CHAPTER - I
PROGRAMME OF PHENOMENOLOGY : HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY TO MERLEAU-PONTY'S EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The introductory chapter of the thesis proposes to do three things: First, it tries very believably, to delineate some important features of Husserl's phenomenology with special reference to essentialism and description. Second, it stresses the point that, although Husserl, never fully gave up the idea of pure essences and that of phenomenology as a descriptive eidetic, he, nevertheless, came to realize that his essentialistic phenomenology has to make room for a search for meaning. Third, it briefly works out the position of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology in the phenomenological tradition as such, and argues that Ponty's approach is not descriptive of pure essences but of the particular and contingent forms of man's existing in the world, so to say, the relationship between essences and facts.

i) The Original Programme of Phenomenology :

Our use of the term phenomenology here refers mainly to the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and to that of those who derive their main inspiration from him. Husserl in his "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft" very clearly indicated that he is attempting to give philosophy a new, rigorous foundation which he felt philosophy badly needs and does not possess. He protested against a conception of
philosophy which equates it with "Weltanschauung". Phenomenology as originally conceived by Husserl also meant by implication at least a critique of relativism, Psychologism, scepticism, historicism, etc. and the eidetic suspension of the phenomenological standpoint knows no exception. All that it accepts are the intuitively given essences.

Husserl opposed the Kantian bifurcation which meant by phenomena objects and events as they appear in our experience as opposed to objects and events as they are in themselves. Hegel, who characterises his approach to philosophy as phenomenology agrees and differs with Kant. With Kant, he does accept that all what we know are phenomena. But unlike Kant, he felt no need to introduce the concept of an unknown and unknowable "Noumena". It is an interesting coincidence that Husserl who temperamentally differs from Hegel and protests against his 'constructionism' is fully convinced that his phenomenology (as Hegel was convinced of his philosophy) is the necessary culmination of western philosophy and contains the solutions to the contemporary 'crisis in European sciences', culture and humanity.

Philosophy was for Husserl not just the profession he pursued. It was a personal commitment to him. Phenomenology is an unending search for the 'given' because the only foundation beyond all doubt can be found in what is
intuitively certain. Phenomenology stands in the first instance for a method leading to the most originary given in all fields of human activities; secondly, it may or may not mean a philosophical system. Phenomenology as a method has exercised enormous influence and is in fact concretely applied to different areas of research starting from logic to art and religion. It does not commit itself to any metaphysics. It's concern is with consciousness which is intentional and not with existences and facts, important no doubt they are. The real spirit of Husserlian phenomenology is not to erect a system of its own as a theory amongst others. The ideal of presuppositionlessness which phenomenology is committed to, provides the right to play as the role of arbiter.

In the first edition of the 'Logical Investigation', Husserl used the term descriptive psychology to devote a purely descriptive, non-reductionist approach to phenomena. Because of his fear of psychologism, Husserl classified in his 'Philosophie als strenge wissenschaft' as to what he really intended. To describe, for him, is neither to reduce nor to speculate; it is not to hypothesize either. The concept of description really aimed at philosophizing without any presuppositions, prejudices and prejudgments. In his attempt to overcome all forms of relativism, Husserl was in search of the notion of a non-linguistic, non-formal, non-psychological, non-speculative giveness. In order to
reach this goal, he introduced the method of phenomenological description assisted by the methods of epoche, eidetic variation and phenomenological reduction.

ii) Phenomenological Method:

Husserl's formulation of the method is complex and indeed manifold. In all his major works, he presents it from a new angle adding, subtracting, revising and expanding. His approach in some of his work is distinctly Cartesian, in others, it is more Kantian or Hegelian. But regardless of his specific point of departure, Husserl considers the goal of his method to be a transcendental experience of consciousness capable of producing universally valid knowledge. We can enlist five principal phases in his Method.

1) Husserl proposes a bracketing (epoché) or suspension of the empirical and metaphysical presuppositions of the 'natural attitude'. Foremost among such bracketed presuppositions is the question of beings existing independently of our consciousness. Husserl thus intends to concentrate man's awareness on the ways in which meanings appear to us qua phenomena, regardless of whether they exist as empirical entities outside of our consciousness. Phenomenological suspension or to use Husserl's term 'epoché' consists in making explicit to consciousness the thesis which unconsciously underlines every individual judgement made within
ordinary life about reality. Suspension means, first of all coming into awareness of the very meaning of the natural attitude itself. The phenomenological suspension, places in phenomenological doubt the traditional commonsense taking for granted of the very reality of the world within which things and events are noted and appraised. With this heightened phenomenological perspective, consequently, the 'possible' experience is considered just as reliable as that of fact. Both are equally valid experiences of consciousness. The mind is thus freed from its servile attachment to 'reality' which we normally take for granted, and comes to know its intentional object more intimately and more accurately.

2) There is the phenomenological reduction which enables us to return to the generating axis of our intentional experience before they are overlaid by objectifying constructs. By means of such a reduction Husserl believed we could regain access to a presuppositionless world of transcendental immediacy where being becomes identical with its manifestation to consciousness. In other words, being becomes 'reduced'- in the non-reductive sense of being retrieved and opened up-to the meaning of being.

3) There occurs what Husserl terms free variation. Having undergone the epoche and the reduction, meaning is no
longer confined to empirical actualities, but unfolds in free play of pure possibilities. This invariant structure is what Husserl terms of the essence or 'eidos' of the thing intended.

4) The fourth stage of the method entails an intuition of the essence as it emerges passively from the multiple acts of our freely varying intentionality. This 'essential' intuition involves an active repossession of the passive play of possibilities, reuniting them in a single immediate grasp. In this manner, phenomenology contrives to repeat the pre-reflective act of our intentional experience in a reflective fashion. The phenomenological intuition of essences is the result of a methodical conversion or change of mind. It can only occur when we no longer attend simply to taken-for-granted objects but re-orient our attention to the manner in which these objects are intended by our consciousness. The table intuited is still a table, but it is now intended and grasped in a more fundamental manner - that is, in all its hitherto hidden dimension. Moreover, it is only my means of such intention that the object ceases to be a self-evident given and becomes instead a gift of meaning.

5) The phenomenological method culminates with a description of the essential structures of both intended thing (noema) and intending consciousness.
as these essences emerge from the free variation of imagination into the grasp of a united intuition. The descriptive stage is that which records the preceding phases of the method and makes them available to others as a theoretical document of the entire phenomenological analysis. The descriptive phase of the method, is in short, that which renders essential intuitions permanent and thus eligible for communication to others in the universal pursuit of knowledge.

The method of constitutive analysis helped Husserl to describe all objects of human knowledge and interest as the noemata of noetic acts. Phenomenology shows quite a number of motives which do not always harmonize with each other. The two conflicting motives which pervade the history of phenomenological movement are (i) phenomenology as an eidetic discipline, i.e. as a purely descriptive philosophy of essences and (ii) Phenomenology as a descriptive philosophy committed to the clarification of meanings.

The method of phenomenological description enables to face the given without any preconceived framework. The real spirit of phenomenology is against the attempt of reducing one set of phenomena to another. This makes phenomenology tolerant and respectful of other traditions as opposed to the phenomenology of Hegel which does not trust every form of human consciousness as a legitimate expression of truths.
iii) The Thesis of Intentionality:

Edmund Husserl's famous dictum 'Back to the things themselves' is normally taken to be the epigram that explains the philosophic concern of phenomenology. A fundamental theme underlying Husserl's work, especially in his later years, is his concern to transcend all beliefs or doctrines which threatens to turn philosophy into the accumulation of empirical facts. Such a philosophy he termed naturalistic which he defines as a phenomenon consequent upon the discovery of nature, which is to say, nature considered as a unity of spatio-temporal being subject to exact laws of nature.

Naturalistic philosophy does not give a place for an understanding of consciousness and of our relation to the world. It was the rise of Naturalism-separation or dissociation of reason-which Husserl in his last writing identified as the cause of 'Crisis' in European culture and civilization. Husserl saw two responses to this Crisis—'the Crisis of European existence can end in only one of two ways - in the ruin of a Europe alienated from its rational sense of life, fallen into a barbaric hatred of spirit, or in the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy, through a heroism of reason that will definitely overcome naturalism.

Phenomenology was the philosophy that was going to accomplish this rebirth of reason. It was the study of 'phenomena' of that which appears to consciousness. It was
not only meant to be descriptive of consciousness and its acts, it is also transcendental, in that, the world apprehended as human and meaningful was to be understood as constituted by consciousness. Phenomenology, unlike naturalism, refused to consider the world as essentially independent of consciousness, rather the world was understood as the correlate of consciousness. This is expressed in the fundamental thesis of intentionality, according to which, all consciousness is always the consciousness of something, that is to say, that the acts of consciousness intend its correlate in the world. Husserl always considered this as the central insight in his phenomenological analysis of consciousness.

iv) Phenomenology and Essentialism:

Husserlian phenomenology contains two conflicting motives: it aims at being a descriptive science of essences and essential structures belonging to different regions and it also stands for an endless process of clarification of meanings which are constituted in the rich life of human consciousness. If the essentialistic version of Husserlian phenomenology is nearer to the classical idealistic and rationalistic tradition, its concern with meaning brings it closer to the empiricistic tradition. The radically empiricistic concern of Husserlian phenomenology is on the whole more dominating. The essentialistic approach to phenomenology is not satisfied with the description of mere
facts, it aims at the discovery of the essences and essential structures in phenomena. Phenomenology, according to Husserl, is nothing less than a theory of essences. Both facts as well as essences are given. Yet Husserl makes the discovery of the former as the main target of phenomenology. This he does because, essences according to him are totally given and the science of phenomenology aiming at absolute knowledge must prefer essences to facts which are contingent and given in an endless progression. Husserl does not give up the idea of description. Description, for him, is now more descriptive of phenomena; it is the description of particular sort of phenomena, namely of essences. They are (essences) neither mere idealities nor psychological realities but intentional objects given to consciousness. Husserl rightly claims that his technique of eidetic variation helps to discover the essences beyond the contingent and empirically given facts. This discovery of essences as something invariant must not be confused with the inductive discovery of empirical universalities. Essences have intuitive backing and are not mere empirical generalizations.

Husserl differentiates between essences and facts and contends that they are given in two radically different ways. The reason why phenomenology concentrates exclusively on essences lies in its original programme to reach absolute knowledge based on what is absolutely given and is
Intelligible in its own right. Facts are never totally given. After the application of the method of epoche, the acts of consciousness are found to be necessarily correlated with the objects. Phenomenology is thus an a priori eidetic discipline, may be like Mathematics. The new field thus discovered is the rich transcendental field of acts of consciousness along with their correlates. It is neither objectivist (naturalistic) nor subjectivistic nor metaphysical (speculative). As Husserl says, phenomenology is an eidetic science of non-realities; it is a new way of looking at things from a phenomenological standpoint which consists in classifying as to what we mean when we judge, explain, understand and interpret.

The phenomenological reduction left Husserl with the pure realm of consciousness with infinite number of actual and possible noetic acts. Our consciousness at the level of natural attitude, no doubt, suffered a loss but the phenomenological consciousness at the level of reflection gained in richness. The toughest task before Husserl was to find the way out after bracketing the world of things and beings. The dogma of the exclusively essentialistic phenomenology is its belief that essences are "per se" more intelligible than facts.

v) The Noesis-Noema Correlation:

One of the most fundamental and fruitful discoveries of Husserlian phenomenology has been the universal principle of
Noesis-Noema correlation. This may be said to be the most important contribution of Husserl in his "Ideas". The subjective and the objective are just the noetic and noematic structures. The noematic structure refers to the intended object whereas the noetic act is the intentional act as such. In the "Logical Investigation" Husserl argues that philosophy never thematized this noetic-noematic correlation. In "Crisis" Husserl goes so far as to see in the systematic exploration of this correlation as the main task of his philosophical career. The noetic acts as the meaning-giving originally experience are what Husserl calls the principle of all principles. This leads him to the theory of genetic constitution and constitutive phenomenology. The main task of the genetic constitution is to show how things get their meaning from the only center of meaning giving intentional acts of intentional consciousness. These acts do not create or project their objects but, the objects are revealed in them irrespective of the fact whether they are real or imagined.

Husserl elaborated the essential relationship between the acts of intention, and the objects intended. The object as given is what is meant by the object as intended. Noema as the ideal correlate of noesis consists of subjective experiences, of mere intention. Noetic acts are themselves acts which lead to noemata and these are not dependent on our will. Husserlian phenomenology therefore adequately
emphasizes the relation between realms of noesis-noematic correlationship.

The perennial problem which phenomenology is called upon to solve is this: how to constitute that which constitutes all? How can phenomenology remain faithful to its original programme of pure description, if it accepts something which itself is not constituted? There is a paradox of human consciousness. It seems to consist in its ability to transcend itself and still to remain consciousness. Are then the consciousness which transcends and that which is transcended two things or are they just two sides of the same phenomenon?

There is a life of transcendental consciousness in which all meaning experiences reside. In his 'Erste Philosophie', transcendental subjectivity is regarded as the absolute starting point. On the other hand, Husserl also speaks of the anonymous and pre-personal primal flux of consciousness. Husserl here distinguishes between empirical I (ego) and the transcendental I (ego). It is only the latter which is given in our transcendental experience. We may take Husserl's transcendental ego as the unconstituted but all constituting foundation. But this would eventually lead to an essentialistic phenomenology with presuppositions and pre-conceptions.

The transcendental phenomenology culminates in the foundational discovery of the 'Lebenswelt' as the reservoir
of the lived experiences and as the irreducible basis of all meaning - conferring activities. The question then which transcendental phenomenology has to face is that of Lebenswelt.

vi) LEBENSWELT:

What is meant by life-world is the world as encountered in everyday life and given in direct and immediate experience. The life-world is understood by Husserl strictly as the "human" world i.e., as a sphere characterized by its specific and cultural character; it is the human world of human experience as interpreted by man which is continuously in the process of becoming in the course of history. The life-world is experienced as a "unity", as the corollate-idea to the "idea of experiences" to be brought to coherence with one another in a never ending "infinite way. From a consideration of these various levels of constitution, i.e. levels upon which meanings develop and become attended to, it is possible now to talk about what is meant by the "life-world". We have already noted Husserl's characterizing of the life-world as "the world in which we always already live, and which provides the ground for all cognitive performances and for all scientific determination". The clear implication is that the life-world is prior to something else, to some second kind of constituting activity. The kind of upper level activity that Husserl has

1. Edmund Husserl, Logic, Appendix 2, # 2C, P.86.
in mind is especially the kind that when pursued would tend to lead to a loss of suitable perspectives for the understanding of the very grounds out of which it arose and the manner of its own genesis. To be specific, Husserl has in mind any kind of idealizing thought, and the prime example of this is the scientific study of nature in terms of exact, "objective" concepts, particularly when mathematics is employed as providing the structure and forms for theoretical explanation. In other words, Husserl is aiming at an adequate description of the world of a prescientific kind of experience.2

Immediately, one must note that to look for a prescientific is not to look for empty, "pure" conditions for experience, but rather to look for a stratum of possible experiencing with its own meaningful kind of thematic articulation of a world that is not that of scientific categories and attitudes, with their demands of exactness and "objectivity". What it amounts to is this: Passively functioning consciousness, as the mere flow of meaning - moments being synthesized in fluid meaning - unities according to typicalities, is not enough in order for a world, even a pre-scientific one, to be known as a world. The development of meaning - unities within the spatio-temporal structure of inner and outer horizontality is

2. Edmund Husserl, Crisis, ## 9,35,36 (The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff).
certainly the forming of the particulars of a world; but this pre-predicative stratum is not, strictly speaking, a known world, although it is one with which the living subject is acquainted. Predicative thematization of the pre-predicative is required for the pre-scientific world to be known as such, and this would be already an active mode of consciousness, active genesis. Yet the thematization at this level of active constitution retains something of the fluidity, openness and typicality of the pre-predicative perceptual flow, from which it draws. It is an inexact adaptable, relatively low level of generality. By such low-level thematization the world is recognized and known as the world of objects, but objects-things- are dealt with in the vague or shifting meaning of ordinary language e.g., corporality is qualitative (colour, weight, hardness, etc.) as well as indefinitely quantitative ("round" instead of "circular"). Space and time are fluid and undefinable ("near", "far", "soon", "a long time").

A world is thus recognised and known in terms of a host of meanings through and in which the things of the world are discriminated and characterized all in pre-scientific way.3 There can be a world "already there" before science would begin, a world in which, before science would begin, a world in which, before "objectively" methodic reflection and

study, "we always already live". On the other hand, it is easily seen that the way in fact that, at some point in the history of reflection, the articulation of the world may be thematized and understood, can happen to be in terms of types of meanings that are products of scientific reflection. It can happen that the pre-predicative level gets expressed in categories and attitudes governed by the requirements and characteristics of exact, objective consideration. In other world, once in time the step of idealizing reflection is taken, the post-predicative and pre-scientific mode of meaning (i.e. the life-world meaning) can become submerged within an increasingly scientific and idealizing mode of meaning. For Husserl, this is the situation of the present day. With reference to the mathematicizing of nature in Post-Galilean science, Husserl speaks of a "cloak of Ideas" which "makes us take as true being what is method"⁴. At the expense of a recognition of the world of experience in its pre-scientific character, man today comes to know it interpretatively in terms drawn from natural science. The result is that the fundamental and original character and structure of experience (e.g., pre-predicative synthesis and what it involves) is even harder to discover. Besides countering the natural attitude, which is not excluded for pre-scientific consciousness, the

phenomenological reduction has to be adapted as, among other things, a specific measure to overcome this new obscuring of the authentic structure of conscious experience, especially its ground-level form, perceptual consciousness. The phenomenological reduction has to awaken reflection to a recognition of pre-scientific experience in the life-world as a pre-supposition of a scientific attitude, and then uncover the phenomenological character of that pre-scientific consciousness itself, free finally from the obscuring notions of the natural attitude.

To sum up: the life-world is that world in which from the first constitutive level, that of passivity genesis, meanings are thematized and predicatively expressed by higher level activity, so that the world pre-predicatively a building, at the first level, becomes known as the world of our everyday, preceptual experience, with its complexity of space-time disposition of objects. Yet this higher activity in the life-world, while productive of generality, is productive of a flexible and type-indefinite generality; it is yet pre-exact and pre-scientific, not yet dealing in terms of pure idealizations or pure a priori-type universals. These latter kinds of generality, now, are products of a new and different kind of cognitive activity and thematization which draws from and is founded upon those

5. Edmund Husserl, Crisis, #35-36ff.
6. Ibid, P.100, note 27.
lower, life-world levels of thematization, and generality. Consequently, one can see that the first thing necessary for uncovering and delineating the grounds of both scientific and everyday knowledge is, as Husserl is proposing a philosophical return to the life-world, for the purpose of examining its structure phenomenologically.

vii) Husserlian Phenomenology to Merleau-Ponty's Existential Phenomenology.

Merleau-Ponty is particularly influenced by Husserl's latest writing where he introduced the notion of the Lebenswelt to refer to the world as incumbent as 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 pre-supposed 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 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, it is already there. For Merleau-Ponty consciousness is in essential dialogue with the world and all meaning is the result of this dialogue. It is in this sense only that consciousness can be said to be constituting.

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 not only a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, but is also a philosophy for which the
world is always already there before as an in-alienable presence, and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving 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 the "primacy of perception" Merleau Ponty has loosely put his view thus: Phenomenology, therefore, 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 unrolling of facts a spontaneous order, a meaning, an intrinsic truth.

viii) Merleau-Ponty's Reduction: The Basic Phenomenon

It is important to see here exactly what Merleau-Ponty understands "the phenomena, living experience layer", to be the stratum that goes under the name "perception" or "perceptual experience". As already mentioned, a major part of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has to do with criticizing and rejecting certain positions and conceptions in order to let the matter in question be seen purely as it is primordially throughout both. The structure of behaviour and phenomenology of perception, Merleau-Ponty reaches a positive formulation out of a closely worked critique of two positions he calls the "Empiricist" and the
"Intellectualist". The first he characterizes as attempting to account for the validity and properties of perceptual consciousness in terms of the interaction of physical objects e.g., nerve stimulation, cerebral impulses, optical refraction and focussing, etc. in a causal network, giving rise to pure primary sense data in associational groupings. These actions and products all possess determinate properties and unambiguous primary sense. Inasmuch as ordinary perception interprets and employs rigidity the primitive items thus given to it, viz., sense data and images, there is true perception. Psychology enables one to define this process, discovering and detailing the conditions, genesis, and characteristics of primary perceptual data, and thus justifying and explaining perceptual experience.8

With regard to the second, the "intellectualist" position, Merleau-Ponty criticizes the notion of perception as a performance by a subject for whom data and objects are made explicit significant items fully clear to it, by acts of fully controlled attention, by acts which confer the meaning upon the data. These acts are the performance of a subject having a distinct ontological location with regard

to the world of events and things, a sui genesis location untouched by and unrelated to that world save inasmuch as the subject relates himself to it. Perception, in particular, is a pure interior thinking turned to sensible data and thereby constituting those data into significant unities. Mind is opposed to world as pure poursoi opposed to pure en-soi, as interiority to exteriority, as thought to extension. The one member, mind, attempts to reach the other things, by means of an intermediary, the sense-data invested with meaning, whose whole significance is ultimately a product of mind itself.

Both positions, Merleau-Ponty shows, are based upon the same conception of the process of perception, one that mistakes or is not even aware of what perception in fact is as it is actually lived. Both are guilty of the same dual error (1) that of conceiving the world as it comes to be given by perception in the act of being given, as an objective, determinate, readymade, fully made universe, the very same universe to which empirical science purports to be adequate. (2) that of conceiving perception itself, as sensible, to take place within this same universe of science, so that the structure and elements of perception, itself are all thought to be fully determinate and unambiguously set in themselves. In other words, perception is the process whereby, within the objective universe of things, elements of that universe transmit to the interior
of one of its members means in which the pattern and weave of the unambiguously objective universe can be presented (whether the presented universe represents an original one "outside" or is a purely subjective. One does not alter the conception of presentation and the conception of the kind of universe that comes to be presented, i.e., in terms of objective, determinate elements in an objective, determinate universe). Upon this notion, both "empiricist" and "intellectualist" analysis of perception are based:

Both empiricism and intellectualism take as their object of analysis the objective world, though it is primary neither in time nor in its significance, both are incapable of expressing the special way in which perceptual consciousness constitutes its object. Both keep their distance with regard to perception instead of sticking closely to it.  

Both being with a common set of ideas concerning the categories within which one's analysis must explain perception: extension or thought, en-soi or pour-soi, causality of idealistic constitution:

Objective thought as applied to the universe and not to the phenomena, knows only alternative notions. Taking off from actual experience, it defines pure


concepts which are mutually exclusive: the notion of the extended, that of an absolute exteriority of parts, and the notion of thought, that of a being all collected into itself.... the notion of cause as exterior determinant of its effect, and that of reason as law of intrinsic constitution of the phenomenon.11

The difference between the "empiricist" approach and the "intellectualist" is that the first sees the universe as all en-soi, within which a single type of event, space time causality, gives rise to all phenomena.12 While the second sees pure thought, a pure subjectivity as generating the idea of the universe and all the phenomena in it, whether absolutely, or upon material given by a sensibility, which ultimately itself ends up either an ungrounded postulate, or another element generated by that subjectivity.13

Now, Merleau Ponty insists that to begin with this basic frame of mind is to begin with an idea of perception, and not with the phenomenon of perception itself. It is to detach oneself from the experience of perception, and to attend to an idealized conception of it.14 The universe of objective science, thus, replaces the world of lived

12. Ibid, P.50.
13. Ibid, P.50
perceptual familiarity and happening. Consequently, the primary task of reflection is to reverse this disorientation and to recover the basic phenomenon in its authenticity as the starting point for philosophy. One has to replace ideas and meanings previously taken to be evident and assured, "objective" and determinate, in the matrix from which they take their origin. The idea of the universe, e.g. must be seen to be nothing other than the phenomenal world of perception, but to cut off from its origins, and transformed, as taken to be the evidently true one because those origins are forgotten.

ix) Meaning in-genesis : Existence

A momentous step is now taken. The phenomenon we have just been speaking about, the stratum of operative intentionality, of passively continuing, pre-objective genesis of sense, is not only put forward as the primordial, utterly foundational phenomenon, it is identified by Merleau-Ponty as the primordial foundational kind of being for man with "being" taken in its strong, metaphysical sense. Human being is at bottom of this stratum of the happening of meaning. To name man etre-au-monde is, for Merleau-Ponty to give metaphysical definition of human being. Until now we have insisted that phenomenology as such is precisely not

metaphysics, not interpretative, and that it was Husserl himself who established this requirement. Husserl furthermore made a distinction between phenomenology and phenomenological philosophy, as the full title of his ideas indicates. Nevertheless, it remains unclear what the latter phenomenological philosophy could be as to any great extent different in its content from phenomenology itself. Husserl contended in his "Afterword" that he had still not reached the point where he could finally turn his attentions to a phenomenological philosophy, although it was quite clear to him what the outline of such a philosophy were. But this is not the same as refusing value as philosophy to the phenomenology he was still working on. Indeed, Husserl does at time speak explicitly of the metaphysical import of his phenomenology. In any case, where Husserl does not allow himself to make a transposition of phenomenology to metaphysics in any but a provisional or allusive way.

Merleau Ponty gives phenomenology metaphysical significance in itself. With phenomenology having now reached the stage in which its principle task is exploration of the life-world phenomenology for him is explicitly philosophical.

is, in other words, something positive in the order of a first philosophy in Husserl’s final phenomenology as Merleau Ponty sees it, and that something positive is the definition of man in terms of his being in the life world situation.

Before continuing, we have to make one point clear. Although it is most important to explicate the metaphysical implications of phenomenology, that matter is not being undertaken in this study. As a result despite the fact that Merleau Ponty explicitly draws metaphysical significance from his phenomenology, that aspect of it is not the primary concern here. His position is mainly presented here for its descriptiv value, even though one cannot avoid the dominant ontological tenor in giving an account of it. In other words, our treatment of Merleau-Ponty requires that certain restrictions to a purely descriptive value be maintained even though for Merleau Ponty himself ontological explanation is obvious and intended in his contributions, and show themselves so. This is indeed an artificial limitation, but it is methodologically necessary, if for no other reason than to preserve an unambiguously common level for a meeting of the positions of Husserl of Merleau Ponty.


Under these conditions we can continue our review of Merleau Ponty's phenomenology.

A number of factors must be drawn together here in order to understand Merleau Ponty's definition of human being as etre-au-monde. Two lines of contribution must converge and their point of meeting constitutes the meaning of that expression. The one is out of Husserl's phenomenology, leading to the full notion of passive meaning - genesis as the matrix and sustainer of the life-world. From it we gain the important notions of temporality, horizontality and typicality, as we have seen. The other line of contribution springs from Merleau Ponty's critique of classical notions of perception, in its special attention paid to the conception, in classical philosophy, of the body, on the one hand, and of consciousness as thinking subject, on the other. We have to make the particular contribution from this second direction of analysis more specific.

From Descartes on, there have been two allowable ontological orders, two ways in which one could consider something to be existent: as thing or as consciousness.22 One's position was taken by choosing one or the other as sufficient to account for the totality of being, or by trying to accept both while attempting to outcome the

resultant metaphysical dichotomy by a kind of mixture. In any case, body was altogether thing, "a bundle of process in the third person,"23 "the objective body of physiology books".24 On the other hand, consciousness was altogether consciousness, altogether pure thought. But the phenomenon of perception reveals for Merleau Ponty a mode of being which is neither that of pure thing nor that of pure thinking, a third genre of being in which body and consciousness are one and the same phenomenon.

The experience of one's own body.... reveals to us an ambiguous mode of existence.... The body is not an object.... The consciousness I have of it is not a thought....25

At the same time that the body withdraws from the objective world and comes to form a third kind of being between pure subject and object, the subject loses its purity and transparency. The notion of body and the notion of consciousness are profoundly transformed. It is merely a matter of recognizing that the idea of body as a chemical fabric, or assemblage of tissues, is formed by a process of impoverishment from a primordial phenomenon of the body-for-us, of the human experience body or the perceived body, which objective thought invests; but without having to

24. Ibid, P.403.
25. Ibid, 231.
postulate a finally completed analysis. With regard to consciousness, we have to conceive it no longer as a constituting consciousness, as pure being-for-itself, but as perceptual consciousness, as the subject of a manner of behaving, as etre-an-monde or existence... under these conditions the antinomes of objective thought vanish.26

Rather than attempting to merge two opposing ontological orders, Merleau Ponty is asking us to recognize a third prior to them both, one which is the ground out of which these same opposition conceptions arise. Further, it is a matter of recognizing this third order of being precisely as an elusive one as far as conceptual thinking is concerned, as one not to be comprehended adequately within thought, but rather as one we are, in a self consciousness prior to thematic, positing thought:

The body is not an object. The consciousness I have of it is not a thought. I have no other way of knowing the human body than by living it.27

This ultimate consciousness is not an eternal subject perceiving itself with absolute transparency, for any such subject would be utterly incapable of working its way down into time and would therefore have nothing in common with

27. Ibid, P.231.
our experience; it is consciousness of the present. In the present, in perception, my being and my consciousness make a single thing, not that my being reduces to the knowledge I have of it and is displayed clearly before myself but because "to have consciousness" is nothing other than "to be to", because my consciousness of existing is altogether merged with the actual gesture of "existence". It is by communicating with the world that we communicate beyond all doubt with ourselves.28

In summation, then, we find, anterior to the objective body the phenomenal body, a body knower, at the same time that we see the subject agent of perception to be not a transcendentally pure thinker, but etre-au-monde through, in and as bodily being. The two are one, and that one etre-au-monde can be simply called "existence".29 At its primary level, consciousness is experience precisely as experiencing in/of the world,30 and experiencing in/of the world is bodily perception, as the genesis of meaning, at work in, at grips with, a world.31 Finally, it is upon this ground that reflection itself becomes possible as a second level, and

reduced the world to the status of a term of thought and, in effect, assimilated it to the knowing mind. Idealism produced a harmonious logical systematization of our experience, but it failed to do justice to the fundamental discontinuities between consciousness and its objects. It was just these discontinuities that Merleau Ponty came to regard as fundamental to an understanding of human subjectivity. Merleau Ponty being a long student of Descartes, and his whole philosophy can be accurately characterized as a radical interpretation of the "Cogito", but it was also an effort to work out a theory of mind that would do justice, which as Descartes did not, to the contingent and non-conceptual character of our encounters with the world and other conscious beings.

Merleau-Ponty's relation to Husserlian phenomenology is more complex. From Husserl, he derived the idea of philosophy as a descriptive account of the structures of consciousness, but he never accepted. Husserl's theory of phenomenological reduction, which required that the world as a phenomenon for consciousness be disconnected or "bracketed off" from any transcendent being it might have in its own right. In Husserl's own philosophy, this leaving open of existential questions eventually developed into a denial that the world could be anything more than the intentional object of consciousness. While Merleau-Ponty agreed with Husserl, that there can be no knowledge of things in
themselves but only of things as they are accessible to human consciousness, he insisted that all perceptual experience carries with it an essential reference to a world that transcends consciousness. This transcendent reference can itself be made a theme for explicit reflection and in that sense, be reduced to its being-for-consciousness, but this kind of reduction is radically different from Husserl's, for it, involves no attempt to create an independent world of phenomenal immanence. Therefore, phenomenological description, as Merleau Ponty conceived it, does not deal with essences alone, it also undertakes to render the self transcending and referential character of our experience, by virtue of which, it differs from conceptual thought.

Husserl, at least in his last writings, envisages phenomenology as a response to the threat of naturalism (or Positivism). In similar vein, Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology takes off from an extended critique of two schools of philosophy, empiricism and Rationalism. These, Merleau-Ponty regarded, as naturalistic or positivist philosophers in their prejudice in favour of an 'objective' world, and so are incapable of transcending the natural attitude which, indeed, they presuppose.

CRITIQUE OF EMPIRICISM
1. The critique of empiricism occupies most of the 'Structure of Behaviour' and is carried over in the
'Phenomenology of Perception'. Empiricism—which includes the British empiricists and behaviourism—is characterized by its atomistic approach: all experience or behaviour of an organism are decomposed into what are considered to be a series of basic elements—such as sensations of sensedata—or basic responses such as reflexes. All psychological processes are to be reduced to such physiological simples, and all behaviour is to be understood in terms of the external and causal relations between these simples.

2. The empiricist account of behaviour fails, however, because its atomistic approach cannot account for the evidence of general or structural behaviours in organisms. According to Merleau Ponty, behaviour is not made up of random association of countless reflexes or stimulus-response chains; this indeed, is characteristic only of pathological behaviour which lacks any overall organization. Normal behaviour on the other hand, exhibits a form of general co-ordination or functioning which controls and orders the individual reflexes. Merleau Ponty cites as evidence of this general functioning the following: cases of substitutions of skills in the body, such as the ability to transfer one's handwriting from paper to a blackboard, even though different set of muscles are involved.
3. Empiricist defines behaviour as the simple response to stimuli emanating from the environment and in some sense an organism chooses its own environment. This is so because the stimulations and organism receives from its environment arise only because the preceding movements of the organism have exposed its receptors to these stimulations.

4. In other words, for Merleau-Ponty, behaviour is better understood as a dialogue or dialectic between organism and its environment, in which each patterns the other, instead of the simple product of environmental conditioning. Behaviour is neither conditioned nor random. It is rather an expression of the biological meaning of the total situation in which it occurs.

5. This inability to account for the structural and meaningful aspects of behaviour is a result of the empiricist notion of experience. Experience is defined simply as the recording of sensations or impressions received from the environment. This, however, is completely artificial - it is hard to find examples of pure sensations in our actual experience except perhaps in such cases of dozing.

6. Our experience does not consist of a series of isolated sensations somehow joined together, but is organized in terms of a field-structure. We never normally
experience dots of sensations, but points on a horizon, primitively patterned. But this is ignored by empiricism which isolates experience from its context.

7. Empiricism seems to pay no attention to the verifying degrees of attention we give to our experience which influences its intensity and duration for us. It offers, then only an artificial and fragmented picture of experience and behaviour. It cannot account for innovation, creativity or improvisation in behaviour, since it makes it intelligible only in terms of responding to given stimuli. Learning for empiricism can only take place, on an extended 'trial-and-error' basis.

8. Finally, the psychological reductionism that empiricism practices makes it totally unsuitable for understanding the human or cultural world, since it has no conception of meaning or significance, which man projects around himself, but must reduce everything it sees to simple causal and physiological mechanisms.

CRITIQUE OF RATIONALISM

Turning to Rationalism, which would include the philosophers of Descartes, Kant, the neo-Kantians, and some elements of Husserl and Sartre, we find a kind of philosophy which at first sight appears totally opposed to Empiricism.

1. The critique of Rationalism views the world as the result of constituting processes of consciousness. It
is the mind that gives meaning to the world, and its mode of operation can be grasped in pure reflection. Yet, while appearing to be totally opposed to Empiricism, it can be seen that in fact rationalism trades off the empiricist view of the world. Rationalism accepts the sensations, reflexes etc., which empiricism posits as the elementary stuff of the world and which are in themselves meaning less. It merely adds that it is mind that injects these with meaning, that joins up the dots of sensation to give a picture of the world. So, in one sense rationalism is merely a higher level build on top of Empiricism.

2. In another sense, it can be seen as the simple inverse of empiricism. To every empiricist thesis, the phrase 'consciousness of' or thought of is added, so that objective world is not construed as self-sufficient, but as the creation of consciousness or thought. In either case, there is the same presupposition of an objective world which is in itself meaningless.

3. Merleau Ponty's specific objections to rationalism concern its view of reflection and of consciousness. The world is there before any possible analysis of mine, and it would be artificial to make it the outcome of a series of syntheses which link, in the first place sensations, then aspects of the object corresponding to different perspectives, when both are nothing but
4. Rationalism isolates consciousness from the world, and splits the self into an outer self in contrast with world and an inner self which is beyond the world. Furthermore, rationalist reflection loses sight of its own beginning and ground in the pre-reflective or unreflective life of man. Most of everyday activities are not carried out in full reflective clarity: taking a walk, catching a bus, eating, smoking, watching T.V. etc., are unreflectively engaged in. In Ryle's terminology, 'knowing how' is more fundamental than 'knowing that'. Rationalism also forgets that reflection entails a change in the structure of consciousness, in which consciousness turns back from the world onto itself, but in so doing inaugurates a division between the consciousness that is reflecting, and the consciousness-reflected-on, hence engineering a split within consciousness.

5. In short, in identifying consciousness with reflection, rationalism cannot allow for any dialectic between the reflective and pre-reflective levels of consciousness. Thus like empiricism, it levels consciousness down. Instead of conceiving consciousness as the blind receptacle of stimulation from outside, it moves to the other extreme and turns consciousness into a wholly constituting and explicit enterprise, operating on the
world in full self-awareness.

6. Empiricism stops there, it has no concept of consciousness or subjectivity, but only of an objective world. Rationalism conceive of consciousness as occupying some place above and beyond the objective world, which somehow endows the inherently senseless physical world with significance.

7. For empiricism, there is no subjectivity; for rationalism, subjectivity occupies some real realm where it operates on the ground from a distance. Neither can it conceive of any living dialogue or dialectic between the subject and the world. Both are inherently dualistic, relying on the rigid distinction between subject and object. In short, his phenomenology is a method whereby essential experience is known as reflection of the existent. Professor 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".
xi) Conclusion:

The introductory chapter was purported to understand and appreciate the subject matter and methods of phenomenology as propounded by Edmund Husserl from the point of view of its philosophical interest so as to the legitimately place the philosophic lineage of Maurice Merleau Ponty's entry into the arena of Husserlian phenomenology. We understand that phenomenology in general and existential phenomenology in particular 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, as propounded by phenomenology, is that he is a conscious being whose activity of consciousness is a meaning of his performance. Thus to approach the study of man means understanding him in the full concreteness of his existence. This point has been underlined especially be Merleau Ponty. In other words, the human subject may be given a special ontological standing as a subject who grounds the experience of himself and other persons. Ontology seeks to 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.

Phenomenology is overtly ontological in that philosophy
is defined as a search for being - which is made up of the system of body and world. Being is not a substance, but is a relationship between body and world, a relationship which encompasses both terms. Being is, in a sense to be characterised as expressing as that which forms meaning.

Hence Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology culminates in an attempt to disclose being, in a search for the "mirrors of being". To clear the way further for a descriptive understanding and interpretation of the human subject, we shall, in the following chapter, try to examine Merleau Ponty's concept of man with special reference to subjectivity and embodied consciousness.