Philosophers both in the East and in the West have ever been anxious to decipher the mystery of man and to ascertain his destiny. Man is considered as a material being, whose body acts on the material environment and is acted upon by it. He is also a living being with an internal purpose or immanent teleology, and strives to maintain himself intact in his surroundings. Again, he is a Psychological being with a mind/self of his own looking backwards into the past and forwards into the future and with an inwardness that is his own which is purely private. He is a social and ethical being with emotions and sentiments developed in the direction of other men, his personality developing and taking shape in a social environment. And man is a religious being searching for cosmic and divine support for his life and activity. He is, in addition, a rational being, questioning himself, evaluating his thinking processes and acting upon it. He is thus a complex phenomenon leading an inward and outward life and craving stable support both ways. However, in the history of modern western philosophy man is sometimes taken to stand for an unchanging soul-substance and sometimes as the consciousness involved in a variety of experiences such as in the acts of choice, decision etc. If the first description corresponds to the Cartesian conception, the second is applicable to modern phenomenological and existential theories in their several
forms. The characterization of man as a person has been variously conceived as consisting in progressive realization or association with God and participation in his blessedness or beatitude.

In the history of modern thought there can be and indeed are, two approaches to the understanding of man. One is said to be the empiricist/rationalist account of Man and the other is distinctively Phenomenological/Existentialist. The empirical studies of man begins with the consideration of man as an object. It tries to avoid every reference to man's consciousness — inside. Accordingly, empiricism regarded man as a specimen of the behavioural set and therefore is a fully analyzable system. One of the most eminent scientific philosophies in which this has happened is Gilbert Ryle's theory of human Mind. Ryle's method of accounting for the nature of mind is said to be behaviouristic. He discards the notions like non-materiality and self-consciousness whereas, the design of the phenomenological- Existentialist approach point toward the ontological structure of human consciousness.

To understand the phenomenological and existentialist approach to human experience, it is essential to realize

that the image of man which is projected is that of a being whose presence in the world is a unitary reality in which man and the world are taken integrally grounded in consciousness. Individual and action, self and situation, man and the world are bound to each other in their fundamental structure. In fact, this study is more than scientific, for, it proceeds from the roots of consciousness and man's act of experiencing. This aspect of the study of man gives adequate importance to the notion of intentionality - the thesis that human consciousness is intentional- originally put forward by F. Bretano and developed by Husserl. According to it, Consciousness is always the consciousness of something. To be conscious as man is to be worldly, to have a psychic structure directed towards objects, to know that the world is there. Thus, being intentional is being directed towards the world. The intentionality of consciousness and the emergence of meaning are interconnected. Both display consciousness as an experience.

Merleau-Ponty, claiming support from Husserl, makes a basic, and crucial distinction between two kinds of intentionality, intentionality of acts, which is that of our judgments and express volitions when we consciously and voluntarily take up a position, and operative intentionality, which is only brought to light through the phenomenological reduction, and which Merleau Ponty
characterizes as:

That which produces the natural and ante-predicative unity of the world and of our life, being apparent in our desired, our evaluations and in the landscape we see, more clearly than in objective knowledge, and finishing the text which our knowledge tries to translate into precise language.  

It is this notion of operative intentionality which Merleau-Ponty sees as the most profound sense of intentionality, and which phenomenology seeks to elucidate. Operative intentionality is that intentionality by which consciousness projects a human setting around itself, a setting in which it lives. What distinguishes it from intentionality of acts, from posited intentions, is that operative intentionality is ante-predicative, non-thematic, in fact the ground of any explicit and voluntary acts of intentionality, as well as all acts of judgments and discursive reasoning.

In Kantianism, Husserl recognizes a philosophy that goes back to the knowing Subjectivity as "the ground of all objective formations of meaning and validities of being", in sharp contrast to the 'objectivism of common sense and of science. The Kantian system represents for him the first effective attempt towards a really universal transcendental-philosophy, meant as strict science'. Yet while genuinely acknowledging in Kantianism, the most significant turning

point in modern philosophy towards transcendentalism, Husserl is at the same time a sharp critic of the Kantian theory of knowledge, which has been criticized by Husserl as involving "anthropologism" and relativism.

When Kant speaks of unconditioned universality and necessity of prior knowledge, he would, after all, refer it to the universal constitution of the human mind. Thus an "anthropological moment" is involved in the Kantian analysis of knowledge and experience. As Husserl critically observes, both Hume and Kant, in effect, reduce rationality to a fact, i.e., the fact of human nature, and thereby tend to miss genuine rationality. However, Husserl does admit that in showing how syntheses are made within the sphere of cognitive consciousness itself, Kant, has definitely brought into effect a 'transition' to the new discipline of phenomenology. Only he had been unaware of the phenomenological method itself.

A cursory view of man that is elaborated by two important thinkers belonging to the phenomenological tradition - Martin Heidegger and J.P. Sartre, - attempted to analyze and understand the nature of man mainly in his subjectivity. Heidegger starts his speculations with the query "what is being?", but eventually shifts his attention to man with the presumption that the comprehension of the being of man may offer a clue to the understanding of Being. Heidegger uses the term "Dasein" to designate the living
reality called Man. The most important feature of Dasern, in Heidegger's system, is its temporality i.e., its relations to the past, present and future which constitute the historicity of Dasein. According to Heidegger, man's being is in ever realizing possibilities, his concerns, cares and pursuits are directed towards the realization of projects rooted in the potentialities/possibilities of his being. This being of man is essentially being in the world involving his relationship with objects and other human beings. Thus Heidegger advocates the existence of other human beings as a necessity for the realization of man's projects and that of the physical objects. With this conception of man, Heidegger emphasizes an important point of view which pertains man; that a man in order to lead a truly worthy life should freely form his own projects rather than allow himself to be driven by the prejudices or values of the multitude. A man lives authentically only when he exhibits the courage to live with the projects freely chosen by him. Such authentic living constitutes the true ideal for the individual's life.

Jean-Paul-Sartre propounded a philosophy of life substantially in agreement with that of Heidegger. While Heidegger's main work, Being and Time, conceives man as living essentially in relation to the future which ensures

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the realization of his possibilities, Sartre, in his Magnum opus, *Being and Nothingness*, sees man's basic character as consisting in the power of nihilation of the given. Both Heidegger and Sartre attribute ontological reality to nothingness which, according to Sartre, we carry within ourselves. The important point is that we can detach ourselves from the given and visualize the possibility of what is not present to us. This capacity for negating or of disengaging ourselves from being constitutes our freedom. According to him, by the free acts of choice and decision directed towards the realization of ever new possibilities, man continually reconstruct his essence; these acts also constitute man's freedom. It is incumbent on man to give in freedom. When a person refuses to behave as free agent shifting allegiance and responsibility to an external authority, he is guilty of 'bad faith' which in Sartrean Scheme of philosophy is equivalent to immoral conduct.

The above explication suggests that phenomenology and Existentialism are efforts to explore man, and his existence by placing primary emphasis on consciousness 'confronting' a world and "engaged" in human situation. The innermost reality of the human subject, then, is that he is a conscious being whose activity of consciousness is the meaning of his performance. It may also be noted that the human subject is a dynamic interplay of felt needs, wishes, desires, intentions attitudes and the like. Thus to approach
the study of man means understanding him in the full concreteness of his existence. This point has been underlined by the existentialist thinkers and especially Merleau Ponty. In other words, the human subject may be given a special ontological standing as a subject who grounds the experiences of himself and other persons. We are using the term ontological in the normal accepted sense referring thereby to basic truths about existence. On the basis of the above, it may be argued that the ontological position of the human subject is that it is a subject who grounds his experience in the "life -World". It is in this life-world that man experiences his mundane existence as a task on to himself. According to him, the task of philosophy is to clarify the essential structures of life-world and thereby showing how it presupposed the work of consciousness. Merleau - Ponty in general accepted the characterization of philosophy put forward by Husserl. Like Husserl, he makes the idea of reduction central to his philosophy thereby characterizing phenomenology as investigation of the natural attitude from a transcendental perspective.

Merleau-Ponty is particularly influenced by Husserl' latest writing where he introduced the notion of the Lebenswelt to refer to the world as incumbent and lived in everyday life. It is the world of familiar objects Husserl saw the task of philosophy as to clarify the essential
structure of the life-world and showing how it presupposed the work of consciousness. This was also Merleau Ponty's concern.

Phenomenology was for him a kind of archaeology where the structure of the life-world was to be dug out from under the sedimentation of scientific knowledge and beliefs and its intentional roots brought to light. As Spurling remarks "There is a basic change of emphasis in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, whereas for Husserl any reduction was an eidetic reduction, an investigation of essences, Merleau Ponty's focussed instead on human existence, on man in the world and his concrete and contingent way of living". Hence for Merleau-Ponty, as for Heidegger and Sartre phenomenology becomes an existential phenomenology, concerned not just with the structure of life-world but also with the man's way of existing in the life-world.

Similarly, Merleau-Ponty rejects the notion that consciousness constitutes the world in the sense of creating it. This would make the world into the simple correlate of thought and turn philosophy into an idealism of which Husserl is sometimes guilty. According to him, the world is not created by consciousness rather consciousness is in essential dialogue with the world and all meaning is the result of this dialogue. It is in this sense only that

Merleau-Ponty's philosophic method is phenomenology in a 'radical' form. Although he adheres to the general methodology of phenomenological reduction, yet he has a different formulation which may be considered for the basis of an existentialism. Phenomenology is the study of essences, and according to it all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man or the world from any starting point other than of their 'facticity'. It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always "already there before" - as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon reaching a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with the philosophical status. It is the search for a, philosophy which shall be a 'rigorous science', but it is also often an account of space, time and the world as we 'live' them. In 'Primacy of Perception', Merleau-Ponty has loosely put his view thus: phenomenology, has a double purpose, it will gather together all the concrete experiences of man which are found in history - not only those of knowledge but also those of life and of
civilization. But at the same time it must discover in this enrolling of facts a spontaneous order, a meaning, an intrinsic truth, an orientation of such a kind that the different events do not appear as a mere succession.

In short, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is a method whereby essential experience is known as reflection of the existent. Prof. Rama Kant Sinari has aptly summarized the above thus, "The vision that Merleau-Ponty has given to philosophy by opening new dimensions of perception and of human consciousness, and by pointing at the obscurity of the region of the pre-conscious, has no parallel in the history of philosophy. This vision assures nothing nor does it claim to have explored the exact nature of anything. Merleau Ponty's quest is the perceptual quest of a consciousness for the knowledge of its own beginning".6

Is existential phenomenology ontologically committed?

The question whether a philosophy is ontologically committed or not may in the first instance appear to be either superfluous or trivial. Ontology seeks for the final meaning of existence - of what there is on ultimate analysis. To be ontologically committed would thus mean to adopt a definite view concerning the ultimate mode of being or existence - a view which, if adopted, should orientate the explanation of experience as a whole. Whether obtained

through speculative reasoning or intuited as self-evident, the position regarding being presents to concerned an intellectual obligation, so to say, to interpret every fact of reality in terms of that principle- and not a mere hypothetical reasoning. So far as traditional metaphysics is concerned ontology in some form or other constitutes the central part of philosophical enquiry. Phenomenology, offering to be a self-complete discipline proposes a metaphysically non-committal attitude. That as such need not mean that phenomenology is anti-metaphysical, disregarding the very possibility of an alleged science of the supersensible reality. Rather it prefers to shift its interest from metaphysical questions to an analysis of experience. In other words, neither a naturalistic nor a metaphysical commitment should, come in the way of the phenomenologist's program for a "first philosophy". However, the outright denial of either the existent fact or of the so called "first principles" is not as such involved in the program itself. An expression which Heidegger used in this regard explains the typically non-committal attitude of his, "bracketing", i.e., suspending beliefs in the question of reality, whatever may be the object under reference. Phenomenology, as it is primarily a methodological program, should be understood more as a line of analysis than as a system of truths regarding the nature and categories of reality. And methodologically again, it offers to be
thoroughly non-committal so far as metaphysical questions are concerned. The confinement of the subject matter of phenomenological investigation within the region of immanent consciousness and the rejection of the transcendent may have an immediate bearing on the question of ontological commitment. Husserl prescribes what he calls 'epoche' or rather, "transcendental epoche" not merely towards the common sense belief in existent facts and natural laws of science but also towards metaphysics itself. What he means is a disconnecting of the natural belief in the existent real as the ideal pre-condition for obtaining the pure phenomenological region of consciousness. And this attitude of suspense towards the question of being is evidently extended at all possible levels of ontology.

Two issues may further be pointed out on which the question of ontological commitment seems to be almost unavoidable. One definite case where the question comes up quite relevantly is that of the status of "essences". Can essences possibly be conceived as devoid of reality? They could be real at either of the two levels - that of natural facts of experience or that of the alleged unconditional being. Either essences are viewed as naturalized as real essences of actual experience, or they are ontologized as non-factual realities of a higher order. Phenomenology seeks to avoid committing either of these two levels. It may now appear evident that in taking a further estimate of the
phenomenological philosophy, an element of 'ontological premise' can hardly be dispensed with. Phenomenological attitude may combine with the ontological one- or even may not. And the latter choice need not affect the genuine character of phenomenology, so long as the latter remains primarily a methodological program of analysis of experience, so to say, a critique of consciousness.

Possibility of a Phenomenology of Man

The notion of person occupies an important position in the discourse of Husserl's phenomenology. As with all facts and objects, the fact hood of person also is treated in the phenomenological attitude as a "phenomenon". A paradox seems to arise which may briefly be put thus: person is an object for phenomenological investigation and is at the same time a presupposition of the latter. Husserl maintains that the fact of personality and mentality does in a sense come within the sphere of immanent givenness. Accordingly, there is a phenomenology of man, whose characteristics lies in the stream of consciousness. The phenomenological interpretation of personality should not in any case pertain to the dimension of existential being - or as Heidegger would put it "the dimension of the question as to the being of existence". Person is thus not to be posited as a thing which is thought to be behind and besides the immediately experienced. All that can be admitted in the explanation of personhood is the principle of unity - one that may serve as
the Substrate for the different psychological properties in the similar way as a substance is the substrate of qualities. As Husserl remarks, person is "the unified pole of identity, the substrate of character and such like", which refer back to the stream of experience. In further exposition of this unity, Husserl refers to a two fold polarity as the counter pole on the one side and I-pole on the other. Each of the poles has its own type of identity. The I is the identical subject of fruitions in all acts of the "stream of consciousness", it is the centre of emanations. The unity of the object also is to be understood in the context of reference acts. While all acts of reference unites in the unifying subject, they are not so in the object of reference, or the object referred to; in the latter only such acts are united which can be viewed as "consciousness of" the self-same object.

Phenomenological Analysis of Man

Two points of departure from which the phenomenological approach to the question of personality proceeds can be stated as follows.

A. Regional constitution of person:

In the phenomenological order, the phenomenon of person belongs to the "region" of mind or spirit. To be a person means in the first instance to be a subject of a world around us. So far as I am a person - and that applies nationally to every other person, I am inseparably bound
with the world around me. This world around me/us is that of which personal I is conscious of and to which it is related in different ways. The person in all its personal acts like representations, Sensations etc, stands in relation to something, to an object in the world. To speak in general terms, this world around me is no world in itself, but one "for me" i.e, the surrounding world of an I - subject and experienced by me - intentionally given in experience. In this sense the world around us is never absolutely fixed, but it is in a certain sense ever in becoming. In a word, person acts as the centre of a surrounding world. Not only things but other subjects too are contained in the surrounding world. The subject thus views other subjects as persons who participate in their respective worlds around them. So long as a person is not considered in the context of the common interpersonal world around him, he is just theoretically treated - and only as a thing, but not considering his personal character.

B. Person in the light of intentional act :

The phenomenological treatment of person is concerned not only with the phenomenon of personality as it is presented in reflection, but also with the deeper question regarding the essence of person in its subjectivity. The question here turns chiefly on the essence of person as the subject of intentional acts. The guiding interest of phenomenological investigation, however, is directed to the
aspect of person qua subject; for phenomenology, after all, is a philosophy from the standpoint of subjectivity. So far as the personal reality involved in the natural complex is essentially subjective, the question as to the essence of personality is, determined by the genuinely phenomenological character of subject and his function. Therefore, only in the context of intentional act alone the phenomenology takes of person and hence understood ultimately with reference to the underlying principle of transcendental subjectivity. The latter, however, is essentially self-positing subjectivity and as such assumes the form of "I am". This "I am", proves to be the phenomenological residuum, pointing to transcendental subjectivity as absolute which is stated to be the I - mode of being rather than as the metaphysically absolute consciousness.

The preceding pages set the tone of the present thesis. What we set out to do in this thesis is an assessment of philosophic worth of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's concept of man in the philosophic lineage of Edmund Husserl. But Merleau-Ponty was not merely interested in simply explicating Husserl. The proof for the above statement and the basis of deciding the place Merleau-Ponty holds vis-a-vis Husserl, is shown in Merleau Ponty's own writings. They reveal a thinker able in his own right but one whose philosophy is heavily indebted to the walk of his predecessor. Merleau Ponty's first book appeared in 1942, The Structure of Behaviour, to
be followed by his major work, *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945. Thereafter, Merleau - Ponty expressed his philosophic thinking in the form of articles and addresses, often more topical than theoretical interest. From time to time, collections of these shorter pieces were published, the main ones being *Sense* and *Non-Sense*, in 1948, *The Adventures of Dialectic*, in 1955, and *Signs* in 1960. Finally, two other writings merit special notice both in a way unofficial. The first is a study of Husserl's position on the relation between phenomenology and certain sciences dealing with man: psychology, linguistics, and history in particular. Merleau Ponty gave it as a course at the sorbonne in 1950-51 under the title "*The Sciences of Man and Phenomenology*" published in mimeographed, form, it is important to note as to how Merleau Ponty interprets Husserl's phenomenology particularly Husserl's "essence - intuition". Lastly, in concluding this survey of Merleau Ponty's own writing, we wish to mention the posthumous "*The Visible and the Invisible*" a careful editing of manuscripts and notes, it contains the material Merleau Ponty was working on in preparation for a book that was to present the position he had reached in the decade and a half since *Phenomenology of Perception*. In his last years, Merleau -Ponty's was reported to be engaged in reaching a new assessment of his phenomenology, and *The visible and the Invisible* bears the mark of this rethinking.
As we see it, the few problems that the present thesis is purported to inquire are the following:

i) Far from any assessment of philosophic worth or the question of legitimacy in philosophic lineage, Merleau Ponty’s entry into the arena of Husserlian phenomenology and his critique of both empiricism and rationalism.

ii) The analysis and explication of the problem of subjectivity consciousness as embodied, so to say, as the body subject.

iii) Man as a mundane existent and his modes of existing which reveals the operation of consciousness which is in the life world (Lebenswelt).

iv) The articulation of human experience in time and space and the consequent intertwining of consciousness in the temporality and spatiality of the human world.

v) The experience and expression of the body - subject through the medium of language and thereby the body subject articulates a highly differentiated consciousness of his situation.