Chapter I

0. Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts. Part I deals with the Approaches To The Study of Religion. Different approaches to the study of religion are examined in order to highlight their positive contribution as well as limitation. Each approach, while contributing to a greater understanding of various dimensions of the religious phenomenon, tends to be restrictive and even reductionistic in character. Phenomenology of religion, however, rises above such reductionistic tendencies and attempts to encompass religious phenomena in their entirety.

Part II deals with the Phenomenological Notion of life-world in Husserl and in Merleau-Ponty. The Husserlian notion of life-world is qualified by Merleau-Ponty by calling it the lived-through-world. Merleau-Ponty recasts the very process of cognition in a new mould in which he accords primacy to perception of the phenomenal world which is the foundation of all human knowing. Consequently, consciousness is to be understood no longer as disembodied but preeminently embodied in a concrete world.
Part I

Approaches To The Study of Religion

Study of religion today, more than ever, is important and complex. As a major issue in human life, it can neither be brushed aside, nor can it be left to take care of itself. It demands our attention. This is because religion, among various facets that constitute human life, occupies a prime place in the life of man.

Man is a finite being constantly seeking to reach the shores of infinitude. He is not satisfied with his finiteness, consequently searches for 'something' deeper and enduring. Obviously, this deep and enduring dimension cannot be provided by that which is temporary, transient and finite. No ideology, no institution, no system, however lofty and commendable they may be, cannot fulfill this inner aspiration of man, unless of course, it leads him out of his finitude.

Religion in the widest sense seems to be doing that function in human life. Each religion with its belief systems, creeds, customs, rituals, myths, symbols, ethics and the like attempts to provide man with a path that promises to lead him out of his finitude - a passage to liberation or salvation. Religion, however primitive or developed (in the sense of conceptualization of belief system and formulation of creed) it may be, brings man face to face with his limitedness and suggests ways and means to overcome it. As for example, Hinduism places before its adherents sanādāna dharma as a means for achieving mukti or liberation from bondage (samsāra); Christianity exhorts its followers to emulate the ideals and values of Jesus Christ in order to obtain salvation and thus eternal life; Buddhism prescribes to its followers the eight fold ethical path for attaining nirvana.
Each religion began, as it were, with an originary experience of its founder or founders. Through that originary experience the founder or founders were able to diagnose the perpetual human predicament, that is, a judgment focusing attention on some flaw or defect in the natural existence that stands as an obstacle between ourselves and the ideal envisioned by a religion or religions.

The founder or founders of various religions do not stop with the diagnosis; they go on to proposing a strategy in overcoming such an impasse. William James in his well-known book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, says that both the diagnosis and the strategy of redemption derive from the lives and insights of the founder or founders, sages and prophets upon which the religious traditions rest. It would therefore be no exaggeration to claim that religion, in some form or the other is here to stay, as long as man's quest for transcending his finitude remains.

Religion not only answers the personal quest for transcendence but also forms itself into an integral part of social and cultural life of man. The history of the world bears that out succinctly. W.H. McNeill, in his work, *The Rise of the West*, gives an overview of the general history of the world with an intention to bring out the significance of religions within that history. It is not then incorrect to say that until the period of modern secular West religions have played an inherently important role in the world history. In fact there had been an overlapping of religious and cultural history because of the close affinity they had maintained.

However, studying religion is also a demanding task. That it is becoming very complex is evident from the numerous and voluminous works appearing on religious studies. While the ever increasing literature on religious studies is a step
in the direction of progress in religious scholarship, it also presents the task of studying religion stupendous and all the more difficult today.

It is complex also for another reason, for there exists no common consensus regarding the exact nature of religion. In fact, there are conflicting views among scholars in regard to the meaning of religion. The term 'religion' is used both in a narrow as well as in a wide sense. In the narrow sense of the term, it is prescriptive: it identifies with particular religious traditions - with their scriptures, traditions, ethics, rituals, myths, institutions and so on. In a wider sense, however, it encompasses not only particular religious traditions but even the secular ideologies or world-views as Ninian Smart understands it. He explicitly advocates the use of the expression world-view in place of the term religion.

I use the word world-view even though it has manifest disadvantages ... It is not altogether a natural word yet in English. It is not a sound embodied enough, whereas religion suggests ritual practices and the like. But it is about the best there in English, and I would suggest that it supplies a missing category in English, as a genus-word to cover both traditionally religious systems of belief and practice and secular systems of a similar nature ... I would urge that we bear in mind something wider than Religion, namely, world-view.⁵

It is to be noted here that there have been modern powerful critiques of the Western notion of religion. W.C. Smith, opines in his book, The Meaning and End of Religion, that the terms, 'religion' and 'religions' have become reified and obsolescent. He makes a long and insightful analysis of the use of the word,
religion in the Western world and concludes that it has been used in four different ways. It has been used to refer (1) to the personal piety of an individual, (2) to a system of beliefs, values and practices seen as ideals in ‘true Christianity’ (3) to an overt system of beliefs, values and practices seen as a sociological and historical phenomena as in ‘the Christianity of history’, and (4) to point to religion in general as a ‘generic summation.’ Smith calls for dropping of the use of the term religion, except in a personalistic sense, because it is ‘confusing, unnecessary and distorting.’ His main objections to the use of the term religion are: (i) it tends to be static, while the history is under a process of constant flux, and (ii) as a reified term, it leaves out the transcendent element in religious life.\(^7\)

There are also difficulties in using the word ‘religion’ cross-culturally since it is essentially culture-bound. Brelich is of the opinion that the term religion has been defined at a special epoch, and in a specific context. It has evolved through many changes in history. According to him, the concept of religion applies to the whole set of phenomena that separates religious from other cultural manifestations. Religion, therefore, should be discussed with reference to a particular ‘human group’ and society because empirically religion exists for individuals or group of individuals.\(^8\)

Although there are genuine difficulties in studying religion due to various factors, it demands greater and deeper attention to itself. An obvious predicament that confronts every student of religion is to delimit the scope of his subject. In other words what exactly passes for religion? Can we define it exhaustively, or is it better left for a working definition?
1.1. Methodological Considerations

1.1.1. Defining Religion

The expression religion is derived from a Latin term *religare* that refers to the union between man and the supernatural being or beings. This is the usual lexicographical definition of the term religion. But this definition is not accurate because there are religions (for example, Buddhism Jainism and Confucianism and the like) that do not subscribe to the very idea of the existence of such a supernatural being. What is more, even some other secular movements, such as communism, various forms of nationalism which deny the existence of God, nonetheless demand a 'religious' commitment from their adherents. In such case how are we to define religion? Can it be defined in a narrow sense which refers only to the theistic religions? Or should it include all movements (religious as well as secular) irrespective of their lack of strict religious character? In other words, what are the constitutive elements of a definition of religion?

It is opined by many scholars today that in the absence of an universally accepted definition of religion, it is better that we attempt only to describe it. William P. Alston holds that it is difficult to provide a definition of the predicate 'religion' either in terms of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which determine class membership or in terms of genetic and non-genetic interpretation of the 'essence' of religion. So he follows the Wittgensteinian approach that is close to the common usage of the term - 'religion.' According to Alston, when a number of features which when manifest in various measures and present to a sufficient degree then we are justified in calling a particular object 'religion.' These features,
he calls as 'religion-making features.'9 Hegel holds the view that religion is a living process. It involves in the actual self-elevation from the finite to infinite life. And in this process of self-elevation alone do we understand the unification of many within the One without the dissolution of the former.10 If Hegel gave such an idealistic view of religion, Schleiermacher would emphasize historical nature of religions. He contends that the ideals of religion have undergone historical development. However, his attitude to the historicity of religion is rather ambivalent.11

Ugo Bianchi furthers what Schleiermacher has suggested with regard to the historical nature of religion and says that the problem of definition of religion can only be solved through inductive research. And according to him:

it is not a matter of a selection of facts or aspects operated a priori, but rather a matter of penetration. This penetration is realized through the progressive and articulated extension of the historical knowledge of the inquirer, in relation to the different milieus that he is methodically considering ... Only this dialectic between contact with the object and progress in the conceptual determination of it makes it possible to surmount the impasse ... of a definition that is at the same time the pre-supposition and the aim of research12

There are other thinkers who view religion in contradistinction with other segments of human life. Cornelius P. Tiele suggests such a definition of religion. "By religion we mean for the present nothing different from what is generally understood by that term - that is to say, the aggregate of all those phenomena
which are invariably termed religious, in contradistinction to ethical, aesthetical, political and others."¹³

Frederick J. Streng, however, views religion as a means for ultimate personal transformation. It is a practical means for achieving the transformation that is closely bound up with four parallel notions of ultimacy. They are personally apprehending the holy; establishing the sacred through myth and sacrament; living in harmony with eternal law as perceived by seers and the learned tradition; and attaining freedom through spiritual insight.¹⁴ What shall we consider as religion in our understanding of it? It is a fact that most people, even if they encounter religion for the first time, have some idea of what religion is, though often limited. Generally everyone understands what it means to believe in God, spirits, ethical principles, salvation or liberation, etc. Such common notions of religion provide sufficient ground for our exploration of religion at the moment.¹⁵

1.2. Different Approaches to Studying Religion – A Historical Overview

Just as there are definitions of religion from a variety of viewpoints, so also there are different approaches to the study of religion, as evident from the voluminous data available on religion. The whole question of studying religion today is complex, mainly due to the absence of any consensus regarding the precise nature of religion. There are conflicting views among scholars with regard to the meaning of both ‘science’ and ‘religion.’ Such divergent views on methodology ranges from objective factors of religion to its subjective dimensions; from primarily qualitative to quantitative evaluation of religious data. Such pluralistic approaches to studying religion today, however, are not totally disconcerting. For each
approach has its strength and purpose, and accordingly has contributed towards a greater understanding of religion. Plurality of approaches, not only in religious studies, but in any realm of human inquiry is a fact to content with to-day, says Ursula King.¹⁶

1.2.1. Theological Approach

Religious studies, for a long time in the West, have been conventionally synonymous with theological investigations carried out in Christianity. Accordingly, theology is specifically concerned with the knowledge of God or transcendence. As such it is normative, apologetic, and its concepts are usually developed in Christianity. Robert Cummings says,

...theological studies also go on to examine what ought to be said about the true, the good, and the obligatory in normative religions, issues, to assess whether religions have it right, and to make practical judgments about how to face those issues both within and without institutionalized religious practice. Theological studies in this sense are normative disciplines going beyond description or any attempt to limit themselves to free value analysis.¹⁷

Theological investigations have their own agenda. It first of all presupposes the validity of the revelation enshrined in the scriptures and established in traditions. Any furtherance of theological insights has to limit itself within the ambiance of the scriptures and traditions, violation of which is treated as heresy, deviation from the official position of the religion. From its own vantage point it surveys other religions, more often than not, considering them as belonging to less developed
stages of human consciousness. Therefore, it can be said that theological investigations tended to be limiting and leaves out of its purview a large sections of human beings who follow other religions.

1.2.2. Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy of religion has already been existing for a long time in the human history. It is the philosophical thinking about religion. It is critical and rational in its approach to the fundamental tenets of religion. John Hick, one of the best known authorities on philosophy of religion says that philosophy of religion,

"seeks to analyze concepts such as God, holy, salvation, worship, creation, sacrifice, eternal life, etc., and to determine the nature of religious utterances in comparison with those of everyday life, scientific discovery, morality and the imaginative expressions of the arts."\(^1\)

As the very nature of philosophy of religion is critical, it does not accept any religious claim uncritically. Even the very central religious claims are subjected to critical scrutiny. In this sense philosophy of religion is analogous to similar philosophical efforts involving other human disciplines, such as philosophy of science, philosophy of art, philosophy of education, etc. In the case of philosophy of science the philosopher inquires into what lies beneath the surface. The scientist may accept the physical laws of uniformity or cause and effect relationships. But the philosopher asks the meaning of the scientist's assumptions. Similarly, a philosopher of education does not actually involve himself in the pedagogical process but he studies the methods, assumptions and objectives of education.
Philosophy of religion, similarly, examines the claims, presuppositions and belief systems of religions. It does not systematically restate the teachings of a religion but rather questions their rational basis. As for example, Christianity claims that God exists. Philosophy of religion would investigate the proofs for establishing such a claim. And if it is proved that God exists, then other related problems such as the problem of evil, suffering, etc. are brought to the fore for investigation.

Paul Tillich, however, redefines the role of philosophy of religion. It has been defined conventionally as a detached study of the concepts of religion in order to clarify the character, structure and dynamics of the phenomenon of religion. But Tillich gives a more positive and constructive task to philosophy of religion. In this attempt he draws insight from the German classical philosophy and also from existentialism. In the classical tradition philosophy of religion attempted to provide a rationale and a definition of religion. It did not, however, ostensibly depend on special revelation. Existentialism has on its part emphasized the human living conditions immediately experienced as meaninglessness, anxiety, fear and so on. With the synthesis of these two outlooks, that of German classical philosophy of religion and of existentialism, Tillich seeks to give a new role to philosophy of religion other than that has been conventionally assigned to it as only systematic reflection about the phenomenon of religion.\textsuperscript{19}

The new task assigned to philosophy of religion is meant to bring about a synthesis between itself and the revealed religions. It aims at finding,

\begin{quotation}
the point in the doctrine of revelation and philosophy of religion at which the two are one." It is in finding this point of meeting that a genuine synthesis takes place. This is in full accordanc\end{quotation}
Tillich considers as the basic characteristic of religion, viz. concern with the ultimate.²⁸

It is evident that Tillich has moved away from the traditional type of philosophy of religion where detached attitude to religion was most important, and pointed out the importance of relating it concrete life conditions. The appeal to reason in establishing the religious claim is one-sided. Because man is not only his reason but emotions, will and appetites as well. Consequently, any inquiry into religious tradition should take all these dimensions of man into consideration. People are often religious possibly not out of the force of the rational proofs, but more out of a non-rational experience that demands loyalty and commitment to the transcendent Absolute.

As with the theological approach to the study of religion, philosophy of religion also tends to be prescriptive or normative. It makes value judgments in regard to the validity of religious claims and their truth-value, of course, from its own specific perspective. And to this extent philosophy of religion becomes a restricted approach to religion.

1.2.3. Religionswissenschaft

The modern scholarly study of religion can be traced back to the late eighteenth century. It was a time that was permeated by the rational scientific attitude of the Enlightenment. F. Max Müller is accredited to be the founder of this new discipline called Religionswissenschaft or science of religion²¹ which was meant to be a descriptive and objective science free from the normative nature of theology and philosophy of religion. He understands religion as a "mental faculty to
apprehend the infinite through nature apart from the senses and reason." He exhorted scholars to do comparative mythology and comparative religion according to the model of comparative linguistics. C. J. Bleeker along with some other Dutch scholars consider that there are four traditional branches of the science of religion. They are: history of religion, phenomenology of religion, psychology of religion, and sociology of religion.

1.2.4. History of Religion

The term 'history of religions' is still widely used today to describe a wide range of non-theological approach to the study of religion. Understanding 'history' in this context means studying historical data including ancient texts. It involves wide theoretical framework which makes use of comparative data and systematic classifications leading to typologies and generalizations. Both these positions are often held together by a number of scholars. J Waardenburg, however, makes a distinction between 'history of religion in the proper sense' (which deals with 'general studies,' 'religions of the past,' 'religions existing at present') and 'comparative studies' (among various religions). However, the study of religion in the wider sense according to him is equivalent to Religionswissenschaft. The latter includes within it the works on methodology and theory in the study of religion.

Jean Bottero speaks of 'histories of religions' rather than 'history of religion' in the singular because there are only histories of specific religious systems through which the 'phenomenon of religion' finds its expression. He gives priority to individual religious experience or feeling which leads to social expression. Although he pointed out that the study of religion is co-extensive with the study of
social and cultural systems, he changes his position later on and calls for a return to the religious experience of individuals and groups of individuals. 25

There are other scholars whose concerns for the study of religion revolve not on the prevalence of religion on the individual or social level but on the phenomenon of religion itself, viz. grasping its essence, structures, etc. For C. J. Bleeker, the overall aim of the history of religion is the perception of the essence of religion.

It is important that historians of religions should clearly realize what the ultimate aim of their studies, viz. insight into the essence and the structure of religion in the manifold forms in which it appears ... The history of religions is an autonomous discipline. Its very nature prescribes a critical, independent and yet congenial study of the religious phenomena so that their inner religious logic becomes transparent. 26

Kitagawa also follows mostly a similar line of thinking as that of Bleeker when he says that the primary objective of history of religions is,

the scholarly task of 'integral understanding' of the structure and meaning of man's religious history, in elucidation of the fact that in order to be really human in every culture and every phase of history, man has always seen the total aspect of existence in relation to sacral reality. 27

Bianchi also follows a strictly historical-comparative method. It is pointless to talk about the ultimate concern unless it is rooted in the historical process. According to him, the historical-comparative method studies and compares historical-cultural milieu and complexes. It also investigates the historical process of the genesis and
development of religion. So the general concept of religion is found through
inductive method, in the actual historical milieu. 28

While some scholars accept history of religions as an independent discipline,
others such as T.P. Van Baaren and H.J.W. Drijvers hold that it is not an
autonomous discipline but one of the branches of the science of religion. History
of religions, whether or not an independent discipline, is very important in the
scholarship of religion. It has brought to the fore hitherto little known facts about
religions and religious beliefs and practices of a wide range of people in the world.
The history of religions gathers and classifies historical data on religions. In this
process they use the historical critical methods including philology, and they insist
on factual-descriptive expositions at times with some interpretations of the
meanings of them. The historical study was initiated not only out of historical
concern, but also with a view to free religion from the dominance of a priori
theological and philosophical speculation.

Historico-descriptive approach although has made significant contributions to the
religious scholarship, it suffers from some serious lacunae. First, there is a surfeit
of data due to overspecialization. Second, history itself is open to multiple
interpretations, and so it requires a systematic reflection on and theory of the many
factors that go into the making of history. Third, difference of opinion regarding
the choice of a historical period of a religion exists. For example, is there any
overriding reason for a preference for the classical period rather than the modern
period in the study of religion? Fourth, the history of religion bypasses the
problem of meaning which is the main concern today. Besides, it also does not pay
sufficient attention to wider philosophical and theoretical questions which underlie these historical data on religions.29

1.2.5. Anthropology of Religion

Closely akin to the historical study of religion is the anthropological approach because both are mutually dependent. History of religions draws its data from the anthropological findings; conversely, anthropology turns to historical records as its source for data. What is so distinguishing about anthropology is that in its studies most attention is paid to non-literate and small societies. John F. MacLennan (1827-1881) of Scotland describes totemism as a form of religion. However, Lord Avebury (1843-1913) presents a theory from the point of view of evolution, in the light of Darwin’s contribution, which suggests a linear progression from a condition of religionlessness to the modern religions.

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) follows the theory of evolution in his studies of cultures and religions. He holds the view that religion has originated from the worship of ancestral spirits (manism). He says that from the ghosts, “have arisen the variously conceived supernatural beings...” and “in conformity with the law of evolution, there will develop many unlike conceptions out of conceptions originally alike.”30

Edward Tylor, like Herbert Spencer, traces the evolution of civilization from the primeval man up to the modern civilized man. Tylor employs a comparative method and applies his theory of the recurrence and survival of elements of an older cultural stage to a later stage which is of a different setting. His survey of human history shows that religion ‘began’ from primitive man’s animistic beliefs,
giving rise to beliefs in spirits. This belief, later undergoing various modifications became higher religious conceptions and actions.

Tylor refutes the conclusions of some anthropologists who hold that there are non-religious tribes. Such a view is erroneous according to him since it is the result of the biased outlook of the researcher himself, that is he (the researcher) compares the belief system of the tribe with that of his own. He understands religion as the belief in spiritual beings or his whole research is geared towards investigating the forms and development of the doctrine of spiritual beings. It is evident from his doctrine of animism that he wants to counter some of the non-religious views prevalent during his lifetime.

Tylor's animism implies two types of beliefs: (i) that the souls of individual creatures continue to exist even after the death or destruction of the body, and (ii) there is a gradation of spirits up to the rank of deities. And, Tylor says that the doctrine of animism is "... an ancient and world-wide philosophy of which belief is the theory and worship is the practice."31

However, throughout his historical review of civilization of man, Tylor views religion arising not out of the supernatural power or revelation but rather from human endeavors. Therefore,

... as to the religious doctrines and practices examined, these are treated as belonging to theological systems devised by human reason, without supernatural aid or revelation; in other words, as being development of Natural Religion. 32

Andrew Lang, however, disagrees with Tylor's theory that religious beliefs have their origin in primitive animism. According to Lang the origin of religious belief
should not be limited to one single source but should be more broad-based, viz., it should also take the paranormal phenomenon into serious consideration. He rejects any 'established' conclusions about the origin of religion, and in fact, he argues that no dogmatic decision should be made by science with regard to the origin of religion. Lang's own view on religion assumes two main sources of religion. First, the belief in a powerful supreme Being, and second, belief in something like a soul of man which may survive after death.33

Corroborating to Lang's view that the origin of religion should not be limited to one single source, James G. Frazer (1854-1941) presents several theories regarding the origin of religion such as totemism, magic, dying gods and other religious phenomena, all, however, from an evolutionary perspective. He sees a definite link between magic and religion, although these two according to him are fundamentally opposed to each other. In the evolutionary view of religion magic precedes it.

Frazer admits that the phenomenon of religion is so complex that no single factor can be conclusively considered as its origin. Here he refutes the theory of totemism held by some anthropologists as the forerunner of religion. He also holds the view that the monarchy arose in societies when magicians took over as rulers.34

It is William Schmidt who reverses the 'established' theory of evolutionism in religious studies. He remarks that there existed in primeval societies ideas of monotheism and morality. He proves his hypothesis by investigating into the existing notions of Supreme Beings - all fathers and sky gods among non-literate peoples. Accordingly, he constructs a hypothesis wherein he holds that animism,
polytheism, mana belief and magic are later accretions to the original monotheism.

It is indeed true that anthropological approaches have wielded considerable influence over the thinking of people regarding religion. However it is also a fact that they are largely reductionistic in character. The attempts of different anthropologists to trace the 'origins' of religions have gone to the extent of explaining the religious phenomena as mere human constructions and, therefore, they have nothing extra-human in them. This goes contrary to the very nature of religion itself which often draws its legitimacy from sources that are supra-human. In other words, religions explained without reference to the divine do not command human respect, and perhaps they need not, since they do not rise above any other similar human endeavor. Religion certainly is more than the product of human endeavor, though it is significant only in human context.

1.2.6. Sociology of Religion

Another dominant approach to the study of religion is Sociology of Religion. Sociology as a discipline studies society at its macro-level, unlike anthropology which investigates into societies at the micro-level. In other words, sociology deals with social structures, institutions, problems related to changes and growth, etc., of large sections of a given society. Religion as part of society is also brought under the purview of sociological investigations. The sociological approach to the study of religion has been developed largely due to the work of Pareto, Durkheim, Weber and Malinowski. It can be said without exaggeration that their writings
have dominated the changes in the sociological thinking on religion of the early part of twentieth century.

Emilie Durkheim pays much attention to religion in his sociological studies. He holds that religion 'is' society in a projected and symbolized form, and the reality symbolized by religion is a social one. Study of religion, therefore, takes into consideration the responses it makes to the social needs. Durkheim makes it clear from his study of elementary forms of religious life, using his sociological method that it leads to understanding of religious nature of man. In other words, sociology of religion reveals an essential and permanent aspect of humanity. He says "There are no religions that are false. All are true in their own fashion; all answer, though in different ways, to the given conditions of human existence." 37

Max Weber examines the relationship of religion to other cultural institutions, especially to economics. He holds that religion is, at first, purposive then later it becomes symbolic. This view goes contrary to the then prevailing thinking in Germany on religions as primarily mythological in character.

Weber is not concerned with the essence of religion as such, but is more interested in deciphering the conditions of a particular type of social behavior influenced by it. He contents that both magic and religion are oriented to the world in which they assume significance for individuals. Therefore, they have to be taken together with everyday purposive conduct. 38

There are other theories of religion put forward by thinkers such as Comte, Spencer and Marx who relegate religion to the past history of man and predict the triumph of science in the life of modern society. It can be said that these thinkers
are mostly influenced by the 'Enlightenment wave of thinking' which places science as the 'religion' of modern rational man.

In contemporary study of religion from the sociological perspective, there exists a number of different theories such as phenomenological sociology of religion, where a combination of both the phenomenology of religion and formal sociology is made; structural-functionalist theory where the role of religion in maintaining the social order is mentioned; conflict theory and evolutionary schemes developed by Ralf Danhrendorf and J.Milton Yinger which focus on the conflictual tendencies of religion giving rise to social changes; system theory of Niklas Luhmann which tries to explain the emergence and continuation of system within a given environment, and the most recent sociological approach to religion namely the use of the concept of identity for the understanding of religion.

The fact that there are well-formulated sociological theories of religion do not ipso facto qualify them to be representing religion in its essential dimensions. True, they highlight some aspects of religion and its social bearings. But they can even distort it as each theory is applied to the phenomenon of religion from a specific perspective of the researcher which is constituted by his academic, social, religious and other conditions. Besides, it can also be said, as in the case of anthropology of religion, that these sociological approaches tend to view religion from a reductionistic angle.

1.2.7. Psychology of Religion

Psychology of religion as an independent discipline arose late in the nineteenth century. In its study of religion there exists broadly two fundamental trends: (i) the
descriptive trend which follows a phenomenological analysis, and (ii) the explanatory trend which endeavors to unravel the underlying causal connections of experience and conduct of religious persons.

The descriptive trend is followed usually by those religiously committed and their purpose is to explicate the religious experiences for the greater benefit of those who follow religion. Where as the explanatory trend has been mostly preferred by those religiously uncommitted, and consequently sought to portray religion as pointless in modern human life.

The most prominent thinkers in Psychology of religion of the last part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century are William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, among others.

William James gives an empirical account of man's religious experience. He addresses himself to the original religious experiences of individuals some of which even border the uncommon behavior. James, however, leaves aside the institutional religion. And he does not intend to engage in any value judgment which, according to him, is the function of philosophy. For him religious sentiments are nothing psychologically specific, but are normal ones directed to 'religious object.' James appreciates even some queer religious expressions considering them in terms of a self-regenerating organic life and its mental reorientation and adaptation.  

If William James attempts to highlight the positive elements of religious experience and condones even some of the apparently abnormal behavior as having religious significance, Freud dismisses religion as vestiges of the infancy of human history. He contents that religious beliefs and practices are founded on the
wishes and fears of man’s childhood. God the Father is nothing but a re-creation of
the all-powerful father figure of infancy who has caused ambiguous feelings of
love and fear in the child which is reflected in his religious beliefs also. Freud
brushes aside the sanctity of religious ideas and the compulsive character of
religious rituals as reminiscent of the neurotic ‘ritual.’ Freud, like Frazer and
Marx, believes that religion is soon to be replaced by modern rational positivistic
science.

Carl Jung, in contrast to Freud’s negative approach to religion, argues that religion
has an important psychological function. He points out that underlying personal
unconscious (a Freudian concept) is a deep-lying region - the collective
unconscious. It is from this collective unconscious region there arises myths,
symbols and the like that constitute the humanity’s religious heritage. The
recurrent experiences over a long time have eventually formed the structural
elements of the collective unconscious, the archetypes. These archetypes, in turn,
become the foundation for recognizing and experiencing anew the persons and
situations that constitute human reality.

The trend that we find in the area of psychology of religion, especially in North
America, is to follow the method of quantitative researches of religiosity of a given
section of people. These researchers use the methodology of social sciences which
presupposes the development of a minimum of religiosity. However, many
scholars of religion do not approve of the method of quantitative research into
religiosity. They consider the approach of Freud and Jung (Depth Psychology) as
far more useful in studying religiosity.
Another approach is that of the humanistic psychologists such as Eric Fromm, Gordon Allport and Abraham Maslow. Allport restates and develops many of William James’ themes such as the diversity of religious experience, distinguishing mature from immature forms and defending the value of mature religious commitment. Allport’s approach to religion is descriptive and typological and not explanatory.

An outgrowth of Maslow’s views is what is today known as the transpersonal psychology. It focuses on mystical experience, meditation and other altered states of consciousness. Obviously, they are influenced by the Eastern religious traditions which promote ways to gain insight into the transcendent, ego less experience. The goal of the transpersonal psychology is not the transformation of merely the individuals but of the society as a whole.44

Psychology of religion has exerted a decisive influence on the study of religion today. Among the many scholars of the psychology of religion, there are some who view religion sympathetically and acknowledge its rightful role in human reality, but there are also an equally sizable number of scholars who refuse to accept the positive role of religion. What is more, the present day trend of emulating the method of quantitative study of religiosity, following Social Sciences, has certainly robbed religion of its sense of mystery and supra-natural character. In other words, study of religion today is often done not within its own parameters and ambiance which results in a reductionistic understanding of religion.
1.2.8. Phenomenology of Religion

Among all the various approaches to the study of religion, phenomenology of religion is the most prominent one. It, in a sense, began during the enlightenment period. However, it emerged as a major field of study and an influential approach in the twentieth century.\(^{45}\) When we come to phenomenology of religion, as it is practiced by different scholars of religion we face many difficulties regarding its exact nature and scope. First, there is a proliferation of works in which the term phenomenology of religion is used in a vague and uncritical way. In many such studies, the expression phenomenology of religion means nothing more than an investigation into the phenomenon of religion. Second, it is used for the comparative study of religion and their classification into different types. Here we do not come across anything much of phenomenological concepts, methods or procedures of verification. Third, numerous thinkers, such as W. B. Kristensen, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach, C.J. Bleeker, Mircea Eliade, J.Waardenburg, however, identify phenomenology of religion as a specific branch within the Science of religion or History of religion (Religionswissenschaft). Then we find here that a substantial contribution to the study of religion has been made. Fourth, there are thinkers, such as Rudolf Otto, Van der Leeuw and Eliade who, while using phenomenological method, have been partially influenced by philosophical use of phenomenology. There are others like Paul Ricoeur, Max Scheler, etc. who explicitly identify much of their approaches with philosophical use of phenomenology.\(^{46}\)

While dealing with religion we are referring not to the strictly philosophical but rather to the non-philosophical use of phenomenology. We can find non-
philosophical use of phenomenology operative in the social sciences. What the scientists mean by the term phenomenology is that it follows a descriptive method as contrasted to the explanatory one. Some phenomenologists of religion also make this emphasis.

A second non-philosophical use of phenomenology is noticed in the descriptive, systematic, and comparative study of religions. The concern here is to assemble groups of religious phenomena in order to disclose their major aspects and to formulate their typologies.

It was during the period of Enlightenment. Christopher Meiners first called this method of studying religion as phenomenological. In the nineteenth century, however, we find P.D. Chantepie de la Saussaye using the term phenomenology to mean the transitional discipline between the history of religion and philosophy of religion. His purpose is to investigate the essence and meaning of religious phenomena and to grasp phenomena in a typological manner independent of their context.

Not every scholar of religion understands phenomenology of religion univocally. For instance, Dhavamony emphasizes the empirical character of phenomenology of religion which is understood as the combined use of the historical and phenomenological methods. The aim of phenomenology of religion, according to him, is the elucidation of the essence of religious phenomena. This aim is to be achieved on strictly empirical grounds. So Dhavamony considers phenomenology of religion as purely an empirical science.

Even those who do not fully endorse Dhavamony's view of phenomenology of religion as a pure empirical science underscores the close relationship between
history of religion and phenomenology of religion. For many scholars of religion take phenomenology of religion to be a systematic counterpart of history of religion. History of religion is concerned with the gathering and describing of religious data in their historical context. Where as phenomenology of religion deals with the religious data in a systematic manner in order to delineate their essence. Widengren says that there is a dialectical relationship between the two. History of religion which is fact-descriptive needs a systematic dealing and interpretation, and this is done in phenomenology of religion. So also the phenomenological typologies require constant reference to the historical data.50 Similar is the view of Pettazzoni who holds that in the study of religion both history and phenomenology are interrelated. Further, he stresses that in order to avoid possible pitfalls of understanding and interpretation of phenomenological typology one needs constantly to refer to history.

Religious phenomena do not cease to be realities historically conditioned merely because they are grouped under this or that structure. Does not phenomenological judgment (verstehen) run the risk on occasion of ascribing a like meaning to phenomena whose likeness is nothing but the illusory reflection from a convergence of developments different in their essence; or, on the contrary, of not grasping the similar meaning of certain phenomena whose real likeness in kind is hidden under an apparent and purely external dissimilarity? The only way of escape from these dangers is to apply constantly to history.51
C. J. Bleeker concedes that there is a mutual corrective function between history of religion and phenomenology of religion. As phenomenology of religion can be of much help to a historian of religion in several ways, in particular by reminding him of the need to retain the specific religious nature of religious data, so also, a historian can correct the phenomenologist's tendency to disregard historical grounding, that is to say, phenomenological claims have to be referred back to their historical moorings.

Although there is a close relationship between history of religion and phenomenology of religion, they are not identical. They are distinct from each other. Phenomenology of religion is primarily understood as a systematic and comparative classification of all religious phenomena whatever they are.

The use of phenomenology in religious studies requires some clarification in regard to the term phenomenology itself, as it is found in Husserl, its basic characteristics and its application to domains other than philosophy.

The term 'phenomenology' has an intricate history. This term was already used in 1765 in philosophical writings. Although the term phenomenology is used by many philosophers including Kant, it is Hegel who, for the first time, gives a "well-defined technical meaning" to it. In his work, Phenomenology of Mind, Hegel considers knowledge to be that which appears to consciousness. Hegel wants to have the knowledge of the Absolute which, "itself must be called an absolute knowledge." Thus phenomenology for Hegel is the science describing the development which the phenomenal consciousness undergoes by way of science and philosophy towards the absolute knowledge of the Absolute.
The phenomenal way of knowing is the starting point from which the individual mind, subject to various changes, and together with other minds, ascends to the Mind. The Mind to which all other minds ascend is an Absolute One. He knows Himself in full experience. So it is only a path leading from the "phenomenal knowing to an absolute knowledge of Absolute Mind."
Part II

Phenomenological Insights

1.3. The Concept of Life-world

Towards the end of Husserl’s career he realized the need for philosophy to return to the human existence as based on our being-in-the-world. This world is more fundamental than the abstracted world of science and therefore he calls it the pre-scientific and pre-thematized world. In other words, Husserl names it as the life-world (*Lebenswelt*).

The concept of life-world is originally introduced by Husserl in a special way in his last major work - *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental phenomenology*. Although Husserl uses the term, life-world in the context of phenomenological philosophy, others who borrowed his term went far beyond the frontiers of his strict philosophy. It has therefore a wider acceptance today, and in fact it has become a catch-word, so much so that people prefer to say ‘modern life-world’ in place of the ‘modern world.’ says Gerd Brand.

Although the concept of life-world is pre-eminently found in his work - *Krisis* - it was also mentioned in his earlier writings. In his work, *Idea II* (appendix) we find that Husserl replaces the natural world with life-world. J.N. Mohanty says, “This probably is one of the earliest passages in which the concept of life-world is found to replace the earlier “natural world”.”

In Husserl’s second book of his *First Philosophy* also we find that this replacement of life-world for natural world is further reinforced by the perception of its (life-
world’s) historicity and intersubjectivity. Husserl says that we belong to the “totality of endless Lebenszusammenhang of one’s own and of the intersubjective historical life.”

In *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl, in order to explain the constitution of ‘alter ego,’ refers to the ‘my sphere of ownness’ which is regarded as the ‘original space,’ the primordial world in which both the objective and the intersubjective world is said to be constituted.

In the *Manuscripts* of 1929-1930 compiled by Landgrebe as *Experience and Judgment*, a mention is made of the world as the field of unity of passive doxa which is prior to and the universal ground of all cognitive confirmation, as the “horizon of all possible judgmental substrates.” Life-world here then is characterized as a ‘world of experience,’ of individual objects but it is also permeated by ‘logical accomplishments.’ It is, however, Husserl’s important work, *Krisis* which gives a definite place to life-world in phenomenology.

1.3.1. Some Difficulties in Regard to Life-world

Although the Husserlian concept of life-world has a phenomenal success in various disciplines of learning, it is by no means easy to understand. The main difficulty stems from the Husserlian understanding of the relation between the transcendental phenomenology of the Ideas and the ‘mundane’ phenomenology of the life-world. This difficulty has led many thinkers including Hartman, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Fink and Ingarden to develop other conceptions of phenomenological philosophy.
Secondly, it is difficult to determine as to what exactly is the role played by life-world in Husserl's phenomenology as a whole. Is it really opening up a new path of investigation into the transcendental subjectivity or providing another clearer outline of the pragmatic intentions which Husserl's phenomenology had from the very beginning?

A third difficulty arises from the fact that Husserl had already developed his own idea of the world in general and that of the world of perception in particular in his earlier works. How can this earlier understanding be related to the life-world of the later works and especially to the idea 'the world of immediate experience' introduced by Husserl in the 1920s?

A fourth and perhaps the most serious difficulty is connected with the fact that in the last twenty years of his career, Husserl seems to have used the concept of life-world in more senses than one. In other words, it is used equivocally. J.N. Mohanty has well documented the different descriptions of life-world given by Husserl in his work - *Krisis*. A few of his descriptions shall be picked out here to illustrate the above said point: it is the perceived world, the original ground of all theoretical and practical activity, the source of verification; it is also the world of known and unknown realities, it has a 'bodily character,' and it is in which we ourselves live in accord with our bodily personal ways of being, it is also a realm of anonymous functioning, it is again 'an accomplishment,' 'a universal mental acquisition,' 'the construct of a universal, ultimately functioning subjectivity,' the life-world is not an entity, 'the plural makes no sense when applied to it'; it is the field, the horizon which is constantly and necessarily pre-given, yet the mode of activity is predominant in it; it is the 'world for us all,' yet each of us has his life-
world meant as the world for all; it is 'pre-scientific' but also includes the sciences as the cultural facts of the world, so that the objective sciences as an accomplishment of scientific community belongs to the life-world without altering its concreteness.

All the above mentioned descriptions of life-world by Husserl goes only to show that it is a bit confusing at times. However, from the above descriptions, we can decipher the following different worlds: (a) the world of scientific objectivity, (b) the world of perceptual objectivity, (c) the many special worlds determined by specific pre-scientific interest and (d) the life-world in the strict sense.

The life-world of scientific objectivity is constituted by the scientific theoretical interest. And this constitution presupposes logico-mathematical idealities. These theories are 'applied' to sensible objects, sensible qualities and shapes. The world of perceptual objectivity, however, refers to the world that we perceive as having objects with determinate qualities, invariance, etc. This perceptual world may not be exactly the 'original' perceptual world in the sense that the former may have been constituted from a more original stratum of phenomenal field. This perceptual objectivity is not subjective-relative, on the contrary it is to some extent 'same' for all. The special worlds are determined by specific pre-scientific interests. It means that there are a number of worlds constituted by special interests prior to scientific interest. These pre-scientific interests constitute special worlds, as for example, the world of a medical practitioner, or of an artist or of a sports person. However, it should be added that these special worlds intersect each other in so far as people belonging to each of them live in the same world, and in some sense perceive the same objects. As for example, an owner perceives his house in his own way,
different from the perception of an architect, or from the perception of a real estate
dealer, although all of them see the same building. It can therefore, be said that the
'house' itself (perceived by all) is a construct, or, to be precise, is a unified
construct of all different worlds.
The life-world can be understood in three different ways. Firstly, life-world is
perceptual, not conceived as a world of objects with determinate qualities, but as
what is perceived indeterminately, relating to a subject. This has a reference to
Merleau-Ponty's conception of pre-objective world of perception (Merleau-
Ponty's concept of body-subject). Secondly, life-world may also be seen as a
totality of all other worlds. But this does not seem to be plausible and legitimate
because the attitudes of each of these worlds cannot be cultivated and maintained.
They cannot be just juxtaposed as they do not belong to, to use a Wittgenstein
phrase, the same 'logical space.' Thirdly, life-world is considered as a horizon
within which all other worlds are constituted. It is not a world beside them, rather
it is a condition for the possibility of other worlds in so far as they are given in it.
This life-world as a horizon is not constituted, but given. But the special interest
worlds are constituted, and they are located within the horizon.62

1.3.2. Thematization of Life-world

Before we actually go into the thematization of the life-world by Husserl, it is
relevant to see how the term 'world' is understood in relation to the modern
continental philosophy, such as Life Philosophy, Phenomenology, Existential
Philosophy and Structuralism. The etymological foundation of the word, 'world'
can be traced to the old German term Weralt where wer means man and alt
meaning era or age. Literally, therefore, 'world' originally meant 'the age of man.' In other words, it was descriptive of man's mode of existence in the world, i.e. the world was the world of man. And it is in this sense, i.e. world understood in a personal or subjective sense, Husserl uses the expression world when he refers to \textit{Lebenswelt}.

Husserl wants to thematize the life-world, and in order to do so he has to be a disinterested spectator, extend \textit{epoché} to it, and discover it within the constituting transcendental subjectivity. We do not have immediate access to this life-world because it already has acquired scientific and cultural interpretations. It, therefore, demands a temporary suspension of the culture and science in order to uncover the life-world and its essential structures. As a result of this suspension, according to Husserl, we are able to reach out to the life-world that has the form of a 'mundane' phenomenology or a non-transcendental phenomenology. However, towards the end of Husserl's career he believed that the 'mundane' phenomenology of the life-world is a necessary step towards understanding transcendental phenomenology. The mere analysis of 'mundane' phenomenology, however, does not provide us with a final meaning, unless it is corroborated by the performance of reduction that gives us proper access. An analysis of 'mundane' phenomenology is, therefore, necessary before the transcendental reduction can be performed. That is to say we must turn away from the world of culture and science to the life-world by means of "first reduction," then the transcendental reduction must lead us further back from the structures of the life-world to the hidden achievements of the functioning intentionalities of the transcendental subjectivity.
Differing from the existentialists Husserl thematizes the life-world. And in doing so he wants to explicate the structures of life-world, i.e. Husserl wants to clarify the complexities of world of everyday experience and not so much the involvement of man in it.

The idea of the life-world had occupied Husserl’s attention in some ways since 1920s. But he did not disclose it until he gained sufficient clarity on it and when he attained confidence in expressing it, he made it the central theme of the first part of the *Krisis*.

On account of the introduction of the concept life-world, some commentators have pointed out, that too wrongly, that Husserl has deviated from his original conception of the role of transcendental subjectivity. But that does not seem to be the case because Husserl admits that life-world is only one of the four different ways in which the constituting activity of the transcendental subjectivity is made clear. It means that the world of immediate experience is not the final level which phenomenological analysis can penetrate into. The world itself is constituted and, therefore, this constitution needs to be clarified.  

While dealing with the Husserlian concept of life-world we must be careful not to reduce it to the one-level reality of everyday world; for it is not transcendent but transcendent. Phenomenology, for Husserl, is a transcendental science of the life-world. As such it has complexly structured dimensions and such dimensions constitute its transcendental foundation.

Husserl came to realize this multi-layered reality of the life-world from his ‘discovery’ of the world. Here we find Husserl rejecting his own earlier view of phenomenology which focused just on the immediately given; phenomenology,
now holds, Husserl, should focus rather on the co-given. In other words, the core of phenomenology is the tension between the given and the co-given or co-intended. 67

This tension between the given and the co-given becomes clear in every object that is known as it has an implicit and unexplicated meaning. This meaning through which the object is present is its horizon. Or this meaning or ‘plus extra,’ is known as horizon. We discover the world by moving away from one horizon to another and finally we discover the total horizon, the world itself. It can, in other words, be said that the world is the horizon of all horizons. And so it is total, absolute and universal horizon.

There is also another way of understanding the world in the sense of weltbegriff, i.e. the world concept which determines all beings in their conceptuality.

Every being is subordinated to the concept of world, the law of the which, itself, is not the concept of any or all things and which thus is not a universal concept but a ‘concept’ in a new sense, that as a universal rule governs the being of all things in their conceptuality, i.e. in their particularities. 68

Thus it becomes clear from Husserl’s analysis that, first of all, there is a mutual implication between the given and the ego. Secondly, it is also clear that phenomenological analysis is not like the theory of knowledge in the usual sense. It is a critically justifying, i.e. founding and uncovering of the modes of being of this life in its world experience.
We shall now proceed to this uncovering of the structures of the life-world which is not one-level world but a structured one. When we analyze the structure of the life-world, we come across a number of its features.

1.3.3. Structure of The Life-world

The first feature of life-world is that we insert ourselves into a concrete world in a concrete manner. We are 'at' it. This 'at' is meaningful although not explicated and thematized. In other words, it is the unthematized and exists by itself as a vague whole that is always there. This layer of the life-world is therefore is not a construct or a conception, but is the concrete world in which we insert ourselves. It is pre-given in a concrete manner, and it is not constructed or conceptualized. The life-world is the world as continuously pre-given which, continuously and before-hand, is to be taken as existent. This, however, is not because of some purpose of thematization according to a universal goal. Every goal presupposes this world. The universal goal of knowing it in scientific truth presupposes it, and keeps presupposing it time and again, while the investigation progresses as world that is in its own way, and yet as existing.69

The second feature of life-world is that the concrete world into which we insert ourselves, which we live and it is somehow conceptualized too. This conceptualization is of the pre-understanding kind that we already possess the concrete world. This has a purpose: it helps us in understanding, articulating and interpreting the concrete world which exists by itself. This would mean that we move from the unthematic whole to thematization and theorization of the concrete meaningfulness. In this process, first of all, when we are 'at' it, it is thematic for us
without already being an outright theme. 'Thematic' here would mean that we deal with the concrete meaningfulness in a direct manner without its becoming a theme as such. In other words, we approach the unthematized thematic being unreflectively.

Husserl also introduces another term, 'doxic acts' to explain our usual tendency to isolate an object from the environment and by focusing on it we begin to accentuate what is. This is done by comparing and contrasting the present object with the object presented in our consciousness. Thus an interpretation of the object presented is carried out. This interpretation, however, is not arbitrary but leaves open both fulfillment and possible changes.

The constructs that we form are concrete themes. As such they are distinct and at the same time dependent on the concrete themes. It can be said that they are themes about themes. The themes explicate concrete themes but at the same time is open to further explication.

This analysis can be compared with Husserlian concept of intentionality. We can see that it corresponds to three mutually mediated modes of intentions or consciousness. First of all consciousness is always consciousness of something. It is intention of being with the being of which it is conscious, without any direction towards it. From the original nondirectedness it is possible to distinguish a directedness of intention which is still not very active. Husserl calls it, 'passive intention.' It is possible to distinguish a more active directedness of intention from the passive one. And usually only this is considered as intention, or to be precise intentionality. Here it ignores its origin, but rather takes the role of aiming at. It
goes on 'striving,' going for it so as to determine it ever more closely. And this closer determination has the character of unveiling interpretation.  

1.3.4. Dynamics of Theorization

Having seen that we construct themes on the concrete theme, and having seen its parallel in the Husserlian concept of intentionalites, we could ask the following question: how does this thematization and theorization take place?

Thematization is incipient theorization as objectification or objectivation. It means that I put myself before an object and I thematize it and in the process I thematize my thematizing it. In other words, I grasp 'something' and that something is opposite to myself. In this process I also objectify my 'subject' involved in the objectivation.

This systematic thematization and theorization will lead us to find out certain regions in the life-world. Regions here mean horizons. They are fundamental and encompassing because they are systematically explicated in their systematization. A systematic unfolding of these regions reveals the interrelations between various regions. Thus by highlighting the founding interrelations, theorization leads into 'theory.'

It is a fact that we live the world as a unity, but when we articulate the world it becomes discrete, in the sense that we can only speak of one region at a time, and that brings in a discontinuity or break.
1.3.5. What Happens to Theorization?

The constructs or theories that we make on the concrete meaningfulness now ‘flow back’ into the concrete world, ‘sediment’ there, enrich it and become themselves concretely given in a thematic but unthematized way.

The concrete world is the foundation of all interpretations. It is from that all constructs arise and it is to that all constructs go back to such a degree that the contrast between the two (concrete world and constructs) almost disappears. Husserl calls it an ‘uncomfortable situation.’

The dynamic of flowing back of constructs can well be understood by an example of the formation of a habit. It is a fact that much reflection and thematization go on before acquiring a habit, as for instance, learning to play a game. But once proficient, it assumes a new signification within the world. In Husserl’s own terms, *Habituellwerden* (becoming habitual) is thematizing, while *Habituellgeworden* (what has become habitual) is the significance given in the world. This flowing back is significant because once with the help of a theory a region is created, it possesses a semblance of indigence and self-sufficiency. And this region is sometimes mistakenly taken for the whole.\(^71\)

So far we have acquainted ourselves with the process of thematization and theorization, and how they flow back to the concrete world. Along with this, there is another aspect or feature that we need to take into consideration and it is the practical world.

In our thematization we disengage or disconnect ourselves from the world as such, and follow a reflective or contemplative attitude. But it is different with practice. It is not only a grounding but also an encompassing and contrasting element or
feature of the life-world. In the practical attitude we have things, as not just material things, but they are beings as 'having-been-achieved.' In the practical attitude, we have a tendency to achieve more, that is bringing into being what ought to be. That which ought to be is given to us in the practical action of becoming, and it is realized in practical actions. This bringing into being what ought to be is a possibility which is realized in our communion with other people, and especially through acting, reacting and achieving.

This practical world is the everyday world. However we theorize, it all happens within and against this practical world. And this practical world however, is only as aspect of life-world and not the whole of life-world. Sometimes it is mistakenly taken as the life-world itself because of its forcefulness and encompassing character, and it is usually the only world thematic for us. This practical world is also called the special world (Sonderwelt order Eire besondere welt) by Husserl. He calls it so because it is a world constituted by special interests. A question that can be raised here is: if the world is largely constituted by special interests, and they are so forceful, how can there be mutual communication and interaction?

Life-world as we have said is not constituted by special interests, it is always already there beyond all special interests. This life-world has to be approached not from a special interest perspective but rather from a universal interest. This universal interest does not intend to know it, but it is meant to show its being there as preceding everything in contrast to other worlds special interest. This is possible by explaining the aspect of 'commonality' or 'commonness' of the world.

This commonality is achieved when we understand others, first of all as objects, co-subjects and finally as companions or partners. It is only in considering others
as companions does our common world begin. And our common world is constituted by comprehension and communication. Comprehension means understanding another person in his situation with me in the same surrounding world. Comprehension is, therefore, mutual and grows as mutual determinations. A mutual agreement or assent arises, and it is this reciprocal assent that forms the essence of communication. Communication is an act that constitutes a common environment. A society is created wherein personal reciprocity is experienced in relations and comprehension. It is this communicative agreement that establishes the boundaries between my surrounding world and other 'worlds.' Through this reciprocal relation and communication a group is constituted and to which I belong and this makes my surrounding world (umwelt), and the rest is external world (Aussenwelt). This surrounding world is only for a subject or a group of subjects, i.e. for a social 'subjectivity.' And the surrounding worlds are called by Husserl social 'objectivities.' Here it is possible for me to objectify myself in the social objectivity and feedback relations form the objectivity of my surrounding world. My environing world is that which I share with others. Husserl writes:

This world is the world of our social life of which we know that we are related to it because we are consciously aware of the fact that others are here with us in the form of an all-encompassing society and, this, because we are aware of the communalization of the life of this all encompassing society; but this is to be taken in such a way that we are continuously certain of the fact that this world is one and the same world for us, the same world in which we ourselves are with all the pulses of our life.
However, it should be noted that while communicative agreement on the one hand constitutes my surrounding environment, on the other, it relativizes it. It relativizes in the sense that communicative agreement does not stop at one subject but it proceeds to form other social subjectivities which communicate with each other. From this social ‘subjectivities’ we reach an encompassing ‘personal’ world, the world of the spirit or the mind (Geisteswelt). This is in the form of total idea of social subjects of lower and higher levels. This world is the world for all, i.e. it is a world for others in as much as it is for me in its actual mode of appearance. There is, therefore, a similarity and a difference between the life-world and the ‘universal’ world. That is when I am in the ‘special world’ the life-world is latent, not specific and, therefore, not made thematic. But now that we have made explicit the universal (Geisteswelt), the special world, the practical everyday world, this world’s relation to the world in its actual mode of appearance is also explicit. The world in its actual mode of appearance is the historically given, cultural, economic, socio-political world, a real world for me. And this is accompanied by the latent horizon of the world which is common to all is also real for me. This mode of appearance of the world as it really exists is a universal a priori of the life-world.  

1.3.6. Grasping of The Common World

This common world is grasped in its identity arising out of the interpersonal horizon of unity and identification. Husserl writes that this world is, the absolutely objective world structure that pervades all ‘surrounding worlds’ of life communities (separate groups of men)
that are 'communalized' and self-contained, a structure that everyone
can understand and must be able to understand in order that men can
exist for one another at all, and find themselves constituted in a
community no matter how loose (even if only one of being there for
each other and of understanding each other and of possible
understanding).  

In our communication with each other, the world serves as the identity structure of
the different surrounding worlds. In a way we can say this world is an abstraction,
a pole of identity. And being a kind of abstraction the life-world is also an
idealization of sorts. It is, "idealization of world of life, since the absolute, the
irrelative being world is nothing but the infinite idea which has the origin of its
meaning in the horizonness of the life-world."  

When we say that the infinite idea of life-world is manifested in finitude of the
world, there arises an apparent paradox, as Husserl calls it. In other words, we can
say the infinite potentiality of all that is constitutive of the life-world is itself given
only in finitude. Can we find any solution to this paradox? Husserl says that it is a
pole that we can only continuously approach to discover the infinitude of the life-
world within the finitude of the world.

Having seen that structure of the life-world as explicated in Husserlian writings we
can now say that we live concretely in a concrete world, which we can articulate
by thematizing and theorizing, realizing that our theoretical constructs flow back
into the concreteness of a world which is explicitly a practical world. This world is
constituted by special interests but is, at the same time, encompassed by an
identical common world which is always there without any thematizing and can be
analyzed in its encompassing character as well as in its actual modes of appearance.

1.4. The Concept of Life-world in Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Merleau-Ponty’s preface to the *Phenomenology of Perception* is an eloquent testimony to the unfinished nature of phenomenology and to the inchoative demeanor distinctive of Edmund Husserl. Merleau-Ponty gives a new direction to Husserlian concept of life-world. Merleau-Ponty knew Husserl’s writings well, and he was impressed by the latter’s views on ‘natural attitude,’ the reductions, consciousness, intentionality and the intentional analysis. However, it is Husserl’s *Krisis* where he had conspicuously outlined the concept of life-world (*Lebenswelt*) as the ultimate foundation of science that captivated Merleau-Ponty’s attention.

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology can be called existential phenomenology. He follows Husserlian method of description in his phenomenological investigations, but rejects the latter’s conclusions arrived at through the transcendental idealism. Nevertheless, it can be found on a closer reading of *Phenomenology of Perception* that Merleau-Ponty remains much closer to Husserl’s phenomenology than, let us say, Schler, Sartre or Heidegger. At times one gets the impression that Merleau-Ponty wants to remain faithful to Husserl’s views but other times it is quite evident that he intends to distance himself from him and give an all together different orientation to phenomenology. It is in his last unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, he makes explicit the difference between Husserl’s conception of phenomenology and that of his own.
Merleau-Ponty’s conception of phenomenology can be understood from his seminal work - *Phenomenology of Perception*. He begins his work by asking the question: what is phenomenology? His answer is found in two stages: first, he puts forward his own views of what is fundamental to phenomenology by means of a contrast between description on the one hand, and both analysis and explanation on the other. Second, he goes on to propose certain interpretations of the concepts, like ‘reduction,’ ‘essence,’ ‘intentionality,’ etc. that figure prominently in Husserl.

The hallmark of a genuine phenomenological inquiry, according to Merleau-Ponty, is that it regards its task as “a matter of describing, not explaining or analyzing.” We find here that Merleau-Ponty is in agreement with Husserl who said that the task of phenomenology is to describe the things as they appear to us.

The attempt of the empirical sciences is to provide an explanation to the world around us. Merleau-Ponty opposes this view and says:

> I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science.

Merleau-Ponty calls such scientific explanations of human as naive and dishonest because they take for granted the point of view of consciousness. Moreover, he does not subscribe to transcendental idealism.

The world that humans actually perceive, according to Merleau-Ponty is not like the ‘objective’ world. Instead it has ‘objects’ whose properties are not fully determinate or specifiable, but inherently non-determinate and even ambiguous.
There is no casual determination between these objects but there obtains between them relationships of meaning and reciprocal expression. They are not uniquely located in a single spatial framework but, varyingly situated in relation to human agent’s specific field of action. And Merleau-Ponty calls this as “the lived through world” or the “lived world.”

Having, therefore, considered both the empiricism and intellectualism as untenable for an adequate explanation of the lived world, Merleau-Ponty suggests another method which is phenomenological in nature. And by employing this method, what is revealed as unprejudiced description is the distinctive character of human existence as “being-in-the-world.” It is this basic emphasis on the being-in-the-world that makes Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology existential.

The nature of the lived world is not determinate as the empiricists would explain nor is it clear and distinct as the idealists would have it. In fact, the nature of the lived world is non-determinate and ambiguous, says Merleau-Ponty. In order to reinforce his claims, he often invokes two main contrasts between determinate and non-determinate character of objects in the objectivist’s universe and the lived world respectively, and between the externality and internality of the relationships which obtain within them.

That the nature of objects is not determinate is clear from our experience of the world. For example, one’s visual field can never be precisely specified. There is always an imprecise area at the perimeter, where various items are at best only indistinctly perceived, there occurs here “an indeterminate vision, a vision of something or other.” More significant reason for the indeterminacy of objects for Merleau-Ponty, is from the character of their properties. As against the objective
thought's claim of providing a complete description of objects, Merleau-Ponty says that the objects we encounter in the lived world are rich and complex that they defy a finite enumeration of their properties. Merleau-Ponty also rejects the objectivist's view that we can provide a clear cut affirmative or negative answer to the question whether an object possesses a particular property or not. Instead he holds that an object neither has nor does not have a particular property. He also opines that descriptive terms used in objective thought regarding objects are not always precise in their meaning; they are as he calls, "open ended."

Drawing upon the above objections raised by Merleau-Ponty, we can say that non-determinacy is primarily a characteristic of what is actually experienced in the world. However, he admits the fact that we need to use language to articulate our experience of the world, but this, once again, is an imprecise exercise as the former is only a representation of the latter. Can we then say that ambiguity is the feature of words? The focus of attention for Merleau-Ponty, however, is on the nature of the lived world itself and not on language per se. As for instance, he describes a situation of a relationship between two individuals which can be interpreted in many ways. It could be just a simple human friendship, it could also be for a common purpose, it could be for exploiting each other, and so on. There seems, therefore, to be a coexistence of many layers of meanings in a relationship. So the non-determinate character of objects can be extended to human level where multiple meanings co-exist.

The second contrast Merleau-Ponty draws is between the externality of relationships in the universe and the internality of those in the lived world. A relationship is external if the related items can be identified without reference to
one another; conversely, items are internally related if they cannot thus be independently identified. For example, for an objectivist, the relationship obtained between the various properties of an object can not be identified as there is an internal relationship between them (e.g. color and texture of a carpet cannot be fully identified). Thus by denying that relationships in the lived world are external, Merleau-Ponty is denying that they are causal or functional. The internal relationships obtained in the lived world for him are 'meaningful' or 'expressive' in nature. Merleau-Ponty says,

In our ordinary experience we find a meaningful relationship between the gesture, the smile, and the tone of a speaker... this reciprocal relationship of expression which presents the human body as the outward manifestation of a certain manner of being-in-the-world, ... 

What is a meaningful expression, say in this case a smile, can be robbed of its significance by the causal explanations of empiricism. Even if this physiological explanation is substituted by psychological one, it is still treated as external relationship and thereby misrepresents the meaningful. The contrasts between the objective thought and the lived world are well expressed by Merleau-Ponty in the following passage:

The notion of universe, that is to say, a completed and explicit totality, in which the relationships are those of reciprocal determination, exceeds (i.e. illicitly, 'goes beyond') that of a world, or an open and indefinite multiplicity of relationships which are of reciprocal implication.
The point that Merleau-Ponty wants to drive home is that there is another way of describing the world other than those governed by both empiricism and idealism, and this is the phenomenological way which firmly recognizes and faithfully expresses the basic ambiguity of the lived world.

The Husserlian concept of life-world or as Merleau-Ponty calls it the lived through world, in fact, opened up many possible paths of further development. It was Merleau-Ponty who undertook the task of explicating the many contents of concreteness of being. No doubt, they were already implicitly present in the transcendental foundations of Husserl. But they were not fully explicated by Husserl himself, he left that task to be accomplished by other phenomenologists.

The life-world is the ultimate foundation on which both natural as well as human sciences are built. But under the overbearing presence of the Galilean science and its method what came to be established is only the measured abstractions leaving out the foundation altogether. Thus, by hiding the pre-abstractive evidence of the life-world, the naturalistic attitude brings to perfection the passage from concreteness to measured abstraction. In contrast to this, Merleau-Ponty holds that the laws of knowledge find their justifying reason in the disclosure of the pre-conceptual experience of the life-world. In it (life-world) 'to be,' 'to think' and to 'judge' are intertwined in a *chiasmus* of primordial interactions. It is here where sense is produced. What Merleau-Ponty does in his phenomenology is to examine the life-world in a non-transcendental way by paying attention to the problem of being. This way leads him directly to the theme of lived body as the subject in a world where there are other embodied subjects.
Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction between the ‘lived body’ and the ‘objective body.’ The lived body is the one that we experience from the ‘inside’ whereas the objective body is a thing that we can locate in space as we do with objects. The lived body is a synergic system of habitual, sensory and motor skills and powers with which certain features of the perceived world are strictly correlative.

The bodily skills or powers are both specific and general. The skill one acquires through the performance of one task will help him to repeat not only the same task but also a wide range of similar tasks. For instance, if one learns the basics of music through the constant practice of the musical notes then he will be able to use not just one system of music but even others as well with a relative ease. Similarly, the objects apprehended through the skillful use of the body are apprehended not just as separate individuals but as members of a species which would evoke similar bodily response which fits in with certain pattern of skillful activity. The body-subject or embodied body, therefore, is the natural acquirer and generalizer of habitual and motor-sensory skills. Through the active projection of these bodily skills does one experience the world at its most fundamental level. Therefore, there cannot be an adequate understanding of either the body-subject or the object in isolation from each other; they are correlated. In other words, the subject is the ensemble of habitual skills which actively involve him in the world, and the structure of that world is the function of the subject’s being ‘at home’ in it. This way of understanding human body is central to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology.

The lived body is not an object but an ontological subject of the world. There is therefore, correlation between body-subject and the structure of the perceived world. The following are the most important correlations:
The body-subject interacts with the world through its habits and not through the intellectual powers. This results in the correlative structure of the perceived world as opaque and essentially ambiguous rather than perfectly transparent. The perceived object is partially determined and further determinable. The natural generality of the body is correlated to the generality of the perceived object. It is this generality of the perceived objects, in part, responsible for the givenness of in perception of the whole object and the whole perceptual field. This view is quite different from the traditional one which says that the wholeness of an object is determined by those parts that could be 'directly presented' to the perceiver.

The lived body has the ability to unite its various parts into a single “sensory motor project” that is directed to the world. Correlatively, the perceived object is given intersensorially. The sensory and the motor skills do not operate individually, they are always in collaboration with others in the functioning of the subject-body. So also, the perceived object is not appropriated by one of its characteristics alone which could affect mechanically appropriate parts of the objective body. They, in fact, extend across the various senses as a function of the motility and intersensory potential of the body.

Merleau-Ponty understands, as we have already seen, body-subject’s interactions with the world is primarily not through the intellectual powers but through habits. In other words, it can be said, as Scot Weiner puts it, that the body-subject inhabits the world through his habits; conversely, he acquires habits by inhabiting. The term inhabiting is used here as a technical one in order to express the two dimensions of habit and inhabiting and their correlationship. It means that when
the body inhabits space, it is done through habits, and the body has habits through inhabiting space. Anyone aspect cannot be taken in isolation; that will be an 'impoverished' understanding of the complex dynamics involved in the interrelation between body and space.

Habit is usually understood as a generalized activity that is easily repeatable. And, inhabiting is occupying a familiar space. Both habit and inhabiting are, according to Merleau-Ponty, "mutually implicatory." By this he means that in habit the body regularly repeats actions that are inhabiting in it and in inhabiting, the body’s active familiarizing with a space involves the acquiring and the employment of habits. Both habits and inhabiting are essential for us to carry on with life smoothly. Without habits, every action we do becomes the focus of our 'whole field of action' occurring at the center of our existence. And without inhabiting, we require reflective action to organize every discontinuous setting. Merleau-Ponty says that the habit’s contributions to inhabiting is sedimented generalized possibilities for inhabiting, and inhabiting’s contribution is pre-reflectively knowing one’s way around enabling habitual actions.

An integrated world is, therefore, formed for the co-existence of body and world through their 'gearing' with one another. This gearing is reached through a double way operation. That is, my body possess and enjoys space while the space invites a subject capable of living in it. The body does not fit into a space except through its habits, and habits are of no use except for inhabiting space. That is the reason why Merleau-Ponty says that our bodies are not just 'in' the world but 'of' the world. Which means having this reciprocity of habit and inhabiting.
For Merleau-Ponty habits are both motor and perceptual. This can be generalized to include all habits which include the pre-reflective and pre-personal motor habits. Both the motor and perceptual habits form part of one unitary body; they both together perform one and the same function. The habits set limit to our horizons of the fields of perception. Both these function together; they are geared to each other. The habits help us to situate ourselves in space as well as to increase the store of available actions. These habits are capable of giving body the grasp of significance. The intellectualists say that reflection alone can provide significance. But Merleau-Ponty holds them wrong by elucidating body's power of grasping significance through its motor and perceptual habits.

According to Merleau-Ponty it is due to body's movement the space and time are actively taken up. He says that the body "inhabits space and time." By this he maintains that the body is habit-body and body at-this-moment expressed in space. Here he emphasizes that the consciousness of the body-subject is not an 'I think' but 'I can.' And for the consciousness 'I can' movement is not reflective planning, space is not considered objective and no object is represented. The object here is intended by projecting consciousness to it through the body. Therefore, both the object and the movement are included in this intention.

The projection of consciousness through the body to an object takes place in the space and Merleau-Ponty names it as the expressive spatiality. He says this space is not the outcome of any reflection but it is already built into the bodily structure. And the body as the 'mediator of the world' originates other spatialities for its intentions through its own expressive movements. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of a typewriter's keyboard which is a specific spatiality. And when a
typist types on it his body spatially gets merged with that of the keyboard’s spatiality. There is no conscious planning of each movement of the fingers of the typist, his body begins to exist in a new ‘style,’ says Merleau-Ponty. In other words the typist’s body adapts to the new situation in a significant manner. The innovative inhabiting is possible according to Merleau-Ponty because neither the body nor the space is objective on the primordial level of pre-reflective experience. With this new understanding of habit and inhabiting, Merleau-Ponty challenges both the empiricists and intellectualists. The typist’s intentionality, the text, is not a reflective planning. It means that he does not specifically intend the position of each letter on the keyboard, and the corresponding movements in an objective space. The typist, from the knowledge born out of familiarity, takes the ‘shortest routes’ between various letters on the keyboard. Merleau-Ponty says, “it is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the keyboard space into his bodily space.”

Merleau-Ponty, therefore, says that man’s existence is not just a Being-in-the-world but his body-in-the-world. Body and world are not isolated phenomena that they are to be analyzed separately, such a view is impoverishment of the complexity of both. Body and the world together make man’s Being-in-the-world or better man’s body-in-the-world something significant.

1.4.1. Merleau-Ponty’s New Approach to Ontology

Merleau-Ponty’s new approach to viewing human body and the world as integral to each other has opened up the possibility for a new ontology. The traditional ontologies are characteristically dualistic. They consider a bifurcation of being into
mutually exclusive spheres of immanence and transcendence. And this bifurcation entails solipsism and skepticism. And so they are to be replaced.

The proposed new ontology can be situated in the context of other philosophers, such as, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, etc. who also accord primacy to phenomena. However, not all of them conceive it univocally. Husserl, for example, defined phenomenon within the standpoint of immanence. Martin Heidegger understands the ‘phenomenon’ of phenomenology as “what shows itself in itself.” And, Sartre speaks of phenomenon in terms of the dialectical interplay of being-for-itself and being-in-itself. In Merleau-Ponty, however, the thesis of the primacy of phenomena is to be interpreted in conjunction with the thesis of primacy of perception. According to him, “the perceived world is always the presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence.” For Merleau-Ponty, therefore, the real world is the perceived world, it is the phenomenal world.

The above standpoint of the *Phenomenology of Perception* is explicated in *The Visible and the Invisible* as the perceptual faith. This assumes an indubitable attitude towards perception and its veracity. For Merleau-Ponty says, “it is our experience ... of inhabiting the world by our body, of inhabiting the truth by our whole selves, without there being need to choose nor even to distinguish between the assurance of seeing the true, because in principle they are one and the same thing.” Although Merleau-Ponty names it as perceptual faith, he does not in any way undermine its value vis-à-vis true knowledge. In fact, he stoutly defends its authenticity as the basis of all valid knowledge. He goes on further saying that it is not so much the possibility of the perceptual illusion that prompts us to mistrust our perception, rather, it is the variation of perceptions. Here I have ‘my own
perception,' which is usually contrasted to a universal ideal which can accommodate various perspectives. Merleau-Ponty says that an ideal is an ideal constituted in thought and is expressed in language. And, therefore, it is an invisible which stands in contrast to the visible in a relation of identity-in-difference.

Merleau-Ponty keeps on working on this relation of the visible and the invisible, and even the terms are refined in his work, *The Visible and the Invisible*. While showing the identity-in-difference of the visible and the invisible, he is not suggesting a new dualism. He also rejects any monistic reading into his views either. He also rejects any notion of coincidence, in favour of a fundamental identity and difference expressed in several metaphors, fission, divergence (*écart*), chiasm and intertwining.

1.4.2. The Concept of Flesh

In the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty wants to give an ontological explication of what has been achieved in *Phenomenology of Perception*. He replaces his terminology of the lived world with the ontological notion of 'flesh' (*la Chair*). This flesh belongs neither to the subject nor to the world. It is basically a primal 'element' and both the subject and the world are born out of it. It is not a mind or a material substance, rather, it is kind of circuit, a "coiling over of the visible upon the visible."³⁴

The distinguishing characteristic of flesh is its 'chiasmatic' or 'intertwining' relations. There is a chiasmatic relation between the subject and object, my vision and that of others, and perception and language. Merleau-Ponty begins his analysis
of flesh by examining the lived body. Using the example of one hand touching the other and being touched in turn he says that the body can play the role of both the perceiver and the perceived. It is as though the human body has ‘two sides,’ or ‘two leaves.’

Merleau-Ponty here makes a reference to Sartre’s understanding of human body where the latter brings in a distinction between the first two ‘ontological dimension’ of the body, viz. (a) “my-body-for-me,” that belongs within the sphere of subjectivity and (b) “body-for-others” which is equivalent to the other’s body for me, and so belongs within the sphere of objectivity. Here Sartre understands touching as a task accomplished by the body as subject; being touched is something that happens to body-as-object. These two dimensions of bodily experience constitute “two essentially different orders of reality.”

Merleau-Ponty considers Sartre’s understanding of human body as dualistic which gives no possibility for these two dimensions of bodily experience to interact with each other. The bodily experience of human beings for Merleau-Ponty is something different. It is not a dualistic one, nor is it a monistic one. It is rather an experience steeped in with what he calls an identity-in-difference between the two dimensions of bodily experience. He gives a detailed analysis of the experience of one hand touching the other and being touched by the other in his *Phenomenology of Perception*.

When I touch my right hand with my left hand the object right hand has the singular property of also sensing itself. Yet the two hands are never, with regard to one another, touched and touching at the same time. When I press my two hands against one another, it is not then a
matter of two sensations that I would feel together, as one perceives two objects in juxtaposition, but that of an ambiguous organization in which the two hands can alternate in the functioning of 'touching' and 'touched.'

The alternation of this passage is later described as reversibility in *The Visible and the Invisible*. His contention that the touching and being touched are not radically disjunct but they are co-incident, suggests an essential ambiguity. The model body as touching and touched are *prima facie* reversible, because they are roles played by a unitary sensor, my own body. However, there is no absolute identity, as the touching hand is not the same as the touched hand, it does not coincide. There is already a de-centering, a fission, a non-coincidence.

The ontological significance of this identity within difference is important. In the traditional ontology, there is a co-incidence in self-perception which gives room to the isolation of the epistemological subject. Its emphasis on the incorrigibility of the first person experience and the transparency in the sphere of immanence has led to the bifurcation of interiority and exteriority. This trap of polarization of dualism can be overcome only by the standpoint, i.e. a fundamentally ambiguous identity-encompassing difference.

This notion of identity-in-difference is fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's ontological description of the visible. It is not only applicable to the bodily experience of touch but it is extended to body's relation to the world as well. My body is flesh so also the world that I encounter is flesh. The world as flesh is perceived with the flesh of my gaze. "The flesh of the world is of the Being-seen, i.e. is a Being that is eminently percipi."
There is also the intertwining of all forms of perceptions. Merleau-Ponty says, “the double and the crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and of the tangible in the visible, the two maps are complete, and yet they do not merge into one.” The chiasmatic relation among various sensory modalities takes place because they are woven together by a pre-reflective connection.

Another chiasmatic relation is between me as perceiver with other perceivers. That there is an intertwining between my perspective and that of others; they, however, do not quite coincide. My seeing the world is validated by others who see the world, my touching the world is also validated by others touching the world, and yet my operation remains distinct from that of the other.

There is also the chiasmatic relation between the ‘visible’ and the ‘invisible.’ The invisible, which Merleau-Ponty talks about is not non-visible but rather it is the dimension of objects that are placed within the world. The perceiving subject does not fully comprehend the object. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, the seer is always, “a little behind, a little further” than the body I see. Correlatively, all objects have an invisible ideality inherent to them. Merleau-Ponty’s example of a piece of music illustrates this point well. In a sequence of musical notes, I understand a structure, an idea which rests in these sounds, but it 2(idea) cannot be reduced to the sounds.

This speaks of once again an identity-in-difference. This ideality of perception is transferred to language; yet even here the ‘purified’ ideality remains of flesh. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, therefore, Merleau-Ponty’s language has changed but by and large, ‘flesh’ remains to be an ontology of perception of the visible.
1.5. The New-style Phenomenology of Religion

Among all the methodologies we have discussed above, we shall follow the new-style phenomenology in the treatment of the classical phenomenology of religion. This method emphasizes the need to return to the intentionalities of individuals in their religious beliefs, which alone is the certain key to the essence of religion. But the question now is, which type of intentionality shall we follow: that of Husserl which restricts itself to the immanent operations of the ego, or that of the existentialists which takes the human living condition into serious consideration?

In our deliberations on religious experience we shall follow not the Husserlian understanding of intentionality but that of Merleau-Ponty, viz. the bodily intentionality which is the result of body’s interaction with the surrounding world. The Husserlian type of intentionality cannot be applied to elucidate the religious experience of man because of its emphasis on reductions. Although Husserl is a phenomenologist - one who accurately describes the phenomenal - he is not simply satisfied with the phenomenal as it appears to us, here and now. For what appears to us has been made appear to us due to the intervention of consciousness. What Husserl wants to reach is the essence (eidos) of every human experience divested off all accretion by the consciousness. In order to achieve this end, Husserl employs the method of reduction. The eidetic reductions lead us from the realm of facts to that of general essences, while the phenomenological reductions make us pass from the world of realities to that of their ultimate presuppositions.

We cannot also follow the existentialist approach to studying religion in so far as they do not subscribe to the concept of transcendence as understood in religion. It is a fact that the existentialists, in general, speak of transcendence but it is not
related to the religious sphere; rather, it is to human experience of self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is the ability of someone to go beyond himself in his interaction with the environment. Though this quality is required even in the sphere of religion, it is insufficient to account for man’s religious experience.

Given the fact that Merleau-Ponty is an existentialist, is it then possible to employ this approach in studying religious experience? At the outset, it may seem untenable but a deeper study of Merleau-Ponty would bring out nuances that are relevant in studying religious experience.

For Merleau-Ponty, significance is derived not from the immanent operations of the ego, but it is preeminently from the Being-in-the-world which is the general understanding of the existentialists.

Our approach in reexamining the phenomenology of religion developed by Rudolf Otto, W.B.Kristensen, G.van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade shall be from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of intentionality. Religion is often identified with the ideas associated with it, and studied in normative a priori categories. But then that is only a partial view of religion and perhaps an impoverished one at that. Human being is not his mind alone; he is a complex being with mind and body interacting with each other in a concrete manner, in a concrete world, from where he derives his meanings, expressed in myths, symbols, rituals, doctrines, customs and practices or whatever.
Then are religions which do not claim to have a founder as such as in the case of Hinduism, that is why it is called as the *sanādhana dharma*. So also there are religions that claim more than one founder, as in the case of Jainism, although *Mahāvīra* is credited to have founded it, they also accept the twenty-four *tīrthankarās* as its founders. And in the case of primal and archaic religions there is no mention of any founder or founders at all.


R. Pummer, "Religionswissenschaft or Religiology?" in *Numen* Vol.19., 1972, p.103. Pummer says that the term *Religionswissenschaft* is often erroneously translated as science of religion. This, according to him, is because the German term *Wissenschaft*, since the time of Leibniz meant any disciplined research. It, therefore, covers not only the natural sciences but also other domains of knowledge. However, Pummer later changed his stance and used the term 'science of religion' in a fully accepted sense. See. R. Pummer, The Study Conference on “Methodology of the Science of Religion” in Turku, Finland, 1973, in *Numen* Vol.21., 1974, pp.156-59.


24 Ursula King, “Historical and Phenomenological Approaches,” op. cit. p.73.


32 Ibid.


A detailed elucidation of philosophical phenomenology as developed by Husserl is treated below.


54 Ibid.


66 Ibid. P. 342.


68 Ibid. p.148.

69 Ibid. p.150.

70 Ibid. pp. 151- 53.

71 Ibid. pp. 154- 55.

72 Ibid. pp. 156- 57.

73 Ibid. p. 157.
74 Ibid. p.158.

75 Ibid.

76 Edmund Husserl, Krisis, op.cit. p.499.


79 Ibid. p.354.


81 Ibid.

82 Ibid. p. 55.

83 Ibid. p.71.


87 Ibid. pp.209-14, 327.

88 Ibid. pp.304, 350

89 Ibid. p. 320
Ibid. pp. 151, 152.

Ibid. p.145.


Ibid. pp.139-40.


Ibid. p. 134.
Chapter II

Otto And The Experience of the Holy Through Merleau-Ponty

At the outset it must be asked if we can legitimately read Rudolf Otto’s writings in phenomenology of religion from the perspective of Merleau-Ponty? This question assumes significance against the backdrop of an essential and fundamental divergence of orientation both authors manifest through their writings. Their concerns, in other words, are not immediately correlative. Merleau-Ponty explicitly states that his concern is to carry on the phenomenological task from where Husserl has left, or better left to others to develop. Merleau-Ponty’s preface to *Phenomenology of Perception* is an eloquent testimony to the unfinished nature of phenomenology and to the inchoate demeanor distinctive of Edmund Husserl. In particular Merleau-Ponty wants to redescribe the Husserlian concept of “life-world,” which for Husserl in his later writings came to be acknowledged as the foundation of all sciences. He takes this concept of life-world to new depths and greater clarity.

In Merleau-Ponty’s investigation or “interrogation” of the life-world he primarily focuses on man’s perception. In so doing he wants to “expose the body-subject of the perceptual experience, the structure of the perceived world, and the relations between them ....” It becomes clear from Merleau-Ponty’s expressed intention that he follows an orientation that is ontological in nature. This ontological project, though implicit in his *Phenomenology of*