CHAPTER - V

CRITIQUE OF PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Introduction

Phenomenological psychology has emerged as distinctive discipline of psychology with the writings of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenological psychology has a creative and critical intervention in the field of psychology. This chapter deals about significance of phenomenological psychology in the discourse of psychology. In this context, it explains the similarities and difference between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. This chapter further goes on to portray the phenomenological insight and interventions in the major psychological schools and its influence on contemporary psychologists.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as existential phenomenologists were more concern with phenomenological psychology as method than pure eidetic psychology as viewed by Husserl. Phenomenological psychology applies the phenomenological method in order to pursue a more appropriate understanding of the central concerns of psychology. Phenomenological psychology is against the present psychological method of hypothetical reduction models on the study of human beings. It assumes that all human behaviours are intentional. Thus human beings are always active interpreters of their experience of the self, the other and the world rather than as passive reactors to both biophysical and environmental forces. Phenomenological psychology also acknowledges the inevitable role and impact of the world in shaping the very means through which our investigations are structured.¹

Although the credit goes to Husserl for the initiation of the movement of phenomenological psychology, a very few psychologists accept his views without much modification. It is due to the influence of existential phenomenologists: Sartre and

Merleau-Ponty. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have contributed to phenomenological psychology in their own way. Though they belong to existential phenomenology, their approach to psychology differs. They both agree that human behaviour must be intentional and hold the same view that human experience manifests a meaningful structure as any phenomenologists. Yet their understanding of human being differs. So ultimately there is a difference in their approach to psychology becomes inevitable.

Phenomenological Psychology: Sartre and Merleau-Ponty

Phenomenological psychology initiated by Husserl has been enriched further by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty and also has undergone significant changes with the writings of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. For Husserl, phenomenological psychology is ‘pure eidetic psychology’ and the existing world can be bracketed. He proposes abstract ‘universe of essence’ and ‘transcendental ego’. Sartre argues that Husserl was mistaken in thinking that the existing world can be bracketed. The suspensions of all affirmations of existence beyond consciousness leaves only ‘a great emptiness’ because consciousness has no contents. Therefore consciousness can never be isolated from the existing world. For Sartre, the reflective consciousness became a study of human existence situated in the world. Merleau-Ponty critized Husserl’s understanding of intentionality of consciousness which is based on transcendental ego. Merleau-Ponty rather emphasizes on the bodily consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, the perceiver is not a pure thinker but a body-subject. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology must awaken human being to be aware of consciousness as incarnate in a body and inhering in a world. Thus the notion of ‘incarnate subjectivity’ is central to Merleau-Ponty. In a way, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty reject Husserl’s abstract ‘universal essence’ and ‘transcendental ego’.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as existential philosophers have emphasized on concrete thinking. For them, the actual human situation is the starting point for any authentic philosophy. They felt that genuine thinking must not be abstract. They

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3 Ibid., p.331.
emphasize the central importance of pondering on the meaning of our being-in-the-world. Existential philosophers’ central concern is to prompt humans not to live thoughtlessly but rather, to have a keen awareness of their freedom and responsibility in the shaping of a situation in which they are involved. Both, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty criticized the rationalistic abstract thinking which evades the implications of the concrete situation. They also warned that this attitude would lead to disaster.\(^5\)

Besides their difference with Husserl, as contemporaries, both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty were in regular interaction with each other. The relationship of closeness and contrast has been result of their philosophical differences. The primary concern of both existential phenomenologists, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty was to understand human existence. In their endeavour to understand human existence, they have transformed the psychological aspects human existence. Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty also argues that the human power to become conscious of one’s situation implies that human behaviour is not mechanically determined. Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty emphasize the centrality of intentionality in every human behavioural act. Merleau-Ponty developed an attitude where he has broken away with the abstract dialectical schematism, marxism and developed an existentialism which is more applicable to psychology and other sciences. He keeps emphasizing on the concrete and the lived experience. For Merleau-Ponty, Sartre’s concepts put forth too strong a pull toward abstract schematicism. He opposed what he considers Sartre’s translation of lived concreteness into these conceptual patterns. According to Merleau-Ponty, Sartre seems to replace concreteness with pure ideas which do not touch the lived concrete of science and history. Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the specific kinds of concepts needed in biology, in psychology, in history, given the primacy of the lived over the conceptual.\(^6\)

Existentialism denies the priority of objective truth. The main concern is what one does and how one lives within the given world. This is a response to Aristotelian metaphysics and medieval Scholastic philosophy which believed in a human nature and

\(^5\) Ibid., pp.viii-x.

God. As existentialists, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty analyze the nature of human beings. They express different views on human nature. According to Sartre, there is nothing like human nature. As human beings encounter the world, he or she makes of himself or herself. According to Sartre, there is no pre-determined human nature. For Sartre, ‘existence precedes essence’. In other words, first we exist, then we form our own nature through the many decisions we make throughout our life. There is no universal nature like being a rational animal for humans; rather, we create our nature through choice. In similar fashion, Merleau-Ponty also rejects the predetermined human nature as such. According to Merleau-Ponty, there is no inner man, human being is in the world, and only in the world individual knows oneself. Human being is not the outcome of numerous causal agencies which determine human bodily or psychical make up.\(^7\) He makes it clear by stating:

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\text{Man taken as a concrete being is not a psyche joined to an organism, but the movement to and from of existence which at one time allows itself to take corporal form and at others moves towards personal acts.}\(^8\)
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According to his theories, we are only able to know ourselves based upon the input of others, all our actions, thoughts, and statements define us and have historical consequences. Thus human nature never ceases to change.\(^9\)

Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are concerned about the meaning of human existence that has been realized through freedom. However, they differ in conceptualization of freedom. Merleau-Ponty conceives human being as being-in-the-world which implies that there is no absolute freedom. For Sartre, there is absolute freedom. According to Merleau-Ponty, Sartre conception of consciousness and its relation to world, and his conception of freedom are unhistorical. For Sartre consciousness was a pure ‘negation’. Freedom was power to negate the situation in which one found oneself. Although Sartre holds that freedom is always ‘in a situation’, his

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\(^8\) Ibid., p.101.
\(^9\) Ibid., p.xxii.
doctrine of consciousness and choice effectively denies the importance of history of the
time and place in which one has to make one’s choices. For Sartre, freedom means
radical indeterminism and pure spontaneity whereas for Merleau-Ponty, freedom is
conditioned and not absolute. It is conditioned by a pre-conscious engagement with the
world and by one’s personal history. Therefore, in contrast to Sartre’s contention ‘we
are condemned to freedom’, Merleau-Ponty stated that ‘we are condemned to meaning’.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, as phenomenological psychologists were critical about
the other schools of psychology of their times. Especially, they are critical about
psychoanalysis, behaviourism and Gestalt psychology. Sartre criticizes the psychological
methodology which claims to be scientific. Merleau-Ponty is also critique of ‘scientific
psychology’ which is based on the philosophical conception ‘dualism’. He was never
completely opposed the scientific psychology as such rather he is opposed the dualistic
conception which holds that ‘the mental’ and the physiological realities are two different
orders of reality that are external to each other and causally connected. He indentifies two
types of ‘objective thinking’ to which his phenomenology is opposed: empiricism and
intellectualism. According to him, both empiricism and intellectualism adhere to ‘natural
tendency’. In other words, both make a strict and rigid distinction between nature and
consciousness, the physical and mental and to look for causal relationships between them.
Empiricism in particular, attempts to explain phenomena, both external objects and
internal states of consciousness or mental acts, in terms of sensory qualities or sensory
experiences and causal relationships between them. Intellectualism as such, it relates
perception to a priori forms and categories. He also disagrees with Sartre’s rigid
distinction between being-in-itself (etre en soi) and being-for-itself (etre pour soi) as
object and consciousness. He also rejected Sartre’s disregard for body in Sartre’s book
*Imagination*.  

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As phenomenologists, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes on lived experience in understanding human behaviour. It is obvious that one’s own intentionality plays important role in lived experience. Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty also holds that the ‘lived’ activity exceeds the ‘representative consciousness’ that is to say, there is a process of thought and activity. This activity is prior to and wider than thought.\textsuperscript{14} The lived activity is wider than any datum or ‘what’ is known or perceived. Hence it is also wider and prior to any inward datum of feeling or perception. From Husserl through Heidegger and Sartre, the point has been made that phenomenology does not consider experiences as inward subjective data. They can be viewed as inward subjective data only by artificial effort. The world is not a spectacle of data. In other words, behavior is not “something spread out in front of me.”\textsuperscript{15} According to Merleau-Ponty, the felt living activity is always ‘in the world’ and the feelings are being affected in it. Merleau-Ponty sarcastically remarked:

> Spinoza would not have spent so much time considering a drowning fly if this behaviour had not offered to the eye something other than a fragment of extension. . . . The structure of behaviour as it presents itself to perceptual experience is neither thing nor consciousness.\textsuperscript{16}

Merleau-Ponty views consciousness as embedded form, the form of concrete activity, when ‘felt movements are linked together by a practical intention’ in a situation rather than being inner entities, mental or subjective data spread out before us in reflection.\textsuperscript{17}

In psychology, the Freudian theory of psychoanalysis is one of the major schools of psychology. Phenomenological psychology is not only critical about Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, they have taken up consciousness as their starting point rather than unconsciousness. Sartre is critical about Freudian psychoanalysis from the existential

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.126.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.127.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp.128-130.
phenomenological standpoint. Sartre rejects Freud’s theory as mechanistic and speculative rather than phenomenological in nature. However, Merleau-Ponty approaches Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis sympathetically rather than dismissing it totally. Merleau-Ponty believes that the proper and deeper understanding of psychoanalysis will lead to a meaningful convergence between phenomenology and psychoanalysis.\(^{18}\)

Gestalt psychology is another prominent school of thought in psychology. Gestalt psychology argues for holistic understanding of human being. Gestalt psychology is a school of thought that looks at the human mind and behavior as a whole. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty considered Gestalt psychology has much to their similarity. They appreciate the holistic approach of Gestalt psychology in understanding human being. At the same time, they are critical on the issue of causality. Sartre made use of Gestalt psychology and the principle of form and background in his philosophy. It is vivid in his dealing with nothingness. He has shown how a lack can be organized as a form, against the background of the existing perceptual field. According to him, there are no lacks in perception; nothingness is not, apart from on the ground of our expectations. The figure-ground principle is for Sartre a fundamental feature of our perception, which means that it is an essential way of our apprehending and being in the world.\(^{19}\) Merleau-Ponty considers Gestalt psychology as basis for his understanding of perception. He further uses the Gestalt principle of form in understanding human behaviour as whole and as parts.

The basic disagreement between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty is their views on Cartesian dualism. For Sartre, there is a distinction between object or thing and consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no clear cut distinction between consciousness and object, mind and body.\(^{20}\) This clear cut difference between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty also reflected in their understanding of human being and the world. According to Sartre, ‘being-in-itself’ and ‘being-for-itself’ never could unite. Merleau-Ponty critically argues that we see that ‘being-in-itself’ and ‘being-for-itself’ are united in our everyday daily lives. In order to explain this, he often referred to the ‘hybrid’

situations where the distinction between man and thing is fuzzed. The example of the blind man and his white cane shows that this device, for the blind man a technology for orientation in the world, becomes an extension of his own body. It becomes a part of his bodily experience, part of his abilities, and his way of mobility. In other words, the blind man and the cane becomes a gestalt; he extends himself in the cane and the cane becomes an extension of him. Merleau-Ponty criticizes Sartre for not only upholding the Cartesian distinction and making it more complicated. According to Merleau-Ponty, Descartes’ two substances at least had the thing in common that they were both substances whereas Sartre’s model, on the other hand, makes consciousness into a complete nothingness.\footnote{Op. cit., *The Structure of Behaviour*, p.xx.} For Sartre, the body is one’s facticity that binds individual to the world as a concrete, contingent being. But individual never feel the body as a constraint of one’s freedom, apart from exceptional situations which reminds individual of one’s facticity. In other words, when an individual is exhausted or ill but these are situations that reveal to individual one’s usual sense of transcendence and nihilation of the body. The ‘being-for-itself’ is thus both consciousness and body, and the problem of the body must be viewed in a dialectic of utility and facticity. For, Merleau-Ponty thought the whole dialectic of ‘being-in-itself’ and ‘being-for-itself’ was too exaggerated. For Merleau-Ponty, perception remained a central theme throughout his authorship, as a mediation between consciousness and things, subject and object.\footnote{Jean-Paul Sartre, “Merleau-Ponty,” *Situations IV*, Gallimard, Paris 1964, p.195.}

Gestalt theory becomes important for Sartre through the principle that it is the direction of our consciousness that determine what will be figure and what will be ground; the things we choose are thus the things we have chosen to be our figures, our tastes, manners, our commodities are all determinations that manifest our particular choice of the world, negating the other possible as background for the particular this. How we perceive the world, what we choose, is dependent on what our project is. For Sartre, it is based on ontological choice. In other words, he calls it as fundamental project. The Gestalt principle is in this way the key to understand the concrete freedom of the other or oneself. Merleau-Ponty did not use the category of a fundamental project, and he did not assign such a grand importance to the category of negativity and
nothingness. Therefore, he did not hold that we always negate and choose when we perceive. His task was more to understand the puzzle it is that the world as perceived is meaningful. For Merleau-Ponty, we are not condemned to freedom but we condemned to meaning and to always express something. For Merleau-Ponty, we are not thrown out in a perpetual state of anxiety rather we are in the midst of a world of meaningful wholes. We are not free to perceive, choose or interpret the world as we like.

The ambiguous figures of Gestalt psychology does not imply a complete perceptual relativism, they are rather the exceptions that confirm the rule. The puzzle is not what meaning we choose or confer onto the world, but the fact that the meaning of perception is always already there, a fact that the intellectualists and realists commonly forget. Merleau-Ponty was more occupied with how we perceive structures around us that insert themselves in us as institutions and conversely, how we extend ourselves in the things. This was a point that Sartre later acknowledged as a downplayed point in his first work he had not been sufficiently aware of the forces of circumstance. Still, he did not discard the principle of unconditional freedom, he only made deeper investigations into the situational aspect of our freedom in the practical-inert field, society and history. For Sartre, there is no contradiction between being free and existing in a situation with restraints, our situation is the contingency necessary for the freedom to emanate at all, for it to be our concrete freedom, and not just an idea it is the background that makes freedom appear.23

Phenomenological Psychology and Its Influence

Historically, phenomenological psychology has interacted and influenced other major schools of psychology through its unique method of understanding human being and human behaviour. In other words, phenomenological psychology is having constant fruitful dialogue with others school of thought such as psychoanalysis, behaviourism, cognitive behaviourism and Gestalt psychology. Phenomenological psychology had its influence on some particular contemporary thinkers of different schools. Phenomenological psychology is a unique and systematic approach to psychology

23 Ibid., pp.215-217.
through phenomenological investigation. Phenomenological psychology seeks neither to dismiss nor to diminish the contributions of other contemporary psychological systems. But it attempts to reconsider and reassess their assumptions wherever possible. It is also to point out their relative strengths and weaknesses and to incorporate significant findings obtained from phenomenological enquiry.\textsuperscript{24} The primary criticism of phenomenological psychology on other schools of psychology is that the exclusion of conscious experience from their studies. Phenomenologists argue that this lacuna has harmed psychology and restricted its practical applications.\textsuperscript{25} Rollo May has rightly pointed out the need for phenomenological method in psychology. He said:

\begin{quote}
We need a form of psychology that does now dwell on behaviour to the exclusion of experience, or experience without regard for behaviour, but centres on the relation between experience and behaviour.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

\subsection*{a. Phenomenological Psychology and Psychoanalysis}

Phenomenological psychology and psychoanalytic theories emphasize on questions of meaning and interpretation. Phenomenology is said to study consciousness as immediately given whereas psychoanalysis said to study the unconscious and constructive hypothesis. Phenomenology as a philosophy confines itself to the universe i.e. the world of consciousness whereas for psychoanalysis, consciousness is powerless by product of irrational forces. Psychoanalysis was on the assumption that not only conscious but even unconscious mental life has purpose or meanings. Psychoanalysis was bringing unconscious into conscious and thus redirect and channelize them into rational force through which it gave a special status to consciousness.\textsuperscript{27} Sartre challenged the whole mechanism of repression upon which the notion of a psychoanalytic unconscious rested and suggested instead an alternative that centred upon his idea of unreflected

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p.187.
consciousness. Phenomenology simplifies and demystifies the underlying ideas associated with psychoanalytic notions of the unconscious.\textsuperscript{28}

In general, both approaches can be seen to consider the limits and potentials of human inter-relation with assumption that people are active interpreters of their environment. Freudian psychoanalysis would point to a number of important differences and divergences between the two approaches. Freudian psychoanalytic theories emphasize the role of the unconscious, of our earliest infantile experiences, of the instinctual forces of \textit{eros} and \textit{thanatos}, and of the psychic conflict between id-ego-superego as prime instigators and determinants of conscious thought and behaviour. Equally, Freudian psychoanalysts argue that unresolved sexual and aggressive wishes are basis for human motivation.\textsuperscript{29}

Psychoanalysts understand human being and predict human behaviour based on their assumption of causality that is rooted in past. Phenomenologists question this very foundation of psychoanalytic school. Phenomenology argues that any divide between past and present (and, indeed, future) is both artificial and misleading. Instead one must investigate the current ‘being’ of a person from the standpoint of an indivisible inter-relational matrix composed of past events, current experience and future expectations. Phenomenological psychologists would certainly agree that past experience plays a major central role in the person’s current psychic life. Phenomenological psychologist focuses on the description and examination of current experience as a possible means of liberating oneself from sedimented attitudes, values, stances, beliefs and behaviours. In both cases, one’s past is exposed to examination, psychoanalyst seek to establish causal links between past and present experience whereas phenomenological psychologists eschews both the necessity for and more importantly, the very possibility of such links. The phenomenological psychologist seeks to expose the interpreted significance of past events in the light of current experience. If psychoanalysis adopts the shift in perspective

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp.189-190.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., pp.187-188.
of linear causality, psychoanalysis would free itself from mechanistic orientation without doing serious damage to its central emphases.30

Phenomenological psychology has also influenced psychoanalysts, particularly, Angelo Louis Hesnard, Paul Federn and Jacques Lacan. Angelo Louis Hesnard was a pioneer in Freudian psychoanalysis who was also a chief advocate of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and its application to psychoanalysis. His work *Psychoanalysis of the Human Bond* is an effort to fill the gaps in psychoanalysis through phenomenology, especially its failure to do justice to the interpersonal relations. He was interested in Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the close bonds of consciousness with the body and the world. He argued that phenomenology can offer an enlarged version of consciousness to psychoanalysis which can do justice even to unconscious. For him, the concept of consciousness is intentionality engaging man in his world. Its application to neuropsychiatry yield a better understanding of cerebral lesions, of lesional psychoses, and finally of neuroses. He provides his own interpretations of the psychoses, based on the idea that mental disease is an existential disease, and its main feature is the disturbance of intersubjective bond, which results in its replacement by an intrasubjective world. He claims that the use of Merleau-Ponty’s approach would support in development of psychoanalysis. He also applied Merleau-Ponty in his study of world of ‘morbid consciousness’. According to him, the patient’s inability for unified organization causes his or her perception of world as fragments which deeply affect his or her mode of existence in the world. He further argues that all mental sickness is existential sickness. He holds that a neurotic person as a subject who is no longer capable of maintaining an authentic intersubjective bond with other people. According to him, the psychotic patient as one who out of the debris of his normal world constructs a fictitious world, an *intrasubjective* world. On this basis, he tries to give interpretations of specific forms of neuroses as special forms of disturbances in human being’s relations to the world.31

30 Ibid., pp.188-189.
Paul Federn was of Freud’s intimate circle, but he went beyond Freud in applying psychoanalysis not only in neurotics but also to treating psychotics. He used to define psychoanalysis in terms of descriptive phenomenological and metapsychological. He understood phenomenological to be subjectively descriptive in terms of feeling, knowing, and apprehending. His phenomenological definition of ego is felt and known by the individual as a lasting or recurring continuity of the body and mental life in respect of time, space, and causality and is felt and apprehended by him as a unity.\(^32\)

Jacques Lacan was French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist who reconstructed Freud using post-structuralism. He has made prominent contributions to psychoanalysis and philosophy. Though Jacques Lacan was quite often critical of Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty yet phenomenology was implicit in his thought. His post-structural theory rejected the belief that reality can be captured in language. For him, language is subjective perception. In his theory of symbolism which chiefly refers to de Saussure’s linguistics with its distinction between what signifies and what is signified and asserts the primacy of the former over the latter, seems to be closely related to Merleau-Ponty’s explicit phenomenology of language.\(^33\)

Antoine Vergote was a scholar in psychoanalysis, philosophy and theology. He was a disciple of Jacques Lacan. Vergote has devoted himself to the analysis of the religious phenomenon. He applies phenomenological method to Freud’s interpretation of dreams. He has made an attempt to understand the meaning of the manifestation of the unconscious, which is essentially ‘effective and dynamic intentionality of forces.’ He argues that phenomenological method allows the phenomena to speak as they are in themselves into action.\(^34\)

b. Phenomenological Psychology and Behaviourism

Behaviourism suggests that all behaviour can be explained by environmental causes rather than by internal forces. Behaviourism is focused on observable behaviour.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., p.133.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p.141.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p.145.
Behaviourism arose in direct reaction to psychological schools that emphasized the centrality of conscious experience. Behaviourism rejects the possibility that consciousness could be explained scientifically. Behaviourism has rejected the role of consciousness in human behaviour. Perhaps the most basic assumption of behaviourism is that human beings are by and large passive reactors to natural and culturally derived environmental stimuli which mould and shape our behaviour through conditioning and reinforcement. Despite different attitude towards human behaviour, there are some similarities exists between these two contrasting approaches. Both phenomenological psychology and behaviourism emphasize the importance of environmental stimuli as catalysts to action. Of course, there is disagreement because behaviourism claims that human beings are primarily passive reactors to directly experienced stimuli. On the other hand, phenomenological psychology argues that human beings are active interpreters of the stimuli in that our response to them is intentionally determined through both innate invariants and individual experience.\textsuperscript{35}

Phenomenological psychologists argue that the stimuli are unknown and unknowable. According to them, it is rather the constructed meaning added to stimuli to make sense of our behaviour. Though behaviourists implicitly appear to suggest that we are slaves to our environment, their altitude to this position reveals a major inconsistency. Behaviourists hold some sort of sedimented beliefs concerning the experience of autonomy and freedom of choice. On the other hand, the phenomenological outlook, while acknowledging the uncontrollable limits to freedom, points out, nevertheless, its largely untapped and unacknowledged potentials. The most extreme behaviourist position (B.F. Skinner) is that freedom is an illusion. The phenomenological perspective, in its admission of the situatedness of freedom, falls outside Skinner’s line of attack since it, too, criticizes optimistically naïve notions of individualistic and autonomous freedom.\textsuperscript{36}

The major source of dispute between the two approaches lies, of course, in behaviourism’s dismissal of consciousness. Behaviourists claim that any attempted investigation of inferred non-directly observable agencies such as consciousness

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp.194-195.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., pp.195-196.
threatens its objective, experimental stance. In spite of their dismissal of subjective experience, behaviourists depend on some degree of accurate correspondence between private experience and public report in order to provide validity and significance for their experimental data. Furthermore, as Koestenbaum has pointed out, all public statements begin as first-hand subjective experience; as such:

To claim public verification of my private experience is legitimate only to the degree to which all of us, as philosophers of science and students of human behaviour, agree on a fundamental philosophical assumption – namely that if each of our private experiences indicates a particular event to have occurred, we can then conclude that the event has actually taken place.\(^37\)

In other words, rather than rely upon direct verification, behaviourists actually depend upon indirect constructs or assumptions.

The critics of behaviourism have pointed out that behaviourism gives importance to quantitative research than qualitative research. In a sense, having denied the importance of subjective data, their findings appear limited, alien, even ‘soul-less’. The phenomenological method helps to expose experiments’ implicit, even hidden, assumptions, thereby allowing them to arrive at more adequate and descriptively accurate analyses and conclusions. The major differences between behaviourism and phenomenological psychology remain irreconcilable; there still exists much scope for constructive dialogue.\(^38\)

Donald Syngg emphasized on the importance of a new phenomenological psychology in his article entitled “The need for a phenomenological system of psychology.”\(^39\) Phenomenal field theory is a contribution to the psychology of personality proposed by Donald Snygg and Arthur W. Combs. According to this theory, all behavior


is determined by the phenomenal field of the behaving organism.\(^{40}\) Phenomenology therefore consists primarily in the exploration of the phenomenal field of the individual, including his phenomenal self. He was for phenomenology as the necessary complement for behaviourism.\(^{41}\)

c. Phenomenological Psychology and Cognitive-Behavioural Psychology

Cognitive-Behavioural Psychology is modernized version of behaviourism. It adheres to the behaviouristic principal methods for its own accumulation of data. The cognitive school in general, is far more open to the consideration of conscious experience. It is emphasizes the importance of the interpretational elements that mediate between stimulus input and behavioural response. Cognitive behaviour therapy is a type of psychotherapeutic treatment that helps patients understands the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviours.\(^{42}\) Cognitive psychologists accept with little dispute the conclusions of phenomenological psychology. Current circumstances suggest that a colloquium between phenomenological and cognitive psychology would be more beneficial with those cognitive approaches whose primary focus of interest lies in the study of the ‘the processes that come between stimulus and response’.\(^{43}\) One fairly obvious example of just such an area of co-operative exploration might well be that of emotion. There have already been several interesting, if by no means conclusive, experimental studies on cognitive factors in emotion and the modification of arousal via the alteration of cognition whose results might best be interpreted and clarified from a phenomenological perspective.\(^{44}\) For instance, Schachter's cognitive-physiological theory of emotions emphasizes the centrality of interpersonal variables in determining how we come to label, or conclude the presence of, a particular emotion. Schachter argues that feedback to the brain from physiological activity is insufficient in itself to allow for any clear identification of an emotion. Instead, individuals also require information gained from past experience in order to be able to give a particular interpretation, or meaning, to their

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p.197.
current emotion. This view demonstrates striking parallels with conclusions derived from phenomenological investigation.\footnote{Op. cit., \textit{The Interpreted World: An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology}, p.198.}

At the same time, like phenomenological psychologists, cognitive-behavioural therapists increasingly view persons as active agents who derive meaning from the world via inference and evaluation. However, a critical difference between the two approaches can be seen in cognitive-behavioural therapy’s common assertion that client distress is the result of misinterpretations of situations. Phenomenological psychology views such ‘misinterpretations’ as meaningful and views it as often restrictive response to the uncertainties and anxieties of inter-relation.

Perhaps most notably, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy has emerged as one of the most significant of recent attempts to reconfigure cognitive-behavioural therapy. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy’s major deviation from more classical cognitive-behavioural therapy approaches lies in its explicit acknowledgement that the endeavour to change or remove ‘misinterpreted’ thoughts that have arisen in the person’s attempt to cope may well be counterproductive and even dangerous. Rather, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy concentrates on the clarifying and opening up of the meanings expressed within the ‘misinterpretation’. This undertaking on the part of the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy practitioner to ‘stay with’ the client’s currently experienced meaning brings to the foreground a much more focused inter-relational perspective. This stance suggests a valid ‘meeting point’ for phenomenological and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy theorists and practitioners. At the same time, it does remain the case that Acceptance and Commitment Therapy continues to employ explicitly directive interventions that, from a phenomenological perspective, run counter to its stated enterprise. Nonetheless, as with the other radical constructivist reworkings of cognitive-behavioural therapy, there exists solid ground for worthwhile dialogue with phenomenological psychology.\footnote{Ibid., pp.199-200.}
d. Phenomenological Psychology and Gestalt Psychology

Phenomenological influence was found in Gestalt psychology. The aim of Gestalt and phenomenology was to free modern man to fresh reality. Both streams of thought developed simultaneously. Though Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Kohler were not interested in philosophy but when they were to face the challenges of behaviourism, then they sought the help of philosophy especially phenomenology. Phenomenology was a methodological support to Gestalt psychology. Kurt Koffka has identified the methods of Gestalt with that of phenomenology in his work *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*.\(^47\) He viewed phenomenology as naïve and full of description of direct experience as possible. He distinguished direct experience and introspection.\(^48\) Fritz Heider was a Gestalt psychologist. His work *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, provides the conceptual framework and the psychological processes that influence human social perception. In his study of social perception, he makes use of phenomenological method to understand the perceptual phenomena. His objective was to describe phenomena faithfully and allow them to guide the choice of problems and procedures.\(^49\) Aron Gurwitsch has played an important role in bring about Gestalt psychology to have phenomenology as its philosophical ally. Aron Gurwitsch explained the relationship between phenomenology and Gestalt thoughts. He also showed how Gestalt can contribute to the phenomenology of perception.\(^50\) David Katz was a German-Swedish psychologist. In his work *Gestalt Psychology*, he argues that comprehension of contemporary psychology necessitates an understanding of the phenomenological method.\(^51\) He used phenomenological method in his animal psychology because the method was giving the greatest possible freedom. According to him, phenomenological method helps to describe the animal behaviour meaningfully and provides the unbiased description of phenomena. His phenomenological method was to simply describe phenomena as they appear without any distortion. He argues that the ‘world’ is with

\(^{48}\) Ibid., pp.74-75.
abundance of phenomena but pre-phenomenological psychology overlooked. He was trying to have presuppositionless phenomenological analysis of phenomena.  

\textbf{e. Phenomenological Psychology and Contemporary Psychologists}

Phenomenology has profoundly influenced many thinkers in psychology. Phenomenological literary influence was found among thinkers of Wurzburg school of psychology. Wurzburg school was to explore higher psychological functions such as thinking and willing, through experiments in disregards to Wundt. They found an unexpected fact that thinking as well as willing do not exclusively come from sensuous images. August Messer argues that Wurzburg school needs phenomenological methods for better understanding of its studies. He was speaking of intention, intentional act and intentionality but he was sceptical about essential intuition. According to him, phenomenology means to describe the higher function of thinking in psychology. Phenomenology supplied an active ingredient in his interpretation of his own findings. Narziss Ach, Otto Selz and Albert Michotte of Wurzburg school were also using phenomenological methods in their studies.  

Kurt Lewin was one of the modern pioneers of social, organizational and applied psychology. He was even moving beyond phenomenology because he was interested in a psychology of action, of will and of dynamics of human personality. He refers to works of Sheler, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty in his understanding of human personality. Karl Duncker was another psychologist. His treatment of phenomenological pleasure and phenomenology of the object of consciousness was significant.  

Ludwig Binswanger was a Swiss psychiatrist. His phenomenological interest was trying to absorb his main interest of psychoanalysis. Binswanger is considered to be one of the most distinguished of the phenomenological psychologists. He eventually developed his own distinctive brand of existential-phenomenological psychology. He has combined psychotherapy with existential phenomenological ideas. He saw concept of life

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., pp.48-52.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., pp.80-81.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.79.
\end{itemize}
world as a key to understanding the subjective experiences of his patients. He holds that the patients with the mental diseases undergo modifications of the fundamental structure and of the structural links of being-in-the-world. In other words, the mental illness involves one’s perception of the world which includes one’s altered understanding of the lived experience of time, space, body sense and social relationships.56

Carl Rogers’ interest in phenomenology was late and slow in developing. His primary interest in psychology was clinical therapy. In the beginning, he was neither interested in phenomenology nor had any contact with those movements. His twelve years of experience with children in Rochester, New York made him to realize the defects in narrow psychoanalysis and coercive approach and felt the importance of client’s perspective. In his book *Client-Centered Therapy*, he refers to phenomenology as source for his new interpretation of human behaviour. According to him, the therapeutic process is to understand the way the client perceives the objects in his or her phenomenal field, his or her experiences, his or her feelings, his or her self, other persons, his or her environment which undergoes change in the direction of increased differentiation. According to Rogers, phenomenology is a main ingredient for the ‘third force’ in psychology. The other two are behaviourism and psychoanalysis.57

**In Defense of Phenomenological Psychology**

Apart from its influence in the field of psychology, phenomenological psychology has been criticized by modern psychologists on following issues; such as, phenomenological psychology leads back to subjectivism, back to introspectionism, lacks objective method and lacks scientific verifiability. The most vociferous opponents of phenomenological psychology have tended to represent it as an anachronistic reversion to outdated doctrines, incompatible with the scientific character of psychology and harmful to its progress.58 Phenomenological psychologists defended their position against these criticisms and responded to them in their own way.

56 Ibid., p.132.
57 Ibid., pp.148-150.
Behaviourists have argued that both the methodology and the conceptual basis of phenomenology are little use to any modern day psychologist whose aim is to manipulate and predict behaviour from standpoint focusing on generalizable rules which emphasize similarities in behaviour or mental processing. Such critics have also questioned the significance and effectiveness of phenomenological theory and its application and reliability. They also questioned the over dependence on verbal descriptions, ambiguity of phenomenological concepts and esoteric language of phenomenologists. Phenomenological psychologists defended their position and argued that the long neglect of the issue of human inter-relatedness in academic psychology has not only severely put into question the validity and reliability of psychology’s own accepted views and positions. In its neglect of the issue of inter-relational experience, psychology has not only lost its soul in a metaphorical sense, it has lost its original purpose and has focused instead on the construction, analysis and interpretation of ever more ornate and esoteric experimental studies. According to phenomenologists, the implication of psychology is to understand the person. Therefore the starting point must be the exploration of human experience. Phenomenologists do not wholly dismiss the findings and methods of other approaches but they more accurately argue that the progress of psychology requires a more fundamental investigation of the attitudes and assumptions that underlies psychological explorations.

According to T. W. Wann, many critics have assumed that phenomenological psychology is the modern-day equivalent of earlier psychological introspectionist approaches. This incorrect association is due to the fact that the basic focus of phenomenological psychology and introspectionism is consciousness. The principal subject matter of both approaches is conscious experience. However, their purposes in engaging in such studies are markedly different. In introspectionist studies, well trained observer focused upon their subjective reaction to external stimuli in order to note various characteristics in their impressions and sought, ultimately, to reduce their

subjective experiences to the simplest mental elements, that is sensations, feelings and images. They also attempted to examine certain attributes of their experiences, such as their quality, intensity and duration. In contrast, there is assumption concerning the composition of impressions is permitted in phenomenological studies. An introspectionist report excludes the objects and meanings. The phenomenological psychologist is interested in the meaning that stimuli or situation have for the observer whereas introspectionism primarily focused on their sensory experiences that are analyzed impressions of various stimuli and provided reports. Though phenomenology and introspectionism concern with issues of consciousness, it is necessary to understand that they not only differ in methodology but they also differ in scope and focus of investigation.  

According to Hubert Dreyfus, many critics view that it is absurd to conclude in phenomenology that reality as experienced by an individual is a construction of intentionality. Phenomenologists say that they never dispute existence of the physical reality separate from our conscious experience of it, rather they insist on the point that our experience of reality must always be situated within intentional interpretations. Experimental oriented critics raise question regarding phenomenological conclusion that each individual perceives the world uniquely. But phenomenological psychologists argue that the assumption of a shared reality is an illusion because what each of us perceives is the result of a combination of both species specific ‘structural givens’ or existential and unique experimentally derived intentional constructs. Those share the similar language or cultural perspective may develop mental frameworks which in influencing the labels the viewers impose as well as their general attitudes towards those of others. At the same time, the diversity of perspectives and attitudes between persons sharing similar socio-cultural influences that are apparent in any given situation makes clear that what is perceived as shared is at best partial and that alongside every shared experience, unique perspective will emerge if they are given due attention and structured enquiry. Similarly, while it may be the case that substantial attention is given by phenomenological psychology upon the unique variables that make up a person’s worldview, this is not

because such are considered to be inherently more significant or more worthy of inquiry, but because the other systems of psychology either minimize or deny these variables in their studies. In addition, existential phenomenology takes the view that it is precisely via the study of particular way of being that the investigator is directed to the universal or ontological, structural being.\(^6\)

Another criticism against phenomenological psychology is related to its scientific status of research. The contrary to the common assertion that phenomenology is antagonistic to or disinterested in psychological research, phenomenology continues to play a major role in the development of qualitatively focused approaches to research.\(^5\) At the same time, phenomenology’s view of suitable paradigms for psychological research stands in direct contrast to the natural scientific viewpoint and its underlying assumptions. Phenomenological psychologists deny the possibility of truly objective observation and analysis in traditional natural science psychological research models and further holds that psychological research assumes an indissoluble inter-relationship between the observers and observed. Secondly, phenomenology places conscious experience as central to all inquiry since its primary aim is to arrive at a description of the structure of conscious experience. Thirdly, phenomenological research rejects standard research notions of control groups, dependent and independent variables preliminary hypotheses and so forth. Since all these suggest and rely upon to a greater or lesser degree the notion of linear causality. Instead, phenomenological research is principally qualitative interpretative in nature. It focuses upon descriptive methodologies that seek to remain as faithful as possible to the data of experience. In other words, it seeks to understand rather explain and by doing so, it searches for meaning rather than seeks to collect facts.\(^6\) As Gunmar Karlsson has clarified this distinction:

In line with logical empiricism, traditional psychology neglects to study meaningful experience

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in a ‘direct’ way. Instead, one operationalizes variables so as to turn them into observable facts. Phenomenology rejects the idea that there exist objective facts… The ‘objectively’ given fact is always present in relation to … a constituting and meaning-imbuing subject.\textsuperscript{67}

While the notions of reliability and validity, which remain central elements of natural science research methodology, are not employed by existential phenomenology, the approach relies upon the verifiability of the researcher’s conclusion in so far as verifiability refers to whether another researcher can assume the perspective of the present investigator, review the original protocol data and see that the proposed insights meaningfully illuminate the situations under study.\textsuperscript{68}

In the contemporary psychological research, there is search being made to find areas of unity among the various diverse approaches. But phenomenological psychology stands in the vanguard of this movement. Although phenomenological psychology has its distinctive features which has clear contrast with other contemporary approaches in psychology yet phenomenological psychology remains an ‘open’ system which is both capable and willing to incorporate relevant data obtained by other systems. In the same way, phenomenological psychology has ability to assimilate and to accommodate to the ‘stimuli’ of the other psychological systems which would increases the adequacy of its own assumptions and conclusions. At the same time, it would also have significant change in the assumptions and conclusions of other systems. It is this very ‘adaptive’ openness that allows phenomenological psychology to provide pivotal contributions to increased communication and substantial rapprochement between all the contemporary systems in psychology.\textsuperscript{69}