CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

Phenomenological psychology is firmly rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology and existential phenomenology. Phenomenology has played a pivotal role in the development of novel research methodology which focuses upon all facets of distinctly human experience. Though the starting point of phenomenological investigation is consciousness, the principal task of phenomenological psychology is the analysis of how individuals arrive at unique interpretations of one’s experience by means of both innate or social constructs and frameworks. Phenomenological perspective in psychology would offer the possibility of reconsidering many established psychological issues and concerns in ways are both original and illuminating. More importantly, phenomenological approach seems to bring a breath of fresh air to how we think about ‘doing’ psychology.¹

Phenomenological psychology is an application of the phenomenological method to the issues and problems in psychology so that an individual’s conscious experience of the world can be more systematically observed and described. The conscious acts such as perception, imagery, memory, emotion and so on are studied under the phenomenological investigation.² In keeping with the rules of the phenomenological method, the focus of such a psychology is placed on the description of current experience as a result of ‘bracketing’ as many assumptions, suppositions, theoretical explanations and habitual psychological biases as possible. Phenomenological psychology as a discipline is not concern with the prediction and control of human behaviour; instead, its emphasis is on understanding the individual’s life-world and experiences. Human behaviour depends primarily on how the individual perceives the world in general and immediate situation in particular. Phenomenological psychology is envisaged as complementary to other psychological movements and orientations.³ Phenomenological psychology is basically concerned with the issues of intentionally derived experience. Phenomenological

² Ibid., p.32.
psychology is an orientation towards the examination of central psychological issues via the use of a specific methodology known as the phenomenological method.\textsuperscript{4}

The starting point of phenomenological psychology is that human experience manifests a meaningful structure. Phenomenological psychology wants to uncover this structure and rescue it from the multitude of human experience in which it lies buried. Phenomenological psychologist wants to describe these structures with the help of a dialectical method which is essentially distinguished from the methods of science. An intentional analysis method of phenomenological psychology makes it possible to be easily approached from other positives science like empirical psychology.\textsuperscript{5} Phenomenological psychologists argue that the goal of phenomenological psychology is the application of the phenomenological method to psychological enquiry.\textsuperscript{6}

Phenomenological approach has made a significant difference in the fields of psychology and psychiatry by replacing the restrictive methodologies of a narrow positivism and naturalism; it has made room for new phenomena and new interpretations. It has broken the strait jacket of behaviourism without denying its relative value. It has also contributed to the overcoming of atomatic associationalism. Concretely, it has helped in reforming the psychology of perception, of the emotions, and of the will and has added to such specialized enterprises as the study of the self and social psychology. In psychiatry, it has made room for much wider and deeper understanding of pathological phenomena and has helped to open the way for new therapies.\textsuperscript{7}

In the nineteenth century, the emergence of objective thought has brought about a paradigm shift in the methodology of study of the man and the world. The philosophical methods were rejected as mere speculative. The naturalistic scientific method is made a standard model of exploring the truth of the man and the world. The change in the application of methodology has influenced both the fields of psychology and philosophy.

\begin{thebibliography}
\item \textsuperscript{4} Op. cit., \textit{The Interpreted World: An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology}, p.32.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Op. cit., \textit{The Interpreted World: An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology}, p.32.
\end{thebibliography}
For many centuries, psychology which was part of philosophical endeavour has separated itself from philosophy for striving towards naturalistic tendency. Wilhelm Wundt was the one who separated psychology from the clutches of philosophy. Psychology started making use of naturalistic methods of laboratory experimentations. At some times, the affinity with the natural science has become so close at times, it was impossible to view that where psychology ends and physiology begins. Psychologists adopted the same method to study the ‘science of human consciousness’. The naturalistic scientific method had its limitation. Though this method was useful in the analysis of sensory realm of psychology, the method could not penetrate into the realm of psychic of human beings. In other words, the results derived through this naturalistic scientific method were disappointing. As a result of the naturalistic scientific method, the experimental psychology committed a grave mistake of searching for universally valid laws of human behaviour. Some psychologists, like, Franz Brentano, Carl Stumpf, Theodor Lipps have rather paid attention to human differences.⁸

Wilhelm Dilthey has shown that there should be different methods to be used to study the problems of science and humanitarian subjects. With the severe criticisms, many scientists also declared that naturalistic scientific method was successful in the natural science as it was designed for specific purpose. The same method is not necessary to be used by other sciences. Psychologists also realised that the naturalistic scientific method is designed for studying particular issues. They need to look for new method suitable for studying human science. As a result, in the field of psychology, different conflicting approaches have emagered to study human beings. They failed to study human beings as holistic person due to their application of naturalistic scientific methods to establish the universal laws of human behaviour. Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology was a reaction against the traditional speculative philosophy. Though his intention was also to make philosophy a rigorous science, he realised that naturalistic scientific method is not an appropriate method to study human beings. He could not reconcile with the view of empiricists and associationalists notion of consciousness. He viewed the psychology based on these assumption as empirical psychology. He strongly opposed their approach

to psychology. He designed his own phenomenological method to study the ‘science of human consciousness’. Husserl also proposed phenomenological psychology with the purpose that it can be better basis for his transcendental phenomenology. The aim of phenomenological psychology is to study consciousness in its meaningful structure and function. Husserl viewed that the phenomenological psychology can be bridge between psychology and phenomenology. In other words, such a study would lead towards transcendental phenomenology, also provided a justification and basis for empirical psychology, as well as a methodology for exploration of consciousness.

According to the phenomenological psychology of Husserl, all human behaviour is intentional behaviour. Psychology must make intentionality as the starting point of its research. Husserl furthers states that human being experiences himself or herself in the life-world in which he or she dwells only through the intentional relationships which he or she maintains with the real things in the world around him or her. Sartre goes on to say that even emotion is deliberate spontaneous conscious act of human being with purpose. Phenomenological psychologists view human beings as free individuals to act or react to environment in their own manner. Phenomenological psychologists also make human beings responsible for their acts. In this connection, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty oppose the deterministic nature of human beings as understood by ‘traditional’ psychology.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have no longer viewed human being as ‘pure consciousness’ but rather ‘being-in-the-world’. They do not accept the transcendental reduction of Husserl. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as existential phenomenological psychologists cannot be fit into Husserl’s view of phenomenological psychology. Their phenomenological psychology is interested in existential orientation of man towards the world. This existential orientation can be studied through positive sciences such as empirical psychology. This existential orientation can also be studied by philosophy such as existential phenomenology with its phenomenological, interpretative and dialectical

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9 Ibid., pp.28-30.
12 Ibid., p.332.
approaches. The primary task of existential phenomenological psychologists is to study the empirical basis of this science and free the psychological studies from all pseudo-philosophical prejudices which led psychology into positivism, objectivism, reductionism and scientism. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are opposed to these positivism, objectivism, reductionism and scientism. According to them, the point of departure for any psychological investigation must be rooted in and nourished by a real experience of man and human realm.\textsuperscript{13} As a result of refocusing and introduction of phenomenological investigation to understand, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have tried to explore the potentials for human freedom and the unavoidable limitations inherent in human beings’ experiences of themselves as \textit{beings-in-the-world}.\textsuperscript{14}

Sartre argues that phenomenological psychology is a distinct and separate disciple.\textsuperscript{15} His phenomenological psychology has academically preceded his philosophy. For him, the objective of phenomenological psychology is to furnish necessary foundations to empirical psychology for its empirical investigations, experiments, tests, correlations and so forth. Sartre tries to show the inadequacies of a mere empirical psychology in accounting for human existence. He says that psychology wants to be positive science that it tries to be science in which all insights are based on human experience. According to him, psychology must look for genuinely interpreted data. He argues that it is not possible with the experimentation method of physics in psychology. He further argues that psychology should define experience even more accurately than physical sciences. Sartre also emphasizes that psychology should not depend on the definition of man provided by purely empirical analysis of physiology and sociology rather it should look for the definition of its own. Sartre as existential phenomenologist strongly opposes the view that the world can be understood through natural sciences. According to him, these sciences rather only explain the conditions which lead us to understand certain universal phenomena. He also upholds that we cannot separate human reality from the world. Therefore, a psychology which uses purely empirical methods cannot understand human reality. According to Sartre, traditional psychology starts with

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp.332-333.
heterogeneous facts and tries explain human reality through synthetic totalities of facts. For Sartre, true psychology is possible only after establishing the nature of human reality. Phenomenology studies spontaneous appearance of the phenomena, not the facts. This spontaneous appearance of a phenomenon is questioned and described as it appears. The whole of man can be found in any particular human attitude. Sartre holds that emotion as human reality itself which gathers itself and directs itself emotionally to the world. According to Sartre, human being to *ek-sist* means to take one’s own being upon oneself in some existential mode, in some or other orientation towards the world.\(^6\) Sartre’s phenomenological psychology directs itself to man-in-the-world, to the multitude of situations in which human realizes himself or herself. He holds that since this psychology depends on phenomenological philosophy in understanding human, world, being-in-the-world and situation, it is subordinate to phenomenological philosophy.\(^7\)

Sartre argues that human beings enjoy absolute freedom. The actions of human beings are based on their own choice. According to him, human beings are responsible for their own action and behaviour. He upholds that emotional consciousness is the primarily consciousness of the world.\(^8\) He further emphasises that emotion is an organized form of human existence. For Sartre, emotions are certain way of apprehending the world.\(^9\) Emotion is behaviour which refers to our position in a world as a whole. It has its own teleological structure.\(^10\) The predicament of human being is based on one’s own imagination. According to Sartre, ‘every image is an image of something.’ The image is in fact a vehicle of intentionality. It is a mediated relation between consciousness and its object. The image is not the thing, nor is it in any way thing like rather it refers to the thing or stands for it in an experience that is structurally similar to but ontologically distinct from the experience of the thing itself. Sartre holds that there is no thing as an image in imagination. The first difference between perception and imagination is not the presence or absence of image but a different way of referring to the

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p.57.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., p.3.
intentional object of our consciousness. There is no difference in imaged object or perceived object but the difference is on the side of the imaging act. The image is a constructive element of consciousness; it is one of the ways in which consciousness ‘intends’ the thing. He says that it posits its object to be either as non-existent or as absent or as elsewhere. In other words, imaging consciousness posits its object as nothingness as imaginative.

Sartre has proposed a methodological analysis called existential analysis instead of Freudian psychoanalysis. Freudian psychoanalysis is a therapeutic method to find out the sources for human behaviour. According to Freud, human action is meaningful action. But every action may not have the outward portray of meaning. So the meaning for action to be found in the unconscious desires or hidden motives of human being. These hidden motives stimulate human behaviour. He also holds that human behaviour is causally connected to these unconscious motives. For Sartre, there is a fundamental project based on which the behaviour of human being is designed. For the elucidation of human behaviour, it is necessary to go back to the fundamental choices of human being.\(^{21}\)

Merleau-Ponty also holds that phenomenological psychology as a distinct and separate disciple.\(^{22}\) According to Merleau-Ponty, the starting point of phenomenological psychological approach must be describing perception as individual experience it before it is being theorized. The starting point for both empiricism and intellectualism is rooted in scientific theories in different manner. Thus he rejected their understanding of human being. For him, we can understand human nature taking into account of human being as bodily subject devoid of rigid dichotomy of Descartes.

Merleau-Ponty argues that the world of objects is not something apart from the experiencing subject acting upon the subject causally, but the place experiencing subject inhabits. The experiencing subject is able to have perceptual unity and meaning from the fact that the subject who perceives, lives, acts and moves about it. In other words, the perceiving subject is ‘being-in-the-world’. Merleau-Ponty argues that there is inseparable

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p.343.
unity between the subject and the world. He argues further that if the subject is essentially a ‘being-in-the-world’ then the subject must be necessarily ‘embodied’. The body-subject looks at the world from a particular perspective. According to Merleau-Ponty, the real world stretches out beyond what an individual can perceive of it. He terms it as ‘inexhaustible’. An individual has endless commitment to try to ‘exhaust’ the world to make a rational sense of the world and to examine the world from different perspectives and to seek to connect one perspective to others. Thus the experience of the world is necessarily ‘ambiguous’, and never capable of being fully spelled out in rational terms. The body-subjects are not mere inanimate objects in the world. But they are actively involved in the world. To explore the individual’s ‘being-in-the-world’ is to explore one’s way of being involved with the world. This leads to show that an individual involved in the world intentionally. Merleau-Ponty rejects the mechanistic or reductionist modes of thought. In other words, experience has a direction from the past, through the present to the future. The present action springs from the past and shapes the future action. The condition of embodiment sets limits to one’s freedom. But he rejects Cartesian body and mind dualism in body-subject. According to him, one’s subjectivity is not separate from one’s embodiment. He further argues to show that the body-subjects are not isolated from other subjects. The body-subjects are being in the social and cultural world as well as in the world of physical nature. The body-subject communicates with other subjects through language. 

Both Sartre and Merleau-Ponty reject the deterministic view of human nature in psychology and psychiatry that was espoused by orthodox psychoanalysis and radical behaviourism. In psychoanalysis, freedom is restricted by unconscious forces, irrational drives and past events. According to behaviourism, freedom is restricted by environmental forces and socio-cultural conditioning. Sartre proposed an existential psychoanalysis which was to deal with Freudian unconscious and the mechanisms of repression. Existential psychoanalysis was an attempt to decipher man’s action especially his or her neurotic behaviour by going back to his fundamental choices. This was his most original contribution to phenomenological psychology. According to Sartre and

Merleau-Ponty, there is nothing which can determine human behaviour. Sartre emphasizes on absolute freedom whereas Merleau-Ponty emphasize that human beings are committed to the world and they are in regular interaction with the world which shapes their behaviour.24

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are not only opposed to the scientific approaches in psychology alone but also in philosophy. Though psychology was once a part of philosophy got separated from philosophy for the reason that philosophy is more of speculative in nature and psychology started to become more as physical sciences. This kind of attitude also was found in philosophy due to the influence of science, especially, empiricism and intellectualism became using objective thought. Merleau-Ponty opposed these objective thinking or natural tendency. They make straight and rigid distinction between nature and consciousness, the physical and mental, body and mind and they emphasized on either one aspects of human beings. They also look to find causal relationship between them.25 Psychology was also influenced by science wanted to make use of scientific approach in understanding human beings. They also committed the same error as philosophers. According to Merleau-Ponty, we cannot separate the body and mind as done by Descartes. He holds that an individual is in the world and lives in the world as being-in-the-world. He or she perceives the world through one’s bodily-subject. His notion of embodied incarnation has led to the abolition of body and mind dualism. But the psychological schools have failed to unite the body and mind dualism. Thus they hold that separation of subject and object dualism. According to Merleau-Ponty, this kind of dualism does not yield in holistic understanding of human being. Merleau-Ponty terms them as ‘scientific psychology’. They have not only followed the dualism of body and mind, they went further to analyze human being as parts. These deterministic, atomistic and reductionist tendencies of psychology were opposed by phenomenological psychologists.

24 Ibid., p.21.
The analysis of phenomenological psychology of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty has clearly portrayed that psychology as humanitarian subject cannot reject the finding of other humanitarian subjects, especially existential phenomenology. Existential phenomenology deals with human existents as being-in-the-world. It carefully analyses the human beings and their relationship with oneself, others and the world. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty as existential phenomenologists hold that human beings are the ek-sistence of the world. They behave in a manner which is based on their will. Though both differ in their understanding of freedom but they agree that human beings exercise their will of freedom in their action. Thus every human act is intentional willful act.

The primary focus of phenomenological psychology is consciousness. Consciousness plays an important role in human being’s perception of the world. Human being as being-in-the-world has regular interaction with the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, we are in regular interaction with the world as passive recipient and active contributors. He argues that we perceive the world and the world perceives us.26 The emphasis of consciousness by phenomenological psychologists is in contrast to that of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. These schools of modern psychology have neglected the study of consciousness. According to behaviourism, consciousness cannot be studied as subject of psychology as the subject matter of psychology for them is behaviour. Behaviourism emphasis on scientific approach does not permit the study of consciousness. They understand consciousness as proposed by either empiricism or rationalistic philosophy. Psychoanalysis has impoverished the consciousness. According to them, consciousness is powerless byproduct of unconscious irrational forces. Psychoanalysis has given consciousness a special status. Phenomenological psychologists argue that psychoanalysis has missed the essence of consciousness.

There are some similarities exists between phenomenological psychology and empirical psychology. Phenomenological psychology and psychoanalytic theories both emphasize on questions of meaning and interpretation. The phenomenological psychologist seeks to expose the interpreted significance of past events in the light of

current experience. The psychoanalysis understands human being and predicts human behaviour based on their assumption of causality that is rooted in past. The orientation towards phenomenological view in this respect would free psychoanalysis from mechanistic orientation without doing serious damage to its central emphases.\textsuperscript{27} Phenomenological psychology and behaviourism both emphasize the importance of environmental stimuli as catalysts to action. The role human beings are the cause for disagreement. 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{28} Phenomenological psychology and cognitive behavioural psychology both 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.\textsuperscript{29} 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’.\textsuperscript{30} The aim of Gestalt psychology and phenomenological psychology is to free modern man to fresh reality. Both emphasize on holistic understanding of human and human perception of the world.\textsuperscript{31}

Phenomenological psychology has made room for new phenomena and new interpretations. It has broken the strait jacket of behaviourism without denying its relative value. It has also contributed to the overcoming of atomatic associationalism. It has helped in reforming the psychology of perception, of the emotions, and of the will and has added to such specialized enterprises as the study of the self and social psychology. In psychiatry it has made room for much wider and deeper understanding of pathological

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., pp.194-195.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.197.  
\textsuperscript{30} J. Medcof and J. Roth, \textit{Approaches to Psychology}, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1984, p. 182.  
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., pp.81-82.
phenomena and has helped to open the way for new therapies.\textsuperscript{32} Despite the diverse approaches in psychology, there has been a constant effort to unite the different approaches of psychology. Phenomenological psychology, in spite of its own distinctive features is the possible platform for the unification. The very nature of ‘adaptive’ openness of phenomenological psychology enables it to have a communication and substantial rapprochement with all other contemporary systems in psychology.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.xlii.