There are two main reasons which make it difficult to discover the nature of knowledge. The first is that most people imagine that bodies are as capable of knowledge as minds and they gradually get so used to thinking of the act of knowing by comparison with accidents of matter that it is very difficult subsequently to get them to form a different idea of it and to teach them to distinguish the properties of one from the other. The second reason is that people almost always confuse the ideas or notions which the mind perceives immediately with the physical species which are used by the imagination and the senses. That is why, having shown that bodies do not think and that they are completely deprived of knowledge, we should try to show what is the nature of the corporeal species which come from objects and are received in the sense organs, and what is the nature of those ideas or intellectual and spiritual notions which our mind perceives in order to think.

Before beginning the discussion proper, I should advise you that although in Mr Descartes' writing the word 'idea' is applied just as readily to bodily images (that is, to the impressions of objects on our senses with which the thoughts of the mind are linked) as to the ideas which belong specifically to the mind and are the forms of its thoughts, in this chapter, however, and even in the whole treatise, in order to avoid confusion and equivocation I never use the word 'idea' except in this latter sense, and I call the other ideas 'corporeal species'. Having made that stipulation, we then define ideas or spiritual notions, following Mr Descartes, as that form of all our thoughts by the immediate perception of which we know these same thoughts. Thus once we express anything in words and understand what we are saying, it is clear from that fact alone that we have in ourselves an idea of the reality signified by our words. And we shall apply the term 'corporeal species' to the impression which an external or internal object makes on our external or internal senses and with which the thought or sensation we have on that occasion is linked. But we shall not explain yet whether this impression, to which some of our thoughts are thus united, is only a modification made by an object in the flow of animal spirits, in opening up some of the pores of the brain's ventricles where the nerve fibres on which the object acts terminate, as you could have read in Mr. Descartes'
Treatise on Man,\textsuperscript{59} or whether these species are little images which our soul uses to conceive of the objects which impinge on our senses and by means of which many people are convinced that all our knowledge is acquired.

To clarify properly this issue, which is of great significance, I think I should first explain in general the nature of these corporeal species and the difference between them and mental ideas, and then show what is the essence of the latter, their cause and their distinctiveness.

The famous physician Fracastoro, in his treatise on the understanding, thinks that the human mind does not contemplate any species other than the little images which he thinks external objects send to our senses and imagination.\textsuperscript{60} A big mistake, but a common one; for there is hardly anyone who does not imagine that their soul is like a little angel lodged in their brain where it contemplates the species which come to it from objects, like so many little pictures which represent to it everything going on outside, almost like a man who is looking in a mirror. I know that I will be told that most other philosophers do not agree with him and that they distinguish between the species of the imagination and the ideas of the understanding. However I also realize that even those philosophers speak about them in their books only as if they did not believe that they were distinct from one another and that, in everything they say about the action of the senses and imagination, they make it seem as if they do not believe the human mind needs any ideas other than these little flying images, which some call real species and others call intentional species.\textsuperscript{61} This mistake, which is very damaging to those who wish to know the nature of their mind, is one of the prejudices of our childhood, during which the human mind performs no operations which are not accompanied by some bodily movements and has no thought which is not caused and supported by some corporeal species or, if there are some, it does not reflect on them and is convinced that the body to which it is joined is not distinct from it, that the two are just the same thing, and that the ideas it has are not distinct from the material species which always accompany them. That happens because the mind at that time cannot act through the pure understanding for reasons which we shall give below and it does not notice any way to rid itself of this belief.

This mistake causes our mind to make another; for insofar as the natural light tells us that the causes of our ideas must contain formally or at least eminently the qualities which they represent and must therefore be in some way similar to the

\textsuperscript{59} Treatise on Man, Part V, §§ 66 ff.

\textsuperscript{60} Hieronymi Fracastorii Veronensis, Opera Omnia (Venice: apud luntas, 1555): Turrius sive De Intellectu Dialogus, Bk. I, p. 166 B-C: 'Understanding certainly seems to be nothing but the representation of an object by means of the reception of a species of the object in the interior of the soul.'

\textsuperscript{61} Cf. Descartes, Dioptrics, Discourse I, AT V, 85: CSM I, 153-4; 'your mind will be delivered from all those little images flitting through the air, called "intentional forms," which so exercise the imagination of the philosophers.'