problem of the existence and nature of man. In this context, one could claim that, since Descartes wanted to defend the then existing religious life style, his problem had a practical dimension or implication. At least, we can maintain that

1. Rene Descartes, "Discourse on Method", (The Italicised are ours), p.65.
2. Ibid. p.65.
Descartes' was a theoretical endeavour with practical implications. For he had a mission, both theoretical and practical and to defend the existence of God, the soul, and consequently the immortality of the soul, rationally; which, in turn, would support the theistic life prevailing in his days. Since Descartes' problem can be shown as endowed with practical implication, we can characterise it as concrete rather than abstract. For it is a problem faced in man's actual life-situations.

This practical implication was also present in relation to Descartes himself as a concrete, personal and existential individual. And it is because it was important to himself as an individual that he wanted to have a kind of assurance of the existence of God in spite of modern science and mathematics. If it had not been possible to present a system of absolutely certain knowledge of the existence of man, of God, of the soul, etc., it would have definitely affected Descartes' concrete, personal and existential life to a considerable extent. That is why Descartes clearly proclaims, as we have already seen, that all his endeavour is meant "to know Him (i.e., God) and to know himself,"¹

rationally. That is also one of the reasons why he wanted

to prove the existence of God, of oneself, of the immortality

of the soul, etc. Hence it can well be described as a

problem suffered and lived by Descartes himself in the

actual situations of his own concrete, personal and

existential life.

Once Descartes' problem is shown not only as a theoretical

problem but also endowed with practical implications, as a

problem suffered and lived by Descartes as an individual

person in a specific and actual situation of his life, we

can characterise his problem on the basis of the criteria

enunciated by Marcel, concrete, personal and existential.

For, to suffer or live a problem means that the problem is

suffered or lived by an individual in his own actual life.

Further, that problem has a kind of say to a limited

extent at least on the determination of the personality

of the person concerned. For, ultimately the problem is

not merely to know for certain, rationally, the existence

of God and the immortality of the soul, but it is concerned

with a way of life in one's own everyday living. Further,

since the problem of the belief in the existence of God,

the immortality of the soul, etc., comprises the life of

the individual person as a whole throughout his life, it
affects the every mode of one's whole life and life situations. Therefore, one could describe it as an existential one.

Once it can be called a problem suffered by an individual in his life, it can be characterised as a personal problem since it is suffered by him in his personal life as a whole person. Even if this suffered and lived problem is raised in a general manner, still it has its personal implication once we see it related to the context in which it was raised. This will be clear only when we see it from another point of view. For example, suppose that Descartes could not prove the existence of God theoretically. It would definitely have its repercussion in his actual mode of life or behaviour. In sum, we could say that, though on the face of it, Descartes shows the sceptical and agnostic mentality of the scientists towards the existence of God, the immortality of the soul etc., he personally felt the need to find out absolutely certain and valid arguments for the existence of God, the soul etc. This, in turn, would locate the authentic theocentric dimension of his own life.

Then there is another way personal aspect may enter into the problem of Descartes. It is in the way in which
one is impressed by not the knowledge of mathematics but, say, by the knowledge of our own sensations. For example, as we saw earlier, the empiricist philosophers, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, are impressed by the certainty of our knowledge of our own sensations. Hence their's is the problem of proving the existence of something as well as its constitutive elements on the basis of sensations. Whereas, rationalists, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, do not admit the knowledge based on our reason. Hence, they adopt the mathematical knowledge as the model of absolutely certain knowledge. It is on this basis Descartes raises the problem of proving logically or rationally the existence and the constitutive elements of reality including that of man and God as the problem of his philosophy. It is thus the personal element enters into the very problem of Descartes.

The claim that Descartes' thought has practical consequences is objected to on several grounds:

(i) It might be said that the practical consequences need be of one kind; in fact, they can be in the opposite directions. Some one may feel convinced by the arguments and some one may not. Some one who feels convinced by the arguments, say, of Descartes, will be confirmed in his
belief in God, or will not be persuaded by scientific developments to give up his belief in God, or even one who did not earlier believe in God, may come to have a belief in God. On the other hand, one who finds that the arguments cannot prove the existence of God would be confirmed in his denial of the existence of God, or will not be persuaded to stick to his earlier belief in the existence of God, or even one who believe in God may come to deny the existence of God.

(ii) Further, it might be argued that any system, and therefore, the system of Descartes is open to objections, and its claims to prove the existence of the self or of God are not acceptable. If so, there can be no justification for claiming that the system has any practical consequences.

(iii) It might be said that the study of the logical characteristics and relationships of concepts is an activity with an autonomy of its own. Further, philosophy merely describes these relationships, but does not prescribe them. This indeed would be the claim of the linguistic analysis.

But these objections are, even if true, beside the point; because the claim is not that the practical #
consequences follow logically, much less that one type of practical consequences follow. The claim is that these considerations are related, at least psychologically related. Further, this raises the question of the relationship between the philosophical considerations and value, and it is possible to argue on both the sides.

II. Marcel's Problem is Abstract, Impersonal and Non-existential:

Now let us consider whether Marcel's problem is only of a practical and not of a theoretical nature. We start our discussion with the following question: 'Is not Marcel's consideration of such issues as 'Whether a philosopher can doubt about the existence of himself?' or 'Whether man can exist alone or only in relation to the world?' - a theoretical problem? Are these questions either merely practical or also theoretical?

For the purpose of illustration, let us take Marcel's account of man as a 'being-in-the-world'. According to him, 'I' of 'I exist' is not to be considered as an ego isolated from the actual situations in which he exists, as if this 'I' were not at all related to them. Instead, an authentic conception of man is to be realised as an individual person
in intimate and personal relationship with others. For, the family, of which I am a member, the beloved with whom I am fostering an intimate personal relationship, the Union of which I am an active member, etc., have an intimate relation to me, nay, they are, according to Marcel, the constitutive elements of myself without which I cannot even think about myself. To a great extent, the present 'I' is constituted by the cumulative contributions from these situations in which I move. What is there is the 'altogether', myself in my inner structure plus everything around myself. It is in this context that Marcel writes in his 'Mystery of Being'. "The more my existence takes on the character of including others, the narrower becomes the gap which separates it from being; the more, in other words, I am".¹ That means, the authentic nature of man is to be found, not in his isolation from the concrete situation, but in his personal involvement in it. Whatever be his mode of existence, he cannot at any time isolate himself from the actual situations in which he exists and considers himself as complete; for, his human existence basically consists in his 'being-in-the-world' as any embodied person who exists in specific relations

with other persona and things. "My primary experience is about myself who is existing along with other beings or existing in the world which is also indubitable". That means, Marcel argues theoretically that every man in the world is, to be regarded, not only in terms of his inner composition, but also in terms of his relation to other human existences, which are basically connected with him in a personal, concrete and existential manner.

For the purpose of another illustration, let us take the example of Marcel's discussion of the problem of the existence of man, namely, his answer to those who ask the question; 'How can we be certain about the existence of oneself?', 'Can we prove it or not?' According to Marcel, the philosopher would be committing a great mistake in doubting his own existence, because the existence of the philosopher himself can hardly be doubted without it being first presupposed. Suppose a philosopher starts philosophising with the claim that his very existence is to be doubted. What would be the outcome? Absolute nothingness. Now, the philosopher has somehow to arrive at existence. But how? According to the principle already

enunciated, the arrival at existence should be by strictly rational proofs without any presuppositions. This raises the question: 'How can this philosopher be sure whether that which he arrives at is a genuine or a pseudo-idea of existence?' For that purpose, he should have a clear conception of what is a genuine idea of existence and what is a pseudo-idea of existence. Wherefrom can he get it? What is there is only absolute nothingness. From nothingness nothing can be deduced. Hence, Marcel contends that unless and until the philosopher presupposes the fact of at least his own existence, he cannot take a step forward in his philosophical exploration, whether his aim is the absolute certainty of human knowledge or the building up a system of knowledge of absolute certainty. That is why Marcel writes: "I would like at the outset to show that there is nothing problematical in existence and that if scepticism sets on to attack it, it tends to destroy itself". 1

Marcel's argument runs as follows: "To doubt existence is to say that it is not possible to affirm validity regarding anything that that exists. But, as we immediately see, this doubt itself presupposes a definite idea of existence

that we hesitate to apply. Thus it seems that between this idea and the experience there is no guaranteed contact. We do not set out from a this which certainly does exist, so as to ask whether that also exists. We doubt the application of this idea considered as a whole. But, how, then, are we to avoid being tempted to conclude that this idea is a pseudo-idea, that it has no hall-mark to guarantee it and that it must be thrown on to the scrapheap as a useless tool? Thus, when this scepticism goes a little deeper, I think it is inevitably converted into a negative doctrine.¹

Once we analyse the above mentioned arguments of Marcel, we can contend that there is an attempt in Marcel to give a theoretical basis to what he says by way of theoretical arguments. However, simple or limited, still there is an attempt on his part to give answers which have a theoretical basis. In this way, we can bring out the theoretical character of Marcel's problem of human existence. Further, in the course of the development of his philosophisation he has to consider and, in fact, he does consider, many problems, at least on the theoretical basis of what he

has to say. The same point is stressed by Debabrata Sinha when he criticises Existentialism as a whole. He writes: "Even the existentialist philosophers themselves, in their discussions on the notion of existence, tend to conceptu-alise - or essentialize existence".¹

Once Marcel's problem of man is shown as being dealt with the help of theoretical arguments, we can argue that his problem is also of an abstract, impersonal and non-existential nature, because, the question is not, in fact, raised in relation to himself. For, here the 'I' is considered as a general or universal 'I'. This can be shown once we relate it to the answer he gives to this question. For the discussion and the answer to this problems of the doubtability of man's existence as well as that of altruistic dimension of man will be seen to be the same for all.

Further, Marcel's problem is of an abstract character or dimension, since it is raised as a theoretical and epistemological, rather than as one's own practical problem. Besides, it is tackled also theoretically, and in relation

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to human reasoning, rather than in relation to the total person, because the problem, 'Whether the existence of man can also be doubted?' or 'Whether man is to be considered in his inner structure or in relation to others?' is meant to satisfy the rational requirements of the concrete individual. Marcel's answer is worked out by showing the inherent rational difficulties in the very question. Owing to this, we could characterise Marcel's problem as an abstract one on the same grounds that Marcel also makes use of to explain that the Cartesian problem is an abstract one.

Since this problem of the doubtability of the existence of oneself is not going to affect the very existence of the person concerned or his mode of living, we can characterise it as a non-existential problem. Hence, in sum, we can interpret Marcel's problem as endowed with abstract, impersonal and non-existential dimensions on the basis of the very criteria set by Marcel himself. If we are right in all these contentions, then we can argue that Marcel's characterisation of his own problem as well as that of others cannot be held valid and relevant. At the least, his characterisation needs some additional qualification.

III. The Actual Difference Between Marcel's and Descartes' Problems:

We have now considered Marcel's view that his problem is
concrete, personal and existential, whereas Descartes' is abstract, impersonal and non-existential. We have seen that, though there is a plausibility in this way of drawing a distinction, the distinction is drawn in too sharp a manner. We find that, though the Cartesian account of the problem shows it to be a theoretical one, it also has practical implications. This is clear if we consider the context. Insofar as this is so, the problem has also a concrete, personal and existential aspect. On the other hand, though Marcel's problem is a practical one, it is not possible for it to escape a theoretical character. And these theoretical considerations are of an abstract, impersonal and non-existential character.

But does this mean that there is no difference between Descartes and Marcel with reference to the nature of their respective problems? Or is the difference between the two only a matter of emphasis? It is tempting to describe the difference between the two as a matter only of emphasis. Because one could claim, in the first instance, that both Descartes and Marcel are dealing, in the ultimate analysis, with different aspects of one and the same problem, namely, the problem of facing the challenge of science and mathematics to religion and its way of living. For, in the case
of Descartes, he is making an endeavour to show that the developments in modern science and mathematics do not constitute a theoretical challenge to religion or to a belief in the existence of God by developing a reasoned structure of system of philosophy in which man and the material world are subsumed under God - a system constructed more or less like a mathematical system in which God has a supreme place.

Whereas, in the case of Marcel, one can interpret the problem as a problem of creatively responding to the challenge of modern science and mathematics in its practical field against the religious way of living. For, in the first instance, the processes of man treated as a non-free, functional and indistinguishable entity in a crowd, materialised through the massive industrialisation and technologisation of contemporary life, is a direct challenge to the religious way of living which is mainly based on the understanding of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal Brotherhood of humanity. Secondly, in the ultimate analysis, this industrialisation and technologisation is more or less an offshoot or the practical application of modern science and mathematics. In another sense, one can say that modern technology is more or less an applied science. Hence, in the ultimate analysis, both
the problem and the answer of the philosophy of Marcel can
be seen as the positive response of a philosopher of
religion to the theoretical challenge of the science and
mathematics of Descartes' time as concretised in the
everyday living and the inter-personal relationship of
human individuals of Marcel's time.

And then we have seen that Descartes' very theoretical
question has a practical implication, while Marcel's very
practical question is endowed with a theoretical aspect.
Hence one could plausibly claim that, in the case of
Descartes, the problem of man affected directly the theory
and then indirectly the human life; that is, his is a
problem of man theoretically practical, or more theoretical
rather than practical. Hence, the issues Descartes raises
will, mainly, be of a theoretical nature, which, in turn,
will affect, indirectly at least, the practical side of
the theocentric way of human living and behaviour. Whereas,
in the case of Marcel, the problem of man affected
directly human life and then, indirectly theory, which means that
his is a problem of man practically theoretical, or more
practical than theoretical. Hence, the issues Marcel
raises will, mainly be of the practical consequence of
the concretisation of modern science in the life of man;
which, in turn, will affect indirectly the theoretical side of the philosophy of man. So, one could claim that the real difference between Marcel and Descartes in this connection is more or less one of emphasis, either on the theoretical or on the practical aspects of the same problem.

But we would claim that, actually, the difference is greater, and that on two accounts. In the first instance, the concrete implication of Descartes' problem is of a general, or social character. It means, that his theoretical problems, which have got a practical implication, are not raised with reference to a specific person in connection with a specific situation. For example, in Cartesian thought, what is shown is that science cannot take the place of God. For thus he constructed a system, more or less similar to that of mathematics, in which God has the supreme place. Therefore, the place of God in the life of man remains. People, at large, need not change the theistic dimension of their living since there is no theoretical challenge to that dimension. But even those who accept belief in God, or retain their belief in God, have to face the problem of deciding in a specific situation what needs to be done to be a believer in God in the real sense of the term. For example, with reference to the following problems,
namely, 'Will it be proper to forgive one's wife, or will it not be proper?' or 'Will it be right to fight a war, or will it not be right?' each individual will have to work out the solution for himself, as a man of God, with reference to the demands of the specific situations in which he exists. These practical and concrete details are not worked out by Descartes' theoretical thought endowed with practical implications. Whereas the practical implications of his theoretical problems will only be felt directly in a social level rather than in an individual level. That is why, even though concrete, personal and existential implications are also there in Descartes' problem, still the problem and the solution to it are the same for different people. At the same time this implication at a social level has a relationship to the implication at an individual level. Hence what we want to stress here is that the practical implication of the theoretical problem of Descartes is felt directly at the social level, which, in turn, has a bearing on the individual level in an indirect manner.

As against this, Marcel is concerned with specific problems with reference to the specific situations relating to a specific individual person. These will be different for different people. Therefore, the concrete implication
is felt directly not in the social level but in the individual level. That means, there is a specificity and personalness in Marcel's problem which is not in Descartes'. This is true, all through, of the characteristics of concreteness, personalness, and existentialness of Marcel's problem. What Marcel does is to describe, in the first instance, the direction of a theistic life concretely and practically realised. Then he illustrates the minute details of the implication of this life as concretely, personally and existentially understood by a specific individual with reference to the specific situations in which he lives. Hence, the practical implications will be of a different nature to different people, depending upon the specificity of the persons involved as well as the specificity of the situations in which these persons find themselves. Hence, the impact of these problems on them will be of a different nature. Consequently the solutions also will be of different nature.

This is not surprising when one considers the different contexts in which their respective problems arose. In the case of Descartes, as we have seen, in our account of the context of his thought, the developments in mathematics and science not only challenged certain beliefs of religion but set up an ideal of method and demonstrativeness for beliefs
to be acceptable. But Descartes, through his system of philosophy, could show that, because of the development of science and mathematics, one need not abandon his belief in God and consequently change his theistically orientated life. But this way of showing will not decide how one, as an individual person, is going to decide a particular issue of his life in relation to his belief in God in a particular situation. Hence, the practical implication of Descartes' argument is of a general or social nature rather than referring to the specific nature of an issue of the person, in a situation. That means, the concrete implications of Descartes' problem are not different for different individuals.

Whereas, in the case of Marcel, the problem is one of presenting an alternative to the contemporary industrialized way of living and becoming free from the de-humanising trends of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation. Hence, it is a problem of life, which one has to face in a specific situation. And, since the situation of an individual must vary from time to time and from place to place, his problem will take a different shape with each situation. Hence, this problem is a problem which continues to exist in one form or another, depending upon the situation in which one lives irrespective of the fact
that one has solved this problem with reference to a particular situation of one's actual life. Since it is a continuous problem owing to the varying situational impact, it cannot be solved once and for all. For, each situation will change the nature and the form of the problem, and consequently that of the solution required. That means, each time a man encounters this problem of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of human life with reference to each situation, he will have to tackle it anew because of the specific situational demands. Further, it is a problem one will not be able to tackle in his social life, but only in his private life as an individual person, since the whole life of the society is mechanised, functionalised and bureaucratised. In other words, one can tackle these problems by trying to consider oneself and others as free, non-functional and personal; whereas one cannot make others behave accordingly. Hence, in sum, it is a specific problem a specific individual has to face in a specific situation. Consequently, there is a kind of specificity and personalness in Marcel which is absent in Descartes.

Now there is another point where the two theories are similar as well as dissimilar. For example, both views are similar in the sense that both have a theoretical aspect.
We have already seen it. But along with this similarity there is also a dissimilarity between the two views. The theoretical aspects of their problems are different, and so are their practical aspects. The difference between them is this, that, in the case of Descartes, the theoretical problem is to make an attempt to evolve a model of certainty, and then introduce that model in philosophy. Then he has to work out the consequence of introducing that model of certainty in philosophy. For example, dissatisfied with the state of affairs in philosophy in the face of the standard of certainty achieved in science and mathematics, he tried to construct a rational system which is more or less similar to the mathematical system which he has accepted as the model of certainty. For this purpose, at the outset, he tries to establish a certain principle in his philosophy (namely, the absolutely certain knowledge of one's own existence as a thinking being, 'I think, therefore I am') which is as certain as anything in mathematics and science. Then he goes on to discover the criteria of truth, namely, clarity and distinctness. Afterwards, on the basis of these two, he establishes the existence, in the first instance, of God and then, of the material world, the constitutive elements of man, of the world, etc., so that what ultimately one gets is a system which is similar to the mathematical system.
But, in Marcel's case, the intention behind raising the theoretical problem can be explained in the following manner, namely, if this is the concrete problem, what must be the theoretical foundation for it? And the theoretical problem and also the theoretical discussion, are, really, an attempt to support the practical problem of his philosophy and the way of dealing with it. That means, unlike in the case of Descartes, it is not realised in the acceptance of the particular model which is theoretically sound and certain, and in its introduction in philosophy in order to tackle certain other problems. Instead, in the first instance, he raises a practical problem and then tries to solve it. But, at the same time, he wants to justify theoretically his solution of his practical problem. For that purpose he raises the problem of justifying his practical problem as well as tackling it as a theoretical issue and also tackles this theoretical problem of supporting through a theoretical discussion. Hence, the need of a theoretical problem as well as a theoretical solution of that problem. For example, as a solution to the problem of mechanisation, functionalisation and bureaucratisation of life, he introduces the life of fidelity, hope and love realised both in the human level and on the divine level, by which he could claim to have shown a life where people
will consider themselves as well as others as free, total
and personal individuals rather than non-free, functional
and indistinguishable in a crowd. Now, the justification
of this life of fidelity, hope and love is done by Marcel
by showing that the authentic human personality, in fact,
consists of these qualities or characteristics. For this
purpose he introduces the theoretical discussion whether
man is a being in intimate relation with others, or
whether man is an egoistic creature, a being isolated from
others. And he tries to argue that man is authentic only
when he is involved intimately as a free and total person
in the situations, both external and the internal, in
which he exists. Hence, the purpose of his theoretical
discussion is only to support the raising and the solving
of the practical problem.

In this context, by way of conclusion, we would say
that both Marcel's and Descartes' problem has a theoretical,
abstract, impersonal and non-existential as well as
practical, concrete, personal and existential aspects; but
these are themselves different in the sense that in
Descartes the practical implication of his problem of man
is of a social or general character, whereas in the case
of Marcel, the practical problem is of an individual or a
particular character. Further, in Descartes, the theoretical aspect of his problem is to make an endeavour to establish a model of certainty, and introduce it in philosophy, and then work out the consequences of introducing it in philosophy. Whereas, in Marcel, the theoretical aspect is to support the practical problem and consequently to work out a theoretical foundation for it.