C. EXPLORATION OF THE THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS: AN IN-DEPTH INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN—ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIP

At this juncture, it is important to accentuate the difference between the phenomenological approach in environmental ethics and ecophenomenology. Phenomenological approach in environmental ethics can be considered as only a necessary methodological perspective. Particularly this methodology has been adopted from the very inception of this discipline to obtain insights from the everyday experiences for comprehending the environment and its relation to us in our everydayness. However, ecophenomenology focuses more on philosophical approaches. Ecophenomenology argues that these insights about the environment from our day to day activities provide more of a pragmatic understanding and enable us to capture the holistic interconnections between human and the environment. Ecophenomenology, in this context not only restricts itself to proximate insights regarding the environment obtained from the first person experiences of everyday activities, but also, it concentrates on how the philosophy of phenomenology can give a meaningful interpretation of the human—environment relationship to build a more effective form of environmental ethics. If my research approach would have been merely a phenomenological one, then the exploration could have ended in the last part itself, but as my approach is more towards being an ecophenomenological one, I attempt to go beyond the proximate outcomes of the field study, for an in-depth philosophical inquiry to be able to tease out deeper nuances.

As mentioned, this part will be an exploration of the concept of the phenomenological world to explicate its philosophical underpinnings in detail. In this context, first I will elaborate on the concept of the phenomenological world in the Western philosophical tradition of phenomenology, and will move on to describe its conceptualizations in the Indian philosophical traditions. After this brief literature survey, following the interpretive phenomenological tradition, I will particularly focus on Heidegger’s phenomenology to explore the concept of the phenomenological world. I will attempt to demonstrate how Thomas Sheehan’s interpretation of Heidegger’s phenomenology can bring forth some novel interpretations of this concept to this entire literature. I will also evaluate existing literature to explicate how Heidegger’s phenomenology is being incorporated in the discipline of environmental ethics and will show how this very concept of the phenomenological world in the light of Sheehan’s interpretation has a potential to unveil a new dimension of Heidegger’s phenomenology that possesses some noteworthy implications for environmental ethics.
8 The Phenomenological World: Exploring the Theoretical Underpinnings of the Concept

i. Husserl and Lifeworld: A Notion of Phenomenological World

The concept of the ‘phenomenological world’ can be considered as the heart of the philosophy of phenomenology. I see, different phenomenologists have articulated these concepts with different terminologies. In this chapter, my attempt would be to capture some of these and highlight the way these converge with and diverge from each other. Husserl termed phenomenological world as lifeworld. By contrasting with the objective-scientific world, Husserl discusses the concept of lifeworld as a prescientific and pre-given worldly space, where one dwells in to obtain embodied experiences. There are two levels of explanation associated with the concept of lifeworld. The first states that in day-to-day dwelling, each individual is engaged at the level of meaning structure.¹ This meaning structure is a pre-given component which over time becomes familiar to us and subsequently creates an obvious world. This obvious world is referred as lifeworld in Husserl philosophy. Brown (2010)² shows that as the term lifeworld consists of the two words, the ‘life’ and the ‘world’, each word denotes a specific understanding about the concept. ‘World’ denotes that it is not merely constituted with things or objects, rather it is the intelligibility of things. Each object comes along with the totality of things. This totality of the things suggests that things are not present in isolation rather a thing always comes along with its co-given horizon. Thus, the world indicates the universal horizon of our everyday activity. On the contrary, ‘life’ refers to the personal lived aspect of our involvement with the world. In other words, from the given horizon of a thing, each individual tends to comprehend a specific meaning of that thing according to the individual’s interests or motives. Hence, lifeworld as a concrete-whole creates a dialectic relationship between the world as given horizon of things and the life as individual’s engagement with things according to her interests driven by a practical purpose. It also says that the transcendental perspective of the lifeworld is considered as the ground for all experiences. The lifeworld is the pre-given ground where observation and experience is possible at all, as Husserl would say “lifeworld constantly

²Ibid.
functions as subsoil”. This transcendental notion of lifeworld indicates that any objective scientific experience also emerges from the lifeworld as it can be regarded as the ‘subsoil’ of the scientific world as well.

Schutz (2011) describes the lifeworld as the combination of one’s present and past experiences of things as well as it also takes account of the potential world that can get included in the lifeworld in future. Schutz comprehensively describes the characteristics of the lifeworld, and as per him the primary characteristic is the openness. As already discussed, lifeworld is an open world in both the dimension of space and time. One could comprehend from the above explanation of the lifeworld that it is constituted of the objects of the present as well as the potential world. In the perspective of time, lifeworld is constituted of both the past and the future. The experience of the lifeworld is eternal; it is present before one’s existence and will continue to be present afterwards as well. In this regard, Husserl demonstrates the importance of imagination to constitute the lifeworld—imagination makes lifeworld open in terms of revealing the potential world.

The knowledge of the lifeworld could illuminate its structure. As per the structure of the lifeworld as described by Schutz (1970), three kinds of knowledge exist in this regard. The first one is the immediate actual lifeworld which can be grasped through direct experiences. This segment of the lifeworld exists within our actual reach. It is the world on which one can directly act upon as well as this also functions as a working world that affects an individual. The second type of knowledge deals with the world which was previously present, but currently does not exist. The knowledge about this world tells us the plausibility to restore the experience of this lifeworld. To restore the experience, as Husserl mentions, it is possible to relive the process “with reference to the idealizing assumptions of the ‘and so forth’ and ‘I can do it again’”. This process can lead us to the same world what we have experienced earlier. The third type of knowledge actually speaks about the potential world. This potential world, neither exists at present, nor was it existing in the past. Nonetheless, it is possible to bring this potential world within one’s actual reach. There is an unmistakable similarity between the potential world and the actual one. First of all, all the mentioned segments of the lifeworld owns the same structure.

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6 Ibid., 116.
Secondly, one’s biographical situation entirely influences these three segments as well. The segmentation of the lifeworld, nevertheless points towards another principle characteristic of the structure of the lifeworld that Schutz (1970) mentions it as follows:

The stratification of the world into zones of actual, restorable and obtainable reach already refers to the structure of the lifeworld according to dimensions of objective temporality and their subjective correlates, the phenomena of retention and protection, recall and expectancy, and to the peculiar differentiations of the experience of time which correspond to the manifold dimensions of reality.7

These three segments of the lifeworld clearly indicate that the essence of various things can be grasped not only through their actuality, but also through their potentiality, as Husserl shows, to achieve this potential world, imagination plays a pivotal role. On one hand, emphasizing on the actual lifeworld reveals the intentional existence of an object (in opposing to empirical existence), on the other, imagination explores things in their ideal status of possibilities (in opposing to their contingent status as facts). The knowledge of perception and memory, and the knowledge of imagination together leads us to achieve the necessary truth or to grasp the essence of a phenomenon. Both perception and imagination complement each other to disclose the ‘things-themselves’. Imagination makes it possible to move into a “mode of consciousness where they can be altered and adjusted at will for the purpose of clarity and definition”.8 In the direct perception or the actual lifeworld, things do not occur in their fullest essence and we cannot grasp them in their entirety. To fulfil this inadequate knowledge of things, Husserl suggests imagination could be an effective way to entirely unleash the horizon of things. Imagination can also lead the logical investigation or free variation which discovers the “certain universal and a priori ‘law of essence’”.9 Thus, from the direct perception of lifeworld, imagination creates the transcendental phenomenology which can reveal the universal truth. From this description, it can be said that in Husserl’s phenomenology, the lifeworld is the ground for intentional perception as well as it is the actual world from where the emergence of the potential world is possible at all with the help of imagination and free variation.10 To attain this transcendental phenomenology and the universal truth, lifeworld can be considered as the prime point of departure.

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7Ibid., 118.
9Ibid., 24.
10Free Variation is a process described by Husserl. We imagine all kind of plausible variation in an object and eventually reach to an ultimate position where without destroying the object any other ways of imagining the object would not be possible at all. For further details see Experience and Judgement by Husserl, sec. 87.
The concept of lifeworld is also embedded in the Husserl’s concept of ego, and it also leads to deeper understanding of Husserl’s phenomenology. As per Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, there are two types of ego.\textsuperscript{11} The first one is the empirical ego, and the other is the transcendental ego. In the lifeworld, one can only grasp the empirical ego. Empirical ego can be understood through the perceptual act of thinking, remembering, and imagining. But the empirical ego is not only the essence of ego, there is another ego, which remains beyond this empirical one. Empirical ego is only the consciousness of physical things or the phenomenological data. The exclusion of that phenomenological data also leaves us with the self-consciousness of ‘I am’ and this self-evidence certainly hints towards a pure ego or the transcendental one. Bracketing of empirical ego can only lead us to experience this transcendental ego. Whereas the empirical ego is always intentional, ‘I’ or transcendental ego is an empty act and refers to the structure of consciousness. Let me explain it with an example, empirical self could be conscious of any objects in the lifeworld, suppose a red chair. The transcendental self would be conscious of that ‘I am looking at the red chair’, and this ‘I am’ is the transcendental ego. Transcendental phenomenology is the elucidation of the transcendental ego. This pure ego synthesizes the object and the subject and serves as a principle of unity. Empirical ego is not the cause of the emergence of pure ego, rather a pure ego or a transcendental ego is always present and certain acts of deep self-reflection can only explicit it.

\textit{Implication of Lifeworld in Ecophenomenology:} Having explained the key points of Husserl’s phenomenology, one could say that bracketing out the existing immediate facts and looking further with the motive of finding out the more basic and a-priori elements, are the primary objectives of transcendental phenomenology. Subsequently, borrowing from the transcendental phenomenology, Thomson (2004)\textsuperscript{12} elaborates that the primary objective of naturalistic ecophenomenology\textsuperscript{13} is to explicitly inquire the truth of nature. In that same vein, ecophenomenology emphasizes on to implement two levels of bracketing to explicit the ultimate truth of nature. At the first step, it asks for bracketing out the scientific facts about nature and


\textsuperscript{13}Thomson (2004) has demarcated two streams of ecophenomenology. The first one is naturalistic ethical realism inspired from Husserl’s philosophy and the second one is transcendental ethical realism inspired from Heidegger’s phenomenology.
tries to describe the experience of the lifeworld. This description will possibly reveal the essence of a thing in nature as it occurs. Brown explains that:

The description of the experience is an attempt to return to the “things-themselves” rather than simply taking for granted higher-level, culturally sedimented idealizations and abstractions that often pass for a historical metaphysical discovery. Phenomenology seeks to describe the meaning within the experience and to uncover the experiential phenomena on which categories of higher-level philosophical discourse are founded and in which those experiential phenomena are embedded.14

In this regard, naturalistic ecophenomenology also advocates for bracketing out the traditional fact/value dualism. It clearly mentions that within our lifeworld, the pre-reflexive experience is infused with value. This value is unconsciously embedded in our minds and thus appears as a fact in our everyday experiences. For example, defining something good or bad is primarily a value-laden act, as Brown points out, life-supporting elements have been taken as good in our society because we pose positive value on life itself. Subsequently, whatever supports life is considered as good and it is being accepted as a fact. This value imposition, nonetheless, differs across individuals, societies, and cultures. Hence, the description of the lifeworld is also in a way a description of value experiences, and such multiple descriptions help us to formulate the value horizon. The emergence of this value happens through the meaningful order of things and as per Husserl’s phenomenology this meaningful order is pre-given. Our life experience is intertwined with this pre-given meaningful order of purpose and value. As Brown says, this is the “unnoticed background of experience available for phenomenological reflection”.15 Inspired by Husserl’s phenomenology, ecophenomenology argues that human beings and their environment are being enmeshed with each other, and this embodied experience is phenomenologically describable. Moreover, naturalistic ecophenomenology argues that moral value is not only a subjective preference, rather through the self-reflective analysis of phenomenological experiences, it is possible to see the structure of meaningful order of purpose and value. It also believes that bracketing out the value embedded in the lifeworld (or present in lifeworld as a fact) can open up the fundamental possibility of encountering nature as infused with goodness. If a fact emerging from the lifeworld produces a moral unease, then that moral unease could lead us to explore the goodness of the natural traits. This stream of ecophenomenology advocates that the true phenomenological experience in nature will reveal

15Ibid., 13.
the good and bad for nature. Nature itself will show the traits that can create the necessary ethical
ground for substantiating moral acts. Before going on to elaborating further on the development
of post-Husserlian phenomenological tradition, in the next section, I would like to briefly
elaborate on the existing concepts of the phenomenological world in Indian philosophy.

ii. Phenomenological World in Indian Philosophy

The need of taking this diversion is to acknowledge that phenomenology as a philosophical
stream is not only restricted to Western philosophy, indeed, a phenomenological way of thinking
does exist in Indian philosophical traditions as well. Mohanty (2011)\textsuperscript{16} elaborates that
phenomenology as a methodology is imbibed in the concept of rationality in Indian Philosophy.
Almost every Indian philosophical school believes that perception is a source of our knowledge.
Therefore, the theory of pramāna (the mode of knowledge) is taken as the central principle in
any Indian philosophical school, to establish claims. In Mohanty’s words:

For almost all Indian Philosophers, the ultimate ground for all evidence, the source for all
‘establishment’ (Siddhi), is consciousness (cit)—without which no ‘being’ or ‘non-being’ could
be asserted or denied and there would be ‘universal darkness’ (jagatāṇḍhyaprasāga).\textsuperscript{17}

Furthermore, Mohanty also elaborates that the concept of rationality in Indian philosophy is
constituted of three components: theory of consciousness, theory of pramāna (the mode of
knowledge), and theory of action. Mohanty depicts that these three components have a number
of similarities as well as dissimilarities with Husserl’s phenomenological account. He captures
the debate regarding the intentionality of consciousness in all Indian philosophical schools. As
well as, he deals with the difficulties in concluding about Indian philosophers’ stands on the
temporality of consciousness. He says: “There is no doubt that Indian conception of time is
heavily cosmological, and that by and large, consciousness, in its pure non-empirical nature, is
kept outside of the sphere of temporality”.\textsuperscript{18} He also highlights the Vedantic and non-Vedantic
debate on whether consciousness is the source of the world or not. In this regard, he claims that
the lack of ‘theory of sense’ and an ontological orientation of the structure of Indian thinking,
make phenomenology appear as a ‘theory of constitution’ in Indian philosophy.\textsuperscript{19}

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\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 12.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 13.
of the constitution of *the thing itself*. Eventually, phenomenology as a theory of constitution serves two main purposes. It becomes either theory of evidence or theory of *pramāṇa* (the mode of knowledge). Or, it becomes a theory of real origination or theory of *prameya*. Hence, Indian philosophical tradition, according to Mohanty’s argument, is entirely based on the fact that though consciousness is the ultimate ground of being, it does not become a constitutive source of all transcendence. Rather phenomenology as a ‘theory of evidence’ or, particularly, ‘evidence of senses’ as well as ‘theory of real origination’ becomes the constitutive source and takes over the place of consciousness. This, I see, is quite similar to the Western tradition of phenomenology, especially the Husserlian account. However, Mohanty acknowledges that in Indian philosophy, any transcendental account of consciousness does not exist. It implies that Indian philosophy does not support the plausibility of revealing the structure of consciousness as a ‘universal-constitutive subjectivity’. Mohanty puts it thus:

> The *pramāṇas* ‘establish’ them, the consciousness evidences this act of establishment, but the judicative authorities of the *pramāṇa* is not, and cannot be traced back to their origin in the structure of that consciousness.\(^\text{20}\)

Based on this account, it can be concluded that in Indian philosophy, phenomenology offers a descriptive account and is considered as an epistemology, but not as a transcendental account of consciousness. This rejection, clearly specifies the sharp distinction between phenomenology in Indian philosophical thoughts and its presence as a separate discipline in continental philosophy. In spite of this distinction, a few specific Indian philosophical schools explicitly discuss the idea of the phenomenal world. Especially, both Advaita and Buddhist schools have the concept of the phenomenal world. Here, it is important to mention that phenomenal world and phenomenological world is not identical, though, both captures the experiential account of the external world. Owing to this reason, I think, it is important to capture the concept of the phenomenal world in Indian philosophy and compare and contrast the same with the concept of the phenomenological world.

In Buddhist philosophy, the concepts of existence, suffering, ignorance, action, knowledge, and liberation have been considered as the core ones. In this regard, the concept of an existential world comes in the context of understanding Buddhist nature of reality. The specialty of Buddhism is to understand the nature of reality by focusing on the process through which reality appears to us, instead of analyzing what is really present in reality. In a way, “Buddhism teaches that to understand suffering, its rise, its cessation, and the path leading to its

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\(^{20}\text{Ibid., 18.}\)
cessation is to see reality as it truly is.” To describe the process through which reality appears to us, Buddhist philosophers keep referring to two kinds of reality. The first one is the conventional truth of reality and the other one is the ultimate truth of reality. According to conventional truth, all objects in the world exist and possess various properties. But, according to the ultimate truth, objects are empty, devoid of any properties. This ultimate truth about reality is possible to realize iff we have a critical mind that can carry out philosophical analysis. In everyday realm, ordinary people are prone to see the conventional truth where things are sensed through their sense organs and consist of a range of attributes. Although Buddhist philosophers emphasize on to seeing the reality as an ultimate truth where one can understand the futility of the conventional truth and the emptiness of objects, I will try to examine the concept of conventional truth in detail to explore the concept of the phenomenological world in Buddhist philosophy.

According to Buddhist philosophy, the conventional truth of reality occurs due to ‘dependent origination’. This concept claims that behind all existent phenomena there are complex networks of causes and conditions. These causes and conditions set the stage for a phenomenon to arise. Simultaneously, to recognize a phenomenon as a distinct one, there is a need to have some conceptual construction. This construction is entirely based on human consciousness. This conceptual construe actually creates a savikalpaka (Determinate) perception. As the Buddhist goal is to attain the ultimate truth of reality, it does not accept the savikalpaka (Determinate) perception as a true perception. Rather, it argues that nirvikalpaka (Indeterminate) perception is the true form of perception. They believe that perceptual data is free from all concepts. Nirvikalpaka (Indeterminate) perception is that in which perceptual object exists without having some conceptual background. It is a pure form of sensation. On the contrary, savikalpaka (Determinate) perception is loaded with perceiver’s conceptual baggage. Buddhist views elucidate the way Savikalpaka (Determinate) perception takes over the nirvikalpaka (Indeterminate) perception. Due to this, conventional truth also overshadows the understanding of the ultimate truth. Garfield captures these differences in perception in another context, as he puts:

Things appear to us as independently existent. But the objects of our experience, as we experience them, exist only in dependence on our minds. Without our subjectivity, there can be no objects. Here again we can see that the appearance of an object is seen to be entirely dependent on the mind as it is the only carrier of concepts which gives rise to savikalpaka (Determinate) perception.

The above brief description of the Buddhist nature of reality and perception can be seen to be completely entangled with their conception of phenomenal world. And the conception of phenomenal world becomes decisive to ensure the objective of Buddhist philosophy ‘to see the reality as it truly is’. In spite of the absence of the exact term ‘phenomenological world’, I argue, Buddhist philosophy has a notion of the same. According to this philosophy, savikalpaka (Determinate) perception creates an object as experienced and this leads to an attachment towards the object. Buddhist philosophy defines this attachment as a cause of suffering. To elaborate, things turn into a specific object through savikalpaka perception (Determinate). Chatterjee (2008) accentuates the way “savikalpaka perception is a verbalized experience, in which the object is determined by the concepts of name, class, relation, etc.” We get attached to things and start craving for some more. Predominantly, through our power of imagination, we envisage objects that we can crave for and thus, we get bounded up in the samsaric realm. This attachment towards objects, creates suffering in samsāra. This entire process of the creation of samsaric realm, as per my understanding is quite similar to the notion of the phenomenological world. I have already elaborated, in the last chapter, the way in everyday dwelling, individuals eventually create this samsaric realm. This samsaric realm is personalized and subjective; or in other words, each one of us owns our own samsāra—a meaningful relational world. In Buddhist philosophy, this realm is termed as ‘experiential world’, ‘karmic world’, or ‘samsāra’, and I find a notion of the phenomenological world is ingrained in these terms. In the phenomenal world, though we see objects, we are not aware of the dependent existence of an object. This unawareness destined us to belong to the samsāra and continually suffer.

Buddhist theory suggests that knowledge of the nature of reality can enable us to transcend this phenomenal world and attain nirvāṇa (liberation). Or in other words, it can be

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23S. C. Chatterjee, Naya Theory of Knowledge (Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, 2008), 175.
said that nirvāṇa (liberation) is the understanding of the nature of reality—the dependent origin of objects and also the emptiness in existence. Once, one is sympathetic to the emptiness of the existence, then it is possible to grasp the futility of craving, suffering or the futility of the phenomenal world in its entirety. This understanding can eventually lead one to attain nirvāṇa (liberation). Various Buddhist schools conceptualize the notion of phenomenal world or saṁsāra and nirvāṇa (liberation) from different perspectives. There is a very distinct difference between the Mahāyāna and Theravāda school. Theravāda school suggests that there is a need for ethical and moral conditions to transcend the phenomenal world, to attain nirvāṇa (liberation). They emphasize on ethical traits because that can only help one to overcome the attachment to the phenomenal world. This view clearly conveys that Theravāda school is quite critical of and imposes a negative value on the phenomenal world. In contrast, the approach of Mahāyāna school is rather uncritical towards the phenomenal world. Mahāyāna philosophers see “All of saṁsāra is nirvāṇa” 25 As per this school, all beings that belong to the phenomenal world, possess the possibility of attaining nirvāṇa (liberation). Thus, as per this view, saṁsāra (phenomenal world) and nirvāṇa (liberation) together create the reality of nature. 26 This in a way ascribes a positive value to the phenomenal world. This view suggests that the phenomenal world is the foundation for attaining the absolute truth or nirvāṇa (liberation). This basic difference in understanding the relationship between the phenomenal world and the absolute world, also clarifies another basic distinction between these two schools. For Theravāda school, suffering is the basic characteristic of saṁsāra (phenomenal world) and one can really overcome suffering by strictly following the Buddha’s teaching. Hence, they argue for an ethical and moral subjective commitment to attain nirvāṇa (liberation). On the contrary, Mahāyāna school believes that suffering is an illusion. This shows that for them attaining nirvāṇa (liberation) is a requirement to invoke a mere subjective change to understand the status of reality.

Here, my objective is not to elaborate on the path of nirvāṇa (liberation) as discussed in Buddhism, indeed, I limit myself to consolidate various concepts in a manner so that it can explicate the notion of the phenomenological world in this philosophy. And I demonstrate that the fundamental objective of Buddhism: to attain liberation from saṁsāra, is nothing but obtaining a vivid understanding about the nature of reality. The notion of phenomenal world in Buddhism is connected to the metaphysical question concerning the nature of reality. Buddhist

26Ibid.
philosophy argues that the emptiness of existence is the truth of reality. To grasp this emptiness of existence, it focuses on comprehending the human consciousness. This doctrine about the nature of reality offers a notion of the phenomenological world as being a conventional way of interpreting the reality.

Now I would like to discuss, Advaita Vedānta’s notion of phenomenological world. The core concepts in philosophy of Advaita Vedānta are Brahman (absolute consciousness), atman (absolute individual self), ignorance, māyā (apparent reality), knowledge, and liberation. Among all of these, māyā (apparent reality) occupies a central position in this philosophical doctrine, and similar to Buddhism, the concept of māyā actually originates from the inquiry about the nature of reality. Advaita firmly claims that Brahman is the ultimate reality, except that there is nothing. It also affirms that atman is only identical to Brahman (absolute consciousness), therefore ātman (absolute individual self) is also real—ātman (absolute individual self) is Brahman (absolute consciousness). Except Brahman and ātman (absolute individual self), all other things are illusions, or as Advaita calls it/these mithyā (false). This core essence of Advaita philosophy again leads me to invoke the concept of the phenomenological world. I argue, Advaita’s way of conceptualizing the nature of reality as māyā (apparent reality), resonates closely with the notion of the phenomenological world. Here again, it seems that there exists a dual nature of the world. The world of our ordinary everyday experience is known as māyā or apparent reality and the ultimate reality is Brahman. However, Advaita denies the apparent reality as a ‘reality’ and advocates that there is only one reality—Brahman (absolute consciousness).

Advaita describes that the ordinary everyday world of our experience or the phenomenal world is māyā (apparent reality). Brooks (1969) elaborates the ontological status of māyā (apparent reality) and says, in Advaita for something to be real, it needs to fulfill three basic characteristics: real thing should be experienceable, non-illusory, and permanent. Brahman (absolute consciousness) is the only entity who owns these three characteristics at any point of time. Owing to this, Brahman (absolute consciousness) is considered as the only reality. On the contrary, māyā (apparent reality) is an ever-changing phenomenon. It is also dependent on Brahman (absolute consciousness) to appear. For this reason, māyā (apparent reality) does not get the ontological status of being real. Brooks captures the reason as follows:

Advaita’s claim that the judgments we normally make about the world, on the basis of our sense perception of it, are mistaken. Certainly, if reality is unitary, then the plurality of the world cannot

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be real; we must be mis-perceiving the world and then misjudging it on the basis of our ignorance of the truth of the matter.  

Advaita claims that we accept māyā (apparent reality) as the ultimate reality due to our ignorance as we are prone to focus on our empirical ego and get ignorant of ātman. On the other hand, we depend on our sense perception to formulate our knowledge. This knowledge that generates from the interaction between empirical ego and sense perception is called the phenomenal knowledge. The super-phenomenal knowledge is a “primordial intuitive insight into the nature of existence”. This knowledge offers a total transformation of human beings and could lead one to attain moksha. Hence, it can be concluded that for Advaita, phenomenal world or māyā (apparent reality) is an outcome of our ignorance. Māyā (apparent reality) is a realm which is neither real nor unreal, but there is no ambiguity about its existence. Yet, māyā as a phenomenal world does not get the status of being real. Our experiential world or the phenomenal world, or māyā (apparent reality), whatever one might call it, according to Brooks (1969) is just an appearance.

The Indian philosophical doctrine of the phenomenal world clearly reveals that this concept always comes in the context of understanding the metaphysical reality or what we can call the nature of reality. In this regard, the reality of phenomenal world has always been seen as substandard to the ultimate reality. Throughout Indian philosophy, attaining moksha is being portrayed as the ultimate goal. Both Buddhism and Advaita suggest that transcending the phenomenal world can only lead one to attain moksha. According to me, the pivotal commonality between the phenomenal world and the phenomenological world is that both of them actually focus on sense perception and our everyday relational reality. Both of them give importance to human consciousness as well. However, the phenomenal world in Indian philosophical traditions, is considered as the reality that appears, rather than the real nature of reality. Whereas, the conceptualization of the phenomenological world never questions the truthfulness of reality that appears, rather it is considered as the soil to elucidate the transcendental reality. Depending on this ontic reality, the real nature of reality, appears. At this juncture, it can be said that despite the similarity in terms of imposing emphasis on the human consciousness and everyday experiences in the Western and the Indian traditions, the objectives of the interventions are quite different. Hence, in the rest of the dissertation, I would concentrate

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28Ibid., 386.

on the Western phenomenological concept of the phenomenological world to comprehend the human—environment relationship and will make a further attempt to explore the ontological implications of the same. Nevertheless, there is definitely an enormous scope of an in-depth inquiry to comprehend the Indian philosophical concept of the phenomenological world as indicative of the nature of reality, to possibly expound of its implication on our understanding of the human—environment relationship.

iii. Heidegger and Being-in-the-World: a Notion of Phenomenological World

With the advancement of phenomenology, the concept of the phenomenological world became layered and complex in Martin Heidegger’s philosophy. In this context, it is important to mention that there are diverse and often conflicting translations of Heidegger’s lexicons from German to English. This ambiguity in interpretation still remains as a central matter of Heidegger Studies. To circumvent this ambiguity, I will solely consider the interpretation of Heidegger philosophy by Thomas Sheehan. Sheehan in his recent book, Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift, has made a commendable scholarly attempt to provide a comprehensive understanding of Heidegger’s philosophy. This book also is an important effort because Sheehan establishes quite a few path breaking arguments about the mammoth philosophical oeuvre of Heidegger. The other reason to take account of Sheehan’s interpretation is that there are multiple interpretations of Heidegger’s oeuvre available based on political or theological readings, whereas Sheehan’s interpretation is grounded on comprehending Heidegger completely based on a phenomenological reading. Considering my attempt here is to understand the human side of the human—environment relationship from an ecophenomenological perspective, and also in the same vein, I employed interpretive phenomenological methodology for my field study, I see, it is inevitable to choose a phenomenological interpretation of Heidegger’ oeuvre, that Sheehan rightly offers, over the other prevailing ones.

Although Heidegger’s phenomenology never explicitly discusses the concept of the phenomenological world, he grounds his phenomenology on the facticity of the human existence. In this section, I shall concentrate on to describing what this facticity of the human existence is and how the notion of the phenomenological world is intrinsically related to that. In his magnum opus, Being and Time, Heidegger strictly negates Husserl’s phenomenological methodology and introduces a hermeneutical or an interpretive understanding of the world. Heidegger’s phenomenology argues that human beings are thrown into the world or always
being-in-the-world, however, the world is neither made by us, nor we can grasp it in its entirety. The world is always-already there; there is no way to escape from it. To explicit this throwness of human beings, Heidegger introduces the term *Dasein*. Sheehan explains, *Dasein* refers to the ‘disclosedness—openness’, ‘Da’ in the *Dasein* refers to the openness where all forms of meaningfulness are possible at all. In other words, *Da* refers to the thrown-openness of the human existence as Sheehan elucidates:

The Da refers to that clearing in which things stand as a whole, in such a way that, in this Da, the being of open things shows itself and at the same time withdraws.30

Sheehan argues that for Heidegger *sein* means phenomenologically the meaningful presence of things. Hence, in this light, *Dasein* can be translated as throwness in the open space where the meaningful presence of things is at all possible. Heidegger clearly mentions that *Dasein* is the essence of the human existence. This existence only makes things intelligible or meaningful. To clarify, Heidegger says in the human ex-sistence31, things just cannot stand separately, or it cannot stand alone. According to Sheehan’s reading, Heidegger’s argues that owing to the human ex-sistence, we always perceive things in the realm of intelligibility—things always appear along with other things. The human existence is the clearing where things get meaningfully present. Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* as explained by Sheehan, clearly points out that *Dasein* is not merely an explanation of the spatial existence of human beings, indeed it is the essence of the human existence.

For fulfilling the objective of phenomenology i.e. to transcend the subject/object duality and to capture things as it appears in the world, Sheehan explicates that, Heidegger’s existential phenomenology deals with two notions of existence.32 The first notion is ex-sistence as one’s own personal life which is termed as *Dasein*. As in the everyday dwelling things are always meaningfully present to us, the primary question of Heidegger’s phenomenology is why there is meaningfulness at all. As per his explanation, the answer lies in the analysis of his concept of ‘world’. According to Heidegger, ‘world’ is not a realm constituted by objects rather each individual encounters meaningful intelligibility of objects in one’s everyday existence as she presses into some possibility or other. The intelligibility of things that is generated through those pressing into possibilities or intention to accomplish certain roles, constitutes one’s world. As


31Sheehan translates both *Dasein* or personal instance of hermeneutical openness and *Da-sein* or ontological structure of any concrete, personal ex-sistence as ex-sistence. As per the context, the meaning of ‘ex-sistence’ gets decided. Please see Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger*, 135.

32Ibid., 136.
Sheehan depicts, Heidegger’s thought aptly demonstrates that each human being is thrown ahead and always pressing into some possibility or other to fulfill. Possibilities can be articulated in contrast to actuality. However, if articulated independently, possibility could be understood as potentiality. Here, the possibility means ‘being able to’. The pressing into possibilities acts as a force what gives motion to the ex-sistence or Da-sein. Through the process of pressing into possibility, other objects achieve their meaningful presence in one’s world. The possibilities, one is pressing into, decide how each of our world would be like. In this way, each of our world is entirely personalized. Due to the difference in the meaningful presence of things, each of our world is different from the other’s world. Hence, Heidegger’s conception of the world does not indicate the meaningless realm of objects, rather it is the phenomenological world created by Da-sein. In other words, my world appears to me because of my purpose and pressing into different possibilities.

In a simpler manner in an average everydayness, the human existence (Da-sein) encounters other things in the mode of equipment. When one is engrossed in her work or pressing into certain possibility, various other objects appear meaningfully as per the purpose and for the sake of completing that work. These entities Heidegger denotes as ‘ready-at-hand’. For the completion of the work, she requires those equipments and this very mode of relation is highlighted as ‘equipmentality’. This equipmentality is the key feature of Dasein that ensures it encounters other entities. Dasein as being-in-the-world always already acting in the world, it explores various things as equipment in-order-to complete its goals. Hence, it can be said that being-in-the-world provides equipmentality to Dasein to connect with other beings which are ready-at-hand. Hall (1993) also echoes the same:

Heidegger labels the ordinary way that the object is for us in the midst of practical activity “ready-to-hand”. The way that such objects are for us during breakdowns in their normal functioning he calls “unready- to-hand”. The complex instruments just referred to he calls “equipmental totalities”. And the system of on-going purposes and projects he refers to as hierarchical “toward-which”, “in-order-to”, and “for-the-sake-of” relations between our activities and our short – and long-term goals.\(^3\)

In this manner, the first notion of the ex-sistence in Heidegger’s phenomenology illustrates how the formation of the phenomenological world is actually dependent on the existentiel understanding of the human ex-sistence as being-in-the-world.

Furthermore, now let us move to the second notion to grasp the grounded-ness of Heidegger’s philosophy on the concept of the phenomenological world. Sheehan explains that to understand the ex-sistence as structural, not merely being limited to personal, one needs to transcend the ontic level and focuses on the ontological question that Heidegger has posed. According to Sheehan, the ontological question is ‘What is the source of being?’ and in this regard, it is important to mention that Sheehan clearly denotes the translation of ‘being’ is nothing but meaningfulness. Sheehan argues that disclosing the source of meaningfulness was Heidegger’s primary objective throughout his philosophical journey. Heidegger’s answer to this question is the human ex-sistence. The essence of human beings is that we are always-already thrown into the world. In Heidegger’s terminology, this is the very facticity of the human existence; “from which there is no escape”. As human beings are always being-in-the-world, the creation of the phenomenological world is inevitable. The structure of Dasein is, it is thrown-ahead and always pressing into one possibility to another. This hermeneutic structure ensures that human beings are always in the world of intelligibility or the phenomenological world. According to Heidegger, the engrossed involvement with the phenomenologically meaningful world actually detains us to acknowledge that the human existence is the clearing or the reason why the meaningfulness is possible at all. We are oblivious to this structure of Dasein or ontological truth of the existence i.e. Da-sein. As per Sheehan, Dasein is nothing but understanding the facticity of the human ex-sistence. Here, the word facticity denotes the impossibility of the human existence to withhold from pressing into some possibility or other, and cease one into the actuality.

To summarize, it can be said that, the concept of being-in-the world can be articulated as being engrossed with the meaningfulness of things in the phenomenological world. On one hand, it depicts the importance of human being’s everyday dwelling in the world. On the other hand, it establishes how the human ex-sistence and the structure of the human existence are interlinked. Sheehan’s explanation of this bivalent structure of the process of meaningful encountering of things, clearly denotes the importance of the concept of being-in-the-world in Heidegger’s philosophy. Therefore, I posit, the phenomenological world is an implicit notion of Heidegger’s phenomenology which runs throughout his philosophy. It binds his existential philosophy with the everyday dwelling of human beings. Moreover, the hermeneutical structure
of the human existence can only be grasped through the understanding of the notion of the phenomenological world.

*Implication of ‘Being-in-the-World’ in Ecphenomenology:* Having explained Heidegger’s concept of the phenomenological world based on his notion of being-in-the-world, if one traces back to the ecophenomenological school, then the manner in which Thomson’s conceptualization of transcendental ethical realism\(^{37}\) directly gets inspiration from Heidegger’s phenomenology, becomes evident. This school emphasizes that the open encountering of the environment provides a transcendental source of meaning which is beyond any fact or value. It is important to mention that as Heidegger’s conception of the phenomenological world is implicit in his philosophy, similarly in transcendental ecphenomenology, Heidegger’s ontological phenomenology is not mentioned explicitly. The actual difficulty in this regard arises with the availability of diverse interpretations of Heidegger’s philosophy. In the stream of ecphenomenology, Heidegger’s various unique lexicons such as *Dasein*, Being-in-the-world, clearing, appropriation, disclosedness, withdrawal, ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, calculative thinking, meditative thinking, fourfold, etc. are widely employed to incorporate his philosophical insights. However, according to my reading, the scholarship fails to produce a comprehensive picture from these insights. Mostly, all of these terms have been evoked to depict Heidegger’s thoughts on technology, modernity and the present condition of human beings due to the prevailing technological mode of engaging with the world. I will revisit the concepts referred in transcendental ethical realism, to review its various facets.

Broadly, it can be said that ecphenomenology inspired by Heidegger, captures the way modernity and technology modifies our perspective of engaging with things and how that certainly influences the meaningful presence of things in our phenomenological world.\(^{38}\) It also refers how these influences are prone to create an inauthentic existence of human beings instead of an authentic one. Entirely being engrossed in the ontic engagement within the external world and the subsequent obliviousness of the existential structure, are denoted as the characteristics of an inauthentic mode of dwelling. In that same vein, the current literature of transcendental ethical realism borrows from later Heidegger’s philosophy to argue that the technological mode of engaging, enables us to see other things just as resources. As explained by Thomson:

\(^{37}\)Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology”.

The later Heidegger’s ontological critique of ‘enframing’ (*Gestell*, our nihilistic, ‘technological’ understanding of being) builds on the idea that we *Dasein* implicitly participate in the making-intelligible of our worlds, indeed, that our sense of reality is mediated by lenses inherited from metaphysics.\(^{39}\)

This enframing is seen as one of the major causes behind the current environmental crisis. This mode of engagement, neither cares for other things, nor does it care for its own existential structure. Thomson (2004)\(^{40}\) also argues that the current way of engaging with the world is inherited from the Nietzsche’s metaphysics which leads towards an obliviousness of the enframing. Enframing not only reduces other entities to mere resources, even it also reduces ourselves to resources. Subsequently, Thomson argues that this Nietzsche’s metaphysical lens is so strongly rooted in our thinking that it also guides the present day’s environmentalism. He strongly contends naturalistic ecophenomenological view of posing intrinsic value on life as it implicitly bears the Nietzsche’s notion of life and thus belongs to Nietzschean nihilistic ontotheology. On the contrary, Heidegger’s ontological critique of technology as per Thomson provides “a positive philosophical treatment for the nihilism”.\(^{41}\) Thomson reads, later Heidegger’s concepts of ‘poetic dwelling’ and ‘releasement towards thing’ and ‘fourfold’ show us the way to come out of this nihilism. Hence, it can be said that the current exploration of Heidegger’s philosophy and its influences on ecophenomenology mostly consider later Heidegger’s philosophy. According to scholars, the proposed way of transcending enframing, that Heidegger has suggested, points towards an ecologically benign way of dwelling. Transcendental ecophenomenologists claim that Heidegger’s thought about phenomenological *presencing* of things in its fourfold horizon could enable us to capture the deeper meaning of being. Thomson\(^{42}\) as well as Brown\(^{43}\), both agree that the environmental crisis is actually ‘a crisis of meaning’ and on that basis, Thomson advocates that this deeper meaning of things is essential to overcoming the crisis. According to him, it may not fix the environmental problems directly, rather it might radically change the human relationship with the environment, eventually solving various environmental issues. This change in the relationship will plausibly provide a new meaning of things, and will lead us towards creating a new set of meaningfulness. That is how transcendental ethical realism transcends the fact/value dualism and provides a

\(^{39}\)Thomson, “Ontology and Ethics at the Intersection of Phenomenology,” 396.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 380–412.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., 397.

\(^{42}\)Ibid.

\(^{43}\)Charles S. Brown, “The Real and the Good : Phenomenology and the Possibility of an Axiological Rationality,” in *Ecophenomenology back to the Earth itself* (See note 39), 3–18.
scope of experiencing a transcendental source of meaning. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that though Thomson rightly highlights the objective of transcendental ethical realism, the scholarship gets limited as it mostly concentrates on the later Heidegger’s philosophy. Especially, the scholarship does not pay due importance to the fact that possibly Heidegger’s project completely was a phenomenological one and his concept of being-in-the-world needs to be interpreted from that perspective.

iv. Conclusion

In this review, I demonstrate that the phenomenological world is regarded as an individual’s everyday reality. However, there is a contradiction between the Eastern and the Western philosophy about the nature of this reality. As from the very beginning of this dissertation, I concentrate on hermeneutic phenomenology, I see, Heidegger’s conception of the phenomenological world seems more apposite for further exploration, over other conceptions explicated in this chapter. I also demonstrate that the creation of the phenomenological world or early Heidegger’s project of existential phenomenology is not incorporated in transcendental ethical realism and certainly that demands an in-depth examination. For the same, first of all, I see, it is required to review how Heidegger’s philosophy gets incorporated in the discipline of environmental philosophy and ethics, apart from the stream of transcendental ethical realism or ecophenomenology in general. I think, it will provide a comprehensive understanding of the import of Heidegger’s concepts for the discipline environmental ethics. Subsequently, it would help to elucidate the importance of the notion of the phenomenological world and its role in comprehending the human—environment relationship.