

Answer the following questions:

1. Discuss critically Cartesian notion of Substance. Do you think that there is an asymmetrical relationship in the trio - Substance Attribute Mode? Explain.

Ans: Descartes constructs a metaphysical system consisting of three substances, viz; God, Mind and Matter. It is clear that we are directly conscious of our selves as thinking beings and perceive that all thought implies some object of thought. Now from one such particular thought viz; that of the most perfect being we arrive at the existence of God. Next, from another idea, viz; the idea of extension we arrive at the existence of the external world. But this is not as direct as in the case of the idea of self and the idea of God. It is rather indirect and inferential in nature. Being opposed to the mind, matter is extended and is ~~wholly~~ wholly governed by mechanical laws. Bodies are independent of our thinking and hence it is called a Substance. A Substance is a thing which so exist that it needs no other things ~~which~~ for its existence. Substance is self-existing while God is Absolute Substance, Mind and Matter are relative Substances. They are independent of one and other, but both depend on God. Attribute is the essential property of

Substance and so two relative Substances, mind and matter are known through their attributes of consciousness and extension respectively. The attribute can manifest itself in different ways or modes or modification. Substance and attribute can be conceived without modes, but modes cannot be conceived without Substance and attribute. We cannot conceive figure without extension, nor motion except in extended space, nor imagination or will, except in a thinking Time. We can, on the other hand, conceive extension without figure or motion, and thought without imagination or sensation. The substance cannot change its attributes but it can change its modes; a body will always be extended but its figure need not remain the same. We have seen that Descartes thought that two Substances, viz; Mind and Matter possess absolutely anti-~~metaphysical~~^{theoretical} qualities as their essences, i.e.; Consciousness and extension respectively. They are thus entirely distinct and independent of each other. Now the problem arises: how can these two Substances, viz; Mind and Matter be brought together and especially since we find that in human life we actually come across mutual interaction between Mind and Body. But how such interaction of mind and body possible,

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if they are really independent and opposed substances? Descartes's solution of this problem is neither very decisive nor satisfactory. All that he said is that the relation between them is not one of intimate interaction, not that one can be expected to cause the other to change, but whatever may be the relation, it is certain that they mutually influence each other in our actual life. Bodily changes produce sensation in the mind, mental volition, on the other hand, produce movements in the body.

CRITICISM :- This explanation of Descartes is far from being satisfactory. Descartes, in fact, has not really explained the actual fact of interaction between mind and body but has merely assigned a place or point of interaction between them and the real point is left unexplained.

Again, Descartes' conception of mind as characterised by thought and that of matter as characterised by extension involves dualism. This definition of substance is unsatisfactory in so far as two relative substances cannot be called substances at all. Descartes is inconsistent in view of the fact that mind and matter are related to the will of God. The whole basis of the relation between mind and body is related to the

Divine will and here in lies the basis of occasionalism strict dualism facts to account for any relation between mind and body, mind and God and Matter and God.

Descartes defined substances as that which depends upon nothing but itself for its existence. From this it logically follows that there can be but only one substance in existence, for if there is more than one substance they become related to each other and ultimately the conception of other. But Descartes, inspite of this logical consequence, believes in the existence of more than one substance, for him, God is the absolute substance and besides God, mind and matter are supposed to be ~~two~~ mutually independent but created substances. But the recognition of mind and matter as two substances, though both depend upon God for their existence, is a glaring inconsistency in his doctrine of substance.

2. Explain the Method of Descartes.

Ans: Descartes has noted that deduction alone could yield certain results and experiential inference could not yield errorless results. But he did not that these methods dealt with two different kinds of propositions. (Descartes therefore was very

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much concerned with the enquiry
into the method of philosophising.)
(He had proposed to lay down
thirtysix rules of which he mentioned
thirtyone in the Regulae.) The
object of Cartesian methodology was
to apply mathematical method of
Philosophy with a view to obtaining
certitude in knowledge. (As a result
of his enquiry, he laid down four
broad rules for his self guidance.

(i) Never to accept anything as true (unless
I clearly know) (it as such.)
(Descartes believes that errors arise)
(from poorly comprehended) (experiences)
or from hasty, (groundless and
preconceived notions.) (The only remedy,
therefore, he thinks, lies in resolute
refusal) (to believe in what is not
clearly and distinctly perceived.)

(ii) (Divide up) (each of the difficulties)
(under examination) (into as many
parts) (as possible.) (We begin with
something vague) (and indefinite) (and
later on, step by step,) (attain clearness
and distinctness.)

(iii) (Commence with the simplest objects)
(and ascend, step by step) (to the
more complex.) (The explanation must
be ordered and systematic.) (Here
Descartes is in favour of deductive
use (in Philosophical thinking,) (for he
implies that later steps, (should be

clearly deducible from earlier ones.

- (iv) In every case make the enumeration so complete that I might be assured that nothing was omitted. The complex thing can be understood when we know its (a) Several Constituent factors separately, clearly and distinctly, and when we (b) know the order or system in which they are found.

Descartes, being himself a great mathematician, was struck by the excellence of mathematics. Therefore, in order to make Philosophy truly scientific he hoped to make its method patterned on mathematics. Now in Geometry we first of all start with a few self-evident axioms and then reach the whole body of its conclusions by means of simple elaborative deduction. Now in the same way in Philosophy too, he tells us, to find out "by an inductive enumeration and a critical sifting of all ideas. ... a single certain point to deduce all further truths. The first task of Philosophy is analytic, the second synthetic."

17/10/22

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Ideas of Descartes.

Ans: Descartes has been a real initiator of modern rationalism. First, as mentioned before he laid down

that reason is the sole arbiter of Philosophical dispute.

(Descartes is the founder of rationalism in its distinguishing feature by pointing out that real, universal and necessary knowledge is found in innate ideas alone.)

~~However~~ No amount of sense-experience can give us universal knowledge for necessity the former is particular. As such the universal principle is supplied by the mind to the sense data. Now divested of the inadequate and mediaeval expression, the doctrine of innate ideas really means that mind is not totally receptive but is also active. It supplies the active formative principles of knowledge. In this broad and sympathetic interpretation of innate ideas, Descartes seems to be essentially correct. Even the most sympathetic interpretation would point out that Descartes was rather vague in his doctrine of innate ideas. Descartes at last recognised the dual role of innate ideas.

- (1) Since the essence of the mind is consciousness or thought so there are certain ideas which belong to the mind alone. Specially the innate ideas are characterised by clearness and distinctness. In this sense innate ideas meant pure and abstract thoughts. The best example of this is the innate

idea of God defining His characters as infinite, perfect etc.

- (ii) However, Descartes was also obliged to extend the innateness to sense ideas as well. First, he could not find their place in the mental series as they seemed to be caused by something external to the mind. But afterwards, he had to yield. The sense experience of colour, taste, etc., are not in objects and therefore, they belong to the physical existence. Descartes had to concede even though reluctantly that the ideas of sense must be natural to the mind, i.e.; innate. Upon the second view, then ~~is~~ instead of the innate ideas forming a special class, innateness becomes characteristic of every idea. In ^{any} case the doctrine of innate ideas was suggestive of future development in the modern stream of thought. There is yet another element in the Cartesian rationalism of modern development. This element consists in showing that certain knowledge is found in the analysis of Self Consciousness.

The Cogito Ergo Sum of Descartes led Leibnitz to define the monads in terms of the self. This finally led in Kant and the subsequent idealists to the statement that the mind is the legislator to things. As a matter of fact

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in spite of dualism Descartes really had an idealistic leaning in as much as he laid down that the mind alone can be known with certainty and the matter can be known only indirectly through the veracity of God.

