The phenomenological movement, which was founded by Husserl with his slogan "Back to the facts themselves" is given a new existential turn by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the famous French phenomenologist. As a phenomenologist, his achievement consists in establishing a philosophical system which aims at avoiding the defects of the extreme views: Idealism and Intellectualism on the one hand, and Empiricism on the other. Merleau-Ponty is completely in agreement with Husserl that the task of philosophy, as a rigorous science, is to give a direct description of our experience as it is without any prior interpretation. He also accepts Husserl's method of phenomenological reduction as a means of gaining access to this natural world by eliminating all habitual and traditional ways of thinking and belief. But Husserl's effort to describe "things themselves" was not successful in spite of the intention to do so. For what he described was not the thing itself, but its essence which need not necessarily include existence. Merleau-Ponty is not so much concerned with 'essences'. Eidetic reduction for him is not itself an end, but only a means to understand existence better against the background
of essences. We are concerned not with ideas or universals, but only with clarifying the particular existences in the light of their essential nature. We think always about the fact, and the visible. "The need to proceed by way of essences does not mean that philosophy takes them as its object, but on the contrary, that our existence is too tightly held in the world to be able to know itself as such at the moment of its involvement, and that it requires the field of ideality in order to become acquainted with and to prevail over its facticity." (1) The notion of intentionality, another trademark of Husserl's phenomenology, does not signify the mere relatedness of consciousness to some object. For even before Husserl Kant was aware of this relation of the inner and the outer, of consciousness and object, as is evidenced by Kant's Refutation of Idealism. The main function of intentionality is to reveal the world as already existing there as a unity prior to any construction on the part of the subject. Kant has to posit the unity of imagination and the understanding and unity of the subject in order to explain the knowledge of the unity of the object, whereas the unity already exists there and intentionality refers to our entire relation with the world and other beings, not to our conscious acts only.

The most significant advancement of Merleau-Ponty is his attempt to reunite the subjective and the objective.

in his phenomenology. No doubt Husserl also aimed at such an end, but his endeavour was not successful owing to his emphasis on the subjective consciousness, and could not surpass the limits of traditional German Idealism. Husserl's phenomenology reached its final goal in finding the ultimate foundation of all knowledge in pure subjectivity which is much like the idealistic conception of absolute and transcendental constitutive consciousness. Merleau-Ponty is against this very idea and does not believe in any "inner man" or transcendental subjectivity except the particular individual existents. He is never satisfied with this traditional idealistic conception of an impersonal or super-individual subjectivity which can never be located definitely; he rather, following Husserl's direction and being influenced by existentialism and Heidegger's phenomenology, developed his philosophy to find a new basis for experience instead of an abstract worldness consciousness. He searched for the description of the being which actually exists in the world and is centered in our individual existence, the historical man as he is engaged and existing in the world. But from this it should not be assumed that Merleau Ponty's phenomenology is identical with the realist's account of the world. The realists assume the world as already pre-existing without any reference to the subject.
The world which Merleau-Ponty refers to is not constituted by the subject; nor is the pre-existing world only brought to explicit expression; it is the world as lived and experienced by the subject with which he is concerned. He denounces even sciences insofar as sciences only take an objective view of things and their external relations, whereas the true function of philosophy would be to return to the world as lived in actual experience.

The goal of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical undertaking is to understand the relation between consciousness and nature or the nature of the living world as actually experienced by man. That is why he first of all wants to explore the experiential field and, in order to do it, chooses perception. For perception, the consciousness-world union, is the fundamental fact of reality. It is anterior to every distinction— including that of consciousness and nature, and serves as their basis. It is the elementary process which presents the things as they are without any bestowing act of interpretation or judgement or in other words, without the reflective analysis which might impoverish it.

To return to this primary field of perceptual phenomena, Merleau-Ponty first of all criticizes the attitudes of the traditional philosophers. Among the
traditional theories he finds two main blocks - (i) Empiri­
cism, and (ii) Intellectualism - which stand on the way to a correct approach to the phenomena. That is why in the first two chapters of his book, "Phenomenology of Percep­
tion", M-Ponty attacks the empiricist account of percep­
tion with their correlated conceptions of 'sensation', 'association' and 'the projection of memory', then in the third chapter, he questions the validity of intellec­
tualistic analysis, i.e. of perception with its basic concepts of 'attention' and 'judgment'. M-Ponty also endeavours to show that all the so-called scientific and idealistic accounts are equally unacceptable. The scien­
tific or physiological explanation of perception or rather human behaviour in general is based on undue assumption of the law of constancy which in its turn finds its basis in the fundamental law of causality. The idealistic theory on the other hand presupposes an abstract transcendental consciousness as the cause of perception. Hence, in order to reach to the final account of Merleau-Ponty's view about the phenomenal field we shall have to make a brief survey of his negative criticisms of these erroneous theories.

The empiricists, according to M-Ponty, are not faithful to the data of our consciousness. On the other­hand, they assume that as there are definite objective stimuli there must be definite subjective process
corresponding to that. That is why they are forced to start with the notion of sensation i.e. with the view that in perception we have immediate and obvious sensations of redness, of blueness, of hot or of cold etc. But this is a defective method. The basic difference between M-Ponty and other philosophers who also deny sense-data, is that whereas the other philosophers (e.g. Kant, Price) admit sensation but deny that it is a form of knowledge and therefore reject the necessity of admitting sense-data as the supposed objects of sensations, M-Ponty denies that there is anything like a sensation.

For, in his opinion, there is nothing in our experience as pure sensation or impression which is absolutely autonomous and instantaneous. In all cases of perception there is the experience of something as related to others, each part arousing the expectation of more than what it contains, and thus having from the very beginning some meaning. Sensation presents only qualities, but in actual cases we do not apprehend the discrete qualities as such, but experience much more than that; we apprehend the qualities as forming a definite 'figure' on a certain backdrop. This sense of distinction between 'figure' and 'ground' and 'outline' between the two, or in general, the concept of shape is not provided by the mere collection of qualities or the atomic sensations presented to us. There is no such thing as a discrete sensation, for in our
experience there always is reference to some 'meaning' or 'significance' which is not found in the discrete sensations. As for example, the so-called pure sensation of redness should give us only the concept of redness as such. But in actual case, we never experience redness as such, but the redness of a definite shape, occupying some space however small, of a certain size, distinguished from other shades of redness etc. The experience of redness therefore, has some meaning, that is, implies much more than what should be included in pure sensation of redness only. "The pure impression is, therefore, not only undiscoverable, but also imperceptible and so inconceivable as an instant of perception." (2) But at the same time we should be on our guard against the other extreme conclusion. To say that the perception of an object always has some meaning does not imply that the meanings are fully determinable from the very beginning. The field of vision is at first relatively indeterminate. "We must recognise the indeterminate as a positive phenomena. It is in this atmosphere that quality arises." (3) Empiricistic explanation of experience in terms of sensation considers only those objects which are pure and absolute, distinct and determinate, whereas in actual experience there are frequently to be found objects which are obscur and ambiguous, vague but always further determinable, and which refer to things other than what is sensed here and now.

(2) Merlean-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, P.4.
The empiricists try to explain this relationship between different data by the laws of Association. But the deficiency of their attempt is quite apparent. External association can restore only the extrinsic resemblance between two sensations, but it cannot account for the sense of identity or 'the feeling of sameness'. There is a more deep-rooted internal bond which is implied in the meaning of a percept or the experience of a total thing, the parts of which cannot be bound up by a merely external association. The fact is that association can never explain this internal relation or significance or prior experience of a systematic whole. "If we confine ourselves to phenomena, the unity of the thing in perception is not arrived at by association, but is a condition of association, and as such precedes the verifications which establish and delimit it, and indeed precedes itself." Association is never autonomous, but a particular idea is reproduced in a particular case because of the previous connection of the two considered to have a definite meaning in a definite context. That is why Kant speaks of a productive and nonempirical function of imagination due to which there is found an underlying unity between several experiences. "M-Ponty, of course, does not admit any such a-priori or non-empirical faculty. Nevertheless, he is also of opinion that the sense-experiences form a system and are not separate. This unity is due to the organised

(4) Ibid. P.17.
structure of the world. Association or filling the gap, therefore, cannot be accounted by memory also, for memory itself presupposes previous association of chaotic sensations, the patterning of discrete data. The reason why the present sensation revives only a particular sensation and not others, is that these two sensations must have some basic similarity or always have been perceived to be associated in the past experiences; that is to say, there must have already formed a pattern. Hence the empiricist's attempt to explain experience by 'projection of memories' is found to be futile.

That the empiricist's description of perception does not present a true account of the perceptual field becomes evident from the empiricists' mis-representation of the act of attentive consciousness. The empiricists are of opinion that the objects, or more correctly, the normal sensations are already there, and the function of attention is merely to make them appear to us. Attention is therefore merely an inactive process which had no internal relation with the object being attended to. It can only reveal the object as it is actually given. "Attention is therefore a general and unconditioned power in the sense that at any moment it can be applied indifferently to any content of consciousness." But the empiricists, assuming from the

(5) Ibid.,P.26.
very beginning the independent existence of the object, fail to make a proper estimation of the act of attention. Attention is never an abstract and ineffective power merely, it enriches the object and brings it into consciousness. There might be some vague perception which draws our attention to the object. But the object is then only in an indeterminate form. Attention makes it clear and determinate by bringing it to the focus and discovering new characteristics. So there must be some "internal connection between the object and the act which it triggers off." (6)

Not only empiricism but also its antithesis, intellectualism, is equally faulty in this respect. Intellectualism goes to the other extreme with regard to the question about the function of consciousness, and holds that consciousness, wherever it exists, exists as the consciousness of an intelligible object. All objects are constructed within the framework of consciousness. Attention only elucidates the object. There is no difference in kind between inattentive and attentive consciousness, no passage from indistinctness to clarity. For there cannot be any indistinct perception. In order to be conscious of an object, the object must from the very beginning be of some intelligible structure. So attention does not bring any new property to the object. Such an analysis of consciousness

by the intellectualist therefore makes attention an inactive process as is found in the empiricistic analysis, though the goal of the two are quite opposite. Like the empiricists the intellectualists also make the act of attention an abstract and ineffective power, empty and unconditional, as it cannot influence the presence of any particular object, since consciousness includes all objects. The fact is that intellectualism in its zeal to emphasise consciousness, overlooks the point that the object cannot be presented in all its determination from the very beginning, for then there would be no need for looking for the object.

Both empiricism and intellectualism are equally guilty of ignoring the creative function of attentive consciousness. Attention not merely elucidates the already determinate objects. Actually the objects are not presented from the very beginning in a determinate form. Neither are they wholly created by consciousness. The fact is that there always remains a general field in which the various objects are present and it is the attentive consciousness which makes these pre-existing data articulate and appear as definite figures. This act can be regarded as a creative one, and not merely formal or inactive. The entire field might already be there, but it is then only in an indeterminate form, and a determinate figure appears in consciousness in accordance
with the motive and attention. The indeterminate object in the total field sets attention in motion, and attention in consequence makes the object of perception a determinate articulate one. "This passage from indeterminate to the determinate, this recasting at every moment of its own history in the unity of a new meaning, is thought itself." (7)

That intellectualism fails to discover the structure of perception though it intends to do so, becomes clear by considering not only the concept of attention, but also the account of judgement. The intellectualists show that the empiricistic explanation of perception with reference to pure sensation is not tenable as perception consists of more than pure sensations impressed by the stimulus on the body. This excess in perception which cannot be explained by sensation is to be accounted for by the act of judgement or interpretation or significance. If the empiricists' account be true, one has to see an object double by the two eyes, whereas the actual fact is not so, and it is due to the function of judgement that the two images are constituted into the idea of one object so that only one object is seen instead of two as it should have otherwise been the case.

But in such an analysis, judgement becomes merely a factor of perception, not the constitutive principle and almost equivalent to words like 'see', 'hear', 'feel' etc. For these acts also are seldom confined within what should be

(7) P.P.P. 31.
called pure sensation. But if we feel as we judge or if we see what we judge, there cannot be any criterion of distinction between true and false perception. If in reply it is held that the distinction between correct and false perception is made by judging the external signs, it implies that a meaning is already inherent in the material or sensible qualities to which judgment only gives form. The meaning is not provided by the judgment, but it is created along with the perception of the data. Sensations are already interpreted in order to give rise to actual perception. Such an analysis fails to recognize the distinctive characteristic of the objects. According to empiricism, the object is given and we are compelled to perceive it just as it is. Intellectualism goes to the other extreme and holds that the object is constituted by consciousness. Neither can provide a perfect account of the relation between consciousness and nature due to the attempt to give primacy to either nature of consciousness.

The defect common to both the views consists in starting from a scientific account without considering the actually lived process which happens in perception and both have their root in what Merleau-Ponty calls the "prejudice of the world" i.e. the presupposition of the objective world as consisting of meaningless sense-data which either associate passively to form the phenomena of perception or are put together by such acts as attention and judgment. This prejudice
is based on what psychology has called the "principle of constancy", the assertion namely that there is a constant correlation between a stimulus and the corresponding sensation. But there are certain actual phenomena which do not obey this law. To take an example, there is the case that red and green stimuli presented together produce sensation of neither of them but of a different one i.e. grey. If such cases be explained by certain other factors such as, attention or prolonged practice etc., then the supposed law of constancy by which the physiologists try to explain sensation, cannot be regarded as a universal law holding unconditionally. This hypothesis of a one-to-one relation between stimulus and response is founded on a naive acceptance of the general principle of causality.

But analysis of behaviour clearly shows the invalidity of such a law. Watsonian Behaviourism claims to be a scientific study of behaviour and explains it in terms of stimulus which is regarded as the constant and unconditional antecedent or the cause, and response or the effect in the organism which is wholly passive, by abandning all reference to intention or norms. But this atomistic interpretation of behaviour fails even at the level of primary cases of sensation and this failure is quite evident from the failure of the law of constancy which is the basis of such a theory. With the failure of this one-to-one causal explanation, Gestalt psychology has shown that the whole reflex chain forms an equilibrated
gaetalt pattern or a "form" which controls the mutual relationship of stimulus and response. The 'forms' are not arrived at by artificial summation of the individual units, but are 'transposable wholes' in which the change in one brings corresponding change in all others. Human behaviour is to be explained in terms of this Gestaltic view since "there is reciprocal action and internal connection among the different excitations on the one hand, the motor influxes on the other, and finally between both of these systems". Merleau-Ponty prefers this Gestalt account as it goes beyond the atomistic conception and at the same time does not adhere to the idealistic view that regards unity to be constituted by consciousness; he thus rejects psychological empiricism without accepting the other extreme view of the intellectualists. But he does not stop with Gestalt theory. For the same criticism which is adduced against behaviorism may also be directed against the Gestaltist theory. The Gestallists are right in pointing out that the original experience are not given in a piecemeal manner in chaotic and haphazard way and then later on systematized by the application of some external bond, but that the world is given as a gestalt or a whole on account of an internal bond between phenomena. But this internal bond itself should be regarded as the appearance, not the cause of the appearance of the Gestalt. Like behaviorism, it also takes a naturalistic or objectivistic attitude and accepts the superiority and the causal control of the physiological

phenomena over the psychological. So here the problem is only displaced; the problem of order has no meaning if it be a second problem of causality, as H-Ponty puts it.

The mentalistic theory also is guilty of the same fault of accepting a causal account - that consciousness is the productive cause due to which all experience and behaviour is possible. An exploration of the phenomenal field reveals that perception or behavior is neither exclusively subjective nor exclusively objective, but a dialectical interchange between man and the world, which cannot be expressed in the traditional causal terms. There is no question of one thing being the cause of the other, but there is a 'circular dialectic' between the subject and the object within the whole field out of which the meaning emerge.

There is also a misconception, points out H-Ponty, about the subject of perception in both the empiricist and intellectualistic views. According to the empiricist philosophers, perception is nothing but an event in the world like other events. It is a mental happening which takes place in the perceiving subject. So the perceiving subject is nothing but the substratum where sensations occur. But their fundamental mistake is to overlook the fact that perception can never be regarded as an event among other events. For it is due to perception that all other events appear to us, and perception is perception only to some perceiving subject, it always
exists for some one. Hence the subject of perception should be assigned a different position. The intellectualists of course recognize self-consciousness in the form of the transcendental Ego which is not included within the perceptual process, on the contrary to which all belong. But this transcendental ego also cannot do proper justice to the process of perception. "For here also the whole system of experience-world, our body and empirical self are subordinated to a universal thinker charged with sustaining the relationship between the three terms," so that the same difficulty arises again. For, if the body and the self be objects among other objects which are presented, then how could it be said that we perceive with our eyes or through our mind? Hence the act of sensation or experience should be re-examined in order to find out the proper relation of the perceiver to his body and to the world.

Psychology teaches rightly that sensations should not be treated merely as states which takes place in the subject nor should they be regarded as consciousness of states. Sensation is always more than that. Every sensation has always some motor-reference. Sensations have a very close connection with the organism and always influence bodily movements. Such a relation of correspondence between sensations and motor reactions has already been recognised in psychology. But motor response is generally considered to be due to the

(9) Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, P. 208.
effect of some external thing of the physical world, whereas in actual cases it may so happen that there is no physical phenomenon corresponding to a motor sensation. "Motor reactions produced by blue, "blue-occasioned conduct", are not the effects of colour on the objective body, defined in terms of specific wave length and intensity; for a blue produced by contrast, and therefore having no physical phenomena corresponding to it, has around it the same motor halo. The other alternative is that motor-reaction comes into effect due to mental experience or consciousness - that the experience of a certain colour produces a certain change in the phenomenal body. But such a conception also cannot be supported, as the felt effect of colour does not always have exact correspondence with the reaction produced by it on behaviour.

The solution lies in regarding sensation not as a state or quality external to the observing subject but as having an organic relation with him and thus providing the general setting through which the subject come in terms with the world. Sensation is not merely a passive state or an external quality and the relation between the subject of sensation and sensation itself is not some outward or external relation, but sensation is already inherent in the subject though the exact inertia comes from without.

The important role of the subject in the process of perception is therefore confirmed. The things of the world

appear as systematic only to the observer who makes it so.

Now, what exactly is the nature of the subject? When the
object is specified as a determinate being to the experiencing
subject, the subject is said to have some sensation or percep-
tion. In order to make this experience of the object possible,
the subject must be outside the whole range of impressions
which is to be known by him. As a result, the different
sense-organs cannot be regarded as the subject of perception
since these are themselves entities in the world. But
generally the sense-organs are regarded as the subject. This
mistaken view is commonly accepted as we are generally uncon-
scious of this fact since we do not think about it. But
would it not be a sheer contradiction to hold that the subject
is ignorant of the working of the mind? To say, on the other
hand, that the self is aware of the fact that the sense-organs
are merely the instruments and the self situated within the
body is the actual subject of perception would also be quite
misleading. For the "I who reflect cannot recognize myself
in this embodied I, since therefore embodiment remains in the
nature of the case an illusion and since the possibility of
this illusion remains incomprehensible". (11)

The mistake lies in separating the subject from the
world of object altogether and considering the subject to be
absolutely free from the object, in making an impossible gulf
between for - itself and in - itself. The solution lies in

(11) Ibid, P. 213.
overcoming this mistake and regarding the subject not as a separate entity, but closely related to the body. Sensation has always a significance beyond itself and is never complete by itself. Sensation of a particular colour, for example, always lead to some particular bodily movement and cannot be experienced if the appropriate bodily attitude is not ready. There must always be some sort of cooperation between the sentient and the sensible in order to make the appearance of the sensation possible at all. So, as said before, the body must be prepared and present the suitable attitude so that the determinate sensation might be experienced. On the other hand, the object also must display its influence upon the subject, otherwise the attitude would never be sufficient to make the real experience of the sensible. "The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place." (12)

Thus the contradiction between for-itself and in-itself can be overcome by considering the subject and the object to be given in a general system. The subject is a personal consciousness no doubt, closely connected with the body, and the sensation will not happen if this suitable bodily activity is not present, yet it would be more correct to say that the personal consciousness is already included within a general system which is pre-given. Every sensation is of its own kind and by the different sense-organs we experience different

(12)P.F.P.214.
sensations which are all individual and distinct, yet we feel that there is an underlying unity between them, that there is a general existence from which these particular sensations emerge. We are not cause of this, but it is given as a natural course. That is why every sensation is said to be intentional and the subject automatically becomes habituated to the appropriate sensation and makes a determinate appearance possible.

Intellectualism does not recognise the importance of senses so much, since according to this view senses can never be presented as separable from thought which gives form to the sensations. Senses appear as presenting contingent matter only after theoretical analysis of the knowledge process. But matter by itself without any form is unreal and impossible. Intellectualism proves this by taking the concept of space. Every sensation must be spatial, that is, must be presented within the concept of space in general. Not only that, different senses must refer to the structure of space in general, otherwise there would be no full coordination between different senses and consequently the knowledge about a thing would never be possible. So according to the intellectualists e.g. Kant the relation of senses to consciousness is universal the sensible qualities would appear as objects only in the context of universal relations and to a central or universal consciousness. The object thus thematized becomes universal
and necessary, it is true for everyone and for all time. But such a view cannot be supported. The question is, how am I to know that there is some universal space or universal object unless I first have experience of myself as a particular subject and of a thing as an existent in a particular space? There might be some sort of amalgamation between different spaces and experiences of different subjects. But there cannot be any a-priori rule in this respect, that synthesis would be only external one.

There is of course a sort of unity between different senses. The immediate consciousness of an object is the result of several interacting senses and it is only in the scientific or intellectualistic analysis that the strictly particularized attitude is gained. This sensible significance is quite different from intellectual synthesis in which the unity is merely thought. The fact that the functions of the different senses are intermingled and are mutually comprehensible without the intervention of any idea proves that the unity of experience is not a formal one, but a primary organisation. It is our phenomenal body, which is a "synergic system", that is the seat of this unity and the synthesis is not brought from without by any consciousness. My body is the fabric in which all objects are woven, and it is at last in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'. 

(13) Phenomenology of Perception, P. 235.
It is held that the body gives significance not only to the natural world but to the cultural objects as well. Thus it is shown that cultural objects like words have significance because every word becomes indistinguishable from the bodily attitude which it induces. Words have meaning because we adapt each word to a certain form of behaviour which make its complete appearance the moment each word is given. The body thus plays an important role in producing the significance of percept although the perceptual experiences cannot be reduced to "bodily sensations".

The body is thought to be both constructing and constituted in relation to the object. It becomes constituted when the object is prominent and there is no question of the subject to see it. But when reflection begins, the need of a subject to whom the object exists becomes inevitable. This subject not only knows the object but also knows itself as the subject of that knowing process otherwise, a third subject which knows both the subject and the object would be necessary, and in this way there would be an infinite regress. Consciousness of the object presupposes self-consciousness, or rather they are synonymous. The primitive sense-experience points to a type of intentional unity between subject and object, and it is only analytical or critical reflection which distinguishes between the two and regards
the synthesis to be due to perceptual act of unification, whereas the fact is that the transcendental unity is already there, the perceptual synthesis here means a temporal synthesis and the function of the subject is to maintain this order of temporality in order to make experience of the object possible. For the subject is neither the transcendental consciousness without any relation to the body as held by the idealists and the intellectualists, nor a mechanical amalgamation of physiological processes based on causal relation as held by the realists and empiricists but an existent being with human body, a historical person. M-Panty thus rejects both the vitalistic-psychism - that the soul is a separate, vital force exerting a peculiar non-physical power of its own, and the objective behaviorism which reduces the subject to the bodily mechanism merely; while the true account would be to say that individual existent being with his body is the proper subject. It is better to say that I am my body. That my meanings are found in the structures of its behavior, and it is the center of the world in which I exist. "The person who perceives is not spread out before himself as a consciousness must be; he has historical density, he takes up a perceptual tradition and is faced with a present" The human body can know itself into the immediate past sensation and point out to a determinate object as towards a near future. In fact, no

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(14) PP, P.238.
experience of the present world would be possible if it has not some historical reference.

We may now therefore take a final account of the phenomenal field as conceived by Merleau-Ponty. In perception, the object no doubt is already given, it would be incorrect to say that the object came into existence at the moment when one first perceives or becomes aware of it. It is directly presented to the observer. But it is given only partly as some part of it always remains hidden due to variations of perspectives. The table, for example can be seen by at most three of its sides at a time, the backside being hidden. With the variation of perspective the different parts may succeed one another, but the object as a whole which is the source of the parts, always remains beyond perception. A paradox of immanence and transcendence is therefore found in every perceptual process. Immanence since what is perceived cannot be foreign to the perceiver, transcendence since it always involves something beyond what is actually given. "The asecity of the thing, its unchallengeable presence and the perpetual absence into which it withdraws, are two inseparable aspects of transcendency." (15)

In the phenomenal field, the object thus is already present; yet the appearing of the object immediately implies the presence of a being to whom things can appear. There

(15) PP.P.233.
would be no phenomena unless a subjectivity came to bring the plenitude of being in itself, to design there a perspective, to introduce non-being. An object is an object to some consciousness or being. On the other hand, consciousness reveals itself by means of what appears. There is a mutual revelation of consciousness and object. In view of this dependence upon one another, the exchange between them cannot be considered as an exterior causality exercised by one complete being upon another. The relation between the two is interior, each entering so profoundly into the meaning of the other that neither can be understood without the other.

In fact, at first no distinction is made between consciousness and nature or subject and object, but only a total perceptual field is given against the background of a world and the determinate objects are reached later on by reflection. Is the function of perception, in that case, only to illuminate the object as it is? Such an assertion would be incorrect since even at the level of perception some form of synthesis is required, we have to relate the different passing moments in order to make that experience of an object possible. We are involved in sensation. Our glance and the data belong together. Hence the correct description is that primarily there is a total field no doubt, but within this field there are determinate intentions though not fully recognised. In realising these
intentions critical analysis arrives at determinate objects and the sensation as private phenomena and the existing subject which posits both. Now any object presenting itself to consciousness appears among other objects which form its background when perception centers on it. "What is perceived is always among other things, always part of a field." This figure-background structure is constant in perception. This concept of figure-background is expressed fully in the notion of form which emphasizes the importance of the total whole within which the parts are included. The world serves as a source of what appears, it is the all-inclusive whole, "an inexhaustible reservoir from which things are drawn", the ultimate horizon - the neutral world also includes the cultural world composed of other people. For the cultural world has meaning which can be interpreted only with reference to the activities of other persons, our fellowmen, contemporaries and predecessors. Hence this cultural world demands that our knowledge cannot be confined within the realm of sense data which are private and incommunicable.

After this elaborate discussion of the main ideas of Merleau Ponty's phenomenology, we may now try to make a critical estimation of his contribution. It is true that unlike Husserl, M. Ponty does not claim to be a pioneer, the beginner of a new philosophical thought; he rather takes up the traditional problem and express them in a systematic
way in order to free them from previous errors. Neverthe­less his philosophical system certainly contains many new elements which credit him with the honour of being a leading philosopher of this century.

Marleau-Ponty's primary concern is with the phenomenology of perception. Of course many other philosophers before him discussed this problem. Like him many of them wanted to return to direct phenomena of perception without any causal explanation. Thus Price also rejects, the causal explanation and supports common sense realism. But Merleau-Ponty's theory is opposed to Price's main theory - the theory of sense-data. He does not believe in such meaningless data. Nor does he think, like Husserl, that the object is bodily given in perception which is the fulfilment of previous anticipations. He is more interested in the phenomenology of the world as perceived rather than in the perceiving act. In explaining the phenomenal field, he criticises equally both the empiricistic and intellectualist analysis and rightly points out that the main defect of both is to start from an objective attitude whereas a true phenomenology of the perceptual field can only be gained by being free from all the prejudiced views and starting anew. We should describe the world as it is actually presented without any prior interpretation and "perceiving is to seize an immanent sense in a sensible form prior to any judgement." The immanent sense is to be
discovered not constructed. Here he also differs from Husserl. Husserl thinks that the function of intention is to blend the different aspects and thus construct an idea about the object. But K-Ponty is against such idea of construction. Perception is not to be regarded as a process of construction, but should be seen as such. As a phenomenologist his work is situated in a newly established philosophical tradition which attempts to surpass Idealism and Intellectualism on the one hand, and Empiricism on the other, attitudes which accord primacy to either consciousness or nature. By considering the structure of perception he finds that both the realistic theory, that in perception the subject is merely passive and the object is impressed upon him, and its antithesis, the idealistic account that perception is wholly due to the function of consciousness, are equally mistaken. The strength of his work lies in the renewal of the traditional problem of spirit and matter and recognising the fact that there is an organic relation between the two which precedes their separation in thought; and the perceptual process takes place by a dialectical interchange between the two, so that it is neither wholly passive nor wholly constructive but can be described as an existential act in which the object is given in a particular sense and is also partly our own making. This existential role of perception constitutes
clearly the most original feature of M-Ponty’s theory of perception. His critical analysis of the process of ‘sensation’ and ‘attention’ also contributes a valuable addition to the discussion of these traditional ideas.

But perhaps the most notable advancement of Merleau Ponty’s phenomenology in comparison to other phenomenological thinkers, specially Husserl, consists in his emphasis upon the subject of perception at the same time rejecting subjectivism in the Cartesian and Husserlian senses. There is no consistent and clear account of the subject in Husserl. He brings undue complexity by his conception of the trinity of subjectivity. The pure or transcendental consciousness has no satisfactory relationship with the natural ego, as a consequence of which Husserl’s whole phenomenology is beset with transcendental idealism. M-Ponty therefore rejects this idea absolutely and it is due to his description of subjectivity as equivalent to human existence that phenomenology is brought down from the level of pure consciousness to the world of concrete life. Husserl in his concept of intentionality brings the idea of synthesis or blending: no doubt, but M-Ponty’s conception is much wider. Intentionality according to his view, is not only a cognitive function, but some form of synthesis is found even in the pre-cognitive stage, e.g. the synthesis of the body. The body acts as a synergic whole and it is this human body which acts as the subject of any perception. Sartre, of course, has emphasised the
importance of human body, but he has also not gone to the extreme like M. Ponty in identifying the human existence with the body. At the same time he rejects the behaviouristic explanation which reduces the subject to an uncensored machine. He demonstrates clearly that a merely mechanistic philosophy of the nervous system cannot account for the experience of our own body. That is why he tries to show that the experience of our own body has its basis in our "existence", i.e., in our mode of "existing our body". Therefore every form of human behaviour is also to be considered from this existential point of view - as an act of the human being as existing in the world. Subjectivity for him assures the form of "inherence in the world." The subject is an inseparable fact of an all embracing structure.

Novelty is found not only in his account of the perceptual process and the subject of perception, but in his analysis of the phenomenal field as well. The phenomenal field consists not only in the natural world which includes various different perspectives as already shown by Husserl, but our various possible perspectives are again connected with the perspective of other human beings and can be known by seeing their bodily movements. In this way, the field is increased to include the social phenomena. Man is a social being, but also a cultural being. All cultural objects whether it be language system or works of art or other social institutions - point back by their very
original meaning to the activities of other persons. When I speak, or when I understand, I experience the presence of others in myself and of myself in others - a presence which is the corner stone of the theory of intersubjectivity. Hence the phenomenal field which includes these social and cultural phenomena demands that our knowledge cannot be retained within the private world of sense-data.

Although Merleau Ponty's phenomenology is thus praiseworthy in various respects we cannot but mention some of its shortcomings while making a critical evaluation of his philosophy as a whole. Though his aim is to make a systematic analysis of the traditional problems and explain these clearly from his own phenomenological standpoint, his conceptions and explanations are not always very clear and definite. His most unique concept is that of 'existence', which stands between the extreme ideas of consciousness and the non-conscious. But nowhere he makes it clear what exactly is meant by 'existence'. The term seems to be vague enough and there is no assertion to show its definite relationship to either consciousness or the non-conscious. Apparently one may think that existence is not merely conscious, not wholly unconscious, but a mixture of the two; whereas the real intention of Merleau Ponty seems to be that there is a synthesis between the two. But this idea is not fully developed and therefore leads to ambiguity. It may further be pointed out that though he rightly emphasises
human existence, he goes to the extreme when he gives human existence the same status with other existing things of the world. Is this equibilibration justified? No doubt human being is included within the things of the world, but he is definitely more than that. If we are absolutely merged into the world and be a thing among other things, how can we know this fact at all? Certainly the inanimate objects do not possess this power. The intention of Merleau-Ponty does not seem to be so though he identifies human existence with his body; for he distinguishes between the subjective and objective attitudes to show that the same body become the subject when it knows, and object when it is known. But this attempt can not save the situation. For man is more than a mere bundle of relations to the world, he has a unique nature of his own. It becomes even doubtful whether phenomenology itself would be possible unless the subject detaches itself from the phenomena and looks upon them from a distance.

Merleau-Ponty is right in criticizing the mechanistic interpretation of behaviour in terms of the law of constancy; but here also he goes to the extreme by denying the law of causation altogether in his phenomenological account. He accepts the gestalists view, but the Gestalists also believe in this law. In fact there might possibly be some causal relationship between matter and
consciousness. This particular relationship may not been established firmly and therefore may seem to be obscure, but that does not imply that all belief in causation is illegitimate. To start with a negative assumption from the very beginning may also be regarded to be a biased view and is contrary to Merleau Ponty's principle.

In analysing the perceptual process Merleau Ponty recognises the basic paradox of immanence and transcendence, but the complexity of its play in perception is underestimated. In a particular perceptual case, that which is perceived transcends the particular perspectives from which it is perceived. Merleau Ponty's tendency is to stress the importance of the background in determining meaning. Something in particular is always given, but it is given within something general.

But this emphasis on something-in-general distorts his main conception of consciousness. Against the notion of a creative consciousness of the idealistic thinker, Merleau Ponty intends to show the presence of the object as already given. But his reaction is not completely successful because creative consciousness with its power of reflection is reestablished. Since what is given is something-in-general, the particular specifications of what appears seem to be traced to existence which guarantees meanings to the particular successive perceptions. Thus the notion of
consciousness as dependent upon what is given becomes subordinate to that of existence as a spontaneous movement constituting meanings.

Merleau Ponty's description of the phenomenal field, though it is free from the defects of both empiricism and rationalism and seems to do justice to both nature and consciousness, is not wholly satisfactory. He holds that there is an organic relation between the two and both are included within a general system. But several question may arise here - what exactly is the relation between object and consciousness? How are these again related to the whole? And what is this whole? What is its limit? How perception actually take place? Of course Merleau Ponty is more concerned with the world as it is perceived than the perceiving act, yet any theory of perception would be incomplete and far from satisfactory without a proper description of how the process actually occur.

As a final evaluation of Merleau Ponty's system, we should say that it is useless to expect a theory which would be entirely free from all defects and acceptable to all. It may only be said that despite of some defects, it is due to Merleau Ponty's endeavour that phenomenology is saved from Husserlian transcendentalism without going to the extreme of Sartrian existentialism. Phenomenology thus received a new status, it is no longer considered to be merely a tool
of existentialism or merely a subordinate branch of science, rather, science understood in its proper sense, is to be dependent on it. True science, according to Merleau Ponty, is not merely abstract objective study, but is essentially human science, which cannot be considered except in the context of subjectively lived experiences and meanings. Understood in this sense, phenomenology as outlined by Ponty, may be regarded as the foundation of all sciences, as its task is to describe reflectively the phenomenon of lived experience which is to be the starting point of all sciences. Such a humanistic interpretation of phenomenology by Merleau Ponty brought phenomenology into the world of concrete life from the level of transcendentalism and thereby he assigns to it a unique status which it has not acquired before.

After this critical survey of Merleau Ponty's phenomenology, it is still worth recalling, by way of concluding the relevance of his work in the present context of our thesis. We have been concerned with the sense-datum theory of perception and its major modern critics. We have already found, in chapters II & III, that the epistemological and linguistic critics do not go far enough, and do not succeed in making out decisive arguments against the sensedatum theory. The reason for their failure may be that they all accept the concept of sensation, though they may differ regarding the exact status of it. None of the
critics examined in the earlier chapters questions the very concept of sensation, they only question, if sensation is a form of knowledge, or if sensation can legitimately be treated as a kind of observation, or not. Thus, there is a common point of agreement between the sensedatum theory and its other critics. But it is M. Ponty's chief contribution that he questions the very concept of sensation, and rejects it. He rightly shows that the concept of sensation is based on the objectivistic prejudice and the law of constancy, which are presuppositions and do not have phenomenological validity. Once the very concept of sensation is rejected as an outdated notion belonging to materialistic psychology, the very basis of the sensedatum theory collapses.

While Merleau Ponty's negative contribution lies in his effective and radical criticism of the notion of sensation, his positive contribution lies in relating perception to the effective-volitional life of the concretely existent human being, thus freeing theory of perception from that one-sided intellectualism which vitiates both the sensedatum theory and its critics.