From Ontology to Ethics: A Merleau Pontyan Approach to the Human–Nature Relationship

The thesis submitted to Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

Violeena Deka

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

Guwahati 781039, India

August 2019

Declaration

I, Miss Violeena Deka, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis entitled "From Ontology to Ethics: A Merleau Pontyan Approach to the Human–Nature Relationship" has been carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Archana Barua, Professor (Philosophy), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG). Abiding by the formal practice of reporting observations, due acknowledgements have been made for the citations of other investigations and the sources of secondary data. This work has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree or diploma.

Guwahati

August 2019

Violeena Deka
Research Scholar
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
Guwahati-781039, Assam
India

Certificate

This is to certify that the work contained in the thesis entitled "From Ontology to Ethics: A Merleau Pontyan Approach to the Human–Nature Relationship" by Violeena Deka (Roll No. 136141003), a student of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG), for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was carried out under my supervision. The results embodied in the thesis have not been submitted to any other university or institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

Guwahati

August 2019

Prof. Archana Barua

Professor (*Philosophy*)

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

Guwahati-781039, Assam

India

This work is dedicated to my beloved father

Late Prof. Uttam Chandra Deka

Acknowledgement

This thesis is an outcome of five and a half years of academic engagement which owes immensely to a lot of people who helped me in numerous ways to make it see the light of the day.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. Archana Barua for guiding me throughout in this journey in the best way possible. I feel lucky to have found in her a perfect blend of a philosopher, a teacher, a mother, a friend, a critic and an inspiration. Be it attending her lectures, the long, deep discussions over cups of tea in her office, attending different talks and conferences with her, or just spending some time out of doors, there was always a lot to learn from her. I owe her a lot for teaching me to develop an attitude of love, excitement and passion for learning itself. I am deeply grateful for getting the opportunity to work under her supervision and for her constant encouragement and support throughout these years.

My sincere thanks goes to the members of my Doctoral committee, Prof Pranab Goswami, Dr. V. Prabhu and Prof. Rohini Mokashi Punekar, for their helpful insights, suggestions and comments during the preparation of the thesis. I thank Dr. Avishek Parui, Dr. Anamika Barua, Dr. Ananya Barua, Prof. Erik Garrett, and Prof. James Morley for their encouragement and interest in my work.

I extend my gratitude to the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Guwahati for giving me the opportunity to pursue my research by providing me with a very good and vibrant academic environment and for all the facilities required by a research student. I am thankful to IIT Guwahati for providing me with a beautiful campus to stay and all the facilities that made the entire research period a smooth journey and an enriching experience that will remain close to my heart for life.

I thank all my friends and fellow research students in the department for their help and support. I would specially like to thank my friends Hemanta, Halim and Manali for their constant motivation, wonderful company, support and encouragement. They are in fact friends who turned into family and have always helped to bring out the best in me.

I would like to express my love and thankfulness to the sisters of my heart, Lipika and Binita, my brothers-in-law, Deepankar and Bidyot, and my loving nephews, Aneesh and Jai who have always been there to cheer me up and have been my biggest strength always in all that I do.

Words are not enough to express my gratitude to my wonderful parents who have always stood by me and have constantly motivated me to work towards my dreams no matter what. I feel so sorry that my father did not live long to see the final shape of the thesis, but I am sure that it is his blessings, his love and trust in me that enabled me to reach this final destination in spite of all odds. I immensely miss his presence at this point of my life as he was the one who most fondly awaited and looked forward to this day.

Violeena Deka

Table of Contents

Abstract

The thesis attempts at a philosophical reflection on the question of human-nature relationship in light of the serious environmental challenges that characterize the present age. Although there have been sustained efforts on the part of environmental philosophers to redefine various aspects of the human-nature relation and extend the domain of ethics to include the natural environment, the thesis observes certain limitations in the existing approaches. In doing so the thesis delves into the conceptual roots of the environmental crisis and identifies the role of philosophy as that of clarification of the ethical and metaphysical assumptions that characterize human attitude towards the natural environment. Contemporary environmental philosophers have argued that there are important and largely unnoticed connections between our worldviews, metaphysical systems, and forms of rationality, on the one hand, and environmental domination and exploitation, on the other.

These philosophers seek to address such deeper issues of the environmental debate which are rooted in the history of Western culture and society. Adopting a critical approach to our ingrained tendencies and presuppositions borrowed uncritically from the natural sciences, these philosophers see promise in the methods of phenomenology in bringing about a paradigm shift and in securing a new foundation for environmental philosophy. Such philosophers now give shape to an altogether new discipline called Ecophenomenology.

Within this new approach, many environmental philosophers have been particularly interested in the works of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty as if his phenomenology supplies the key to an alternative worldview that is urgently called for in the present times. Thus, the present work will attempt to explore the relationship between human and nature in the context of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty with special emphasis on the relation between ontology and ethics which emerges from his work.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

Across different disciplines, there has been a growing concern for our degrading natural environment. It is true that we are in the midst of an environmental crisis characterized by degrading quality of our environment, extinction of species, changing climate and other environmental challenges. While human exploitation of the natural environment is the chief cause of such a crisis, it is often explained in terms of scientific, political, historical, archaeological causes. A deeper reflection into environmental problems reveals that the root causes of such problems are philosophical. The environmental crisis is indeed a philosophical crisis. One of the philosophical concerns of the environmental crisis is rethinking the human-nature relation that characterizes much of the environmental debate among environmental philosophers.

Our understanding of the relation between human and nature has come a long way. The natural environment has always been a major theme for reflection by humans since the time of the ancient Greeks and even prior to them in the axial age. While initially nature incited awe, wonder, poetry, myths and spiritual beliefs, later with the development of natural philosophy and modern science, nature came to be understood as consisting of purposeless atoms in motion, devoid of conceptual meaning, which is modeled on the mechanistic view of nature (Callicott & Frodeman, 2009). Such a view was further influenced by the ontological dualism of the 17th century philosopher Rene Descartes characterized by his well known separation of the thinking mind, or subject, from the material world of things, or objects (Abram, 1996).

Nature's significance for us has changed from the earlier understanding of nature as richly layered, spiritual, alive and full of meaning to that non human 'other' which can be manipulated, used and abused by humans. (Callicott & Frodeman, 2009) Thus, the environmental degradation that we witness today is in many ways an inevitable consequence of such a worldview which separates and privileges humanity over nature.

As environmental problems continue to accelerate, the world looks to science and technology to offer solutions in the face of such a widespread perception of an environmental crisis. But, once we settle into approaching the environmental crisis as a series of problems or issues to be resolved by calculative rationality, we lose sight of the deeper assumptions that have set the terms of such problems. Adopting John Livingston's comparisons of such issues to the 'tips of icebergs', Neil Evernden writes,

> They are simply the visible portion of a much larger entity, most of which lies beneath the surface, beyond our daily inspection. The submerged mass constitutes the fundamental 'problem', that domain of unspoken assumptions which legitimates , indeed even demands, the behaviour which precipitates the state of affairs we designate as the 'environmental crisis'(Evernden, 1993, p. xii)

Environmental problems are not merely of the nature described by the scientist; there are certain deeper issues that remain to be addressed which form the roots and the cause of such a crisis. Such causes are inescapably cultural, political, ethical and as the thesis argues, philosophical, and are indeed rooted in the history of western culture and society.

But in our race to solve the environmental problems the philosophical dimension of the environmental crisis is entirely forgotten. In order to restore this philosophical dimension we need to re-visit the history of our meaning systems and the philosophical and also ontological background of environmental ethical issues that need urgent intervention not only for prescribing policy decisions and a prescription of certain first order moral guidelines, but for keeping room for asking deeper background questions as to why the first order moral guidelines remain obligatory on our part. This needs re-visiting the background of the problem time and again.

As the environmental problems are human induced the thesis identifies that environmental crisis is not merely a series of problems seeking quick solutions but are of the nature that requires philosophical intervention. The underlying cause of the environmental crisis are conceptual that requires clarification and reflection peculiar to the task of philosophers.

As has aptly been pointed out by contemporary philosophers of the environment Charles Brown and Ted Toadvine,

> If philosophy is to make a contribution towards resolving the environmental crisis, it will likely begin with a steady and insightful clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions about ourselves and the world around us. These basic assumptions— about the relation between humans and nature, human nature, the nature of nature, and the nature of the Good—underlie all of our current behavior, both individually and culturally. But the assumptions that have guided our past behavior reveal their limitations as we think about, imagine, and live through the events and consequences of what we call the environmental crisis.((Brown & Toadvine, 2003, p. x)

Although the question regarding the relationship between humans and nature is as old as philosophy itself, with the contemporary recognition of serious environmental problems on a global scale, the question assumes greater urgency. (Ouderkirk, 1998)

1.2 Issues of the study undertaken:

This section discusses briefly certain issues undertaken in the thesis.

- **The limitations of environmental philosophy and the need for renewal of a philosophy of nature:**

In view of the aforementioned increasing global environmental crisis, Environmental Philosophy developed as an academic discipline since the 1960s and 1970s. Initially the philosophical works that developed during this time explored the extent to which existing ethical theories could be expanded to include the natural environment. Thus, Environmental Ethics emerged as a professional specialization focused on environmental concerns and embraced the superficial focus on issues. There have been rise of different groups like the biocentric ethicists, deep ecologists, ecofeminists and others who all arrive at different conclusions and there are a lot of disagreements too within these various schools. Contemporary thinkers point out that such theorizing emerged within the Anglo-American tradition which relies on concepts of man and nature which has largely, and uncritically, been borrowed from the natural sciences.

The natural sciences uphold a mechanistic view of nature, privileges naturalism and objectivism which is apparent from the use of concepts such as ‘ecology’ and ‘ecosystem.’ Thus, being based on the sciences, environmental philosophy is based on the idea that man

and nature are separate entities. Focus is on understanding nature objectively as distant from us and finding reasons to confer value on the objects of nature. As such, many environmental philosophers claim that these foundations have to be dealt with before any durable changes can be accomplished.

These foundations are created by the dualistic ontology inherited from Descartes who is widely held as the father of modern philosophy. Much of the current worldview is shaped by the dualistic nature of reality espoused by Descartes. Descartes analysis of the dualistic nature of reality goes on to separate thinking humans from material realm of nature; it is based on the idea that man and nature are separate entities. Descartes dualistic philosophy easily promotes an anthropocentric outlook in which a superior ratio investigates and evaluates a merely irrational and material world. The natural world has within such an outlook only value insofar as it is of human interest.

Based on such an understanding, early environmental philosophy dealt largely with reasoned arguments as to why we should value nature based on different moral norms and principles like utilitarianism, deontological ethics, virtue ethics etc. Thus, having developed within the tradition of Anglo American philosophy, Environmental philosophy aimed at a philosophical reflection on nature, not as natural philosophy but as a special branch of ethics as an investigation of our moral obligations towards that nature about which positive knowledge had been provided by the natural sciences. Environmental philosophy has thus remained confined to Environmental ethics.

Contemporary ecological philosophers thus argue that there are important and largely unnoticed connections between our worldviews, metaphysical systems, and forms of rationality, on the one hand, and social and environmental domination, on the other. Thus, the thesis seeks to bring to light certain factors that have gone into framing our dominant worldviews and the consequent results.

- **Descartes dualistic ontology and its ramifications:**

The different approaches in environmental philosophy share a common flaw in that they are rooted in the modern dualistic conception of nature which correlates nature with unintelligent matter, setting it up as an independent sphere apart from humanity. This modern conception of nature, they argue, is severely flawed, since humanity belongs to nature and is part of nature. Hence, there is a need for a new conception of nature that takes full account of our

belonging to nature. An ethical relation with nature requires a change in our attitude towards nature which can only come about with a change in our understanding of the concept of nature. Therefore, the theoretical foundation of an environmental ethic must be addressed.

- **The objectivism of the natural sciences:**

Descartes dualistic ontology laid the foundation for the construction of the objective sciences which have yielded a lot of knowledge and brought about the technological gifts that make our lives easier. Even in the face of the environmental problems we look to science and technology to offer us solutions. Yet as pointed out by philosopher David Abram, the sciences overlook our ordinary, everyday experience of the world around us. Our direct experiences are necessarily subjective and the world we experience is not an inert mechanical object but a living field (Abram, 1996).

- **The problem of alienation:**

Being based on the Cartesian and Scientific paradigm, our understanding of the physical world is that of essentially atomistic, inert, quantifiable matter in motion observed by a dispassionate, detached human mind. Thus, environmental ethics is divorced from the actual, direct, experiential dimension of our relation with the environment. Such ideas have paved the way for environmentalism. Langer (2004) writes that in such environmentalism the very notion of environment results from a fundamental rupture with nature and an implicit denial of relationships in favor of things. This approach encourages us to continue our current manner of viewing the world instead of questioning the basic assumptions. The common meaning of environment accepted here is something like a surrounding of objects. It connotes a physical thing rather than a "network of relationship".

- **Phenomenological approach in Environmental philosophy:**

Recently, however, a critical phase is seen to be developing which discusses the limitations in the traditional philosophical approaches to environmental questions and highlight the merits of an alternative approach that involves a rethinking of the very human-nature relationship that lies at the foundation of environmental philosophy. Such an alternative approach has been found in the works of numerous thinkers in the traditions associated with "continental philosophy", particularly 'phenomenology'.

Contemporary phenomenologists interested in the problems of environmental philosophy are of the opinion that a full-fledged environmental philosophy has far-reaching ontological and epistemological implications and perhaps requires the philosophical methods peculiar to phenomenologists.

- **Significance of Merleau Ponty's Philosophy to environmental thought:**

There is now a new emerging discipline called Ecophenomenology which studies the interfaces between phenomenology and environmental philosophy. Ecophenomenologists like Ted Toadvine believe that a renewed philosophy of nature would concern the being of nature, the being of humanity and the relation between them. Within this new approach, many environmental philosophers have been particularly interested in the works of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

The thesis draws on the work of some contemporary ecophenomenologists like David Abram, Ted Toadvine, Charles Brown, Simon, James, Bryann Bannon, to name a few, who seek to restore the experiential dimension of nature and suggest that the term 'environmental philosophy' should give way to 'philosophy of nature'. It is here that the thesis emphasizes the existential phenomenology of Merleau Ponty, particularly his philosophy of 'perception' and 'embodiment' in restoring the lost touch with nature over Husserlian Phenomenology. The thesis draws light on how Ponty's vision of perception and embodiment helps us redefine the way we are connected with nature.

1.3 Review of Literature:

The need for a philosophical reconsideration of the human -nature dialogue in a new light has been suggested in a number of works within the continental tradition of philosophy in recent times. The following works have been found particularly relevant which talk about the insufficiencies in our dominant worldviews and point towards the need for a renewed ontological foundation for our ethical dispositions towards the natural environment. The literature also suggests the importance of Merleau Ponty's philosophy in redefining such a new ontological foundation.

Toadvine (2005) states that environmental philosophy which developed in the 1970s has been predominantly a movement within the analytic and post-analytic Anglo-American traditions of thought, a movement that concerned itself primarily with issues of moral

eligibility and the extension of rights to nature. Environmental philosophy has, thus, remained confined to environmental ethics.

Foltz & Frodeman (2004) also claims that practically all previous work in the area of environmental philosophy has been from the standpoint of analytic philosophy and modernist epistemology, which tends to treat the ethical dimensions of environmental and ecological thinking solely in terms of argumentative analysis.

Stone (2005) points out that having emerged from the Anglo-American philosophical traditions, especially those of meta-ethics and normative ethics, Environmental Ethics tends to overlook certain important factors. Today we understand ethics as a theory of moral obligation. Traditionally, however, ethics was pursued as a reflection on the overall manner of our ethos or dwelling place in the world. A consideration of how a good life would be situated in relation to the world in which it found itself. Moreover the world was conceived as one whose features understood philosophically helped to define our manner of dwelling. It was the axiological character and ontological integrity of nature above all that called for limits to our actions. In contrast to this orientation, environmental ethics over the last thirty years has proceeded conversely. It has embraced the purely formal principles of ethics like consequentialism of Mill or deontology of Kant and proceeded to apply it on the natural environment. The natural environment is understood uncritically as the object of the natural sciences and additional inquiry beyond that of science into the ontology of nature seemed unnecessary. The natural environment to which the ethical norms were extended appeared complete with its scientific pre-understanding.

Bannon (2014) shares his opinion that although efforts to confront ecological crises have had some success over the past fifty years but the overall reaction to such crises has been, for the most part, too slow and not enough. He suggests that an important reason for the slowness to respond to ecological crises is a lack of unity among those who care about the environment. Thus, in absence of a basic common understanding of the significance of nature it becomes difficult to motivate a healthier relationship with nature.

(White Jr, L. ,1967), (Carson, R. ,1962) suggested that in order to change what humans do in and to the natural environment, they must first change what they think about it. They believed that science and technology will not solve the environmental crisis unless humans rethink

their most fundamental beliefs concerning the nature of nature, human nature and the relationship between humans and nature.

Thus, Toadvine (2009) writes that the proper object for environmental philosophy is not the environment but a reflection on ‘nature’. Such thinkers propose the name philosophy of nature as the proper inquiry for environmental thinkers. They point towards the need for a renewed philosophy of nature that incorporates the wider and richer investigation of nature taking into account many other dimensions of nature. Such a philosophy of nature would investigate the being of nature, the being of humanity and the relation between them.

He also points out that the environmental crisis is at heart a philosophical crisis. We need some ground to believe that despite all differences there is something that binds us together. The task before them was to ground the relationship on a new foundation.

Evernden (1993) reflects on the limits of environmentalism. He examines the dependence of environmental discourse upon the contours of modern science. The Natural Alien shows how the environmentalist's most basic assumptions have often adapted to the utilitarian, predictive, and managerial "resourcism" that Evernden finds at the core of the environmental crisis. Paradoxically, the experiences of value, love, and care that have motivated many students of nature have been denied, derided, and replaced by so-called realistic, effective, and expedient strategies. In this manner a critical way of seeing has been sacrificed for the progress of calculation. Evernden seeks to rescue this "passionate involvement" to search for a possible language of value by briefly turning to the Romantics, and then by exploring the insights of Phenomenology. Both of those traditions emphasize actual experience, personal encounters within a lived world, the relational contextual qualities of all living forms, and the processes, patterns, and rhythms of myriad fields of nature. For Evernden, only by being open to these alternative visions of self and nature can we hope to break the "Cartesian roadblock" that has championed an anthropocentric" thing-language" of voyeurism, naming and control. Evernden seeks to discover an "ecology of subjects" that might help humans rethink their intimate connections to and their place within a meaningful and richly ariegated ecosystem.

Thus, it is important for environmental philosophy to overcome the worldview defined by science. As Toadvine (2009) writes that rather than embracing the superficial focus on ‘issues’ environmental philosophy must investigate the deeper assumptions about nature that

frame our environmental problems. It must thus carry forward the long tradition of philosophical investigation of nature.

The scientific understanding of the environment as an unquestioned ground for thinking about nature and the consequent confinement of environmental philosophy to the formal and ethical, however, creates problems. As pointed out by Eugene Hargrove, the founding editor of the leading journal in the field of Environmental ethics, that environmental ethics has not had the effect upon public discourse for which they had hoped.

Kohak, (1984) points out that there is a growing disconnect with nature, we seem to have lost touch with nature. In view of our culture's pervasive destructiveness, Jensen (2004) raises the question, "How can we as a culture and as individuals, rediscover our connections to ourselves, to our neighbours, to the rest of the world?" He quotes the ecotheologian and Earth Scholar, Thomas Berry, "The Universe is composed of subjects to be communed with, not objects to be exploited. Everything has its own voice. Somehow we have become autistic. We don't hear the voices."

Spurling (1977) claims that our lives are essentially fragmented in this age. These reflect and are reflected by those splits in terms of which we understand ourselves: mind and body, reason and emotion, masculine and feminine, etc. She writes that what is needed is a mode of understanding that can come to terms with these fragmentations and splits and offer some kind of diagnosis of our contemporary lives. We need a philosophy that will be in contact with our experience at all its levels and complexities and will enable us to take a perspective on it.

Tracing the roots of such alienation philosophers often refer to the Cartesian split of the mind and body whereby everything apart from the thinking mind are to be controlled and manipulated as objects devoid of any purpose of their own. Such a worldview has proved to be environmentally destructive in light of the human induced environmental degradation that we witness around us.

Thus, environmental philosophers working in the continental tradition of philosophy in their search for a new philosophy of nature seek to restore the primordial essential relatedness that binds man and nature together. Such works often refer to Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology which moves beyond phenomenology's preoccupation with consciousness and gives priority to the incarnate subject and its essential relation with the external world.

Moran (1997) points out that Environmental Philosophy must go beyond the more narrowly defined conservationism or even conservation ethics since these may be too rooted in prevailing economic values and political constraints and may never question basic assumptions. Even in developed countries with well developed environmental practices in place, it is increasingly clear that some broader philosophical principles need to be considered which would attempt to integrate various considerations in different areas into an overall outlook. A philosophy of the environment-ecophilosophy- is called for, a form of critical thinking which goes beyond strategic responses to what are often crisis situations, and aims at generating long term ways of thinking about the environment, integrating the environment into our broader philosophical concerns about living well (ethics), about the nature of reality (ontology) and so on.

Klaver (2005) claims that traditionally the field of environmental philosophy has been defined by Anglo-American environmental ethics, especially in the form of moral extensionism. He believes that since the 1980s the field has expanded steadily and its scope has been widened with the inclusion of the insights of continental philosophy.

Langer (2004) points out that the roots of the environmental crisis facing us lies much deeper than the present approaches suggest She believes that it is not only our relation with the non human other which needs to be addressed (a task taken up by much environmental philosophy in the Anglo American tradition) but there is a greater need to overcome the dominant Cartesian ontology and the development of a radically different ontology.

We need some ground to believe that despite all differences there is something that binds us together. The task before them was to ground the relationship on a new foundation. Phenomenology, as a contemporary method in philosophy, is particularly well suited to working through some of the dilemmas that have faced environmental ethicists and philosophers of nature.

Brown & Toadvine (2003) claims that phenomenology overcomes the dualism of classical Cartesian thought, the separation of consciousness from matter that has infected philosophy, up to our present century. They state that the intersection of ecological thinking with phenomenology, the momentum that drives each toward the other, begets a new cross-disciplinary inquiry: eco-phenomenology. Eco-phenomenology is based on a double claim: first that an adequate account of our ecological situation requires the methods and insights of

phenomenology; and, second, that phenomenology, led by its own momentum, becomes a philosophical ecology, that is, a study of the interrelationship between organism and world in its metaphysical and axiological dimensions.

The following literature in the field of Ecophenomenology indicates the growing interest of contemporary philosophers in this field.

Foltz & Frodeman (2004) point out that unlike the scientific theories of nature, ecological phenomenology reflects on our immediate, lived experience of nature and helps to develop 'a new "metaphysics" of nature' .They suggest that this approach is distinctive in two ways: (1) its central concept is, precisely, that of nature rather than the environment; (2) its reflection on nature is closer to metaphysical reflection on what nature is than to ethical reflection on nature's value, our obligations to it, or how to resolve conflicts amongst these obligations. This leads to a "philosophy of nature" which engages in a metaphysical rethinking of nature and thinks of nature not as the totality of material objects and processes, but as identical to being. Brown & Toadvine (2003) claims that throughout its development, phenomenology has seemed to promise a methodological route toward the disclosure of an "alternative" conception of nature, one that would avoid the reductionism of scientific naturalism as well as the excesses of speculative metaphysics. It should not surprise us, then, that today's environmentalists see promise in the methods of phenomenology.

Abram (1996) is an award-winning book on the environmental phenomenology which attracted much attention when it was first released. Here he discusses the relevance of the philosophy of Husserl and Merleau Ponty to environmental thought.

Erazim Kohak's The Embers and the Stars (1984) and Neil Evernden's The Natural Alien (1985) offer remarkably similar invocations to an encounter of environmental thought with phenomenology. Kohak asserts that "we must approach nature anew, undertaking no less than a phenomenology of nature as the counterpart of our moral humanity". Erazim Kohak's 'The Embers and the Stars' was probably the first book-length study to apply the phenomenological method to contemporary ecological concerns, thereby initiating the field of inquiry called "Ecophenomenology".

Even prior to them Compton (1979) pointed out the need to rediscover and evoke the pre-scientific, philosophy of nature which is buried and forgotten because of scientific intervention. He states that independent of any science, human beings find nature as the non human reality in and with which they live and through which they have to find their way.

Brown & Toadvine (2003) writes that the alternative experience and account of nature to which Ecophenomenology gives us access is potentially revolutionary. The rediscovery of a natural world that is inherently and primordially meaningful and worthy of respect might help us to overcome our cultural estrangement from the world around us. This new vision of nature might also allow us, once freed from our nihilistic attitudes toward the natural world, to develop an appropriate philosophy of nature, a "phenomenological naturalism," that circumvents intractable puzzles concerning intrinsic value and anthropocentrism. For far too long, humanity has envisioned itself as an alien presence in nature, thus steering many of the world's religions and moral codes toward a rebellion against our own natural being. Having constituted ourselves in opposition to nature, we adopt values and purposes that threaten the earth itself. Only a reconceptualization of our place and role in nature can work against this tragic disconnection from us and from the wellspring of our being. To begin this task by reconnecting us with our most basic and primordial experiences of the natural world—such is the power and promise of Ecophenomenology.

Evernden (1993) argued in his work that phenomenology provides us with a unique capacity for describing the values we find in the natural world as we experience it, before this world has been reinterpreted in terms of value-neutral scientific abstractions: "Both the phenomenologist and the environmentalist collide," he writes, "with our assumption of the world as an accumulation of subjects and objects."? For Evernden, environmentalists and phenomenologists share a common goal, namely, their interest in "the things themselves," in a world "that precedes knowledge and yet is basic to it, as countryside is to geography and blossoms to botany." Since the innovative work of Kohak and Evernden, Ecophenomenology has attracted an increasing amount of scholarly attention from philosophers and others interested in environmental theory and practice."

Klaver (2005) claims that when environmental ethics is practiced within the phenomenological tradition, ethics takes a back seat to other realms of inquiry, such as ontology and metaphysics. Based on Phenomenology's emphasis on the experiential

dimension of being such that what is, is always conditioned by what is experienced, Klaver claims that without phenomenology there can be no ontology.

From its starting point in experience, phenomenology provides an open horizon for the exploration of all facets of our relation with nature outside of narrowly prescribed disciplinary boundaries. By doing so, phenomenology makes it possible, perhaps for the first time, for philosophical thinking to express and respond to the full range of our natural experiences.

Brown & Toadvine (2003) claims that phenomenology overcomes the dualism of classical Cartesian thought, the separation of consciousness from matter that has infected philosophy, up to our present century.

Langer (2004) writes that Cartesian worldview, which dichotomizes reality, denies reciprocity, declares the non human realm devoid of meaning, and renders humans rootless in a world reduced to quantifiable lumps of lifeless matter. She recognizes the need for a radical ontological shift from the dominant paradigm to modes of perception, conception, and valuation that restore primordial interrelationships. The need for such a paradigm shift is found in the works of all the major Phenomenologists like Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau Ponty.

Many eco philosophers point out that Merleau Ponty's philosophy has much to offer in our understanding of nature, our place within it and our ethical obligations towards it.

The following literature has been helpful in this direction:

Langer (2004) claims that in tackling with environmental issues, it is not only our relations with the non human other that we have to deal with but there is a need to reject and transcend the dominant Cartesian ontology. Merleau Ponty in fact outlines the main features of the requisite new ontology. He criticizes our Cartesian mode of comprehension. In this new type of comprehension, the non human other is no longer inert, alien, meaningless and even threatening or a sovereign self transparent ego.

Abram (1988) discusses how the phenomenological investigations of Merleau Ponty provide the seeds of a new and radical philosophy of nature that remains true to the diversity of experience within the biosphere of experience. In this paper he shows why the

phenomenology of Merleau Ponty that takes seriously the primacy of perception is destined to culminate in a renewed awareness of our responsibility to the earth. He also believes that the ecological movements across the world have much to gain from a careful consideration of his discoveries.

It is important to note here that Merleau Ponty did not a device an ethics of the environment. However, as Clarke (2002) points out that though Merleau Ponty did not author an ethic, it is possible to extend his ontological descriptions to an ethic.

Liberman (2007) talks about some North American environmentally conscious organizations which work towards preservation of wilderness. However, he says that such groups cannot offer us an unmediated encounter with nature as such. He quotes Zimmerman, Silverman and Vogel whose works deal with the fact that the terms nature and wilderness themselves are so invested with human dualism that they could never serve as an independent source of valuation. The question that Liberman tries to address is, "Can we refer to an independent nature apart from all cultural and conceptual practices? Is there a possibility for an unmediated possibility of nature?"

He draws from the works of Merleau Ponty that a direct and unmediated experience of nature can happen, not by reflection, but through our bodies. He cites the example of experiencing an earthquake and sunrise which are not colored by any cultural or linguistic expressions. Merleau Ponty considers the task of Phenomenology to investigate such an experience. Its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world.

Abram (1996) states that the phenomenology of Merleau Ponty suggests alternatives to many of the ingrained tendencies that limit our perspectives: our myopic obsession with objectivity, our anthropocentric conceptions of value, and other legacies of Cartesian dualism. Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology focused on bodily perceptions and regarded the body as the central locus of all life, all knowledge and thus of all science and philosophy. This turn of putting the body to the forefront of philosophy is Merleau-Ponty's major achievement. Thus, in place of Cartesianism, Merleau-Ponty installs a kind of thinking that reveals the basic continuity between human perception and perceived nature, between the sentient and the sensible.

Cataldi & Hamrick (2007) consists of a collection of essays by contemporary writers in the phenomenological tradition. They link Merleau Ponty's ontology of nature to contemporary environmental and ecological themes.

Bullington (2013) states Merleau-Ponty points out that we are always already this being who is both mind and body in a natural unity. Mind and body are not the same, but neither are they as distinct from one another as Cartesian dualism has led us to believe. He quotes Merleau Ponty from the Phenomenology of Perception,

The ego as a center from which his intentions radiate, the body which carries them and the beings and things to which they are addressed are not confused, but they are only three sectors of a unique field.

Langer (2004) states that in reestablishing the mind's 'roots' in the body and the world Merleau-Ponty describes how objective thinking which dominates western culture, underlying as it does our common sense, our sciences, and our traditional philosophies, distorts our lived experience, alienating us from ourselves, our world, and other people. In the place of Cartesianism, Merleau-Ponty installs a kind of thinking that reveals the basic continuity between human perception and perceived nature, between the sentient and the sensible. This is not an interconnectedness model, which would imply an original separation of humans and nature, but an attempt to think the originary identity of embodied consciousness and the natural world.

She claims that Ponty's study of behavior shows that we must discard the assumption of an external observer and embrace the notion of knowledge as an apprehension of existences whose meaning reveals itself to us in perception.

Langer (2003) states that Merleau-Ponty not only provides the most detailed critique of the traditional dualistic ontology, but he also offers a highly original, non dualistic ontology in its place. She writes that this can supply environmentalists with a comprehensive ontological and phenomenological foundation for an environmental ethics. Both Merleau- Ponty's critiques of objective thinking and his new ontology support environmentalists' call for a radical change in our perception of ourselves and the world. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological descriptions can contribute to bringing about such a fundamental paradigm shift.

1.4 Statement of the problem

An important issue that arises from the literature review is that prior to any attempts at understanding "what ought to be our attitude towards nature?" arise the question "what is the nature of the relation between human and nature?"

Clark writes, "After all, how can we make normative claims without some reasonable understanding of what kind of beings we are? We need to understand that (and how) moral behavior is possible". (Clarke, 2002, p. 211)

Such questions regarding the relationship between ontology and ethics frequently arise when one attempts to uncover possible bases for moral consideration for either nonhuman individuals or the whole of the nonhuman world. The connection between ontology and ethics is one of the important areas of philosophy and the two cannot be reasonably separated.

An overview of the current literature on environmental ethics shows that there is scope for further exploration in this direction. Hence, the present work is proposed with the objective of studying the relation between ontology and ethics within the continental environmental tradition.

Moreover the literature review suggests that continental philosophy's engagement with environmental issues envisioned the development of a new ontology. It seeks a paradigm shift whereby there emerges a renewed understanding of the relation between man and nature. While such a new ontology is sought in the phenomenology of Merleau Ponty how it leads to a new ethical relation between man and nature remains to be addressed. Thus, the present work will seek to explore these issues with special emphasis on the phenomenology of Merleau Ponty.

1.5 Objectives of the proposed research:

The study will proceed keeping in view the following objectives:

- To highlight the changing view of human-nature relationship over the centuries and demonstrate how our attitude towards nature is determined by a basic understanding of the nature of reality.

- To explore the limitations in the approach of environmental philosophy and explore the significance of phenomenology to environmental thought.

- To examine the relation between ontology and ethics drawing from the philosophy of Merleau Ponty. The theses will particularly seek to draw elements from Merleau Ponty's philosophy which is relevant for environmental thought particularly in redefining the human-nature relation.

- To examine the problem of alienation from nature and seek to restore our lost touch with nature through Merleau Ponty's philosophy of perception and embodiment.

- To compare Merleau Ponty's philosophy with the eastern philosophy of Yoga and with the works of painters and explore the significance of the concept of 'place' in motivating a renewed approach to the world that we inhabit.

1.6 Methodology:

In this work an in-depth study of available literature on the emerging discipline of Ecophenomenology is carried out. As the primary focus of the thesis is to understand the French phenomenologist Merleau Ponty's philosophical contribution to environmental thought, the thesis delves into both the primary and secondary sources on Maurice Merleau Ponty's philosophy. The primary sources will be the books originally written by Merleau Ponty and secondary sources will be the research articles and books pertinent to the study area. The secondary sources will be primarily the environmentally relevant works in Continental philosophy in general and on Merleau Ponty in particular.

1.7 Layout of the Chapters

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter seeks to set the background of the thesis by pointing out the need for a philosophical reflection on the human-nature dialogue in a new light in the backdrop of the global environmental crisis. While the environmental crisis is of concern to many across different disciplines of study, the chapter discusses the role of philosophers in addressing the environmental problems. It focuses on the dominant trend in the discipline of Environmental Philosophy as it developed in the Western philosophical tradition, and attempts to address certain limitations of Environmental philosophy in addressing the human nature dialogue.

The chapter presents the literature review based on the analysis of contemporary environmental thinkers. The chapter identifies these limitations as rooted in the dominant tradition of western philosophy.

Chapter II: From Phenomenology to Ecophenomenology

This Chapter will propose the phenomenological method as an alternative and suitable approach to address the limitations of environmental philosophy. The chapter seeks to understand the method of phenomenology and how it may prove to be an adequate approach to the challenges faced by contemporary philosophers of the environment. By looking at the historical emergence of the phenomenological movement in the hands of Husserl the chapter looks into those aspects of Husserlian phenomenology which influenced Merleau Ponty to develop his version of phenomenology that is relevant to the eco phenomenological project espoused by contemporary eco phenomenologists.

Chapter III: **Merleau Ponty's Philosophy of nature**

This chapter will explore the philosophy of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau Ponty and discuss the most relevant aspects of his work which make him a strong ally of the environmental debate of redefining the human nature relation that confront us in present times. One of the most significant influences on the development of Ponty's work was the Phenomenological movement initiated by Edmund Husserl. The chapter discusses how Ponty took up Husserl's philosophy and transformed it in a manner that endowed this philosophy with a particular power and relevance for the ecological questions that confront us. The chapter begins with an introduction to Merleau Ponty, his major works, his philosophical project and ultimately those elements which make him relevant for the ecophenomenological project of contemporary environmental philosophers.

This chapter will particularly focus on Merleau Ponty's new ontology of nature and explore the relation between ontology and ethics which emerges from his understanding of the reciprocal relation between the perceiver and perceived.

Chapter IV: **Phenomenology, Painting and Nature**

This chapter will focus on Merleau Ponty's philosophy of expression which is an extension of his perceptual ontology. The chapter will particularly focus on Ponty's insights on art and

paintings. Ponty believed that human thought and language are not merely representational; they do not merely imitate, mirror, and copy some outside reality. Instead, he argues, those processes are essentially and fundamentally creative. In this light the chapter discusses Ponty's interest in the works of painters like Paul Cézanne and the common motivations behind their intellectual and artistic efforts to understand the world as it is lived.

Chapter V: **Reconnecting with nature through the body: Yoga and phenomenology**

In this chapter an attempt is made to understand the significance of reconnecting with nature through the body through a comparative study of the eastern Yogic practices and the existential phenomenology of Merleau Ponty. While earlier comparisons between yoga and phenomenology were made on their common aspirations of transcendence from the world but comparisons with Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology emphasizes the somatic incarnate domain of human experiences and how the practice of yoga shares a common ground with existential phenomenology as explicated in Yoga philosophy. The chapter discusses how a careful exploration reveals that both yoga and Merleau Ponty's philosophy delve into the very flesh of the world and emphasize human embodiment and can help us to overcome the sense of alienation from nature.

Chapter VI: Ontology, Place and Ethics

This chapter will shed light on the relation between Ontology, Place and Ethics which emerges from Merleau Ponty's understanding of the experiencing self as essentially an embodied and embedded entity. In the previous chapters we have seen that by overcoming the traditional dualistic ontology ecophenomenologists seek towards the ethical subject who would act in environmentally sensitive ways. It is here that the present chapter tries to show that this transition from a new ontology to an ethical subject is not possible without taking into account the significance of place. Indeed the terms being, place and ethics are incomplete without one another and they actually mean the same. They draw in particular from Heidegger's notion of dwelling and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body-subject in their attempts to return the human subject to its essential nature i.e. the human experiencer as an essentially embodied and embedded subject. This chapter draws on the significance of the concept of place in the philosophical reconsideration of the human-nature dialogue. At a time when we are so distanced from and lost touch with our natural surroundings and it becomes

more and more challenging to motivate people to adopt environmentally sustainable ways, it is important to revive our touch with the place we inhabit.

In fact the chapter seeks to show that phenomenological reflection on place lies mid way between overcoming ontological dualism and developing ethical dispositions.

Chapter VII: Conclusion and future directions.

This chapter seeks to highlight the important issues discussed in the chapters of the thesis and point towards some possible future areas of study relevant to the current work.

Chapter II

From Phenomenology to Ecophenomenology

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter stresses the need for a paradigm shift in the philosophers' approach to environmental questions by overcoming the dominant dualistic ontology and scientific objectivism that shapes much of the Western philosophical worldview. The current chapter also highlights that it was precisely to overcome such a worldview that led Edmund Husserl to inaugurate the philosophical method of phenomenology in the 20th century. The method of phenomenology is, thus, suggested as offering a renewed approach towards understanding the very terms 'nature' and 'environment' and address the human-nature dialogue in a new light. As opposed to the natural sciences which study nature as a collection of objects and which base their study on an objective analysis and causal explanation, the phenomenological method seeks to understand the human-nature dialogue in a new light; to study 'nature' as it appears to a human experiencer as a 'meant object'. Its attempt is to understand the 'meaning', 'value', signification' and 'motivation' that underlies human experiences of nature. Such concepts underlie the development of the new area of study called Ecophenomenology comprising the works by contemporary phenomenologists. They see promise in the method of phenomenology as providing a much needed paradigm shift in the way we understand the human-nature relationship. Also among the founders of phenomenology, the existential phenomenology of Merleau Ponty is often referred to by most contemporary philosophers as providing the foundation for a new philosophy of nature.

Thus, the present chapter seeks to understand the method of phenomenology and how it may prove to be an adequate approach to the challenges faced by contemporary philosophers of the environment. By looking at the historical emergence of the phenomenological movement in the hands of Husserl the chapter looks into those aspects of Husserlian phenomenology which influenced Merleau Ponty to develop his version of phenomenology that is relevant to the ecophenomenological project espoused by contemporary ecophenomenologists. Indeed as

pointed out by Toadvine (2009), Ponty's work is foundational for the style of investigation called 'Ecophenomenology'.

Before understanding the phenomenological approach to environmental philosophy it is important to understand the difference between the analytic and continental traditions of Philosophy.

It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that having developed within the tradition of Anglo American philosophy, Environmental philosophy aimed at a philosophical reflection on nature, not as natural philosophy but as a special branch of ethics, as an investigation of our moral obligations towards that nature about which positive knowledge had been provided by the natural sciences. Within such a framework, Environmental philosophy has remained confined to Environmental ethics. Such ethical approach has embraced the purely formal principles of ethics like consequentialism of Mill or deontology of Kant and proceeded to apply it on the natural environment. The natural environment is understood uncritically as the object of the natural sciences and additional inquiry beyond that of science into the ontology of nature seemed unnecessary. The natural environment to which the ethical norms were extended appeared complete with its scientific pre-understanding.

This scientific understanding of the environment as an unquestioned ground for thinking about nature and the consequent confinement of environmental philosophy to the formal and ethical however creates problems. As pointed out by Eugene Hargrove the founding editor of the leading journal in the field 'Environmental ethics' that environmental ethics has not had the effect upon public discourse for which they had hoped.

In this light what is needed is to re-examine our metaphysical understanding of nature because much of how we deal with nature is greatly influenced by how we perceive it. Also, here is a need to determine the proper place of humans within the natural order, in relation to other organisms. This is hoped to place natural limits on human aspirations and human actions. One such thinker Simon James argues in his work "The Presence of Nature" that to limit environmental philosophy to the question of value in nature is to unduly distort the many ways nature can matter to us. His view is that in at least some kinds of cases, the way nature matters to us can be best understood with reference to concepts other than value, like concepts of bonds, needs and meaning. To reframe these concepts in terms of value will distort our lived experience. While much thought and effort have gone into the development

of the discipline of environmental philosophy since the mid twentieth century, contemporary thinkers are of the opinion that there is need for change in approach.

In order to address this issue it is important for environmental philosophy to overcome the worldview defined by science. As Toadvine writes that rather than embracing the superficial focus on 'issues' environmental philosophy must investigate the deeper assumptions about nature that frame our environmental problems. It must thus carry forward the long tradition of philosophical investigation of nature.

2.2 Analytic and Continental tradition:

Analytic philosophy is the most influential philosophical tradition in the Anglo-American world. Both analytic philosophy and continental philosophy flourished in the 20th century; analytic philosophy mainly in England and the United States, continental philosophy primarily in countries in Continental Europe.

A fundamental difference between them is their relation to the natural sciences. While continental philosophy is more skeptical of the sciences, analytic philosophy provides a philosophical defense of scientific truth and method. On the other hand continental philosophy criticizes science because it replaces everyday life experiences with theoretical abstractions. Whereas Anglo American philosophers concentrate on conceptual clarification through analytical distinctions, continental thinkers often use "thick descriptions" to explore and define meanings. The former can be seen as problem solvers while the latter are interested in an analysis of meaning-giving practices. The works of continental thinkers like Nietzsche, Husserl, Merleau Ponty, Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze, are thus relevant for cultural studies, literary criticism and fine arts.

It may be noted here that while the analytic or Anglo-American tradition in philosophy emphasizes conceptual clarity, logical rigor, empirical soundness, and scientific validity of arguments, Continental philosophy, is more critical of claims of scientific rigor and more open to exploring the historical and cultural context of ideas, and is more inclined to explore larger philosophical themes such as the nature of being, existence, and consciousness. (Foltz & Frodeman, 2004). Continental Philosophy until the mid twentieth century was virtually synonymous with phenomenology, now a days it is an umbrella term for several modes of thought like existentialism, post structuralism, hermeneutics, critical theory, feminism,

deconstruction and post modernism. Although Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, himself regarded his work as contributing to scientific knowledge, but eventually he understood the problems associated with over reliance on the abstractions of natural and social sciences as it distances us too much from the world of direct experiences. Husserl's phenomenology is a rigorous and descriptive science of things as they manifest themselves to consciousness. Husserl's main concern was how to understand meaning in a way that adequately accounts for the complex relationship between perceiving and perceived, knower and known, this focus on meaning reveals a more pertinent distinction between the two fields than their relation to the natural sciences.

Drawing on the differences between analytic and continental traditions of philosophy, the chapter stresses the need for a paradigm shift in the philosophers' approach to environmental questions. It draws from the works of those contemporary philosophers of the environment who talk about overcoming the dominant dualistic ontology and point towards a new ontology.

2.3 Continental turn in environmental philosophy:

Work in environmental philosophy proper by continental philosophers began in earnest in the 1980s, and from the beginning had a much wider range than its analytic counterpart. Such approach can be seen in the scattered views of certain environmentally conscious philosophers like Erazim Kohak and Neil Evernden. Such philosophers have begun to rediscover ideas about nature as found in the works of some major continental philosophers, that is, philosophers from the European continent, most prominently France and Germany such as Goethe, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Holderlin, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Merleau Ponty etc. Such figures belonging to continental philosophy can be seen as precursors to environmental philosophy.

One such thinker David Abram, in his most important contribution to environmental philosophy, The Spell of the Sensuous writes,

> "How did Western civilization become so estranged from non-human nature, so oblivious to the presence of other animals and the earth that our current lifestyles and activities contribute daily to the destruction of whole ecosystems, whole forests, river valleys, and oceans and to the extinction of countless species. How did civilized humankind lose all sense of reciprocity

> and relationship with the animate natural world, that rapport that so influences and limits the activities of most indigenous, tribal peoples? How did civilization break out of and leave behind the animistic or participatory mode of experience known to all native, place based cultures?" (Abram, 1996, p. 137)

Such thinkers see promise in the method of phenomenology as providing a much needed direction in environmental philosophy. Within this approach to environmental issues there arises a newer possibility to relook at our concepts of nature, humanity and man-nature relationship which serves as the basis of all our dealings with nature. Such reconsideration may help us to secure the foundations for an alternate worldview.

They point towards a growing disconnect between man and nature and search for new philosophy of nature that restores the primordial essential relatedness that binds man and nature together. For example, Kohak (1984) points out that there is a growing disconnect with nature, we seem to have lost touch with nature. In his work "The Embers and the Stars" he states,

> In our preoccupation with techne we stand in danger of losing something crucial- clarity of vision. Surrounded by artifacts and constructs, we tend to lose sight, literally as well as metaphorically, of the rhythm of the day and the night, of the phases of the moon and the change of seasons, of the life of the cosmos and of our place therein. The vital order of nature and the moral order of our humanity remain constant, but they grow overlaid with forgetting. We come to think of a mechanistic construct, ordering a world of artifacts, as "nature" losing sight of the living nature of our primordial experience in which boulders, trees, and the beasts of field and forest can be our kin, both objects and biomechanisms. The moral sense of our humanity is all too easily obscured by the mechanical order of our artifacts. In our daily lived experience, the starry heaven above and the moral law within have been heavily overlaid by artifacts and constructs. (Kohak, 184, p. x)

Thus, the need of the hour is a philosophical rethinking of nature and the human-nature relation. Such an urgency to reconsider the views regarding the human-nature relationship was already suggested in certain earliest works in the field of environmental philosophy. The

article “The historical roots of our ecological crisis” published in 1967 by Lynn White Junior, which stimulated much of subsequent environmental philosophy, suggested that in order to change what humans do in and to the natural environment, they must first change what they think about it. She believed that science and technology will not solve the environmental crisis unless humans rethink their most fundamental beliefs concerning the nature of nature, human nature and the relationship between humans and nature. (Callicott & Frodeman, 2009)

Recent trends in environmental philosophy which belong to the continental tradition bring to light the importance of restoring the lost sense of nature that is to be found in our pre-reflective experience of nature and to restore the sensibility that nature signifies, that nature means more than the aggregate of correct information about it. Such an appreciation of nature prevailed at a time prior to the dominance of modern natural science over all academic disciplines and over our basic worldviews. The philosophical proponents of the importance of modem natural science were Bacon, Descartes, Galileo and Newton.

2.4 Need for a philosophy of nature:

Contemporary thinkers point out that environmental ethics should give way to a renewed philosophy of nature whereby philosophy restores that which it held in common with such environmental visionaries like Thoreau, Muir, Emerson, Snyder, Dillard and Lopez as well as with deep ecology in the 20th century. What was common to these views is that nature is regarded as more worthy of contemplation than of exploitation, less a puzzle to be solved than a presence to be pondered.

Since its beginning, western philosophy maintained a constant, contemplative interest in nature. However, such traditional philosophy being based on metaphysical foundations are now considered to be untrustworthy in the post metaphysical period which saw the emergence of a new language and experience of nature as something dead and recalcitrant and thereby suitable for conquering and subduing (Foltz and Frodeman, 2004).

Ronald Hepburn writes that the history of philosophical idea of nature almost coincides with the history of philosophy itself (Hepburn, 1967) .Thus, philosophical reflection on nature is as old as philosophy itself. From the time of its inception with the earliest pre-Socratic thinkers until the days of the renaissance, philosophy as it developed in the west found far more to nature than merely our opportunities for using it. Although there were tendencies which resembled the materialism of modern theories of nature, there was a contemplative

vision lying at the heart of the materialist metaphysics from which it can be concluded that for a long period of time western philosophy maintained a constant, contemplative interest in nature.

This traditional approach however was premised upon foundations which in recent centuries have come to be regarded as untrustworthy i.e. metaphysical foundations. Such foundations allowed philosophy to speak of nature substantively, materially, descriptively, contemplatively and sometimes even poetically.

However with Bacon, Descartes, Galileo and Newton there emerged a new language and experience of nature as something dead and suitable for conquering and subduing for human interests. They conceived the world as devoid of point or purpose. In this light, Brown & Toadvine (2003) states that if philosophy is to make a contribution towards resolving the environmental crisis, it will likely begin with a steady and insightful clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions about ourselves and the world around us.

One of such issues is rethinking the very terms ‘environment’ and ‘nature’ and the need to move beyond the scientific understanding of nature as ‘object’. Foltz and Frodeman (2004) points out that the proper object for an environmental philosophy turns out to be not the environment at all but rather ‘nature’ as this concept has been developed in the history of western philosophy. In this case, the label environmental philosophy should give way to the richer and more traditional name for this area of inquiry, philosophy of nature. Such thinkers are critical of the use of scientific understanding of the environment as an unquestioned ground for thinking about nature within the domain of environmental ethics.

Recently there have been attempts to redefine nature that neither reduces it to the explanations of the natural sciences nor reverts to the position of the pre-critical metaphysics. Such accounts are found within the perspectives of continental philosophy. Such perspectives indicate the need for a philosophy that would be an antidote for the modernist worldview and that of the natural sciences. It highlights the fact that prior to any ethics of nature what we need is a new philosophy of nature that will help us to revive our lost touch with nature and to once again view the world in a new light and appreciate its richness, depth and unlimited possibilities.

In this background contemporary philosophers of the environment point out that so far environmental philosophy is based on what the scientist or other philosophers talk about

nature, but not as we 'experience' it in our lives. This according to them has led to alienation from nature, the repercussions of which are manifold. In this process what is lost is a sense of nature that we experience in the living of our lives. It is implicit in the works of contemporary writers that unless we restore this 'lived dimension' of our relation with nature, all the efforts toward resolving the environmental crisis will remain incomplete.

They, therefore, seek to return to and draw our attention to that experiential dimension of nature which is implicit in the history of philosophical reflection on nature but that which the subsequent developments in our worldviews have tended to obscure. Stone (2005) writes that the last twenty years have witnessed a significant regrowth of interest in Naturphilosophie, prompted especially by the spread of environmental problems. It is increasingly becoming important to revisit and revitalize the tradition of philosophy of nature which can give us an improved appreciation both of how nature is an interconnected whole and of the dependent place that we occupy within this whole – an appreciation that can help to motivate us to practice more environmentally sustainable ways of life. Old as many of the principal writings in the tradition of philosophy of nature are, then, they still address contemporary problems. This makes it important for us to revisit and revitalize the tradition of Naturphilosophie in the present day.

It is here that contemporary philosophers turn to Phenomenology. They see promise in the method of phenomenology as providing a much needed direction in environmental philosophy. A phenomenological exploration of our relation with the environment will involve examining what it is like to experience the natural world. It involves doing philosophy by attending to and reflecting on one's own experiences. Such an exploration reflects on the meaning of nature and environment and gives importance to the experience of nature in our day to day lives. It talks about the many faces of nature and seeks to understand what it is like to inhabit the world that is in various senses and to varying degrees natural rather than human. The phenomenological approach does not seek to solve environmental problems but rather seeks to examine what it is like to experience the natural world in order to regain the lost touch.

As David Abram states,

> It is natural that we turn to the tradition of Phenomenology in order to understand the strange difference between the experienced world, or worlds,

> of indigenous vernacular cultures and the world of modern European and North American civilization. For Phenomenology is the western philosophical tradition that has most forcefully called into question the modern assumption of a single, wholly determinable, objective reality. (Abram, 1996, p. 31)

Within this approach to environmental issues there arises a newer possibility to relook at our concepts of nature, humanity and human-nature relationship which serves as the basis of all our dealings with nature. Such reconsideration may help us to secure the foundations for an alternate worldview. In recent times continental approach to environmental philosophy was seen in the scattered views of certain environmentally conscious philosophers like Erazim Kohak and Neil Evernden. What is significant to note is that such thinkers seek in their works a 'philosophy of nature' that restores the primordial essential relatedness that binds man and nature together.

Such thinkers are now joined by many others who see promise in the method of phenomenology as providing a much needed direction in environmental philosophy. Although environmental philosophy had not taken into account the phenomenological method for long, much work of the classical and contemporary phenomenologists can contribute to solving the problems that environmental thinkers and activists are trying to grapple with.

The methods in phenomenology makes it possible to reconsider the philosophical issues of the environment in light of what has been handed down to us through the western tradition, but in such a way as to escape all the presuppositions embedded within them. It may not promise us the correct moral code nor any objective scientific understanding, but an insight which can liberate us from the dualistic ways of thinking.

This brings us to the problem that this thesis seeks to address which is that prior to any ethics we need to turn our attention to the nature of our existence and the way we are we are related to the world around us.

2.5 The Phenomenological Movement:

Phenomenology is a movement which, in many ways, typifies the course of European philosophy in the twentieth century. Phenomenology has a long history. The term 'phenomenology' was invented by the German eighteenth-century mathematician J. H.

Lambert to describe the science of 'appearances'. Phenomenology as a thoroughly modernist outlook which has its beginnings in the efforts of Franz Brentano (1838–1917) to supply a philosophical foundation for the newly emerged science of psychology and to tie it to Descartes' discovery of consciousness as the domain of apodictic self-evidence. Though Brentano anticipates many of the themes of phenomenology, it is with Edmund Husserl that phenomenology, conceived of as a science of the essential structures of pure consciousness with its own distinctive method, begins. Phenomenology, as a new way of doing philosophy, was first formally announced by Edmund Husserl in 1900-1901. For Husserl, phenomenology was a bold attempt to bring philosophy back from abstract metaphysical speculation wrapped up in pseudo problems in order to come into contact with the matters themselves, with concrete living experiences (Moran, 2001).

The definitions which closely reflect the traditional starting point for phenomenology for Husserl are:

Phenomenology is the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience (Sokolowski, 2000).

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Smith 2008).

Husserl focused on consciousness, and thought of phenomenology as a kind of descriptive enterprise that would specify the structures that characterize consciousness and the world as we experience it. The first-person point of view means that the phenomenologist, the investigator of consciousness, studies his or her own experience from the point of view of living through that experience. Thus Husserl's original conception of phenomenology is that it is a way of 'seeing' rather than a set of doctrines or theories. In fact, part of the way one starts to do phenomenology is to push aside any doctrines or theories – including scientific and metaphysical theories. This pushing aside is part of the method of phenomenology. The phrase 'way of seeing' could be written 'method of seeing' – it is certainly a methodologically guided way of seeing. Accordingly, some authors suggest that phenomenology is best defined as a method rather than a philosophical theory. The 'whatever appears to be as such' and the 'manner of appearing' or 'its manifestation' – these are all ways of talking about the *phenomena* , which is a Greek word for appearances. For Husserl, phenomenology (literally, the 'science of appearances') was a method that attempted to give

a description of the way things appear in our conscious experience. The way things appear in conscious experience may be very different from the way things actually are in reality. But the phenomenologist, on this definition, is not concerned about what things actually are in reality; the phenomenologist is rather concerned about 'how' we experience things.

Husserl's greatest philosophical achievement in was to found the phenomenological movement, one of the central strands of twentieth-century philosophy. Phenomenology claimed to offer a new beginning in western philosophy, though one that incorporated all that was best in earlier traditions, especially the intellectual revolutions carried out by Descartes and by Kant.

The Logical Investigations constituted Husserl's first "breakthrough" into phenomenology, though at the time he was somewhat unclear about the exact nature of this supposed new way of doing philosophy. In the years that followed, at the Universities of Göttingen (1901–1916) and Freiburg (from 1916 until his death in 1938), Husserl set about elaborating the full programme of phenomenology, not just as the epistemological clarification of logic and mathematics, or even as the a priori science of the essential features of consciousness, but rather as a pure eidetic science, a 'science of essences' which would also provide the essential grounding for all scientific knowledge, and would finally, in Husserl's mature vision, become coextensive with philosophy itself, phenomenological philosophy as such. Everything which appears to consciousness could be studied by phenomenology (Moran, 2001).

He was criticized as many felt that Husserl had lapsed back into the very Neo-Kantian idealism from which phenomenology had originally struggled to free philosophy.

Like all living schools of thought, phenomenology developed over time, but some elements in phenomenology remained constant through these changes. One is the emphasis on human subjectivity. Knowledge and awareness of the world are always someone's knowledge and awareness, as both Descartes and Kant had reminded us. Descartes had argued that all sound conceptions of the world must be grounded in our knowledge of our own existence as thinking beings, or subjects . The famous Cartesian dictum is, thus, 'I think, therefore I am'. Kant had stressed similarly that the 'I think' must accompany all our representations – that a representation of things must be a representation to someone (Matthews, 2006).

2.6 Subjectivity and objectivity:

As opposed to the emphasis on human subjectivity, the ideal of objectivity is one of the most cherished and prominent characteristics of natural science.

The objectivistic point of view could be characterized as ‘‘the view from nowhere’’ (Nagel, 1989). This perspective could also be called a God’s eye view, where it is assumed that there exists an independent reality that can be correctly described in symbolic representations (language) which correspond to things and relationships in the ‘‘real world.’’ According to the objectivistic view, there is a neutral perspective beyond human limitations, independent of human subjectivity and embodiment, a transcendent ‘‘objective’’ stance outside of the relationship person-world, in which the alleged correspondence between things and what-is said- about-things can be judged. Knowledge is objective, in the sense that it can be verified as factual states of affairs in the real world.

Such notion of a subject-independent reality is so ingrained in our cultural thinking that it is difficult to imagine knowledge and meaning in any other way. But however useful this idea may be in other contexts, it prevents us from grasping the subjective ground of thinking and understanding. In order to study the subjective in a positive way, and not merely as a disturbing interfering variable, we need an alternative way of thinking about the subjective. Phenomenology can reveal this dimension by the adoption of a different stance than the objectivistic one. In fact phenomenology is the systematic study of the realm of subjectivity Bullington (2013).

Phenomenology does not study the objective world as such, but rather the subjective foundations for being able to experience the world as objective and independent of our acts of attending and understanding. The way in which the world appears (shows itself) to human beings in and through subjectivity (consciousness) is the focus of phenomenology. The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, called subjectivity ‘‘the wonder of all wonders’’. It is the very ground for all our experience and knowledge and is the medium through which we can have contact with the world which we call ‘‘reality.’’ Phenomenology does not doubt the existence of the world, it simply recognizes that this certainty is yet another non-examined belief and as such must be examined in terms of subjectivity, which is the pre-condition for all knowledge and understanding.

2.7 The phenomenological attitude and the natural attitude:

In order to understand phenomenology it is important to distinguish it from what phenomenologists call the natural attitude. The natural attitude is our everyday way of seeing and understanding the world around us. This taken-for-granted, everyday understanding of the world is shot through with ideas, pre-understandings and prejudices which very seldom come to light, since it is ‘‘natural’’ to not examine them. However, these ideas and pre-suppositions stand in the way of the subject matter of phenomenology, which is the systematic study of the realm of subjectivity. (Bullington, 2013)

Being in this natural attitude characterizes our everyday life. This immersion or situatedness in the natural attitude is precisely the motivation for a philosopher to adopt a different attitude. That is, if we want to get a critical perspective on the way the natural attitude works and therefore on the way that we live our everyday life then we need to effect some kind of modification of that attitude. For the phenomenologist, this does not mean that we dismiss the natural attitude, or leave it behind. Rather, it means we put it in brackets or suspend it for some time.

The starting point of Husserl’s philosophy is what he calls the phenomenological reduction or Epoché. The reduction is a move in which the philosopher takes a critical distance to her assumptions concerning the validity and manner of the being of the world in order to describe and analyze the essence of consciousness in which these assumptions are constituted (Taipale, 2014).

It is within the phenomenological attitude that we carry out philosophical analyses. Phenomenology proposes that ‘living experience’ be taken as the foundation for our knowledge and understanding of the world. It is the notion of ‘experience’ that underlies all phenomenological investigations. Phenomenology in fact tries to revive our living contact with reality.

Initially Husserl’s’ project comprised of an exploration of consciousness, but, in his mature years, Husserl thought phenomenological practice required a radical shift in viewpoint, a suspension or bracketing of the everyday natural attitude and all ‘world-positing’ intentional acts which assumed the existence of the world, until the practitioner is led back into the domain of pure transcendental subjectivity. Without this leading back, this reduction, genuine phenomenological insight would be impossible in Husserl’s eyes; at best it would be no more

than a naturalistic psychology of consciousness. Thus, for Husserl, phenomenology starts with a transcendental rather than a naturalistic analysis of consciousness.

But the question arises how do we do a transcendental analysis? Husserl suggests that we need to effect a change in attitude, and specifically by moving from what he calls the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude. In the natural attitude, consciousness is directed at worldly things, events, and their various interrelations, and the existence of these is taken for granted.

2.8 The phenomenological method of Husserl:

To suspend the natural attitude does not mean that we should start believing that the world does not exist, but rather to set aside any belief about the reality or non-reality of the world. Husserl refers to this first step as the epoché, a Greek word for suspension of belief or putting things in parentheses or brackets.

The reason behind Husserl's method of epoché goes back to his epistemological concern to make sure knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is on a firm foundation. Since consciousness is our only access to knowing anything, we have to understand how consciousness works. This method of epoché is a first step towards that understanding. It requires that we suspend our metaphysical and scientific judgments not only about an object, but everything in the surrounding world, and about the world itself. But according to Husserl that doesn't leave us with nothing, it leaves us with the continuing experience of the world. That is, it leaves us with our consciousness of the world.

The second step in phenomenological method is usually referred to as the phenomenological reduction, although this is sometimes used to refer to the entire process, including the epoché. The phenomenological reduction simply means that we turn our attention toward the phenomena as they appear to us. With the epoché we are no longer interested in metaphysical or causal questions; now we take what we experience just as we experience it. Our attention is turned just to that, to how we are experiencing, and to how things appear in that experience. On that basis we simply describe what we experience.

Some phenomenologists talk about a transcendental reduction that takes the phenomenological reduction to another level. This can be explained by describing our lived experiences of an apple. To maintain the epoché , we would have to be careful to say not that

the apple is red but that I experience the apple as red; so, in the phenomenological reduction , we don't say that the apple is red, but that the apple appears to be red. This experience of the apple (or whatever) has its own existence, and as such, it exists in a certain way. Within that experience the apple appears from a certain perspective. This is a characteristic of the experience, not of the apple. Each experience presents the apple incompletely, and this is an essential feature of the way we experience things.

One more important piece of the phenomenological method concerns the idea that within the transcendentally reduced sphere of consciousness we can grasp the essence of the phenomenon. This is termed the eidetic reduction. Eidos is the Greek term translated as essence. Husserl explains the technique involved in this procedure as a form of imaginative variation. The idea is that we use our imagination to change various features of the phenomenon. For example, we can imagine the apple we see on the table in front of us being bigger or smaller than it is; being green instead of red; being redder than it is; being more round than it is; being heavier or lighter than it is; being more or less sweet or bitter than it is. We could imaginatively vary the way the apple appears by imagining walking around it or seeing it in a different context. There are all sorts of things that we could change about the apple. Through all of these changes it nonetheless remains an apple. The question, then, is what kind of change we could imagine that would actually change it from being an apple into something other than an apple. Whatever those characteristics are which cannot be changed without changing it from being an apple, then those characteristics belong to the essence of being an apple. The essence of something is equal to the set of invariables that we can discover through this process of imaginative variation.

Husserl had an epistemological concern to make sure that knowledge including scientific knowledge is on a firm foundation. Since consciousness is our only access to knowing anything, we have to understand how consciousness works. The method of epoché is a first step towards that understanding. It involves that we suspend our metaphysical and scientific judgments about everything around us and even about the world itself. Such suspension however leaves us with one thing, i.e. the continuing experience of the world. It leaves us with our consciousness of the world.

This is similar to Descartes methodic doubt as pointed out by Gallagher (2012) , Descartes too started by doubting everything until he found one thing that he could not doubt and that was the fact that he was doubting, which is a form of thinking. Thus one thing that he cannot

doubt is the 'cogito' or the 'I think'. Roughly, Husserl follows Descartes just to this point but no further. For Husserl the cogito is just this consciousness. It's the one thing that he can't suspend or bracket out. Importantly, however, he doesn't take Descartes' next step. To make the next step, Descartes, at least on one interpretation, uses logical inference to say, ergo sum – I think, therefore, I am. That is, he employs logic, and gets involved in argumentation of a metaphysical type. In contrast, Husserl stays with the cogito – with the bare fact of consciousness.

The experiencing subject or the self for Husserl is a pure consciousness. His insistence on the mental character of the self led critics to attach his approach as solipsistic, making him unable to recognize anyone or anything outside of his own mind.

In order to avoid this criticism Husserl identified the body as the locus of the experiencing self. However, he still affirmed the self as a transcendental ego ultimately separable from the phenomenal world including the body. This idea of a disembodied transcendental ego was later rejected by Merleau Ponty with his revised understanding of the significance of the role of the body in experience.

2.9 Intersubjectivity:

In order to overcome the charge of solipsism against his phenomenology Husserl acknowledged that the subjective field of experience is inhabited by other multiple subjectivities which makes the phenomenal field a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles (Abram, 1996). This is Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity which constitutes the real world in which we find ourselves. The notion of intersubjectivity suggested a remarkable new interpretation of the so-called objective world of science. The striving towards objectivity in science was understood phenomenologically by Husserl as a striving towards achieving a greater consensus among a plurality of subjects rather than an attempt to avoid subjectivity altogether. This intersubjective realm is the concrete basis underlying all experience. The objective reality of science is merely a theoretical construction of such experience. This intersubjective world of life led Husserl to develop his notion of the lifeworld.

2.10 Lifeworld:

Although Husserl first talked of the non material and mental character of experienced reality, his growing recognition of intersubjective experience and of the body's importance for such experience, ultimately led him to recognize a more primary, corporeal dimension which he termed the 'lifeworld'. The lifeworld lies midway between the transcendental consciousnesses of Husserl's earlier analysis and the objective matter assumed by the natural sciences.

In fact Husserl's phenomenology and the efforts of those who followed him like Merleau Ponty have been to make us return to the 'lifeworld', that is, to the pre-scientific world of experience. They question the rampant objectivism and scientism that is so widespread today and that is leading to the mindlessness we see around us. The positive sciences have had such immense success that they are no longer reflecting on their own foundations and eventual limitations, but, merely concerned with advanced technical issues. They are in need of an ontological and epistemological clarification but have also lost their existential relevance.

Husserl develops the concept of the "life-world" (Lebenswelt), the intersubjective world of natural, pre-theoretical experience and activity, which in his view was neglected by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant in favor of the world of theoretical science.

The life world is the world of our immediately lived experience, as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. Easily overlooked, this primordial world is always already there when we begin to reflect or philosophize. It is not a private, but a collective dimension- the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are entwined.

It was Husserl's genius to realize that the assumption of objectivity had led to an almost total eclipse of the lifeworld in the modern era. We often forget this living dimension in which all our actions are rooted. The emphasis on the restoration of the lifeworld leads us to appreciate the fact that different cultures have different lifeworlds and also that if the world experienced by humans are so diverse, how much more diverse , still, must be the life-worlds of other animals, of wolves, or owls or bees.

Despite the multiplicity he also talks about some basic structures of the lifeworld which are shared and are common to different cultures and also different species. This is his recognition of the earth as the forgotten basis of all our awareness. According to him every theoretical

and scientific practice grows out of and remains supported by this forgotten ground of our lived experience and everything has value and meaning only in reference to this primordial and open realm. The concept of the lifeworld was developed in his last unfinished book the Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology, written between 1934 to 1937, in the shadow of the impending world war. This was his most influential work where he addressed the scientific, moral and existential crisis of the age. However, Husserl saw himself as living in a time of crisis as indicated in the title of his last work

As Dermot Moran writes, Husserl was a philosopher with a mission, a mission to defend the very relevance of philosophy itself in an era defined both by astonishing scientific and technological progress and by political barbarism. (Moran, 2001)

Husserl challenges philosophers who reflect on the achievements of modern sciences and their transformative impact on human culture and on the world as whole. The Crisis was the last work that Husserl was able to publish in his lifetime. Husserl regarded the Crisis as containing his most important work, 'the richest results of my life's work of over forty years'. The crisis referred to by Husserl is the intellectual crisis of the western world whereby Husserl claimed that we have lost our belief that there is any rational certainty and any absolutely certain truth. The cause of this crisis according to him is the dominance in the modern world of the natural sciences and the accompanying philosophy of naturalism.

Husserl's' legacy was further taken up later by phenomenologists like Merleau Ponty who showed the relevance of phenomenology for the ecological questions that now confront us. It is Husserl's conception of the lebenswelt, the life-world, the world as experienced and lived by conscious beings that exerted a profound influence upon later existentialist phenomenologists like Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

2.11 The relation between existentialism and phenomenology:

Existentialist philosophy challenges the contention that philosophy is inherently high-flown; that the search for truth requires a turning away from the world of our concrete experience, as Plato's cave allegory would have us believe. It rejects the Platonic Cartesian-Hegelian ideal of eternal truth or absolute knowledge on the one hand and, on the other, the positivistic leveling which insists on objectivity and calculation. Contending that both approaches are abstract and inadequate for an understanding of our being-in-the-world, existentialist philosophy seeks to awaken us to an awareness of our fundamental involvement in a natural

cultural- historical milieu. It stresses that we are not neutral observers but rather, situated participants in an ongoing, open ended, socio-historical drama. It claims that truth comes into being in our concrete co-existence with others and cannot be severed from language and history. The existentialists declare that a non-situated human being is inconceivable, that the philosopher does not survey the world, and that philosophy is firmly rooted in a situation which has a historical depth. Far from being the unfolding of absolute knowledge, 'philosophizing starts with our situation' and attempts to illuminate it. The existentialist philosophers' central concern is to prompt humans not to live thoughtlessly but rather, to have a keen awareness of their freedom and responsibility in the shaping of a situation in which they are always already involved. (Langer,1989)

The fundamental features characterizing the situation analyzed by the major twentieth-century existentialist philosophers persist to this day. If we are to appreciate the particular relevance of Merleau-Ponty's major work, Phenomenology of Perception for our own time, we must bear those features in mind.

Existentialism base itself upon the principles and conceptions of phenomenology. Its focus is upon the exploration of the lifeworld of conscious subjects. It is only to this element within phenomenology that existentialism has made a contribution. And thus Husserl's concept of the lifeworld is the specific link between existentialism and phenomenology.

Existentialists focus on the existence of conscious being who is thrown into the lifeworld and who alone provide meaning and value to the world. Phenomenology and existentialism has strong influences on other disciplines like that of the social sciences. Especially upon sociology, cultural anthropology, political science and also upon psychology and psychotherapy. All of these sciences derive from it the importance of the conscious subject and his modes of structuring, feeling and acting in the world; they are studying the ways in which the individual subject perceives himself , others and the world rather than looking at him only in terms of his behavior, statistically or as defined by a social system. Under the influence of phenomenology and existentialism, social scientists and psychotherapists are discovering that an important part of our knowledge of human individuals and groups is understanding their ways of perceiving the world.

2.12 Husserl's critique of naturalism:

Husserl views naturalism as a philosophy according to which physical nature encompasses everything that is real. Naturalism thus reduces human consciousness to the status of being merely a part of nature, the product of the physical causes. Moreover naturalism demands that human consciousness, like every other part of nature, should be explained by the enormously successful methods of the natural sciences like in physics, chemistry, and biology. But Husserl insists that the conscious being is completely different from the material being and cannot be explained in the same way. More importantly, however, Husserl argues that if human consciousness is merely material and a part of physical nature, it can never be a foundation for rational certainty. Naturalism has brought upon us says Husserl the present crisis of the loss of a belief in any absolute certainty, any rational truth. Husserl makes it clear that this is not only an intellectual crisis of the lack of any certainty at the foundation of our thought but a social and political crisis as well. If for European man no belief has certainty then European man has no truth to be his shield against the rise of fascism and its appeal to irrationalism.

Husserl like Descartes was obsessed to by a vision of finding indubitable certainty for philosophy just like one finds in mathematics. But just like the Cartesian cogito, he failed. As a phenomenologist he had tried to demonstrate that through a complex phenomenological method of reduction or bracketing ordinary experience to pure experience we can know with absolute certainty the essential structures of our conscious acts such as thinking and remembering and on the other side the essential structures of the objects which these acts intend or refer to and thus philosophy would become a rigorous science and certainty would be achieved philosophy and all the sciences would rest upon this firm foundation of absolutely certain knowledge of the universal and necessary acts and structures of consciousness. Such claims forces Husserl finally to surrender his quest for certainty and led him to his last view of phenomenology- that it seeks to describe the structures of our daily life experiences, our common experience in the life-world (lebenswelt) of everyday affairs. The structures of the lifeworld the world as it is lived and experienced by conscious subjects is what phenomenology studies and describes and is the rich source from which the natural sciences must take their abstractions. Thus, the lebenswelt is the foundation of philosophy and also of all the sciences. With the conception of the lifeworld of conscious subjects phenomenology in this modest descriptive form still has its own foundation and is still

liberated from domination by the natural sciences. The conception of the lebenswelt is, thus, another important claim of phenomenology.

Although Husserl clearly criticized naturalism, he did not reject natural science or scientific explanation. Rather, Husserl was opposed to scientism, the positivistic view that everything is fully explainable by natural science. Specifically he regarded the naturalizing of consciousness, including intentionally, but also the naturalizing of norms, and things like formal logic, mathematics, and ideal essences as wrong-headed. Indeed, he was concerned about natural science – i.e., he worried that it did not properly understand its own epistemological foundations. He wanted to make sure that science and our knowledge of the laws of nature were firmly grounded. This was Kant's worry (and Descartes' worry before that). The right foundations cannot be found in psychology, or relativistic historicism. Husserl argues, however, that we should not return to Kant; rather we should take the transcendental project forward. In effect, for him, the new rigorous science, i.e., rigorous philosophy is phenomenology.

Instead of studying the world of objects in the material world, as the natural scientist does, phenomenologists, having decided to study another realm, place the ''real'' objective world in brackets, performing the so-called epoché, or phenomenological reduction. The term ''reduction'' by no means implies reducing wholes to parts or looking for the least common denominator, but comes from the Latin *reducere*, which means ''to lead back''. Husserl's use of the term reduction as *reducere* was a call to return to the things themselves, that is, to the way in which the world shows itself in and through consciousness, in order to obtain knowledge about the subjective realm. The phenomenological reduction places the reality status of the world and the objective qualities of things within brackets i.e. suspends our taken-for-granted belief in them in order to concentrate on an area that is non-thematic and impossible to see as long as the objective perspective is dominant. By putting aside all interest in the existence of the real world and the objective qualities of things, phenomenology shifted focus to the manner of appearance, that is, to the way in which human consciousness attends to that which appears as it appears to consciousness. The focus of interest is how things present themselves (manner of presentation) and how consciousness ''constitutes'' the meaning of that which appears. This meaning constitution is discovered by examining the streaming of consciousness towards that which is outside of consciousness. The technical term for the streaming of consciousness towards something outside of itself is

‘‘intentionality’’. Intentionality is a term Husserl borrowed from Brentano, characterizing the way in which consciousness always points towards or ‘‘intends’’ its objects (‘‘object’’ here referring to that towards which consciousness flows). In order to study the way in which consciousness intends or constitutes its object, the reality status of the world must be put aside. This does not mean that phenomenologists deny the existence of the real world, as mentioned before, it merely announces another focus of interest, requiring its own methods and terminology. Working out this philosophical strategy was Husserl’s life project. Consciousness is necessarily consciousness of something (that is, consciousness has the characteristic of intentionality), and the something doesn’t disappear just because we put it into brackets. When we suspend all of our beliefs and judgments, etc. about the whole world, we would still have all of our experiences that are experiences of the world within which we are situated. This puts us in a position to do phenomenology, since phenomenology begins with the description of the world as experienced. This world as experienced is the very starting point of knowledge.

Phenomenology may be characterized broadly as the descriptive science of consciously lived experiences and the objects of those experiences, described precisely in the manner in which they are experienced (Moran, 2012). It is best understood as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophizing. Phenomenology is broadly a systematic study of the phenomena or of what appears to the experiencer. As such, phenomenology’s first step is to seek to avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or, indeed, from science itself. Explanations are not to be imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within. (Moran, 2001).

Thus, phenomenology is concerned with ‘description’ rather than ‘explanation’ which the natural sciences are known to offer. Adopting the objectivistic methodology, the natural sciences explain nature as a ‘collection of objects’. To reiterate, phenomenology does not make statements about how the world is in-itself, outside of human beings experiences of it. The subject matter of phenomenological studies is an examination of various human phenomena such as for example, perception, time consciousness, sexuality, religious and cultural practices, the body, the experience of the Holy etc. from the point of view of meaning constitution.

2.13 Husserl's views on Science:

Husserl's life project was to establish phenomenology as a rigorous science, on a par with the natural sciences that studied nature (the world of things). However, since the subject matter for phenomenology differed in kind from the subject matter of the natural sciences, Husserl had to create a methodology and concepts that would be suitable for the study of human ''meaning constitution'', to use another term. He understood that the objective methodologies, so successful in natural science, would not do justice to the subjective. The study of ''appearances'' would need a new approach. This approach was worked out in Husserl's phenomenological thinking and gave inspiration to an entire phenomenological movement. For Husserl how human beings perceive, understand and live the world is the subject matter of phenomenological study. Thus it is the realm of subjectivity that is the focus of interest for phenomenology. (Bullington, 2013)

According to the objectivistic view, there is a neutral perspective beyond human limitations, independent of human subjectivity and embodiment, a transcendent ''objective'' stance outside of the relationship person-world, in which the alleged correspondence between things and what-is said- about-things can be judged. Knowledge is objective, in the sense that it can be verified as factual states of affairs in the real world. The ideal of objectivity is one of the most cherished and prominent characteristics of natural science. The notionof a subject-independent reality is so ingrained in our cultural thinking that it is difficult to imagine knowledge and meaning in any other way. But however useful this idea may be in other contexts, it prevents us from grasping the subjective ground of thinking and understanding. In order to study the subjective in a positive way, and not merely as a disturbing interfering variable, we need an alternative way of thinking about the subjective. Phenomenology can reveal this dimension by the adoption of a different stance than the objectivistic one.

In order to understand how the phenomenological project and its method is relevant for the environmental questions that confront us we need to shed light on the following:

Phenomenology proposes that 'living experience' be taken as the foundation for our knowledge and understanding of the world. It is the notion of 'experience' that underlies all phenomenological investigations. Phenomenology in fact tries to revive our living contact with reality.

Phenomenology does not study the objective world as such, but rather the subjective foundations for being able to experience the world as objective and independent of our acts of attending and understanding. The way in which the world appears (shows itself) to human beings in and through subjectivity (consciousness) is the focus of phenomenology (Bullington, 2013).

Phenomenology paves the way for a steady and insightful clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions about ourselves and the world around us which underlie all our current behavior, both individually and culturally. The result is a more robust understanding of nature, our place within it, and our ethical obligations toward it.

2.14 Phenomenological approach to environmental philosophy:

In order to address such philosophical concerns of the environment, the method of Phenomenology appears to be most appropriate to many contemporary thinkers. What distinguishes a phenomenological approach to the environment is that it takes the subject's own awareness and experiences as the starting point for philosophical, aesthetic, and moral reflection.

Phenomenology is widely held to be primarily concerned about 'how' one experiences the world rather than 'what' one experiences. (James, 2009) It seeks to discover general truths about how anything is experienced. This is done by attending to and reflecting on what presents itself to us in experience. Ecophenomenologists seek to extend this such phenomenological enquiry into how we experience the natural world that we inhabit.

Philosophy they say is to get to a deeper understanding of the world. This is sought through an examination of our experiences of the world. The novelty of the phenomenological approach lies in the fact the any examination of our experiences of the world necessarily involves our experiences 'in' the world, that we are essentially beings-in-the-world.

Phenomenology proposes an unmediated experience of nature as we experience it in the living of our lives. A phenomenological approach to Environmental philosophy involves paying close attention closer than is usual, to how we experience the natural world. It is the notion of 'experience' that underlies all phenomenological investigations. Phenomenology in fact tries to revive our living contact with reality.

- Such experience focused approach helps us to develop original accounts of

1. What the natural world is
2. And how we ought to act towards it.
3. What is our place in nature?

- As James (2009) notes a Phenomenological enquiry has a tripartite structure:

1. We are subject to certain ingrained prejudices which lead us to misconstrue phenomenon
2. These prejudices can be suspended or put out of play
3. Doing this affords one a clearer view of the phenomena

- The phenomenological approach leads to a renewed understanding of the concept of nature. Foltz & Frodeman (2004) point out that unlike the scientific theories of nature, ecological phenomenology reflects on our immediate, lived experience of nature and helps to develop 'a new "metaphysics" of nature'. They suggest that this approach is distinctive in two ways:
  (1) its central concept is, precisely, that of nature rather than the environment.
  (2) its reflection on nature is closer to metaphysical reflection on what nature is than to ethical reflection on nature's value, our obligations to it, or how to resolve conflicts amongst these obligations.
  This leads to a "philosophy of nature" which engages in a metaphysical rethinking of nature and thinks of nature not as the totality of material objects and processes, but as identical to being.
- The phenomenological approach leads us to the development of certain virtues which we can term as 'environmental virtues'.
- Phenomenology describes our existence as necessarily being-in-the-world and also being with other subjectivities and also being seen by others. Phenomenology's concept of intersubjectivity helps us to appreciate the presence of other non human subjectivities. This tremendously affects our worldview. To perceive a thing is to allow itself to disclose itself as having certain 'horizons'. As James (1999) writes, when I perceive a tree, I see only one side of a tree. But my perception includes as a horizon a sense of its other hidden sides. Thus, to see a tree is to experience it as having sides which though hidden from me would be visible to other observers standing in other positions relative to it. Thus, the tree is much more than what I experience of it.

- Abram (1998) further writes that when I turn away the tree still remains as an experience for others, not just for other persons but for other sentient organisms, for the birds that nest in its branches and for the insects that move along its bark. The presence of other bodily entities in fact establishes the relative solidity and stability of the world.

In recent times many philosophers hold that such phenomenological views have a lot to contribute to environmental philosophy. It was against the mathematized and mechanical concept of the universe that led Husserl to inaugurate the philosophical discipline of Phenomenology. Phenomenology is set apart from other theoretical methods by its unique capacity for bringing to expression, rather than silencing, our relation with nature and the experience of value rooted in this relation. For environmental philosophers, phenomenology suggests alternatives to many of the ingrained tendencies that limit our inherited perspectives: our myopic obsession with objectivity, our anthropocentric conceptions of value, and other legacies of Cartesian dualism (Brown & Toadvine, 2003).

Thus, phenomenology, as a contemporary method in philosophy, is particularly well suited to working through some of the dilemmas that have faced environmental ethicists and philosophers of nature.

2.15 How Phenomenology may be an appropriate response to the problems facing the human-nature relationship?

- **Phenomenology offers a critique of the Cartesian metaphysical dualism and the Human-nature divide:**

Contemporary ecological crisis can be traced precisely within the humus of the metaphysical dualism introduced by Descartes. As recognized by eminent critics of modernity like Hans Jonas, human-nature divide follows from the metaphysical dualism between the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa* : since nature is entirely and exclusively the latter, i.e. external, while the former is in no sense 'nature', that division provided the metaphysical charter for a purely mechanistic and quantitative picture of the natural world. Cartesian dualism is much deeper and is essentially metaphysical in character. It is ultimately a worldview in which all reality is divided into the two inseparable segments of the *res cogitans* and the *res extensa*, the human

beings and the rest of the physical world-conceived in terms of diametric opposition and exclusion.

The human perception of the natural world since modernity has been molded by such a dualistic divide. Accordingly, humanity and the physical world stand in total separation and mutual opposition within the Cartesian and largely modern worldview. The ontological divide between humans and the rest of the physical world, rules out any element of continuity and relationship whatsoever between them. The Cartesian bifurcation of nature, as noted by Alfred North Whitehead, eventually sanctioned the domination and exploitation of the natural world at the hands of humans, as the latter came to be considered as totally separate from and as hierarchically superior to nature. The roots of dualism can be found within the western tradition. It can be traced right back to Plato. It is important to trace the roots of the emergence of phenomenology in the rejection of Descartes dualism. Phenomenology as has been pointed above most forcefully called into question the modern assumption of a single, wholly determinable, objective reality fostered by Descartes dualistic ontology (Abram, 1996).

Brown & Toadvine (2003) claims that phenomenology overcomes the dualism of classical Cartesian thought, the separation of consciousness from matter that has infected philosophy, up to our present century.

Langer (2004) writes that Cartesian worldview, which dichotomizes reality, denies reciprocity, declares the non human realm devoid of meaning, and renders humans rootless in a world reduced to quantifiable lumps of lifeless matter. She recognizes the need for a radical ontological shift from the dominant paradigm to modes of perception, conception, and valuation that restore primordial interrelationships. The need for such a paradigm shift is found in the works of all the major Phenomenologists like Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau Ponty.

In his work Being and Time, Heidegger argued that consciousness was not separate from the world and human existence. He called for an existential correction to Husserl that would interpret essential structures as basic categories of human experience rather than as pure, cerebral consciousness. In his work Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau-Ponty broadened Heidegger's correction to include the active role of the body in human experience. Merleau-Ponty sought to reinterpret the division between body and mind common to most

conventional Western philosophy and psychology. As a philosophical tradition, therefore, phenomenology has changed considerably since its founding by Husserl, moving from cerebral structures to lived experience. (Seamon, 2000)

- **Phenomenology emphasizes the inseparability of humans and the world:**

Seamon (2000) states that man and the world are intimately interrelated. A central focus of phenomenology is the way people exist in relation to their world. For phenomenology, the world is understood as a correlate of consciousness. This is expressed through the fundamental thesis of intentionality according to which all consciousness is consciousness of something. In fact, Merleau-Ponty provided an excellent basis for understanding our interrelation with the world, which avoids the problems of dualism, or of epistemological extremes of empiricism or rationalism. His work describes our originary interrelatedness with the world (Clark, 2002).

- **Phenomenology's critique of naturalism:**

Brown & Toadvine (2003) states that phenomenology is based on the idea that the world as we experience it is different from the naturalistic conception of the world taken for granted by the contemporary sciences. While the naturalist or positivist philosophy modeled itself after the aims and methods of the natural sciences, and conceived of the world as a collection of things, essentially independent of consciousness or of man. There was no place, in naturalistic philosophy, for an understanding of consciousness, of us and our relation to the world. Nor was there a place for philosophy seeking truths or insights that were not immediately reducible to empirical fact or generalization. In short, naturalism dissociated itself from what in the history of philosophy had become known as reason. It was the rise of naturalism which Husserl, in his last writings, identified as the cause of a 'crisis' in European culture and civilization, a crisis consisting in the seeming collapse of reason and its absorption in naturalism. According to Husserl there has to be a rebirth of reason which will overcome naturalism. Phenomenology according to him can bring about this rebirth of reason. (Spurling, 1977)

- **Critique of objectivity:**

Phenomenology criticizes our obsession with objectivity and tries to restore the subjective dimension of experience. (Abram, 1996) states that Descartes laid the foundation for the construction of the objective or "disinterested" sciences which have yielded so much of the knowledge and so many of the technologies that have today become common place in the west. However, these sciences consistently overlook our ordinary, everyday experience of the world around us. Our direct experience is necessarily subjective, relative to our own position or place. The everyday world is hardly the mathematically determined mechanical object towards which the sciences direct themselves. Although in a society which gives priority to certainty and objectivity, one's direct experience may be referred to as merely subjective. Yet, Abram points out that whatever we perceive is necessarily entwined with our own subjectivity which cannot be stripped from the things that we study.

Kohak (1984) makes a distinction between the world as consisting of space-time objects to the world as experience. He writes, "Normally, we do think of the world as "objective," a set of entities occurring in space time and linked by causal and mathematical relations. However, while that is how we think the world, it is not how we in truth experience it. The world we experience is first of all our world, the playing field constituted by our being and doing, whether we are humans, woodchucks, or plants reaching for sun and moisture. That is what gives it unity and intelligibility. Certainly, it is not "merely subjective" in the sense of being arbitrary or contingent on my whim. If this cup is empty, no amount of thinking will make it full. Yet while not subjective, our world is fundamentally subject related. This cup is a cup at all, or more exactly, fulfils the function of a cup only in a world structured by its relation to a subject. Only in relation to a purposing subject does a network of relations arise in which this object can have that meaning or any meaning.

- **Emphasis on the experiential dimension of nature:**

Brown (2003) states that phenomenology takes its starting point in a return to the "things" or "matters" themselves, that is, the world as we experience it. In other words, for phenomenologists, experience must be treated as the starting point and ultimate court of appeal for all philosophical evidence. Phenomenology's specific contribution to ecological philosophy begins in the attitude of respect for experience that it shares with ecological philosophy and many environmentalists. Just as Thoreau, Muir, and Leopold describe the

world in such a way that the experiencing of the world is an integral part of it, and in doing so show us broader possibilities of experience, phenomenology as a philosophical method begins with a respect for experience and ultimately grounds all meaning in experience.

(Toadvine, 2005) states that the strength of the phenomenological approach to our relationship with the natural world lies precisely in this method's fidelity to experience. Phenomenologists share the conviction that philosophy must start from experience, even if Western philosophy has perennially sought to deny its debt to this source. It is necessary to rediscover the relationship between our sensory awareness of the world and our abstract thought about it, between our pre-reflective experience and reflection on this experience. Patient description of experience and of the means by which abstract scientific knowledge is constructed from experience is an essential prolegomenon to reconceiving our relationship with nature. In addition to making possible a clearer understanding of the epistemic foundations of our abstract sciences, such a phenomenological investigation of nature also provides us with access to the originary value-laden character of the world that science attempts to thematically explain.

Recently, environmental philosophers who are inspired by the methods of phenomenology in their search for a new philosophy of nature seek to restore the primordial essential relatedness that binds man and nature together. Such philosophers grapple with certain epistemological and ontological questions to restore to nature its significance which is independent yet not separate from human participation. Such philosophers bring to light the fact that the environmental crisis we experience today is similar in its roots to the crisis talked about by Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology. According to Husserl the crisis in Europe was a direct consequence of the objectivism that has dominated since the Scientific Revolution in the Renaissance, a revolution that is characterized by its quantitative ideal of method, its sharp distinction from facts and values. It has been a persistent endeavor among the phenomenologists of the twentieth century to overcome such dualism which distorts our perception.

Thus, here we establish that phenomenology as developed by Husserl and modified by Ponty is a good approach to be taken up in environmental philosophy it helps us to recover the lost sense of nature that we have in our experience of nature.

Thus, the present work attempts to explore the relationship between human and nature in the context of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty with special emphasis on the relation between ontology and ethics which emerges from his work. He develops a phenomenological epistemology and ontology which avoids the extremes of both realism and idealism that hampers contemporary thinking about nature. He provides a philosophical account of what it means to think nature from within, the human place in nature, our relation to non human animas and the role of human culture in our access to nature. His efforts to articulate the foundations of phenomenology, to construct a second-order or meta-phenomenology are convergent with the renewed philosophy of nature.

2.16 Ecophenomenology:

As Brown & Toadvine states,

> The intersection of ecological thinking with phenomenology, the momentum that drives each toward the other, begets a new cross-disciplinary inquiry: eco-phenomenology. (Brown & Toadvine, 2003, p. xii)

Ecophenomenology is a fresh philosophical approach to environmental issues as they face us in the present times. Going beyond the confines of traditional enquiries in environmental philosophy, ecophenomenology explores the questions that address the roots of the environmental crises. This involves questions of ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics; rethinking our very concepts of nature, self, and human nature relation. The method applied in Ecophenomenology is to take account of our direct experiences in order to understand what it means to be a part of nature. Being based on the theoretical framework set by phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, Ecophenomenologists explore newer horizon that may lead towards renewed sensitivity to our natural surroundings

Ecophenomenology explores human relation to nature by specifically looking at how the human subject experiences the natural environment. It is here that ecophenomenologists can draw insights from the works of social geographers and environmental psychologists who talk about the shrinking world of children and nature deficit disorders.

At a time when we are so distanced from and lost touch with nature it becomes more and more challenging to motivate people to adopt environmentally sustainable ways. In their attempts to recover natures significance in our lives and to restore our lost touch

Ecophenomenologists may draw from the works of geographers and psychologists through their research on place attachment and place identity.

Ecophenomenologists are of the opinion that response to environmental issues requires that we begin with our experience of nature. The underlying question is not what ought to be the relation between human and nature but rather how humans experience nature in the pre-reflective experiential dimension. Employing the tools of phenomenology, ecopheneomenologists discover the power of paying close attention to the experience of nature and thereby overcome the superficial feeling of alienation from nature. Ecophenomenologists argue that our dominant ways of understanding subjectivity, scientific objectivity, materiality, and animality cut us off from the actual experience of our environment. The rediscovery of our perceptual, embodied, and intersubjective interactions with our surrounding world opens us to dimensions of nature's meaning and value.

It makes us learn to be spell bound once again and to recognize our status as co-participants within that mysterious world of nature. It instills in us certain virtues which we can term as environmental virtues like paying attention, showing respect, taking care of the land itself, being sympathetic to other's views etc. When extended to our natural surroundings such environmental virtues can elevate our position of mere selves to ecological selves and help us experience our true essence as a member of a much larger universe.

The alternative experience and account of nature to which ecophenomenology gives us access is potentially revolutionary. The rediscovery of a natural world that is inherently and primordially meaningful and worthy of respect might help us to overcome our cultural estrangement from the world around us. This new vision of nature might also allow us, once freed from our nihilistic attitudes toward the natural world, to develop an appropriate philosophy of nature, a "phenomenological naturalism," that circumvents intractable puzzles concerning intrinsic value and anthropocentrism. For far too long, humanity has envisioned itself as an alien presence in nature, thus steering many of the world's religions and moral codes toward a rebellion against our own natural being. Having constituted ourselves in opposition to nature, we adopt values and purposes that threaten the earth itself. Only a reconceptualization of our place and role in nature can work against this tragic disconnection from us and from the wellspring of our being. To begin this task by reconnecting us with our most basic and primordial experiences of the natural world—such is the power and promise of ecophenomenology.

Neil Evernden argued in his work “The Natural Alien” that phenomenology provides us with a unique capacity for describing the values we find in the natural world as we experience it, before this world has been reinterpreted in terms of value-neutral scientific abstractions: "Both the phenomenologist and the environmentalist collide," he writes, "with our assumption of the world as an accumulation of subjects and objects." For Evernden, environmentalists and phenomenologists share a common goal, namely, their interest in "the things themselves," in a world "that precedes knowledge and yet is basic to it, as countryside is to geography and blossoms to botany." Since the innovative work of Kohak and Evernden, Ecophenomenology has attracted an increasing amount of scholarly attention from philosophers and others interested in environmental theory and practice.

Klaver (2005) claims that when environmental ethics is practiced within the phenomenological tradition ethics takes a back seat to other realms of inquiry, such as ontology and metaphysics. Based on Phenomenology’s emphasis on the experiential dimension of being such that what is, is always conditioned by what is experienced, Klaver claims that without phenomenology there can be no ontology.

From its starting point in experience, phenomenology provides an open horizon for the exploration of all facets of our relation with nature outside of narrowly prescribed disciplinary boundaries. By doing so, phenomenology makes it possible, perhaps for the first time, for philosophical thinking to express and respond to the full range of our natural experiences.

Recently, environmental philosophers who are inspired by the methods of phenomenology in their search for a new philosophy of nature seek to restore the primordial essential relatedness that binds man and nature together. Such philosophers grapple with certain epistemological and ontological questions to restore to nature its significance which is independent yet not separate from human participation. Such philosophers bring to light the fact that the environmental crisis we experience today is similar in its roots to the crisis talked about by Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology. According to Husserl the crisis in Europe was a direct consequence of the objectivism that has dominated since the Scientific Revolution in the Renaissance, a revolution that is characterized by its quantitative ideal of method, its sharp distinction from facts and values. It has been a persistent endeavor among the phenomenologists of the twentieth century to overcome such dualism which distorts our perception.

This study is undertaken to understand the human-nature dialogue in a new light. It does not refer to nature as it is explained by the natural sciences. Rather the attempt is to understand the 'meaning', 'value', signification' and 'motivation' that underlies human experiences of nature. As pointed out by Dilthey in the 1800s, the father of the so called 'human sciences', the methodology of the natural sciences is not appropriate in this study. The natural sciences study nature as a collection of objects and they base their study on an objective analysis and causal explanation. On the other hand in order to understand 'nature' as it appears to a human experiencer as a 'meant object' we need to adopt a phenomenological attitude.

Chapter III

Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature

3.1 Introduction:

This chapter will explore the philosophy of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and discuss certain relevant aspects of his work which make him a strong ally of the environmental debate of redefining the human-nature relation that confront us in present times. One of the most significant influences on the development of Merleau-Ponty's work was the phenomenological movement initiated by Edmund Husserl. However, as pointed out by David Abram, Merleau-Ponty set out to radicalize Husserl's phenomenology not just by clarifying the inconsistencies but by transforming it in a manner that endowed his philosophy with a particular power and relevance for the ecological questions that confront us. (Abram, 1996)

The chapter begins with an introduction to Merleau-Ponty, his major works, his philosophical project and ultimately those elements which make him relevant for the ecophenomenological project of contemporary environmental philosophers.

3.2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) was one of the most original, creative and important philosophers of the past century. He was a phenomenologist above all, yet he differed in fundamental ways from the three other major phenomenologists, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. He attended the prestigious Ècole Normal Superior, where he studied together with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and was well grounded in the history of western philosophy as well as with contemporary developments. According to Sartre, Merleau-Ponty confessed to him that he had "never recovered from an incomparable childhood", where he had known, in Sartre's words, that "private world of happiness from which only age drives us" (Situations, p. 157). In fact, Sartre provides a rich insight into Merleau-Ponty's motivation for his lifelong attempts to develop a philosophy of the "beginnings of the beginning" by returning to the pre-reflective world of experience. Sartre sees this as Merleau-

Ponty's attempt to recapture the immediacy of his happy childhood. Merleau-Ponty remained, for Sartre, like a child "surprised by everything".

This sense of wonder and surprise lying at the heart of Merleau-Ponty is the key to understanding his philosophy. Merleau-Ponty said that true philosophy consists in learning to look at the world anew.

Although Merleau-Ponty wrote on a variety of topics, this thesis focuses on those aspects of his work which contributes towards a renewed understanding of the human-nature dialogue through the gradual development in his interests from Philosophy, Psychology to Ethics, Politics, Aesthetics and Nature.

Merleau-Ponty carefully studied the developments in Psychology and the natural sciences and he was a powerful innovator within the phenomenological tradition inaugurated by Edmund Husserl. Lawrence Hass in his book "Merleau Ponty's Philosophy" writes that nearly fifty years after his death Merleau- Ponty's philosophy continues to live and breathe. It continues to offer resources that solve traditional philosophical problems. It continues to offer promising insights for our most contemporary concerns.

The major elements in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy are (1) his commitment to phenomenology as a philosophical method, (2) his phenomenology of perceptual experience, (3) his philosophy of embodiment, (4) his groundbreaking work on intersubjectivity, (5) his later ontology of the flesh, (6) his philosophy of expression, and (7) his philosophy of language. In spite of major influences on his work like that of Hegel, Gestalt Psychology, Descartes and Kant, the most significant influence on his work was the phenomenological movement initiated by Husserl. According to Donald A Landes, Merleau-Ponty was a rare thinker, capable of drawing together various traditions and diverse approaches into a unique manner of questioning that remained responsible to its past and to its objects of study while creatively forging new directions through an unmistakable style (Landes, 2013). Drawing from existentialism and phenomenology, certainly, but also from empirical psychology, Gestalt psychology, neurology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, structuralism, sociology, political philosophy, the philosophy of history, and advances in literature and painting, Merleau-Ponty's approach took up not simply a set of solutions from these sources in order to create a mere philosophical hodgepodge, but rather incorporated what he understood to be their promise into a unified patchwork in the direction of a genuine philosophical interrogation.

However, the two philosophical traditions with which Merleau-Ponty was most associated are phenomenology and existentialism.

Although later on in his career he turned to a variety of other topics, but his interest in perception and the body remained with him throughout his career. Two of his principle works The Structure of Behavior (1942) and Phenomenology of Perception **(**1945) focused on a phenomenological reflection on the nature of perception and human embodiment and proved to be a move away from traditional ways of philosophizing. Many scholars regard his work Phenomenology of Perception as the most important book which included almost all the major themes of his thought. His other important works include the Structure of Behaviour, Humanism and Terror, Adventures of Dialectic. He wrote numerous articles about politics and general cultural topics: some of these were published in book form in his collections Sense and Non-Sense and Signs. His inaugural lecture at the Collège de France was published, along with other essays, as In Praise of Philosophy. And, very importantly, towards the end of his life, he was working on two books, both uncompleted at the time of his death, and published only posthumously, in which his thinking took a distinctive new turn. These books are known in English as The Prose of the World and The Visible and the Invisible. In 1948, he gave a series of radio talks on his own approach to philosophy, the text of which has now been published, both in French and English as The World of Perception.

His last work, The Visible and the Invisible, published posthumously in 1964 reflected on the relationship between mind–body and world. This work is seen as an important step towards a new ontology. In recent years Merleau-Ponty's philosophy has taken on a newfound importance within the field of environmental philosophy. Particularly since the publication of his lectures on nature at the Collège de France, there have been myriad investigations of the implications of Merleau-Ponty's ontology for philosophical thinking concerning the human relationship to nature.

In order to understand Merleau-Ponty's philosophical contribution to environmental thought we need to understand the background from which his philosophy springs, the major influences on his thought and the subtle ways in which he differed from the views of those he followed to arrive at his philosophy.

3.3 Husserl's influence on Merleau-Ponty:

The most important influence on Merleau-Ponty's philosophy was his discovery of the later thought of Husserl. He had already heard from Husserl himself, as well as from Gurvitch's lectures, about the earlier version of his phenomenology. Having read about Husserl's later development in a journal article, Merleau-Ponty went to the Husserl Archive in Louvain in Belgium to read and study the later works of Husserl known as the Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. This reading convinced Merleau-Ponty that, in his later doctrine of the "life-world", Husserl's conception of philosophy had taken a decisive new turn; it was this later version that shaped Merleau-Ponty's own conception of phenomenology and he also developed that conception in new directions of his own. Merleau-Ponty, thus, took upon himself the task of unearthing the unthought thought in Husserl.

Some philosophers point out the subtle differences in the thought of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and show Ponty's position as closer to ecological philosophy. One such writer is Maurita Harney who writes in her article, Merleau-Ponty, Ecology, and Biosemiotics, that in his work Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty shifts the locus of intentionality from Husserlian consciousness to the body-subject. With this shift, Merleau-Ponty effectively shakes off the legacy of the Cartesian derived dualisms, most notably the oppositions of mind and matter, of subject and object, of culture and nature, and of human versus natural reality. This move to embodied intentionality means that intentionality is no longer the "mark of the mental" in Brentano's words, but must now be seen as somehow grounded in biological processes that are shared by human and nonhuman organisms alike. In dissolving the dualism that marks humans off from other living things, Merleau-Ponty effectively paves the way for a philosophical ecology. His later transition from "the body" to "flesh of the world" in his work The Visible and the Invisible marks a further move in this direction, reinforcing the idea that intentionality can now be generalized to all living organisms, and through this to the whole of nature. In this way, Merleau-Ponty sets the scene for a philosophical ecology, something that he did not fully develop himself, but which now presents itself as an important project for scholars of the discipline of Ecophenomenology. Such ideas shake the hierarchical relation between the human and non human world.

Thus, we find that Merleau-Ponty's reformulation of Husserlian concepts leads phenomenology towards an Ecophenomenology. He is undoubtedly, thus, taken up by contemporary thinkers as an ally of the environmental movement.

3.4 Merleau Ponty's Philosophical Project: the primacy of experience, perception and embodiment

Merleau Ponty's philosophical project was to present a "renewed image of the world", and of oneself placed within it among others and thereby an understanding of a more meaningful human existence (Diprose & Reynold, 2008**).** Philosophy for him "is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being" and true philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world" (Ponty, 1964). One of the most important aspects of Merleau-Ponty's ontology is the idea that the self and the world are inextricably entwined: to express oneself is to express a world that is already both a historical and natural event of meaning, but is no less real for that; and expression, whether philosophical, historical or scientific, is fundamentally creative. Philosophy for him is creative. He wanted his readers to approach philosophical issues with attentiveness, wonder, a demand for awareness, with the will to seize the meaning of the world or of history as that meaning comes into being. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty meaning is something that comes into being when we are attentive.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology seeks to redefine our relationship with the world. In this project he identifies 'experience' itself as prior to any scientific theories which try to explain our relation to the world. To put it differently, how we think about the world is rooted in how we interact with it before we think, and so our intellectual thoughts cannot be used to explain away that pre-reflective experience. The focus on 'experience' is unique to the phenomenological description.

Neither Kant's nor Hume's views satisfy Merleau-Ponty, since neither is based on phenomenological description. Both start from the wrong end, as if it could be taken for granted that there is an objective world as described in science, that we were one of the objects in that world, and that our experience is the result of the causal effects of other objects on objects of our type.

Ponty's philosophical project was not to abandon traditional ways of thinking but to rectify it. Thus, even though Descartes philosophy of the cogito stands in sharp contrast to his work , in

his work The Visible and Invisible, he applauds Descartes attempt to restore perceptual faith in a world and that his philosophy did inspire a science of the human body.

It has been mentioned earlier that in order to understand ourselves and our relations with the natural world, this thesis will adopt a phenomenological approach. For Merleau-Ponty we need to make a phenomenological study of living perceptual experience.

Phenomenology, in Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of it, is a philosophical method. Its aim is to put out of action the assumptions we normally make about ourselves and the world for scientific and practical purposes, and to get back to the world as we directly experience it in pre-reflective perception (Mathews, 2002). It has been Ponty's lifelong endeavor to draw attention the pre-theoretical, pre-scientific, pre-reflective dimension of our existence which is the basis of all our dealings and from which the sciences derive their concepts for the phenomenologists our access to this dimension of pre-theoretical existence is through embodied perception.

3.5 Perception:

Phenomenology for Merleau-Ponty was an attempt to get away from the theoretical constructions of science and philosophy by which we seek to understand the world and our existence and to return to simple descriptions of our pre-reflective involvement with the world. Merleau-Ponty's word for this direct, pre-reflective, involvement is 'perception' (Mathews, 2002). It is from this pre-reflective involvement that the theoretical constructions derive their meaning. . Thus, perception is our primary mode of contact with the world. The notion that perception is primary was already to be found in Husserl's' later work for both the later Husserl and Merleau- Ponty, 'perception' was fundamentally a practical involvement with things. To perceive something is not just to have an idea of it, but to deal with it in some way.

Merleau-Ponty takes up the concept of perception in his most important work the Phenomenology of Perception. If phenomenology is an attempt to clarify the meaning of the concepts we use by getting back to the sources of meaning, then perception must be primary, because it is in perception that these sources are to be found. To put it differently, we can only attach meaning to an abstract idea by referring back to our own direct experience of things, that is, to perception. In order to understand the significance of Ponty's understanding of perception to environmental thought it is important to discuss the empiricists and the

intellectualists idea of perception which are the traditional philosophical approaches to the idea of being concerned with epistemology or the theory of knowledge the primary concern of empiricists want to know what is the most basic kind of evidence which justifies our knowledge about the world.

Merleau-Ponty is however opposed to such cognitive relation with the world which reduces us to simply knowers and the world as consisting of separate objects huge number of separate objects, all of which occupy space and are spatially related to other objects. In addition to these spatial relations, objects may be causally related to other objects: that is, they may affect the position and the properties of these other objects.

Thus the notion of perception assumes lot of importance in Ponty's philosophy. For Ponty "the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" (Ponty, 1964). Merleau-Ponty sought to develop a descriptive philosophy of perception, our kinaesthetic, pre-scientific, lived-bodily experience and cognition of the world-the unification of our affective, motor and sensory capacities (Quinn, 2009).

For Merleau-Ponty the world which reveals itself in perception is not a chaos wherein everything acts indiscriminately on everything else but an ensemble of units which manifests a meaning (Madison, 1981). But this meaning is not something real and doesn't belong to the world as a natural property neither the meaning is an idea since perceptual consciousness is not constituting consciousness. This brings us to the point that meaning of the world belongs inseparably to the world and to consciousness and we must therefore take up an examination of the relations between object and subject, nature and consciousness.

Ponty sought for a renewed understanding of subject–object relation by contravening the authority of Cartesian dualism and objectivist thought-an authority that continues to limit present-day intellectual, imaginative, ethical, and indeed scientific possibilities.

He applied phenomenology as a method to achieve a renewed understanding of subject relation and identified a reciprocal relation that underlies all our dealings with the world.

This is what distinguishes the kind of phenomenology which Merleau-Ponty practiced from the traditional approaches of empiricism and intellectualism.

3.6 Merleau Ponty's approach to the traditional approaches of empiricism and intellectualism:

Ponty was dissatisfied with the traditional approaches in philosophy which claimed to provide complete accounts of our relation with the world. The problem he identified with the traditional approaches is that both empiricism and intellectualism pass over the phenomenon of 'perception' which for Ponty is the very ground of our relation with the world.

He therefore attempts at a renewed exploration of the phenomenon of perception and it became the central theme of his magnum opus, the 'Phenomenology of Perception.' In the first few chapters of this work, Merleau-Ponty argues for a broad, phenomenologically based, concept of perception that equates it, not with a detached awareness of objects, but with our active involvement with our world, and against those concepts that are based, not on a phenomenological account of what our experience is actually like, but on assumptions about what it must be like.

In particular, he focuses on two views that are opposed to each other in their conclusions but share certain common assumptions.

On the one hand, there is a realist empiricism, which assumes that the perceiving subject is one object among others in the world, causally acted upon by those other objects in ways that are covered by the laws of natural science. Perceptual experience is then described, not as we actually find it, but as science tells us it must be: it consists of discrete "sensations", each corresponding to a quality in the object that causes it, and each without meaning of any kind or necessary connection with any other sensation. Empiricism in this sense clearly fails to account for the unity and connectedness of our experience, and it is this that motivates the opposing view, which Merleau-Ponty calls "intellectualism".

Intellectualism is an idealist view, which Merleau-Ponty sees instantiated in such thinkers as Descartes and Kant. For the intellectualist, the structures that give unity to our experience are imposed on it by our own minds. In effect, perception is equated with thought about perception; the units of experience are not, as they are for the empiricist, meaningless sensations, but the judgements that we make about those sensations, in which the sensations provide the "matter" that is given "form" by the structure of the judgement. But both empiricist and intellectualist share the common assumption that experience cannot contain its

structure or form in itself, that it can have such structure only if our minds impose it upon a formless matter of sensation (Mathews, 2002).

Both empiricism and intellectualism, in their different ways, start from the wrong end, from the scientific theories that we devise in order to explain that pre-theoretical experience. A phenomenological description of perceptual experience, by contrast, will show it to be, in Merleau- Ponty's words, "that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting of our life". On this view, the world of objects is not something apart from us as subjects, acting upon us causally, but the place we as subjects inhabit. Its unity and meaning for us come from the fact that we live and act and move about in it; and in turn our being is, in the Heideggerian phrase that Merleau-Ponty adopted, "being-in-the world". So the account of perception that Merleau-Ponty defends implies a view about the inseparability of subject and world.

As opposed to such views Merleau- Ponty argued that a phenomenological approach to perception requires us to start by describing perception as we actually experience it, before we begin to theorize.

A subject that is essentially "in-the-world" is necessarily embodied, for only a subject that is inseparable from a particular body can have a place in the world, in space and in time. A body-subject, as it were, "looks out on" the world from a particular perspective, from a "here"' and a "now". Such a subject cannot be identified with a pure reason or a pure consciousness, able to take in the whole of reality at once and make sense of it as a whole. The real world stretches out beyond what we can perceive of it, and is, to use one of Merleau-Ponty's words, "inexhaustible". Even to say that, however, is to imply an endless commitment to try to "exhaust" it, that is, to make rational sense of it, to examine the world from different perspectives and to seek to connect one perspective to others. Our experience of the world is necessarily "ambiguous", never capable of being fully spelled out in rational terms. Our experience of ourselves, as this implies, is also not dualistic in the Cartesian sense; our subjectivity is not separable from our embodiment, or vice versa. Our inner life as conscious persons necessarily develops out of the impersonal physiological life of a certain kind of organism: a human being. And conversely the intentionality that the Austrian philosopher Franz Brentano, followed to this extent by Husserl in his phenomenology, had confined to consciousness is seen by Merleau-Ponty as at least capable of being a feature of physiological movements also.

3.7 Merleau Ponty's philosophy of Embodiment:

Merleau-Ponty emphasized the body as the primary site of knowing the world, a corrective to the long philosophical tradition of placing consciousness as the source of knowledge, and that the body and that which it perceived could not be disentangled from each other. The articulation of the primacy of embodiment led him away from phenomenology towards what he was to call "indirect ontology" or the ontology of "the flesh of the world" [la chair du monde], seen in his last incomplete work, The Visible and Invisible, and his last published essay, "Eye and Mind."

According to Ponty the body is the locus of our being in the world. Ponty says that the body is not merely in space but inhabits space by moving through it. The body's inhabitation of space is thus a matter of time and movement. So the ambiguity of being in the world is translated by that of the body, and this is understood through that of time because the meaning of being is in part engendered in a moving body (Diprose & Reynolds 2008). For Ponty perceptual meaning is importantly rooted in bodily movement.

Merleau-Ponty is known as the philosopher of the body. The contemporary view of the body is that of an object which is the vehicle of consciousness. In his Phenomenology of Perception he demonstrates that one is one's body. There is no ontological separation between the experiencing "I" and the body as one lives it. Indeed, the lived body is one's intentional opening to the world. It is through the body that one experiences meaningful things in the first place. Thus, Ponty's philosophy of the body is an investigation of one's existence, how we exist as bodies which are open to the world. The body escapes traditional conceptual divisions between subject and object, and between first person and third- person perspectives He gives examples of situations of illness and disruptions when something pre-philosophical can intrude and testify against thus subject-object distinction. Illness according to him reveals itself not simply as an absence of the proper function of the objective body but as a vividly experienced change in one's access to the world. David Morris writes that one's bodily experience and one's meaningful existential projects change in entwining ways. And one's existential projects are not pure projections of subjectivity, for they can be modulated by changes rising from the organic level for example by a prosthesis that gives a new way of moving (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008). Ponty believed that it is by virtue of the human body that we achieve a synthesis of the two classical positions and recover the primordial level of perceptual experience.

The human body plays a very significant role Ponty's conception of perception. The human body, on one hand, situates our consciousness in corporeal reality and thus is not a mere absolute subject understood by intellectualism; on the other hand, the body is subjective and active source through which we experience and know the world, and hence distinguishes itself from the usual empiricist presentation of the body as object.

Merleau-Ponty's careful phenomenology of perceptual experience shows perception to be an inherently creative, participatory activity-a sort of conversation, carried on underneath our spoken discourse, between the living body and its world. His later work discloses the character of language itself as a medium born of the body's participation with a world experienced as alive. That living world is none other than the Earth.

He believed that we are being held captive by an objective picture of the world. We believe that the world exists entirely independent of ourselves. Merleau Ponty believed that this scientific viewpoint is removed from any individual perspective. Science believes that the objective picture it holds of the world is complete.

But Ponty through his account of perception brings to light or emphasizes the fact that the picture of the world held by the scientific viewpoint is neither autonomous nor complete since it fundamentally depends on the existence of a priori human engagement with reality. He seeks to develop a descriptive philosophy of perception, reminding science that its abstract concepts rely upon pre-theoretical acts of lived experience. Science believes that reality is independent of us. The world according to Ponty is not something external to us that we merely contemplate. Underlying his philosophy of perception what lies is a philosophy of nature, in terms of a universal common basis on which all our existence, essence, values are based, he holds that this basis cannot be grasped through empiricism or intellectualism but can be done so through a meaningful bodily engagement with the world. According to Ponty the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and existence. Science is based on this perceived world. This perceived world is not a fixed realm. Nature is that with which our body is already united in the pre-scientific, pretheoretical world. We are one with it but we don't realize it. It goes unnoticed. It requires a complete reduction to reach this level of understanding. But as Ponty pointed out a complete reduction is impossible. Hence he says that the works of art particularly painting has the capacity to draw our attention to this level of enmeshed unity.

For Merleau-Ponty, the relationship between humans and environment is more like a reciprocal, communicative interaction than the mechanical action reaction of a subject impinging on an inert, passive world. (Cataldi & Hamrick, 2007) For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not just the passive recipient of stimuli from an external world. Rather, it is attuned to the world.

It means that the world that we operate in is not neutral with respect to our actions, but is in some way complementary to those actions. There is a kind of "fit" between the action and its object—for example, between cutting up cloth and cloth to-be-cut-up, between catching a tennis ball and the ball as something for- catching. As described by Hubert Dreyfus: ". . . the characteristics of the human world, e.g., what affords walking on, squeezing through, reaching, etc. are correlative to our bodily capacities and acquired skills" This idea of a reciprocity between the action (or the potential for action) and its correlate in the world is further developed in Merleau- Ponty's later work, The Visible and the Invisible. Here Merleau-Ponty reminds us of the reciprocity in perceiving and touching—that the perceiver is also the perceived and that to touch is also to be touched. The point here is that intentionality becomes 'globalized' to the world of which I am part: ". . . I am experiencing the world; yet when I attend closely to the carnal nature of this phenomenon, I recognise that I can just as well say that I am being experienced by the world" (Abram, 1996).

The body is neither an internal subject nor a fully external object of experience. Moreover, as embodied perceivers, we do not typically understand ourselves as pure egos standing in a merely external relation to our bodies, for example by "having" or "owning" them, instead the body is itself already the concrete agent of all our perceptual acts (Carman, 1999). In perception, that is, we understand ourselves not as having but as being bodies.

Thus, although Husserl himself talked of perception and embodiment, Merleau-Ponty elaborated and modified these themes to suit contemporary situations. This led to a philosophical reversal which is indicated by the terminological changes: perception is called vision, the body becomes the flesh, Being is given a capital; chiasm, intertwining etc. This indicates the paradigm shift brought about by Ponty in his philosophical project of describing the existence of a meaningful, rational world by making us reflect on our direct, living experiences.

3.8 Being-in the world:

A phrase that is often discussed by ecophenomenologists is Being-in-the-world. This phrase is borrowed from Martin Heidegger, another great philosopher of the 20th century and student of Husserl. But there are not many explicit references to him, at any rate in Merleau-Ponty's earlier writings; we can infer an influence mainly from circumstantial evidence, such as the use of the central Heideggerian term "being-in-the-world" as a similarly central concept in Merleau-Ponty's thought, and the discussions of Being and Ponty sought to understand the relation between humans and the world. He sought this though a phenomenological description of Experience. Central to his understanding of this relationship lies in the fact that the primary relation of human beings (experiencing subjects) to the world is not a cognitive relationship to a purely objective reality: that our relation to the world is neither a detached "view from nowhere" nor like that between objects in the world. Objects are "in the world" in a perfectly straightforward sense, the same sense in which biscuits are "in the tin": that is, they are spatially contained in it. But the sense in which experiencing subjects such as ourselves are "in the world" is different. We could not be in the world at all unless we had a position in space, and to that extent we are ourselves objects like any others. But "the world", for us, is more than simply the spatial container of our existence. It is the sphere of our lives as active, purposive beings: beings who have thoughts about it, who respond to it emotionally and imaginatively, who act on it (sometimes deliberately, sometimes unthinkingly), who are acted on by it and capable of being conscious of its actions on us, and so on. In all these ways, the world is, as was said earlier, the place that we "inhabit", rather than simply a set of objects that we represent to ourselves in a purely detached way.

What it is to "experience" the world, therefore, can be explained only in terms of such "inhabiting", rather than simply in terms of representation: indeed, we can "represent" the world only because we are already present in it and involved with it. We can formulate the idea of an "objective world" only as an abstraction, necessary for certain purposes, from our primary idea of the world as the scene of our own activities; we can understand the concept of a "view from everywhere" only because we already know what it means to have a view from where we are. If so, then we must "be in the world" before we can have a science of the world, so that the science of the world cannot replace that primary being-in-the-world.

Nor can the scientific account of the world take the place of a philosophical understanding of that underlying contact that gives the scientific account its meaning. This concept is central to

the existential phenomenology of Ponty whereby he differs from the earlier position of Husserl's phenomenology.

In his 1927 Being and Time, Heidegger (1962) argued that consciousness was not separate from the world and human existence. He called for an existential correction to Husserl that would interpret essential structures as basic categories of human experience rather than as pure, cerebral consciousness. In his work Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty broadened Heidegger's correction to include the active role of the body in human experience. Merleau Ponty sought to reinterpret the division between body and mind common to most conventional western philosophy and psychology. This "existential turn" of Heidegger and Merleau Ponty moved Husserl's realm of pure intellectual consciousness "into the realm of the contingencies of history and embodiment" (Polkinghorne, 1983).

The whole concept of the subject's being as "being-in-the-world" entered twentieth-century philosophy through Heidegger, and that therefore Merleau-Ponty's use of the term is a borrowing from Heidegger. But it often happens in philosophy that such borrowings take on a different character in their new home and there are sufficient differences in Merleau-Ponty's use of this concept to justify us in saying that he was not a mere unoriginal follower of Heidegger. The whole atmosphere of the two men's thought is worlds apart, and in this different atmosphere the notion of "being-in-the-world", while not changing in its essential definition, functions in a very different way. It is this difference in the mode of functioning that we need to understand if we are to see what is distinctive and original in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy (Matthews, 2002).

For both philosophers, talk of "being-in-the-world" is intended to emphasize activity and engagement rather than pure contemplation, and consequently the "world" is not a mere collection of externally related objects, but is a realm of meaning, in some sense of that word. But the philosophical context for the discussion of that engagement is completely different.

As the very title of his major work implies, Heidegger's primary philosophical concern was with Being. He was, as was said earlier, a phenomenologist, or at least claimed to be, but phenomenology for him was subordinated to ontology, the study of Being as such. Phenomenology was simply the best method for studying Being, the method of allowing Being to "show itself"; the focus was not on the human consciousness or subjectivity, to which "phenomena" appeared, but on what was revealed in this way. The essence of

humanity, according to Heidegger's later work, Letter on Humanism, is "its relation to Being": not to "beings", i.e. to individual objects in the world.

Around the 1950s, Merleau-Ponty introduced his existential phenomenology. This radical philosophy strongly criticizes the traditional sciences and philosophies of western culture. It establishes an alternative philosophy that condemns any subject-object division and launches instead a relational ontology that aims at our direct and bodily being-in-the-world.

As a philosophical tradition, therefore, phenomenology has changed considerably since its founding by Husserl, moving from cerebral structures to lived experience (Seamon, 2015).

In the history of philosophy it is usually thought that phenomenology influenced the later development of existentialism in thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, etc. In fact the original motivation for phenomenology was itself an existential one – the already being-in-a-situation, the 'thrownness', the 'facticity' of our existence. This thought – this situation – is one that phenomenology begins with, and the one it eventually returns to. In between it is like all great philosophies, attempting to clear a space, to find a place from which it can survey this very situation of being situated.

3.9 Nature of the experiencing human subject:

One of the significant aspects of a phenomenological approach is that the existential phenomenology of Heidegger and later Merleau-Ponty helped to redefine the nature of the human subject. Phenomenology in sharp contrast to Descartes disembodied cogito understood the human subject as essentially a being in the world. This turn to ontology is in fact paramount to redefining the human nature relation.

Once one rejects, as Merleau-Ponty did, the Cartesian notion of the human subject as isolated and detached from the world that he or she can do no more than contemplate, then one is necessarily committed to a much richer view of human experience as actively involved with the world. The "phenomena" with which human beings are presented in their experience are then no longer the contents of the "inner self", but are the things themselves, as they appear, not simply to me, but to any human perceiver who occupies the same position. And I, as perceiver, am a concrete human being, whose ways of experiencing these phenomena are at least in part those of my own historical epoch and social setting. In these circumstances, phenomenological description cannot be of some sort of "human experience in general", but

must be of a particular historical human being's or human group's way of being in the world. This does not preclude the possibility that there are general features of perceptual experience as such, of the kind described by Merleau-Ponty in the early chapters of Phenomenology of Perception, but it does imply that that general description must be no more than a basis for, and must eventually give way to, a phenomenology of particular ways of being in the world that in turn must lead to a philosophy of history and society.

3.10 Merleau-Ponty's views on Science:

Following Husserl, Merleau-Ponty viewed science as making models of things which it can then manipulate. Science makes everything appear as an 'object in general'. Science manipulates things and gives up living in them" (Ponty, 1964). However, he believed classical science still had a hope of rejoining the concrete world and had a respect for the opacity of the world, whereas contemporary science sees itself as free floating, constructivist, working with 'blind operations': Thinking "operationally" has become a sort of absolute artificialism, such as we see in the ideology of cybernetics, where human creations are derived from a natural information process, itself conceived on the model of human machines. (Ponty, 1964)

To avoid the consequences of such a deracination of human beings, science must be called back to examine its relation with the world and look more closely at the site or soil of the opened world we experience. In fact attention to this rootedness in the world is precisely how art operates. Merleau-Ponty contrasts the manipulative nature of science which knows, as he says, neither truth nor falsity, with the kind of truth that emerges in painting.

Ponty discusses Paul Klee, Cézanne, and Matisse, as painters who abandon a stylised formal representation of the world and rediscover the lived immediacy of vision and truly capture the vibrant reflective surfaces of things. Only art has the capacity of innocent looking without trying to form an opinion. The painter is involved in a giving birth to the visible rather than attempting to produce a representation of the world.

Merleau-Ponty's doctoral thesis which was later to become his first book, published in 1942, is The Structure of Behaviour. The main influence on him in writing this book was the 'Gestalt' school of psychologists, who emphasized the organized nature of human experience: our perceptions were not, according to them, broken up into atomistic units called 'sensations', but were structured wholes in which the meaning of individual elements

depended on their relation to the whole. Merleau-Ponty, however, thought that the Gestaltists were wrong to think of this as an empirical psychological hypothesis. It was, according to him, a philosophical thesis about the essential nature of human experience. But his interest in Gestalt ideas continued even in his later works. It has been pointed out by contemporary ecophenomenologists that in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy the importance of his first significant work The Structure of Behavior has been entirely neglected. It is important to note here that it was in this work that Ponty first proposed his philosophy of nature.

In the context of Ecophenomenology, Merleau Ponty's other work, Phenomenology of Perception is considered philosophically as a much richer and more wide-ranging work than The Structure of Behaviour. The best place to examine Merleau-Ponty's view of the nature and significance of Husserl's later phenomenology is in the preface to Phenomenology of Perception. Merleau-Ponty begins there by asking what phenomenology is. The first answer that he gives is the conventional enough one that phenomenology conceives of philosophy as the attempt to find definitions of essences, but he immediately goes on to qualify this answer, which would apply to Husserlian phenomenology at any stage in its development, by one which more specifically applies to the later version that we have just been considering. Phenomenology, he says, seeks to put these essences "back into existence" and to understand human beings and their world solely on the basis of their "facticity": the way in which they actually exist.

The phenomenological reduction, from this point of view, involves accepting the world of our experience as already there, before reflection, and of our experience as of "factitious" or contingently existing beings: it is not a rejection of the assumptions of our natural attitude, but simply puts them temporarily out of action so that we can study them in a more detached way. What phenomenology seeks to do, Merleau-Ponty goes on to say, is "to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide". This is the view of the central theme of phenomenology, as an explicit account of the life-world, which Husserl adopted towards the end of his life. But it is clearly fundamentally different from Husserl's own earlier talk of phenomenology as a "rigorous science".

The real world stretches out beyond what we can perceive of it, and is, to use one of Merleau-Ponty's words, "inexhaustible". Even to say that, however, is to imply an endless commitment

to try to "exhaust" it, that is, to make rational sense of it, to examine the world from different perspectives and to seek to connect one perspective to others. Our experience of the world is necessarily "ambiguous", never capable of being fully spelled out in rational terms.

Our experience of ourselves, as this implies, is also not dualistic in the Cartesian sense; our subjectivity is not separable from our embodiment, or vice versa. Our inner life as conscious persons necessarily develops out of the impersonal physiological life of a certain kind of organism: a human being. And conversely the intentionality that the Austrian philosopher Franz Brentano, followed to this extent by Husserl in his phenomenology, had confined to consciousness is seen by Merleau-Ponty as at least capable of being a feature of physiological movements also. It is this that makes our way of being in the world as body-subjects different from that in which bodies that are mere objects are "in the world". An inanimate object like a stone, for instance, is "in the world" in the sense that it has a position in space and is acted upon by other objects; but an embodied subject is "in the world" not only in these ways but also in the sense of being actively involved with the world about it. To explore our being-in-the-world is to explore our ways of being involved with the world, the purposes we have in relation to surrounding objects and the meanings that we give to them (neither of which are necessarily part of our explicit consciousness). This concept of an intentionality that is not necessarily conscious enables Merleau-Ponty to give an account of Freudian psychoanalysis, and of mental disorder generally, that avoids any hint of mechanistic or reductionist modes of thought.

As body-subjects, Merleau-Ponty goes on to argue, we are not isolated from other subjects in the way that Cartesian dualism seems inevitably to imply; our being-in-the-world is being in the social and cultural world as well as in the world of physical nature. Indeed, being the kinds of creatures we are, we cannot ultimately separate our inherence in nature from our inherence in society. We communicate with other subjects through language; but we also live in a world of streets and houses and cultural institutions that we share with them and that also necessarily have a meaning for us. Our individual experience is thus lived out against the background of a certain social reality, and cannot be understood except by taking account of that social reality. Social and political involvement is in this way for Merleau-Ponty not an optional addition to individual life, but a necessary part of our being-in-the-world; his political theory is likewise an integral part of his philosophy as a whole. (Moran, 2001)

3.11 Merleau Ponty on Experience:

Merleau Ponty writes,

> All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from… some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced. (Ponty, 1964, p.viii)

Instead of focusing on the conditions for the possibility of experience as various transcendental philosophies have done, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology aims to draw our attention to the always presupposed and actually present background of our actual experience. It dispenses with the traditional mystifications in so far as it refuses to regard experience as an entity which can be analysed into its component parts, and refrains from constructing a basis for it in a transcendental sphere on the hither side of all actual experience. For Merleau-Ponty, experience is 'a process of transcendence'. His phenomenological reduction does not render us the given as it appears to common sense or naive science. The reduction subverts the reifications of the natural attitude by showing that the given is constituted in a primordial dialogue between body-subject and world. The given which is revealed by this phenomenological reduction has a history and is part of a whole network of relations; it is profoundly dynamic. Analytic reflection and scientific induction are equally inadequate for comprehending experience as disclosed by the phenomenological reduction. Moreover, Merleau -Ponty himself approaches the given obliquely, so to speak, by studying and describing the disturbances which arise from breakdowns in the primordial dialogue. As long as that dialogue proceeds smoothly, we take its results for granted and consider them a 'natural' world. It is when the dialogue is disturbed that its character as dialogue begins to emerge and we sec that the subject's way of living its body is decisive for the manner in which it apprehends the world. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological description proceeds in a Hegelian fashion: at each stage of his investigation, he summons the traditional dogmatic positions and shows how they subvert themselves. Through the continual juxtaposition and dissolution of these theories, Merleau-Ponty endeavors to establish that our experience is neither a mechanistically determined process nor a purely fortuitous construction, and that our various explicit relationships with the world are subtended by a primordial background which cannot itself ever become entirely explicit. If we attempt to tear our experience free from this background in order to study it without its obscure roots, or

alternatively, if we try to force that background itself to cease being a background so that we might circumscribe it completely, we only succeed in, distorting that fundamental pre-personal movement of existence which are and which our body continues to live despite our intellectual contortions. Ultimately, as Merleau-Ponty notes in the 'Preface', 'we shall find in ourselves, and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology'. As genuinely radical reflection, phenomenology recognizes that our primordial relationship to the world 'is not a thing which can be any further clarified by analysis; the dynamic, internal relation between body-subject and world can only be brought to our attention. This bringing to attention is itself, however, a 'creative act' which brings truth into being by disclosing behind reflection that mysterious perceptual realm which is our very 'access to truth '.

Indeed, Ponty argued that living experience isn't some screen of ideas inside the mind or a veil of subjective appearances. For Merleau- Ponty, quite the contrary: it is a continual opening to and immersion in a natural world that is not oneself; it is the field in which we live, breathe, think, and love. Understanding this experience on its own terms— studying and articulating its unique features— isn't some retrograde mysticism, but rather part of an important intellectual movement toward enriched understanding and integrated living. I am convinced that these goals are part of the enduring legacy of phenomenology, part of the reason Merleau- Ponty's thought has remained vital and productive for many philosophers and theorists around the world. (Hass, 2008)

My primary task in the preceding chapters was to articulate the main elements of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of living experience. Even though it is difficult to "know precisely what we see," Merleau- Ponty attempts to show that living experience emerges through the symbiotic intertwining of one's own pulsing body, the overflowing, transcendent world of things, and the living bodies of others. Further, he reminds us that experience is sensual, affective, inter- dynamic, and inescapably carnal. Indeed, against intellectual systems and models that suppress, deform, or denigrate these basic truths, Merleau- Ponty's phenomenology "says to show" what we actually experience in life. Not mechanistic objects constituting an abstract Newtonian universe, but flesh, organic life, and a natural world. Not clusters of sense- data, but sensually rich things and artifacts: trees and mountains, chairs and buildings. Not solipsism, but complex relations and carnal contact with other creatures.

Moreover, we have seen that this phenomenology is not a naïve return to some pre-philosophical immersion in merely private experience. On the contrary, in revealing the

derivative character of abstract concepts and models, Merleau- Ponty's phenomenology uncovers reality as we live and share it with others, and endows it with a philosophical status Indeed, for him as for Heidegger, phenomenology is ontology.

Ponty reveals important features of living experience: perception, embodiment, intersubjective life, thinking and language. He radicalizes phenomenological method as well, for he gradually comes to understand his own philosophical practice as expression. For Ponty philosophy is about "Expressing what exists is an endless task". Philosophy, re- conceived by Merleau- Ponty as expressing the world, as "singing the world," is an endless task, but not a futile one. It is the ongoing work of renewing our connections to the world, of embracing our very being as flesh and nature, of remaining alive to our being with each other. At the same time, it is also about celebrating the creative, transformative powers of thought, language, and philosophy itself (Ponty, 1964).

3.12 Merleau Ponty's Ontology:

Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology sought to provide a different way of understanding how human beings inhabit the world. In recent years Merleau-Ponty's philosophy has taken on a new found importance within the field of environmental philosophy. Particularly since the publication of his lectures on nature at the Collège de France, there have been myriad investigations of the implications of Merleau-Ponty's ontology for philosophical thinking concerning the human relationship to nature.

He sought to rearticulate the relationship between subject and object, self and world, among various other dualisms, and his early and middle work did so primarily through an account of the lived and existential body. He argued that the significance of the body, or the body-subject as he sometimes referred to it, is too often underestimated by the philosophical tradition which has a tendency to consider the body simply as an object that a transcendent mind orders to perform varying functions.

In contrast to this view, Merleau Ponty considered the body as the true subject of experience. It is the body which makes experience possible. The living body is the very possibility of contact, not just with others but with oneself- the very possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge. This turn of putting the body to the forefront of philosophy is Merleau-Ponty's major achievement. He considers 'perception' as the reciprocity or the ongoing interchange between the body and the entities that surround it.

For Ponty, the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. He writes ,

> All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge is gained from… some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced. (Ponty, 1962, p. ix)

In place of Cartesianism and scientific objectivism, Merleau-Ponty installs a kind of thinking that reveals the basic continuity between human perception and perceived nature, between the sentient and the sensible. This is not an interconnectedness model, which would imply an original separation of humans and nature, but an attempt to think the originary identity of embodied consciousness and the natural world. All scientific understanding is based on a pre-scientific level of our experience of the world.

In his work, 'The Visible and the Invisible', Merleau-Ponty claims that we must "recommence everything," and in doing so he creates an ontological concept, "flesh," which he says is neither thought nor thing, but rather an epistemological and ontological relation, that includes the sentient-sensible and the sensed-sensible (i.e., perceiving being and perceived being) as its two lips or leaves. Flesh, then, is neither subject nor object, but the "formative medium" of the two—a "general manner of being". By means of this new ontology Merleau-Ponty attempts a radical reevaluation of our most basic conceptual presuppositions of the tradition of Western metaphysics: our ontological categories of thought, thing, selfhood, and alterity.

There is a general consensus that Merleau Ponty's concept of flesh is his central contribution to environmental Philosophy. The concept of flesh provides a distinct account of the human relation to nature. Merleau-Ponty considers the flesh as the most fundamental element of which everything is made, through which everything comes into being. Or closer to Merleau-Ponty's own words, it is that 'brute being' that upholds the world and me inwardly and renders them present to each other.

The flesh is the mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its own spontaneous activity.

In order to demonstrate empirically his notion of flesh Merleau Ponty calls attention to the obvious but easily overlooked fact that my hand is able to touch only because my hand is itself a touchable thing and is entirely a part of the tactile world that it explores. Thus, our sentient bodies are entirely continuous with the vast body of the land. It means to touch is also to feel touched, to see is also to feel oneself seen. (Abram, 1996)

Such ideas can profoundly influence one's behavior. If my surroundings are attentive and watchful then I must take care that my actions are mindful and respectful, not only towards other humans but with the rest of nature as well.

Ecophenomenologists argue that our entrenched ways of understanding human subjectivity, scientific objectivity, materiality, and animality cut us off from the actual experience of our environment. The rediscovery of our perceptual, embodied, and intersubjective interactions with our surrounding world opens us to dimensions of nature's meaning and value that our habitual ways of conceptualizing our environmental problems tend to obscure.

3.13 Merleau Ponty's Philosophy of Nature:

As Dermot Moran points out, Merleau-Ponty has made the most original and enduring contribution to post-Husserlian phenomenology in France, through his attempts to offer a radical description of the primary experiences of embodied human existence. This also leads to a renewed philosophy of nature which is of concern to contemporary environmental philosophers.

Merleau Ponty's interest in nature was first made known in his first work *The Structure of Behavior* where he explored the relationship between consciousness and nature what interested him was the ambiguous relation between nature and consciousness, of foundedness of consciousness in nature and how nature was in turn "given" to consciousness. (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008)

This concern of Ponty is of interest to recent environmental thinkers in their exploration of questions like if human are to be understood as immanent to nature and not as distant spectators then what does it mean to think nature from within? (Toadvine, 2009)

There is a common thread that binds us to nature which Ponty terms as flesh. Nature is no longer a problem to be fixed. Ponty was interested in understanding the deeper issues like the

"being" of nature and the "being" of consciousness. He drew inspiration from gestalts psychology's notion of isomorphism-the thesis that there is a corresponding kinship between consciousness and nature. He believed that because the world of nature and my own lived consciousness are of the same "flesh" (as he refers to it the Visible and the Invisible) that consciousness is able to enter into a relationship of knowing through kinship with the world. He believes that scientific knowledge of nature would ultimately be "knowledge by acquaintance" rather than a merely theoretical "knowledge about" nature (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008).

Drawing insights from Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, David Abram writes that our civilised distrust of the senses and of the body engenders a metaphysical detachment from the sensible world, fosters the illusion that we ourselves are not part of the world we study, that we can objectively stand apart from that world, as spectators, and can thus determine its workings from outside. A renewed attentiveness to bodily experience, however, enables us to recognize and affirm our inevitable involvement in that which we observe, our corporeal immersion in the depths of a body much larger than our own (Abram, 1988).

In fact, the central idea behind Merleau Ponty's philosophical project is that we have been conditioned to perceive the world in fixed ways. However, according to him the world around us is dynamic and a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles. He regarded the body as the central locus of all life, all knowledge and thus of all science and philosophy. This turn of putting the body to the forefront of philosophy is Merleau-Ponty's major achievement. Merleau Ponty identifies the experiencing subject with the bodily organism. It is with the help of the body that we see, touch, smell and enter into relations with other presences. The living, attentive body that Merleau Ponty talks about is different from the anatomized and mechanical body. David Abram in his work, "The Spell of the Sensuous" explains how the sensing body according to Merleau Ponty is not a programmed machine, but, an active and open form, continually improvising its relation to things and to the world. The body's actions and engagements are never wholly determinate, since they must ceaselessly adjust themselves to a world that is itself continually changing. If the body was truly a set of closed or predetermined mechanism, it could never come into genuine contact with anything outside of itself, could never perceive anything really new, and could never be genuinely startled or surprised. Such predetermined machine would not really have any experiences. Moreover the body subject in necessarily present in a world which continuously

unfolds various aspects of it to the experiencing body. Each thing, each entity that my body sees, presents some facet of itself to my gaze while withholding other aspects from view. Every object out there invites my attention. When our body responds to its call it discloses some new dimension that in turn invites further exploration. In this way the simplest thing may become a world for me, as conversely, the thing or being comes to take its place more deeply in my world (Abram, 1996). Perception in Merleau Ponty's work is precisely this reciprocity, the ongoing interchange between our bodies and the entities that surround it. It is a sort of silent conversation that we carry on with things, a continuous dialogue that unfolds far below our verbal awareness. In perception neither the perceiver nor the perceived is wholly passive. It involves a mutual interaction. Thus, whenever we objectify any object we do so by withdrawing ourselves from this relation. We deny its ability to provoke our senses. Thus, in place of Cartesianism, Merleau-Ponty installs a kind of thinking that reveals the basic continuity between human perception and perceived nature, between the sentient and the sensible.

For Merleau-Ponty, the relationship between humans and environment is more like a reciprocal, communicative interaction than the mechanical action reaction of a subject impinging on an inert, passive world. For Merleau-Ponty, the body is not just the passive recipient of stimuli from an external world. Rather, it is attuned to the world. It means that the world that we operate in is not neutral with respect to our actions, but is in some way complementary to those actions. There is a kind of "fit" between the action and its object—for example, between cutting up cloth and cloth to- be-cut-up, between catching a tennis ball and the ball as something for- catching. As described by Hubert Dreyfus: ". . . the characteristics of the human world, e.g., what affords walking on, squeezing through, reaching, etc. are correlative to our bodily capacities and acquired skills" This idea of a reciprocity between the action (or the potential for action) and its correlate in the world is further developed in Merleau- Ponty's later work, The Visible and the Invisible. Here Merleau-Ponty reminds us of the reciprocity in perceiving and touching—that the perceiver is also the perceived and that to touch is also to be touched. The point here is that intentionality becomes 'globalized' to the world of which I am part: ". . . I am experiencing the world; yet when I attend closely to the carnal nature of this phenomenon, I recognise that I can just as well say that I am being experienced by the world" (Abram 1996, 100 n).

In recent years, many eco philosophers point out that Merleau Ponty's philosophy has much to offer in our understanding of nature, our place within it and our ethical obligations towards it. According to him the non human other is no longer inert, alien, meaningless and even threatening or a sovereign self transparent ego.

Monika Langer states,

> In reestablishing the mind's 'roots' in the body and the world Merleau-Ponty describes how 'objective thinking'—which dominates our (Western) culture, underlying as it does our common sense, our sciences, and our traditional philosophies—distorts our lived experience, alienating us from ourselves, our world, and other people. In the place of Cartesianism, Merleau-Ponty installs a kind of thinking that reveals the basic continuity between human perception and perceived nature, between the sentient and the sensible. This is not an interconnectedness model, which would imply an original separation of humans and nature, but an attempt to think the originary identity of embodied consciousness and the natural world. (Langer, 2004, p.126)

Langer, (2004) claims that Ponty's study of behavior shows that we must discard the assumption of an external observer and embrace the notion of knowledge as an apprehension of existences whose meaning reveals itself to us in perception. Merleau-Ponty not only provides the most detailed critique of the traditional dualistic ontology, but he also offers a highly original, nondualistic ontology in its place. She writes that this can supply environmentalists with a comprehensive ontological and phenomenological foundation for an environmental ethics. Both Merleau- Ponty's critiques of objective thinking and his new ontology support environmentalists' call for a radical change in our perception of ourselves and the world. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological descriptions can contribute to bringing about such a fundamental paradigm shift (Langer, 2003).

Several headlines of his phenomenology such as 'returning to the things themselves', or 'the world is at the heart of our flesh', have inspired environmental philosophers to believe that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology may hold the foundations for a truly ecologically sound philosophy. According to Dermot Moran, Merleau-Ponty has made the most original and enduring contribution to post-Husserlian phenomenology in France, through his attempts to offer a radical description of the primary experiences of embodied human existence. In

opposition to all forms of dualism, in his major work, Phenomenology of Perception (1945), he offers a phenomenological account of our 'being-in-the-world' as a corrective to the distorted accounts of experience found, on the one hand, in rationalism, idealism, and what he calls 'intellectualism', and, on the other hand, in empiricism, behaviourism, and experimental science.

The Philosophy of nature that emerges from his ontology of nature can thus give us an improved appreciation both of how nature is an interconnected whole and of the dependent place that we occupy within this whole – an appreciation that can help to motivate us to practice more environmentally sustainable ways of life.

3.14 Merleau Ponty on rationality:

The notion of phenomenological understanding is inseparable from the clarification of what is involved in human rationality. Husserl's earlier phenomenology sought to elucidate rationality in a more or less Kantian fashion by uncovering the a priori rational structures of human experience as such. But a historicist or hermeneutic phenomenology of the kind developed in the Preface to Phenomenology of Perception must approach this task differently, by working through human experience to a concept of rationality that emerges from the dealings of human beings with each other in society and history. What is rational, on this view, does not consist of the eternal truths about "true and immutable natures" that might be evident to the "clear and distinct perception" of a transcendental ego; it cannot, since there is no such thing as a "transcendental ego" in that sense. Our subjectivity is irredeemably located "in the world", in time, space and history. Rationality must therefore be something that emerges from the human processes of reasoning to a conclusion that all those involved in the argument are able to share.

The rational structure of the world that we inhabit, or the rational meaning of the history of which our lives form part, is thus not located in some other realm of Platonic Forms or Hegelian Absolute Spirit, but is discovered in the "intersection" of my views and those of other people, or of my past views with those of my present. In this sense, it is something created rather than discovered. "Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being"; the comparison between philosophy and art is a recurrent theme in Merleau-Ponty's writings, and will be discussed further in the next Chapter.

According to Ponty, the establishment of rationality cannot be expected ever to achieve completion, or to be immune to the influences and problems of its own time. But rationality, Merleau-Ponty insists, is not problematic: we find what is rational every time we engage in debate with others and manage to arrive at conclusions that are agreed on the basis of argument. Philosophy, as he conceives it (following Husserl, as he himself would claim), is not a discovery of transcendent or eternal truths, but the adoption of an attitude of wonder, of being a "perpetual beginner": "True philosophy consists", he says, "in relearning to look at the world." (Matthews 2002, p.41)

This may sound like a variety of philosophical idealism, as if what we call the "objective world" were merely a human construct out of our inner experiences, but Merleau-Ponty denies this. If our being is "being-in-the-world", then that implies rejection of any dualist distinction between purely interior experiences and purely external objects. Perception is not an inner representation of an objective world, but a relation of inhabiting a world; and we can only inhabit a world that we find already there when we begin to experience it. If perception were some interior process, then it would be impossible to describe our perceptual experience, since "inner impressions" are by their very nature inexpressible. No such problem faces a conception of perception understood as part of our being-in-the world.

The immediate objects of perception are then no longer "visual data", the internal end-products of a causal process which started with the object seen, but "the meaning, the structure, the spontaneous arrangement of parts". The rejection of "objectivism" by Merleau-Ponty thus does not imply subjective idealism, in the sense of a denial of the independent reality of the objects that we experience. As he says in "The Primacy of Perception", "our relation to the world is not that of a thinker to an object of thought, and . . . the unity of the perceived thing, as perceived by several consciousnesses, is not comparable to the unity of a proposition, as understood by several thinkers".

3.15 Merleau-Ponty on the self-other relation:

Merleau-Ponty's most important contributions to rethinking the relation between self and other are his account of perception and embodiment. Contrary to the beliefs of his predecessors Ponty believed that we cannot know ourselves as mere souls or minds in abstraction from our bodies and perceptions. He believed that there cannot be a mind or a

subject without some form of bodily perceptual orientation in a world. (Carman, 2008). Being embodied and perceiving a world are part of what it is for us to exist at all.

In his magnum opus, Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty gave an account of our experience of others in our bodily being in the world. Here he made a fresh approach to the problem of other minds by characterizing a person or a subject of experience as a bodily being. According to him we encounter others not just as minds but as fellow flesh and blood creatures with whom we share a common material world. In Merleau-Ponty's philosophy we find that the problem of self and other completely dissolves. He presents us with a renewed understanding of self and other in which there is no hierarchical relationship. Both self and other are bodily beings and subjects of experience. They coexist as bodily beings in a shared world. In this shared meaningful world, bodies interact with bodies and not with minds. Minds do not exert power over immaterial objects. Such understanding of the self-other relation is extended to the self and its natural surrounding by contemporary environmentalists. In this context David Abram quotes Merleau-Ponty that the natural objects are equally sensitive and responsive to the beings around it and to us. The reversibility of subject and object extends to every object that we experience.

Ponty believes perceptual experience of the world as ontologically basic rather than the secondary world presented to us by scientific realism. For Ponty the world or the other is not that which I 'think' but which manifests itself in perceptual experience in accordance with our bodily structure and skills. Things manifest before us in relation to our ways of inhabiting the world which is always bodily in nature. What he wanted to establish is that we do not exist here as pure detached consciousness locked in the inner sphere but are always given to the world in which things are given to us in relation to our bodily abilities and we get a grip on the things we encounter (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008)

He writes in the Phenomenology of Perception that to perceive, to be embodied, to be "at grips with the world", are not three separate notions but are three overlapping, interconnected unity of consciousness, embodiment and the world made manifest through our embodied experience. He calls this the intentional arc which informs every aspect of our experiences. (Diprose & Reynolds, 2008). Rejecting the existing conceptions of nature which set nature and consciousness against each other, Ponty instead established the ground for the relational bond and the kinship that we share with the natural world.

A new philosophy of nature can be derived from Ponty's philosophy of perception in which he says that "the world is wholly inside me and I am wholly outside myself." He further establishes the reversibility of the self and the other by developing the idea of Flesh. He says that our bodies and the world are two aspects of the single reality, flesh. The idea of flesh connects the self and the other is such a bond that it makes sense to say that seers are seeing themselves when they see things and that the things see the seers. In the "Visible and Invisible' he writes, "as many painters have said, I feel myself looked at by the things and my activity is equally passivity." Further he writes that "the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen." Such an understanding captures the unity we share with other beings that make up our surroundings in an indeed novel way.

3.16 From Ontology to Ethics in Merleau Ponty:

Clarke (2002) claims that Merleau-Ponty did not author an ethic, and yet it is possible to extend his ontological descriptions to an ethic similar to that espoused by post modern thinkers. It is even possible to distill an environmental ethic, or at least, one of consideration of the more-than-human, from his work. He writes that the interrelations between ontology and ethics can be understood by considering the works of the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in which he offers ontological descriptions that involve an ambiguity of identity and a constant openness toward the surrounding world. Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh has the ability to explicate originary connectedness with others. Whatever ethic extends from his ontological descriptions arises from an originary intersubjectivity or interaction between beings and the world, since our very being is contingent on this relation.

The Philosophy of nature that emerges from his ontology of nature can thus give us an improved appreciation both of how nature is an interconnected whole and of the dependent place that we occupy within this whole – an appreciation that can help to motivate us to practice more environmentally sustainable ways of life.

Merleau-Ponty's idea of reversibility when extended to every entity that we experience makes us realize and acknowledge that the other can also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it. It makes us acknowledge the life and dynamism of the nature around us and instills life into the very land we inhabit.

Abram (1996) points out the ethical implications of such a view that if the surroundings are experienced as senate, attentive, and watchful, then we must take care that our actions are mindful and respectful, otherwise we offend the watchful land itself.

In conclusion we can say that it is certainly true, as I hope to show, that Merleau-Ponty's own conception of phenomenology is more closely related to that of the later Husserl, but it is also true that he developed that conception in new directions of his own.

Ponty's phenomenology has helped develop alternatives to the sharp subject-object distinctions that underlie almost every philosophical theory up to the 20th Century, many of which still determine the leading epistemological theories of contemporary philosophy, especially within the Anglo-American tradition.

The concept and rich analyses of the "lived Body," especially as it was first developed by Husserl and further developed by Merleau-Ponty, is probably the ground-breaking discovery of phenomenology that ultimately led to a full rejection of Cartesian epistemology. Ponty's phenomenological exploration indeed helps us to see beyond our human concerns and to reawaken our experience of the world. It opens our eyes to the depth, richness and the strangeness of the world we inhabit just like great works of art.

Chapter IV

Phenomenology, Painting and Nature

4.1 Introduction:

In the previous chapter we came to the conclusion that the fundamental way in which we are related to the world is through ‘embodied perception’. The present chapter seeks to throw light on the affinity of this concept with the artistic insights of the French artist Paul Cézanne in order to give us a fresh perspective on the world we inhabit and our relation to it. While the work of Cezanne appears to agree in origin, method, and outcome with the method of 'phenomenology’, the chapter in particular delves on the idea and significance of the concept of ‘embodied perception’ and how both the artist and the philosopher sought to capture and express it through their works. It indeed became a lifelong endeavor for them and something which had to be established in opposition to established traditions in their respective fields, yet they were driven by the fact that understanding embodied perception may be fundamental to grasping our very being and the way we exist in the world. The chapter examines the significance of this comparison to environmental thought and how it may help to overcome certain assumptions underlying our relation to the natural environment.

Merleau-Ponty was one of the most creative philosophers of the twentieth century. One of the significant aspects of his creativity and originality of thought lies in the comparisons of his philosophical themes with the works of painters. Although in the Western Philosophical tradition, art has been considered as a falling away from truth. In contrast to this view Merleau-Ponty considers art as rather a ‘pursuit of truth’. Ponty was particularly interested in the work of the French artist Paul Cézanne and accorded a substantial philosophical significance to his Post impressionist works. The greatness of Merleau-Ponty and Cézanne lies in their originality of thought and their creativity. They both were original thinkers and creative in the sense that they did not merely follow the traditional approaches to realize their philosophical and artistic goals respectively. They struggled to carve out a middle path to establish that which had been forgotten or underestimated by the traditional approaches in their emphasis on finding certainty by conforming to the rules and standards of the objective sciences. The objective sciences have been successful in many ways and one cannot deny it. But they distanced us from the way we exist in the world.

Merleau-Pony's interest in painting as a part of his phenomenological discourse justifies our quest for exploring Merleau-Pontyan dimension of environmental philosophy as a possible harmonious platform for interdisciplinary and creative dialogue across various streams including phenomenology of embodied perception that remains the subject matter also for a creative artist and a painter like Cézanne.

As Gary Madison writes,

> That the philosopher who formulated his initial theses on the basis of a confrontation with the sciences and, in particular, with Gestalt psychology, should afterwards interest himself in the art of the painter has basically nothing surprising about it. For here it is still the same theme that he is pursuing- perception. And indeed, where could perception manifest itself with more magnificence, more expressivity and evidence than in that privileged operation which is the inspired vision of the painter? (Madison, 1981, p. 73)

As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy sought "to rediscover the world in which we live yet…are prone to forget" (Ponty, 2004). He identified a similar drive to rediscover the world in the paintings of Cézanne. Thus, what made Ponty particularly interested in the work of Cézanne was that they both tried to capture and express the same phenomenon called 'perception' through their works. Ponty believed that what he could not express through his philosophical language was expressed more profoundly by Cézanne's paintings.

Ponty's interest in painting is due not merely to his fascination with this particular form of art. Rather, sensitivity to the way painting relates to the world is essential for his phenomenological project. Yet Cézanne's role in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy was not that of a mere example among others. Cézanne was a counterpart to Merleau-Ponty himself, a sort of painter/phenomenologist who was already aware, in painting and in perceiving, of subject and world, and of the movement and fundamental ambiguity that would come to define Merleau-Ponty's concepts of expression and existence. This closeness led Merleau-Ponty to understand Cézanne as equally on a quest to describe the "primordial level" of perception and existence. Merleau-Ponty's idea of artistic expression and, especially, of how a painting does not represent the world or a pre-conceived meaning brought him closer to the painter to an extent that Ponty has even been referred to as "philosopher of painting."

For Merleau-Ponty, ‘perception’ is an expressive and creative instance intimately linked with artistic practice, and although he wrote about all kinds of art, painting was the art form he considered in most depth (Quinn, 2009). Painting for Ponty is not to represent it as we might think about it in an objective manner, but as we live it. This according to Ponty is captured by Cézanne in his work.

It is an essential part of being a human being that we can go beyond signs toward their meaning: that is, can use existing signs in new ways, to express new thoughts. To express a meaning is not, after all, to copy something that already exists, but to make use of the relations between signs to create something new. Expression is a "transformation" rather than a "representation". We are thus not imprisoned in language as it is, but can make use of the multiple interconnections between signs in order to change the whole nature of the system and create a new meaning. Other forms of communication, like painting are like language in this way. It used to be part of the conventional way of thinking of the history of art that classical painting aimed to reproduce "nature": indeed, that was the way in which classical painters thought of themselves. On this view, the difference between classical and modern art is that the moderns seek "creative expression" of their own individuality. But if we look, as Merleau-Ponty, following Andre Malraux, suggests, at what was supposed by classical artists to be their greatest discovery as a means of "pure representation", namely, perspective, we shall see that the difference between classical and modern is not so great, for classical perspective is not "a law of perceptual behaviour", but "one of the ways man has invented for projecting before himself the perceived world". We do not actually see the world in the manner of classical perspective, although the latter is one possible interpretation of our natural ways of seeing (Mathews, 2002).

Although Merleau Ponty wrote about music, visual art, film, poetry and literature, the subject of painting constituted the majority of Merleau- Ponty’s writings on art at all stages of his philosophical career, believing as he did that particular instances of painting and phenomenological description were intrinsically intertwined. Merleau Ponty’s three essays that consider painting and painters and which provide a guide to the development of his philosophy are “Cézanne’s Doubt” (1945), “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” (1952), and “Eye and Mind” (1961). Merleau Ponty has even been referred to as "philosopher of painting." Madison (1981) writes that in these three essays there occurs a slow maturation of the philosopher’s work and a transformation of his phenomenology into ontology.

However, in this chapter the particular focus is on Ponty's interest in the work of Cézanne and the common motivations behind their intellectual and artistic efforts to understand the world as it is lived, the fundamental element of which is 'embodied perception'.

4.2 Merleau Ponty's Concept of embodied perception:

Merleau-Ponty develops this notion of embodied perception through three steps. First, he criticizes the deficiency in two positions, empiricism and intellectualism, when each of two holds an exclusive explanation of perception. Second, he recovers the primordial level of perceptual experience by advocating a synthesis of empiricism and intellectualism. Third, it is by virtue of the human body that Merleau-Ponty argues we are ultimately able to achieve this synthesis. The human body, on one hand, situates our consciousness in corporeal reality and thus is not a mere absolute subject understood by intellectualism; on the other hand, the body is subjective and active source through which we experience and know the world, and hence distinguishes itself from the usual empiricist presentation of the body as object.

As observed in the previous chapter, Merleau-Ponty develops his notion of perception by criticizing the classical positions of Empiricism and Intellectualism. Each of these positions gives an exclusive explanation of perception.

While Empiricism, a sort of reductive materialism, begins with physical objects in the world as given and subsequently tries to explicate mental "stuff", the mind, emotions, perception in terms of empirical categories. In contrast, intellectualism begins with consciousness as given and subsequently attempts to explain the reality of objects and the world in terms of mental stuff by reference to forms of intuition and categories of the understanding. Each assumes, therefore, the separation between the mental and the physical and also favour one side of the division. Merleau-Ponty fundamentally rejected such kind of dualisms.. Instead, he begins with describing an irreducible involvement of individuals and the world, exemplified in his statement that it is the body which perceives. However, rather than using the terms subject or body, he describes humans as body-subjects and regards consciousness as "incarnate" in the world. This unity has led to the observation that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is characterized by ambiguity (Quinn, 2009).

Thus holding to a readymade, objective world, empiricism and intellectualism both pass over the phenomenon of perception. Empiricism does so because it makes of the subject an object in the objective world where there is consequently no one who perceives. Intellectualism does

so because it makes of perception an operation of thought, an act by which an absolute consciousness projects before itself a universe perfectly explicit in itself.

His account of the world of perception occupies a position that is opposed to both empiricist and intellectualist understandings of the world and calls for "a return to the phenomena" return to phenomena is important for Ponty because for him, before things can be the pure objects of which science speaks, they are dimensions of my existence in them and address me in a natural and immediately meaningful language. There is, he says a "pre-objective realm that we have to explore in ourselves if we wish to understand sense experience" (Ponty, 1962, p. 12). In lived experience there are not yet any pure objects, but there is already a subject who perceives. The problem with empiricism is that it regards everything takes place in the objective world which exists independently of the perceiving subject. Intellectualism on the other hand is opposed to complete objectivity and recognizes that in all sensation there is a kind of transcendental Ego which is the subject of experience. It is thus in favour of a pure interiority a 'Cogito' whose whole existence is to think. (Madison, 1981)

Thus, in contrast to the positions of empiricism and intellectualism, Merleau Ponty gives an account of embodied perception where embodiment is a central element in his understanding of perception. Ponty believed that it is by virtue of the human body that we achieve a synthesis of the two classical positions and recover the primordial level of perceptual experience. The Human body plays a very significant role Ponty's conception of perception. The human body, on one hand, situates our consciousness in corporeal reality and thus is not a mere absolute subject understood by intellectualism; on the other hand, the body is subjective and active source through which we experience and know the world, and hence distinguishes itself from the usual empiricist presentation of the body as object.

Merleau-Ponty's approach to perception rests on the premise that there is no duality between subject and object or between mind and body. A synthetic combination of both opens up a phenomenal field in which our sensory experience invests the object's quality with vital value, grasping it in its meaning for us. Perception in this sense is inhabited by a meaning which gives it a function in the spectacle of the world and in our existence (Dillon, 1997).

Merleau-Ponty's careful phenomenology of perceptual experience shows perception to be an inherently creative, participatory activity-a sort of conversation, carried on underneath our spoken discourse, between the living body and its world. His later work discloses the

character of language itself as a medium born of the body's participation with a world experienced as alive. That living world is none other than the Earth.

He believed that we are being held captive by an objective picture of the world. We believe that the world exists entirely independent of ourselves. Merleau Ponty believed that this scientific viewpoint is removed from any individual perspective. Science believes that the objective picture it holds of the world is complete.

But Ponty through his account of perception brings to light or emphasizes the fact that the picture of the world held by the scientific viewpoint is neither autonomous nor complete since it fundamentally depends on the existence of a priori human engagement with reality. He seeks to develop a descriptive philosophy of perception, reminding science that its abstract concepts rely upon pre-theoretical acts of lived experience. Science believes that reality is independent of us. The world according to Ponty is not something external to us that we merely contemplate. Underlying his philosophy of perception what lies is a philosophy of nature, in terms of a universal common basis on which all our existence, essence, values are based, he holds that this basis cannot be grasped through empiricism or intellectualism but can be done so through a meaningful bodily engagement with the world. According to Ponty the perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and existence. Science is based on this perceived world. This perceived world is not a fixed realm. Nature is that with which our body is already united in the pre-scientific, pre-theoretical world. We are one with it but we don't realize it. It goes unnoticed. It requires a complete reduction to reach this level of understanding. But as Ponty pointed out a complete reduction is impossible. Hence he says that the works of art particularly painting has the capacity to draw our attention to this level of enmeshed unity.

4.3 Embodied Perception in Cézanne's paintings:

Just as Ponty came to formulate his philosophy in a dialectical confrontation with empiricism and intellectualism, so also Cezanne's work came to be only through a struggle with two antagonistic conceptions of painting: naturalism or realism and Impressionism.(Madison, 1981)

The reason why Ponty finds an affinity with Cézannes work is that Cezanne wanted above all to return to nature itself and paint it as it manifests itself to us in our primitive experience of perceiving subjects. The nature which Cézanne wanted to paint is the nature which is the

ground of our life, "this primordial world" in which "we are anchored" (Ponty, 1964, p. 13, 23). In a word he wanted to get hold of "nature in its origin". This project of Cézanne interests Merleau Ponty and is also relevant for the present thesis.

What is interesting is that Cézannes efforts bear resemblance to Ponty's own desire to return to and express the "originating" – our primitive experience of the world. (Madison, 1981, p. 75) Madison writes that it is the entire problem of recuperating the meaning of the world as we live it, and it is known that Merleau Ponty found in Cézanne a kind of prefiguration of his own efforts.

In Cézannes Doubt (1945) Ponty's attention is fixed essentially on the attempt of the painter to express being, to capture it alive on his canvas. Ponty finds in perception the basis of the act of painting. It is the original perceptual relation of man to the world that Cezanne attempted to unveil and expose on his canvases. Ponty's interest in Cézannes work can be grasped through an understanding of the significance of post impressionism.

Merleau-Ponty, thus, opens a dialogue of phenomenology in the direction of painting that too reveals the limitations of our so called scientific or dualistic habitual ways of looking at others and the world that is lived by us intersubjectively. Art, particularly painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which others would otherwise prefer to ignore. It is interesting to see why Ponty puts full faith only on the artist cum painter here. It is because unlike the painter, a philosopher, a scientist or a writer wants to perceive not so neutrally, but to give opinions, to judge, and correct and to mathematically abstract it from the concrete lived dimension of reality our irreducible bruteness. Only the painter paints what is just revealed to him in his lived intertwined deeper dimensions of experience.

4.4 Ponty, Cezanne and nature:

Ponty was against the uncritical adoption of the scientific conception of nature. Science mathematizes nature and gives up living in them. Ponty's sought to carry forward the phenomenological tradition as it developed in the works of Husserl and Heidegger and his philosophical work was throughout guided by the aim of rethinking the relation between nature and human reflection. This is the reason that contemporary approaches in environmental philosophy refer to Merleau Ponty's Work although he was not an environmental philosopher in the contemporary sense of the term, he did not seek to propose solutions. Instead his thinking sought to overcome the deeper assumptions about the human

relationship with nature that drive our contemporary environmental situation. In the words of Simon James, Ponty's philosophy helps us to reconnect with our lived experience of nature, or to understand nature as we experience it in the living of our lives. Environmental philosophy according to him suffers from a lack of attention to this dimension of "nature-as-experienced" (James, 2009) or "to think nature from within" (Toadvine, 2009)

He begins his task of a phenomenological rethinking of nature by critiquing the dominant philosophical traditions of empiricism and intellectualism. both of which provide an objective understanding of nature. On the other hand Ponty through the method of phenomenology sought to awaken our experience of the world (Ponty, 1964)

Ponty sought to recover the meaning of the world as we live it. This is where as Garry Madison points out that Ponty found in Cezanne a kind of prefiguration of his own efforts.

Madison writes,

"All the greatness, as all the misery, difficulty, and anguish, of Cezanne's work comes from the fact that he wanted-over and beyond a naïve realism which takes nature to be the scientific constructions we make of it and an Impressionism which paints only our impressions of nature- to return to nature itself and paint it as it manifests itself to us in our primitive experience of perceiving subjects"

Quoting Ponty, Madison writes that, the nature which Cézanne wanted to paint is the nature which is the ground of our life, "this primordial world" in which "we are anchored" (Ponty, 1964, p. 13, 23)

In other words Cezanne project was to get hold of nature 'in its origin'. This is what interested Ponty and drew his attention to Cezanne's paintings. Ponty, like Cézanne, sought to return to and express the "originating" , the primitive experience of the world. He wanted to "conform himself" to nature and to paint it in all its nascent state, to make it be seen as the first man on earth could have seen it

As pointed out by Ponty, Cezanne's aim was to rediscover nature using the resources of art, just as the first man on earth could have seen it. It is not a question of reproducing reality but of expressing it which is altogether a different matter. Unlike photography which may be exact imitations of nature but according to Cézanne it lacks the entire movement, the entire

life of reality which only art can express by making it live again. Art according to him is 'man added to nature'. It is both a recovery of nature and a creative endeavor. Thus, Cézanne's pictures do not make us think of nature, they present it to us and if they can do this, it is because the nature which appears in them is that of our initial perceptions. In other words it is of our embodied perceptual experience of nature.

Cézannes paintings try to convey to us the impression of an 'emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes" (Ponty, 1964, p. 14, 25).

This happens because nature here is that which corresponds to and is a correlate of naked vision, that "vision which penetrates right to the root of things beneath the imposed order of humanity" (Ponty, 1964, p. 16, 28). Cezanne, thus, shows himself to be faithful to his desire of uniting nature and vision, of searching for reality without abandoning sensation for his paintings leads us back to the instant when the world and perception are born together and mutually define themselves. He was looking for primordial perception and he arrests the spectacle in which men take part without really seeing it and makes it visible to the most human among them. Thus Cézanne may be ascribed Merleau-Ponty's program that " we must discover the origin of the object at the very centre of our experience, we must describe the emergence of being and we must understand how, paradoxically there is for us an it-itself. (Ponty, 1962, p. 71)

4.5 Philosophical Implication of this comparison to environmental thought:

His renewed understanding of the notion of Perception and its affinity with art and painting gives us a fresh perspective on the world we inhabit and our relation to it. True philosophy he says consists of relearning to look at the world. Thus, his account of perception helps us to understand the world better.

The greatness of Ponty and Cézanne lies in their originality of thought and their creativity. They both were original thinkers and creative in the sense that they did not merely follow the traditional approaches to realize their philosophical and artistic goals respectively. They struggled to carve out a middle path to establish that which had been forgotten or underestimated by the traditional approaches in their emphasis on finding certainty by conforming to the rules and standards of the objective sciences. The objective sciences have been successful in many ways and one cannot deny it. But they distanced us from the way we exist in the world.

In the words of Wittgenstein just as we are held captive by the picture of an objective world, Ponty and Cézanne perhaps in a way played the role of showing the fly the way out of the bottle.

Nature is recovered as the ultimate ground of all our actions by both Ponty and Cézanne. While Cézanne equated art with nature the underlying principle in Ponty's philosophy is a 'return to nature' as implicated by the transformation of his early phenomenology to ontology.

They both pave the way for a philosophy of nature that close in spirit to the ideas of environmental thinkers like Thoreau, Muir and Goethe.

Ponty's interest in the work of Cézanne and the common motivations behind their intellectual and artistic efforts to understand the world as it is lived, and the emphasis on an experiential domain of knowledge kept room for the centrality of 'embodied perception' and the importance of the body in perception . Scholars have dwelt at length on how Merleau Ponty's work heralds a call to engage with our world on an embodied, improvisatory level.

The body takes on primary importance for Merleau-Ponty as he sees it as the fundamental condition for the appearing of a world. Such appearing takes place through the body's perceptual system. For Merleau-Ponty, science and philosophy have distorted both our idea of the body and the way perception works by freezing them in idealized third-person representations. The aim of his phenomenological ontology is to return us to a more primordial understanding of our first-person experience of the body as it is lived by us, and of perception as it reveals the world. He gives painting a privilege over science and philosophy because he sees the painter as performing a kind of natural epoché, the phenomenological 'reduction' which suspends our commonsense beliefs about things, while he or she tries to see how things genuinely appear to vision and to render what they see on canvas. Moreover, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the necessarily bodily activity of painting, claiming that it would be impossible for a pure mind to paint. This is because painting revels in the bodily conditions that abstract thought tends to idealize and cover, such as the position of the body in space from which any sight is necessarily seen (the viewpoint), the movement of the eye, prevailing lighting conditions affecting the quality of visual perception, and so on.

For Ponty the world which reveals itself in perception is not a chaos wherein everything acts indiscriminately on everything else but an ensemble of units which manifests a meaning.

(Madison, 1981, p. 19) But this meaning is not something real and doesn't belong to the world as a natural property neither the meaning is an idea since perceptual consciousness is not constituting consciousness. This brings us to the point that meaning of the world belongs inseparably to the world and to consciousness and we must therefore take up an examination of the relations between object and subject, nature and consciousness.

For Merleau-Ponty, 'perception' is an expressive and creative instance intimately linked with artistic practice, and although he wrote about all kinds of art, painting was the art form he considered in most depth. Painting for Merleau-Ponty is not to represent it as we might think about it in an objective manner, but as we live it. This according to Ponty is captured by Cézanne in his work. Ponty, like Cézanne, sought to return to and express the "originating", the primitive experience of the world. He wanted to "conform himself" to nature and to paint it in all its nascent state, to make it be seen as the first man on earth could have seen it.

What is interesting is that Cézannes efforts bear resemblance to Ponty's own desire to return to and express the "originating" – our primitive experience of the world. (Madison, 1981) Madison writes that it is the entire problem of recuperating the meaning of the world as we live it, and it is known that Merleau Ponty found in Cézanne a kind of prefiguration of his own efforts.

Many people, faced with the works of the painters listed, complain that they do not represent what we actually see in the world. We are talking here, not about purely abstract paintings, which do not claim to represent what we actually perceive, but about paintings of people, fields, animals, houses, barges and so on .

Painting for Ponty is not to represent it as we might think about it in an objective manner, but as we live it. This according to Ponty is captured by Cézanne in his work. In Cézannes Doubt (1945) Ponty's attention is fixed essentially on the attempt of the painter to express being, to capture it alive on his canvas. Ponty finds in perception the basis of the act of painting. It is the original perceptual relation of man to the world that Cezanne attempted to unveil and expose on his canvases.

Quoting Ponty, Madison writes that, the nature which Cézanne wanted to paint is the nature which is the ground of our life, "this primordial world" in which "we are anchored" (Ponty, 1964, p.13, 23). Ponty's interest in Cézannes work can be grasped through an understanding of the significance of post impressionism.

We see in the Preface to Phenomenology of Perception a theme of returning to something neglected. This theme of returning or recovering is contained in what comes closest to being the slogan of phenomenology: back to the things themselves. We need to return to the things themselves because we have covered them with intellectual frameworks of understanding frameworks that we bring along with us and apply to things. In his later life, Cézanne gradually turns away from Impressionism with "less a work of the studio than a working from nature,"

Merleau-Ponty, when returning to original experience, opposes theories of vision that explain it as the perception of patches of color". Merleau-Ponty explains that Cézanne, the Impressionist paintings present the object as an empty shell of color, a mosaic of color patches. The Impressionists paint the impression of light on the retina, nothing more (Ponty 2002, p.266-7). Instead, in Cézanne's work the object "seems subtly illuminated from within, light emanates from it, and the result is an impression of solidity and material substance.

Ponty's interest in Cézannes work can be grasped through an understanding of the significance of post impressionism. Just as Ponty came to formulate his philosophy in a dialectical confrontation with empiricism and intellectualism, so also Cezanne's work came to be only through a struggle with two antagonistic conceptions of painting: naturalism or realism and Impressionism.

Cézanne belonged to the tradition of post impressionism a term coined by the English art critic Roger Fry for the work of such late 19th-century painters as Paul Cézanne, Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and others. All of these painters except Van Gogh were French, and most of them began as Impressionists; each of them abandoned the style, however, to form his own highly personal art. While Impressionism was based, in its strictest sense, on the objective recording of nature in terms of the fugitive effects of colour and light, the Post-Impressionists rejected this limited aim in favour of more ambitious expression, admitting their debt, however, to the pure, brilliant colours of Impressionism, its freedom from traditional subject matter, and its technique of defining form with short brushstrokes of broken colour. The work of these painters formed a basis for several contemporary trends and for early 20th-century modernism.

What is interesting is that Cézannes efforts bear resemblance to Ponty's own desire to return to and express the "originating" – our primitive experience of the world. (Madison, 1981)

Madison writes that it is the entire problem of recuperating the meaning of the world as we live it, and it is known that Merleau Ponty found in Cézanne a kind of prefiguration of his own efforts. Art, particularly painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which others would otherwise prefer to ignore. It is interesting to see why Ponty puts full faith only on the artist cum painter here. It is because unlike the painter, a philosopher, a scientist or a writer wants to perceive not so neutrally, but to give opinions, to judge, and correct and to mathematically abstract it from the concrete lived dimension of reality our irreducible bruteness. Only the painter paints what is just revealed to him in his lived intertwined deeper dimensions of experience. The reason why Ponty finds an affinity with Cézannes work is that Cezanne wanted above all to return to nature itself and paint it as it manifests itself to us in our primitive experience of perceiving subjects. The nature which Cézanne wanted to paint is the nature which is the ground of our life. "This primordial world" in which "we are anchored". In a word he wanted to get hold of "nature in its origin". As we have seen, Merleau Ponty's philosophy sought to "to rediscover the world in which we live yet…are prone to forget." He identified a similar drive to rediscover the world in the paintings of Cézanne.

4.6 Primacy of embodiment and moral dimension of paintings: Significance of Chinese paintings to Merleau Ponty's philosophy of nature:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty expresses in his phenomenology that the human body plays a significant role in our perception. It enables a synthetic combination of our sensory taking in different objects' qualities from the world on the one hand, and on the other, our subjective grasping them in their meanings for us. This primacy of embodiment has its vivid illustration in aesthetics in which we see examples of Western (Paul Cezanne) and non-Western artists (Chinese landscape painters) who aim at a balance between representing visible forms of nature and interpreting their deeper meanings for human existence. Emphasizing on the primacy of embodiment in perception, Merleau-Ponty, however, leaves silence of the relationship between the body and moral education. This overlooked aspect of the moral underpinnings in embodiment is strongly developed in Chinese landscape paintings in which Chinese philosophical traditions expressed the essence through the silk surface, that is, a harmonious unity in a person's relationship with nature, with herself, and with others. Chinese aesthetics is therefore in its essence an education of living a dignified and harmonious life.

Jia Chen in her article on Chinese paintings and Ponty delves into the questions: (1) What is the relationship between aesthetics, the human body, and the creation of art? (2) What contribution, if any, will our knowledge of the human body bring to aesthetic experience? And (3) what is the connection between aesthetics and ethics? In his major philosophical work Phenomenology of Perception and essays on aesthetics, Merleau-Ponty offers an analysis of the intertwining between artworks and the human body. On the one hand, he suggests that the artist's work embodies primary features of human behavior: perception, gesture, and expression. On the other, the personalized skill and style of the artist's lived body captures human existence in the world. Moreover, the artist has operated this skill in dialog with the world to arrive at a deeper grasp of human existence and of her dynamic relation to her environment.

She writes that Chinese aesthetic thought emphasizes on cultivating a world view of holistic and thus harmonious unity between one's environment and inner self. Chinese landscape art reminds us of a fundamental idea in aesthetic experience that experience is in its nature environmental. One person starts her life by learning from the environment and learning from others within it. She has to learn to be part of her environment and a member of her community. It is an educational process of self-formation in which understanding of the self is fused with one's perception of the world within which one is situated. What I find more explicit in Chinese Song Dynasty landscape paintings is the philosophical as well as educational theme of living a dignified and harmonious life. Its ultimate goal is to achieve harmony in a person's relationship with nature, with her self, and with others.

Influenced by Chinese philosophical traditions, Chinese landscape paintings, compared with Cezanne's works, exemplify more strongly the indispensable role of the human body and indicate more explicitly a link between embodiment and moral ethics. The latter suggestion of the moral underpinnings in aesthetic perception and experience is particularly significant since Merleau-Ponty has not elaborated upon this point in any explicit manner

Thus, we see that Ponty's interest in painting springs from their similar emphasis on the primacy of embodiment in perception. Both the artist and the phenomenologist aim at a balance between representing visible forms of nature and interpreting their invisible, yet deeper meanings for human existence.

Merleau- Ponty gives us a very promising account of the mind's subtle relationship with the body that finally leaves behind the exhausted binary of dualism and reductive materialism. And it does so in a way that embraces our natural life and natural history rather ignores or denies them.

Merleau Ponty's interest in paintings particularly that of Cézanne may be considered to offer a therapeutic experience. It works to disentangle us from the illusory lure of imagining ourselves as occupying an objective position of control and domination and re-entangle us into us into the messiness of the world. The ethical directions which this therapy points to are numerous; I will mention only two here. Situated within the second decade of the 21st century, ecological implications are probably the most apparent to us; and Merleau-Ponty, who quotes Jean Paulhan to state that the modern painter celebrates "the marriage and reconciliation of man with the world," seems to support such a direction. Working with human conflict, whether global or personal is another direction that Merleau-Ponty's therapy opens up; again, writing that our new perspective may "prepare the ground for those rare and precious moments at which human beings come to recognize, to find, one another," Merleau-Ponty seems to support such a direction. However, some of the significance of Merleau-Ponty's critique of the world created by classical art is that it can extend to within both the ecological movement and the work of conflict resolution. Where the ecological movement often seems pre-occupied with fixing, solving, or controlling the ecological crisis, Merleau-Ponty can show us how this still assumes a position of distant mastery and propose a more intimate means of working alongside various ecological crises. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty can help us see that the assumption, too often made by those involved in conflict resolution, that we can master a situation of conflict, erasing difference and delivering peace, presupposes a perspective of illusory control. Merleau-Ponty's analysis of modern art can help us to see that in both cases our lust for mastery and control is counter-productive where we intend to be constructive; for, the world and its inhabitants are not subject to division and mastery. Merleau-Ponty's therapy can, then, help us to affirm the tensions and ambiguities of life, relieving us of our desire to blindly strive after illusory and destructive finality.

It is an essential part of being a human being that we can go beyond signs toward their meaning: that is, can use existing signs in new ways, to express new thoughts. To express a meaning is not; after all, to copy something that already exists, but to make use of the relations between signs to create something new. Expression is a "transformation" rather than

a "representation". We are thus not imprisoned in language as it is, but can make use of the multiple interconnections between signs in order to change the whole nature of the system and create a new meaning. Other forms of communication, like painting (a product of our embodiment), are like language in this way. It used to be part of the conventional way of thinking of the history of art that classical painting aimed to reproduce "nature": indeed, that was the way in which classical painters thought of themselves. On this view, the difference between classical and modern art is that the moderns seek "creative expression" of their own individuality. But if we look, as Merleau-Ponty, following Andre Malraux, suggests, at what was supposed by classical artists to be their greatest discovery as a means of "pure representation", namely, perspective, we shall see that the difference between classical and modern is not so great, for classical perspective is not "a law of perceptual behaviour", but "one of the ways man has invented for projecting before himself the perceived world". We do not actually see the world in the manner of classical perspective, although the latter is one possible interpretation of our natural ways of seeing (Matthews 2002, p.157).

Chapter V

Reconnecting with nature through the body: Yoga and phenomenology

5.1 Introduction:

In this chapter an attempt is made to understand the significance of reconnecting with nature through the body through a comparative study of the Eastern Yogic practices and the existential Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. While scholars have pointed out certain similarities between phenomenology and yoga practices it remains to be seen how such a comparison may be relevant to a renewed understanding of the human nature relation and appreciation of the way we are connected with nature. What is important to understand here is that such phenomenological interpretation of yoga is based on an existential reading of yoga as found in some forms of yoga practiced across the world and not on the classical forms of yoga which is attributed to Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras. The scholarly works devoted to such discussion focus on yoga as an 'experience' or 'phenomenon'.

The chapter also sheds light on how the practice of yoga may contribute towards recovering our lost touch with nature. To the extent that the development of environmental consciousness and conscience requires awareness of one's body in relation to the physical world, yoga provides a potent, non-ideological tool. As particular instance Jennifer Lea's article provides an explanation of how yoga practices helps to feel the basic contact with natural surroundings in some nature retreats. The chapter compares such nature based yogic practices with the philosophy of body proposed by the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty in his works. As Merleau-Ponty notes, the body is the vehicle of our being in the world. The body has an important role in our project of redefining our relation with nature. It is through the body that we are in contact with the external world. This project was already underway in Husserl's concept of the life world and later Merleau-Ponty took it up to develop it further. Thus, this chapter examines the role of the body in restoring the significance of nature by drawing attention to the importance of physical proximity to the land. In our day to day lives we are getting disengaged and alienated from the basic touch with nature that sustains us. Such alienation is the cause of the growing insensitivity and exploitative attitude towards the natural environment.

5.2 The concept of the body: Western and Eastern perspectives:

The concept of the body has received considerable attention recently in both phenomenological and analytic philosophical circles. The concern to understand 'the body' in new ways seems to rest on a deep dissatisfaction with the mind/body dualism and its consequent denigrating of the role of the body in experience that has haunted much modern Western thought, at least since Descartes' dualism. Although such dualism seems inescapable in our Indo European languages, however, it does not seem to conform to our actual experience of ourselves and our world.

Several metaphors have dominated and controlled much of philosophical and popular thinking about the body. The body, it has been said, is a "prison house", a "temple", a "machine", an "instrument". The machine metaphor has been pervasive in modern Western thinking. Grounded in seventeenth century mechanistic science, the machine metaphor intends to bind the physical entirely to nature: the human body is but one kind of physical system among many others. Man as a physical being is part of nature but his mental being is an autonomous (thinking but unextended) order set over and against the physical, yet somehow interacting with it. The body or the physical is seen as that which is guided by law like forces, limited, determined. The mind is that through which we transcend the physical. Thus the machine metaphor accords centrality and priority to consciousness. Part of us might be reduced to law-like forces but with our minds we transcend the physical.

These dominant, controlling metaphors in addition to being dualistic in character, are conceptually "static" They presuppose that the meaning of the body can be spelled out in purely descriptive terms, 'the body' referring to an objective given of nature or of our experience.

Phenomenology in particular has tried to overcome this dualism at its very core by re-examining carefully how our body becomes a central feature in all experience. One of the strongest critiques to Descartes' dualism is found in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy who sought to overcome the subject-body dualism by establishing the role of the lived body as paramount for any experience.

Eastern Perspectives:

Traditional Indian thought, on the other hand, while clearly articulating differences between mental and physical phenomena, did not on the whole assume that they were opposed to one another or occupied different ontological domains; in fact, many of the functions and capacities which we associate with mind or consciousness were taken to be physical in character: manas as a sense organ. As in many areas of philosophy, the body lends itself nicely to an alliance between contemporary Western and traditional Indian thought.

Indian philosophy comprises of conflicting philosophies ranging from Carvaka materialism at one extreme to Advaita Vedānta's monistic idealism at the other. Whereas classical Advaita Vedānta, as developed by Sankara, devalued the body as an object (a-cit) in the world, not to be confused with consciousness (cit), there were tendencies within Indian thought and sometimes explicit doctrines, to counteract this tendency and to ascribe to the body a positive role in spiritual life. Body in these later modes of thinking was regarded not as a hindrance to freedom, but as capable of being cultivated as a means to freedom. Yoga is an important part of this mode of thinking.

It is found that in later Yogic and Tantric traditions, the body is considered as the locus of spiritual energies and points of graduated spiritual awakening. It is in contemporary Indian thinking that the idea of bodily subjectivity, quite independently of any influence from western thought, is rescued from its anonymity in classical Indian thought and brought to the forefront, first in the metaphysical system of Sri Aurobindo, but most interestingly in K.C. Bhattacharya's philosophy. K.C. Bhattacharya's work, The Subject as Freedom (1931) is possibly a major contribution of Indian thought to genuine phenomenology thus far. Bhattacharya gives an account of various levels of subjectivity, beginning with the bodily.

Contrary to western thinking, Bhattacharya brings out how at each level consciousness claims to be free from its object, this freedom, the first idea of which comes from to body's standing apart from the world, is realized progressively through psychic or mental subjectivity, but finally in the spiritual subjectivity.

One of the central elements of the critiques of the hierarchical dichotomies fostered by Cartesian dualism and objectivism is the growing importance of the role of the body. Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body becomes relevant for discussion in environmental philosophy because it overcomes the subject-object distinction that characterizes our relation

with our body and the world. Central to Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is the idea that we are essentially embodied beings and that 'being' and 'world' are coextensive.

This idea that we are inalienably a part of the world or the essential relation between our body and the world is to be understood at a deeper level. For this we will look for inspiration from the eastern philosophy of yoga and its concept of body's relation to the world. The body occupies a central place in the theory and practice of Yoga philosophy as well. In yoga philosophy the body is understood as a microcosm of the external universe or in Eliade's terms the goal of Yoga is to achieve a cosmic 'homology' between the body and the world (Eliade, 1969).

A number of recent studies have suggested that the relationship between the mind and the body needs to be re-evaluated and the model of hierarchical dualism need to be replaced by a more integrated model of mutual interpretation. In this light I would like to look into Merleau Ponty's philosophy of body and its convergence with ancient Indian Yogic practices involving the body.

The chapter looks into the works of the phenomenological psychologist James Morley who suggests that Yoga and particularly the Tantric dimension of Yoga with its somatic focus may offer phenomenology a much-needed somatic contemplative praxis, as much as phenomenology may offer yoga the basis for an appropriate theoretical articulation. He illustrates how this Tantric dimension of yoga and the particularly incarnational version of phenomenology expressed by Merleau-Ponty both share a profound commonality that may be mutually illuminating.

Such reflections have a practical significance in that it leads to a deeper understanding of the notion of self. It also has a therapeutic effect in restoring the lost touch with nature. The micro-macro relation that it leads to gives a renewed understanding and leads us to the concept of an ecological self. This idea in return helps in grasping Ponty's concept of flesh and reciprocity. Earlier comparisons between yoga and phenomenology were made on their common aspirations of transcendence from the world but comparisons with Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology emphasizes the somatic incarnate domain of human experiences and how the practice of yoga shares a common ground with existential phenomenology as explicated in yoga philosophy. A careful exploration reveals that both yoga and Merleau-Ponty's philosophy delve into the very flesh of the world and emphasize human embodiment.

Yoga is not just contemplative but is a very practical approach involving the mind and the body of the individual. Yogic practices also provide a way out of the alienated lifestyles of industrialized civilization by making us aware of our inner bodies and practicing control over the mind and the senses. Even the yogic practice of prāṇāyāma (breath control) can be compared with Merleau Ponty's idea of lived body wherein the human body is understood as that which perceives nature which it also inhabits. Both emphasize performing or engaging in an activity that brings forth the essential relation between inner and outer body. They draw our attention to the very experience of engaging with body. Like yoga existential phenomenology affirms the domain of subjectively lived experiences and seeks to inculcate in us virtues which help us to appreciate different multiple subjective standpoints.

Both the philosophical traditions can help us to overcome the sense of alienation that springs from the Descartean understanding of the transcendental subject leading to the solipsistic self. On the other hand we become more aware of our bodily subjectivity which becomes charged and enlightened and helps us widen our limited perspectives. Thus we become better equipped to perceive deeper and clearer. Our subdued, dormant subjectivity gets enlightened.

Thus, both yoga and Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology give us an idea of enhanced and enlarged subjectivity whereby a renewed meaningfulness evolves giving us a sense of our belongingness to our real home. Within these approaches the self is in a way released from its bondage in the inner sphere of the psychological world and realizes its bond with the surrounding Earth and the various subtle ways in which the self participates in a meaningful dialogue with everything around it.

The chapter also looks into the significance of nature retreats and how the practice of Yoga in such retreats contributes towards healing and well being and restoring a balance between our inner and outer selves.

5.3 Yoga and Existential Phenomenology:

Although Indian philosophy has never been purely academic, it has always preserved its vital links with the situation of man and its interest in the place that he may occupy in the universe. Besides, it has not dealt with man's situation only in general, but has been concerned with it from the standpoint of the individual. In other words, it has been predominantly or to a great extent existential. This feature, although admitted by most modern historians of Indian

philosophy, naturally gets overlooked in the course of giving conceptual accounts of the schools of Indian thought.

Werner (1998) writes that philosophy in ancient India was, above all, a practical quest for truth or at least for guidelines pointing to truth, and the practical application of those guidelines was paramount. Conceptual elaboration and systemization came second. Indian philosophy has preserved its special character, particularly its closeness to man's life and its concern for his destiny, mainly owing to its relation to Yoga.

Lester Embree writes in the Encyclopedia of Phenomenology that when Phenomenology and Indian philosophy is being spoken about the "and" does not imply any relationship or influence obtaining between the two. Nevertheless, it says that we can look for phenomenological elements in Indian thought, particularly in Yoga philosophy.

Yoga is an ancient inter-religious practice which strives for personal spiritual development through meditative practices aimed at uniting mind, body and spirit. Over time there developed different kinds of yoga but they all share an underlying rationale which is rooted in the very meaning of the tern yoga. Yoga comes from the Sanskrit verbal root 'yuj' meaning 'to yoke' in the sense of yoking one thing to another. Thus yoga refers to the idea of merging or uniting either self/soul with the universal essence or with God as in the theistic beliefs. However being opposed to dogma and institutionalization yoga is popular in the contemporary world, both eastern and western, as it upholds the scope for secular spirituality.

Yoga, the Sanskrit word for "Yoking" or "Union" is one of the six systems of Indian philosophy. Its influence has been widespread among many other schools of Indian thought. Its basic text is the Yoga Sūtras by Patañjali. In the essay, Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patañjals Classical Yoga, Ian Whicher writes about the thought of Patañjali (ca. second-third century C.E.) who is the great exponent of the authoritative Classical Yoga school of Hinduism and the reputed author of the Yoga Sūtra.

Whicher argues that Patañjali's philosophical perspective has, far too often, been looked upon as excessively "spiritual" or isolationistic to the point of being a world-denying philosophy, indifferent to moral endeavor, neglecting the world of nature and culture, and overlooking the highest potentials for human reality, vitality, and creativity. Contrary to the arguments presented by many scholars, which associate Patañjali's Yoga exclusively with extreme asceticism, mortification, denial, and the renunciation and abandonment of "material

existence" (prakrti) in favor of an elevated and isolated "spiritual state" (purusa) or disembodied state of spiritual liberation, he suggests that Patañjali's Yoga can be seen as a responsible engagement, in various ways, of "spirit" (purusa = Self, pure consciousness) and "matter" (prakrti= the source of psychophysical being, which includes mind, body, nature), resulting in a highly developed, transformed, and participatory human nature and identity, an integrated and embodied state of liberated selfhood (jivanmukti). In support of this thesis, textual evidence has been drawn largely from the two main authoritative sources of Classical Yoga: the Yoga Sutra of Patañjali and the Yoga-Bhasya of Vyasa.

He also emphasizes a much overlooked aspect of Yoga thought that far from being exclusively a subjectively oriented and introverted path of withdrawal from life, classical yoga acknowledges the intrinsic value of "support" and "sustenance" and the interdependence of all living (embodied) entities, thus upholding organic continuity, balance, and integration within the natural and social world.

Such accounts point towards possibilities of correspondence between yogic practices and phenomenology.

James Morley writes that phenomenological studies on yoga draw on the work of the philosopher Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Morley, 2001, 2008; Sarukkai, 2002). In Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty articulates the concept of the body-subject, which he sees as giving primacy to the body as our primary tool of perception. The human body, as a perceiving thing, is intertwined and intimately related to the world. He asserted that by understanding ourselves, via our bodies, we have a better understanding of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). The phenomenon that we experience (for example, yoga) is affected by the body and its related sensorimotor functions. Due to the changing nature of the body, our sense of the world and of ourselves is continuously shifting. This implies that every individual has a partial view, and that this partial view is informed by the multiple discourses in which that individual participates. The body or as Merleau-Ponty calls it in his later work as flesh, “expresses the continuity between the surface and depth of the world and that of the body” (Morley, 2001, p. 75).

Psychologist James Morley applied Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology to yoga in his article titled, “Inspiration and expiration: Yoga practice through Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of the body.” In this article Morley highlights how researchers could use yoga to better

understand the writings of yoga teacher and author T.K.V. Desikachar. Morley's goal is not to "impose a Western philosophical framework for an established non-Western tradition…but to show that yoga is an important resource for phenomenologists undertaking future research in the ongoing project prescribed by Merleau-Ponty: namely to bring Western thought "down to earth" by focusing on the lived human body as philosophical and psychological ground" (Morley, 2001). What he does not do in this article is tell the reader specifically how yoga will bring our philosophy down to earth, or what researchers should engage in to make this connection between the body, yoga and phenomenology.

Morley followed up on this perspective in another article titled "Embodied Consciousness in Tantric Yoga and the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty" (Morley, 2008). This article makes an important contribution by exploring how class affects both the embodied practice of yoga and how practitioners think about yoga in India. He states that yoga is increasingly popular across the globe, but that contemporary views are predominated by "the new cosmopolitan and media savvy middle classes" who simultaneously view religion with "claustrophobic suspicion" yet "seek contact with the archaic dimension denied them by the alienated lifestyles of industrialized civilization" (Morley, 2008, p. 147). Morley contrasts the way mainstream, middle class Indians see yoga with a Tantric perspective found in the rural settings of India. He clearly shows that while yoga is found throughout India, middle class and rural Indians experience it differently; the meaning they make of yoga is distinct. Morley's methodological choice to study the way two distinct groups experience yoga, rural and middle class, help him to have a broader view of the way in which yoga is meaningful.

Morley also comments that "Phenomenology needs a somatic methodology that can go beyond academic language" (Morley, 2008, p. 161); the need for a somatic or embodied component to research is echoed by other researchers as well although most of the literature on neuroscience, psychology, phenomenology and yoga show that there is no separation between mind and body. The dichotomy between mind and body, the Cartesian duality, is understood to be merely an illusion (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

5.4 Comparisons between Merleau Ponty's Existential philosophy and Yoga:

In this attempt it is found that Yoga and particularly the Tantric dimension of Yoga with its somatic focus may offer phenomenology a much-needed somatic contemplative praxis, as much as phenomenology may offer yoga the basis for an appropriate theoretical articulation.

(Morley, 2008) Tantric dimension of yoga and the particularly incarnational version of phenomenology expressed by Merleau-Ponty both share a profound commonality that may be mutually illuminating.

In both the traditions, the distinction of the inner and outer dissolves. Ponty uses the term flesh in his later philosophy in place of lived body to express the continuity between the surface and depth of the world and that of the body. The concept of flesh captures the primordial elemental character of the body and serves Ponty's purpose of bringing philosophy 'down to earth'. It captures the intimate, personal and embodied character of human life.

An insight into the ancient Indian school of yogic practices of prāṇāyāma, the tantric philosophy of chakra etc. goes a long way to show that the way in which the body is connected to the natural environment has a deeper significance.

Such reflections have a practical significance in that it leads to a deeper understanding of the notion of self. It also has a therapeutic effect in restoring the lost touch with nature. The micro-macro relation that it leads to gives a renewed understanding and leads us to the concept of an ecological self. This idea in return helps in grasping Ponty's concept of flesh and reciprocity.

However, earlier comparisons between yoga and phenomenology were made on their common aspirations of transcendence from the world but comparisons with Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology emphasizes the somatic incarnate domain of human experiences and how the practice of yoga shares a common ground with existential phenomenology as explicated in yoga philosophy. Such earlier comparative studies have been concerned with the thought of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical predecessor, Edmund Husserl, and the consonance between the transcendental aspects of his earlier thought and that of the more idealist schools of classical yoga.' Such studies have taken a different direction from the present study.

Scholars like James Morley bring to light an alternative non-transcendental reading of Husserl's phenomenological project and yoga. In fact, samadhi, the developmental goal of yoga, can be interpreted, as does Whicher, as a restoration of the senses, not a departure from them. It is an immersion into a direct experience of the world unmediated by socialized typifications that is made possible by yoga practice.

Such scholars delve into deeper comparisons between the traditions of phenomenology and Yoga which is based on their movement away from each other's respective mainstream orthodoxies towards a unique emphasis on human embodiment.

In this light Scholars like Persson (2010) and Morley (2008) have noted significant parallels particularly between, phenomenological theories that posit embodied beings and their worlds as coextensive with cosmological tenets in schools of Indian Yoga and Tantra, including some of its Western adaptations.

In particular, the works of James Morley indicate that by applying the more advanced Existential Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to the more indigenous Tantric stream of yoga, it is found that the congruence occurs in just the opposite direction of immersion into the very "flesh of the world"—the lived human body as homology of the cosmos.

Such comparisons shed light on how Yoga may offer phenomenology a much-needed somatic contemplative praxis, as much as phenomenology may offer yoga the basis for an appropriate theoretical articulation. (Morley, 2008)

5.5 Lived body and Tantric Body:

We have seen that Merleau Ponty's concept of the lived body or what he later calls the chiasm or "flesh" of the world leads to a new ontology that is opposed to western tradition of metaphysics that assumes either an absolutely ideal or material world or a dualism between the two. We are concerned here to look for some eastern tradition which is positive towards the phenomenon of embodiment. Although most mainstream orthodox Indian thought as a whole has strong idealist tendencies. (McEvilley, 1981)

Though the concept of body fares poorly in most of the Asian worldview and regarded as a vehicle through which enlightenment may be achieved, this according to Morley is only a benignly neutral affirmation of embodiment.

Having said this he recognizes that in South Asia there also exists an esoteric yet living tradition that affirms the human body more than any other known religious tradition—Tantric yoga. It is here that Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology of embodiment, and yoga generally, can find a more appropriate point of mutual corroboration.

5.6 Jivatma: Towards a Phenomenological Explication of the Tantric Approach to Yoga

Like phenomenology, Tantrism upholds the view of embodied consciousness and embraces the sensory world as the true reality and rejects any metaphysical system that asserts the primacy of another ideal transcendental realm. In turn, the bodily consciousness takes on heightened focus. Sir John Woodroffe describes the Tantric approach to the body in this way: "There is nothing in the universe which is not in the human body." Further, "Whatever of mind or matter exists in the universe exists in some form or manner in the human body. 'What is here is there. What is not here is nowhere". Moreover, the human body as the crown of creation is to be explored as a microcosm of the universe. (1996) describes "a particular attitude on the part of the Tantric adept toward the cosmos, whereby he feels integrated within an all-embracing system of micro-macrocosmic correlations". Through conscious embodiment (jivatma) the forces of nature cannot just be abstractly studied at an objective distance, but existentially lived, engaged, and immersed into through meditation practice - the goal of Tantric yoga. In this sense, Tantric yoga is not merely a subjective psychology, but a radical approach to the study of external nature and the cosmos. This paradigm of the body as a homology of the cosmos, or as a microcosm of the macrocosm in Merleau-Pontyan terms, the "flesh of the world" - is a conception of embodiment that is no dualist "temple of the soul" but a perspective of the human body as the very source of divinity itself as much as it is a science of nature.

As much as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology stresses the dehiscence of "lived body," Tantra evokes a corresponding notion of the "subtle body" understood as layered in sheaths or envelopes that, like serpent skins, are shed as embodied consciousness develops forward into more complex dimensions and forms. One hesitates to discuss Tantric "subtle body" concepts of chakras, kundalini energy, nadi points, and esoteric ritualized sexuality - so many of which have been profoundly misunderstood by popular culture in the West. From a phenomenological standpoint, one need not conceptualize chakras and nadi energy channels in literal terms as material natural phenomena but appreciate them as meditation templates to assist the practitioner in coming to terms with one's lived body. Morley (2008) writes that these were to be "imaginative" pedagogical tools to be used in conjunction with mandalas, yoga postures (asanas), breath control (pranayama), and chanting to achieve practical, contemplative awareness of the spatial internal dimensionality of the lived microcosmic body.

5.7 Reviving the lost touch with nature through the body and Yoga:

A common concern of many contemporary environmental philosophers have been that although environmental philosophy is developing, engaging thinkers in more and more complex debates, yet it appears that it has not been able to achieve that which can motivate us to reconnect with nature.

Given the fact that alienation from nature is one key element in producing environmental devastation, scholars point out that human alienation from nature is seen as closely related to alienation from the body. Thus prior to reconnecting with nature we need to restore the significance of the body as the necessary contact with the external world.

This section reflects on what Kenneth Liberman discusses in his paper, "An inquiry into the intercorporeal relations between Humans and the Earth", about the impossibility of an unmediated or direct experience of nature in the prevalent initiatives of environmental activists. In contrast to this, the paper seeks to examine the experiences in nature retreats as discussed by Jennifer Lea in her article "Retreating to nature: rethinking therapeutic landscapes". A significant element of the latter work is the application of yogic practices and the role of the body in such nature retreats which leads to an unmediated experience of nature. Her paper establishes nature, not as an enormous collection of things reduced to the status of passive objects, but as a performative actor, as a subject that influences human nature which in turn influences nature. Although we seem to be far removed from our primordial connection with nature and that the way back would involve much relearning and practice, Lea seeks to to show that an unmediated experience of nature through the body is possible .The method she discusses is very phenomenological and she also explores the role of certain yogic and meditative practices. the paper establishes nature, not as an enormous collection of things reduced to the status of passive objects, but as a performative actor, as a subject that influences human nature which in turn influences nature. It talks about the restorative power of nature which in the word of Gesler (2003) many people feel simply when they spend time out of doors or when they are surrounded by undisturbed nature where they can attain physical, mental and spiritual healing.

Lea seeks to show that that the retreat experience involves not just being in place, but entails specific practices in conjunction with the 'natural', which might give rise to specific processes of embodiment and specific therapeutic configurations. This empirical focus allows an

appreciation of the complexities of bodily experiences of landscapes, and also of the different therapeutic 'imaginaries' that can then be mobilised.

Jennifer Lea gives an account of a research carried out in September 2004 during a yoga retreat in a mountain range in Southern Spain. The particular retreat chosen for the research was a Thai massage and yoga programme that lasted six days, which was organised by Nicky Smith, a yoga and Thai massage teacher from London. Lea talks about one interview with the retreat leader, Nicky Smith, and participant observation. Nicky had a clear sense that simply being in nature was beneficial which together with yogic practices led to self healing. Nicky concluded from her research that taking the body away from the 'everyday' opened up attention to the body itself, foregrounding its connections to the world:

This annual retreat is an opportunity to re-connect with the quietness and stillness within ourselves, qualities that are often overshadowed by the demands of our busy everyday lives . The focus of the retreat will be on deepening and developing our innate ability to listen more attentively and respond more sensitively to the wisdom of our bodies, (http:// www.nickysmith.co.uk, accessed 8 June 2006) The 'natural' environment offered a space of encounter possibly not available within the 'clutter' of everyday life (because of work, routines, stress and commitments). During the retreat the emphasis was less on 'doing' or 'achieving', and more about having time to be a little bit more exploratory about not having time pressures or goal pressures - 'we've got to get this' and you know we could just take more time.

Also Nicky realized that 'Nature' offered a possibility to come back into the body, sensing its responses and intelligences, and paying attention to what it is and how it is capable of change. Being in the retreat environment allowed the kind of focused attention to the small spaces of connection between body and environment demonstrated in the research 'instances' above, and gave rise to a 'connective imaginary' through which the retreat participants could sense their (specifically interconnected) place in the world and be 'in touch with the raw energy of the world, of yourself as part of that world unfolding' (Dewsbury and Thrift 2005)

Experiencing nature, and in turn experiencing ourselves during a retreat, is just one mode of this 'creative evolution', leading to experimentation with other modes of being.It leads to an understanding of our own body and how we must actively and artistically use the resources offered by place in order to mould and shape the body and create different somatic relations.

Thus, practice of yoga brings out in nature that performative actor that is therapeutic and known for healing.

From the above account of the retreat experience certain things that come to light as a result of a direct first person experiential account of human-nature interaction resonate with Merleau Ponty's philosophy of nature. It also suggests that Merleau Ponty's philosophy of embodied existence and his insistence on the primordial and reciprocal connectedness of human and nature shares some significant commonalities with the ancient traditional philosophy of yoga.

What emerges from such comparison is the importance of the role of the body in restoring that forgotten ground of nature on which all our actions are based. It also suggests that physical proximity to nature is necessary for re-capturing that primitive contact with nature from which we have become distanced both conceptually and practically. Paying attention to such contact with nature helps to unveil the many aspects of nature.

5.8 Relevance of yogic practices to environmental awareness:

The Yoga tradition, a Pan-Indian system of spirituality utilized by nearly all the religious traditions of India, includes within its discipline several resources that can, at minimum, increase environmental awareness. It affirms the reality of the natural, whereas Advaita Vedanta and other schools of Indian thought assert that the world is a mere illusion. It lists several forms of concentration (samyama) that enhances one's awareness of the body and orientation within the cosmos. These abilities arise from mastery of physical posture (asana) and the breath (prana) as explained briefly in the Yoga Sutra and in greater detail in later Yoga texts such as the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Through mastery of the physical body comes enhanced awareness of its relationship with the natural world. The senses become rarefied and receptive to experiences of how the body relates to the elements (earth, water, fire, and air) and to the movement of heavenly bodies mentioned above. Additionally, yoga sets forth ethical principles that accord well with environmental precepts: through non violence harm is minimized to animals; through nonpossession (aparighraha) one consumes only bare necessities; through purity (sauca) one becomes mindful of pollution and will seek to avoid it in any form. The ultimate goal of Yoga, as mentioned above, involves the cultivation of higher awareness, which, from an environmental perspective, might be seen s an ability to rise above the sorts of consumptive material concerns that can be harmful to the ecosystem.

Yoga is perhaps India's largest cultural export, in part because it does not require adherence to the many constraints of caste system or to a specific theological position. Its techniques have been employed by Hindus, Jainas, Buddhists, Sufis, and Sikhs, both in India and elsewhere; it has also become common to YMCAs and health clubs worldwide. To the extent that the development of environmental consciousness and conscience requires awareness of one's body in relation to the physical world, Yoga provides a potent, non-ideological tool.

From within the Sramanical or renouncer traditions, resources are emerging for the enhancement of environmental theory and action. Though Buddhism does not have a significant presence in contemporary India, Buddhists, primarily in America and Thailand, have used Buddhist principles to develop a new dharma for the earth. The Jainas within India and abroad have thoughtfully applied the ahimsa doctrine to environmental issues, through publication and dissemination of materials as well as hands-on projects such as tree plantings. Yoga, perhaps the most amorphous yet most widely known of the Sramanical traditions, does not have a central theological spokesperson or organization through which to interpret environmental issues. However, the basic precepts of a Yogic lifestyle involve an emphasis on health, exercise, vegetarianism, and non violence that accord well with core environmental principles.

The significance or value of the comparison between Merleau-Ponty's thought and yoga is not that it attempts to impose a Western philosophical framework for an established non-Western tradition: such an attempt would do less than justice to the integrity of the yoga tradition. Morley tries to establish that yoga is an important resource for phenomenologists undertaking future research in ongoing project prescribed by Merleau-Ponty: namely to bring Western thought "down to earth" by focusing on the lived human body as philosophical and psychological ground. Environmental philosophers need to draw attention to the first person, subjective experiences of human relation with the non human. Phenomenology in fact is an appropriate philosophical position in this direction which emphasizes paying deep attention, closeness to the land and restoration of the sense of wonder. This together with Yogic practices and meditation may lead towards an effective environmental consciousness.

Yoga teaches harmony and control. From a very stage in the Indian tradition people were practising various kinds of mental exercises or meditative disciplines known as yoga. Although there developed many different kinds of yoga the underlying principle has been to unite. Sue Hamilton writes the common underlying principle of the different forms of yoga

has been that normal life is characterised by being led astray by our senses and by the misleading busyness of everyday cognitive activity. The practice of yoga therefore is for the purpose of attaining control, calm and in some systems cognitive insight. It leads to an understanding of our own body and how we must actively and artistically use the resources offered by place in order to mould and shape the body and create different somatic relations. Thus practice of yoga brings out in nature that performative actor that is therapeutic and known for healing.

Also such alienation from the body is fostered by our engagement with the 'bodiless spaces' aces made accessible to us by the digital revolution (Abram, 2003).This is one of the latest examples of our ever expanding engagement with worlds hidden behind, beyond, or beneath the space in which we are corporeally immersed. One of the most ancient of such other worlds and perhaps the first to exert a steady pull on our attention was the dimension of pure mathematical truths, the rarefied realm of numbers (both simple and complex) and the apparently unchanging relations between those numbers. The mathematical domain of number and proportion has long been assumed to be a separate and purer realm than this very changeable world in which we breathe and hunger and waste away.

Thus, Brown & Toadvine (2003) writes that the challenge is to restore our lived experience of nature. Technology has distanced us from nature. We have created many worlds within the world in which we are immersed. Technology has created bodiless spaces and worlds which distances us from the brute wild world.

We need to revive that direct experience. As Ponty wrote in his work The Visible and the Invisible, "We are interrogating our experience precisely in order to know how it opens us to what is not ourselves". Also, we are inquiring into our experience with the brute earth, our own silent encounter with "brute being as revealed to us in our perceptual contact with the world" (Ponty, 1988).

A careful exploration reveals that both yoga and Merleau Ponty's philosophy delve into the very flesh of the world and emphasize human embodiment. Yoga is not just contemplative but is a very practical approach involving the mind and the body of the individual. Yogic practices also provide a way out of the alienated lifestyles of industrialized civilization by making us aware of our inner bodies and practicing control over the mind and the senses. Even the yogic practice of prāṇāyāma (breath control) can be compared with Merleau Ponty's

idea of lived body wherein the human body is understood as that which perceives nature which it also inhabits. Both emphasize performing or engaging in an activity that brings forth the essential relation between inner and outer body. They draw our attention to the very experience of engaging with body. Like yoga, existential phenomenology affirms the domain of subjectively lived experiences and seeks to inculcate in us virtues which help us to appreciate different multiple subjective standpoints.

5.9 Relevance of this comparison to environmental thought:

Environmental philosophers need to draw attention to the first person, subjective experiences of human relation with the non human. Phenomenology in fact is an appropriate philosophical position in this direction which emphasizes paying deep attention, closeness to the land and restoration of the sense of wonder. This together with Yogic practices and meditation may lead towards an effective environmental consciousness. In Yogic practices the body is trained to allow its body consciousness become very sensitive and open up different experiential levels of the body. The concept of the contemplative body also includes the idea that we can change the quality of our experience by exercising our body and mind. And this practice can have an ethical meaning (Klemola, 2003). Klemola reveals an interesting 'life principle' directly connected to yogic practices. Different exercises for opening the body-consciousness, he claims, are used to have an experience of life principle, 'a direct experience of nature and also an "expression of life"'. Experiencing life in one's own body enables empathy also towards other sentient beings as there is a certain kind of kinship involved. In our everyday attitude to the world the experience of one's own body with its inner sensations is usually overlooked as we rarely stop and really listen to it.

In general, the yogic practices are 'specifically designed to move human cognition from a illusory view of reality to a true one: that is, to one in which the profound interconnectedness of reality is directly perceived' (Zajonc, 2006). Strengthening of body-consciousness means strengthening the possibilities for experiencing the implicit unity of human beings and nature.

For finding out what is in me and what is out there in the world, and what the connection is between the two, there is a need for a 'critical ecological ontology' founded on phenomenologically based inquiry (Payne, 1997). This can make clear how the responsibilities of oneself and of the environment are complexly intertwined. An ecological

ontology based on Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh can help us to re-situate both human beings and other creatures in ontological terms, and also, in ethical terms (Low, 2012).

Chapter VI

Ontology, Place and Ethics

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters we have seen that by overcoming the traditional dualistic ontology ecophenomenologists seek towards the ethical subject who would act in environmentally sensitive ways. It is here that the present paper tries to show that this transition from a new ontology to an ethical subject is not possible without taking into account the significance of place. Indeed the terms being, place and ethics are incomplete without one another and they actually mean the same. Such ecophenomenologists draw insights particularly from Heidegger's notion of 'Dwelling' and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'body-subject' in their attempts to return the human subject to its essential nature i.e. the human experiencer as an essentially embodied and embedded subject. Such an account may provide a philosophical basis of understanding the importance of place.

This chapter draws on the significance of the concept of place in the philosophical reconsideration of the human-nature dialogue. The concept of place is in fact one of the most important yet neglected concepts at the heart of such philosophical reflection. At a time when we are so distanced from and lost touch with our natural surroundings and it becomes more and more challenging to motivate people to adopt environmentally sustainable ways, it is important to revive our touch with the place we inhabit. Neglect of place has led to loss of meaning and significance in human lives leading to feelings of hopelessness and loss of sense of identity. As Pablo Neruda wrote in his work Still another day, "Pardon me, if when I want to tell the story of my life it's the land I talk about. (Neruda, 1984)

We have seen that one of the challenges of environmental philosophy is to resituate the human mind into the lived body. In other words 'to be' is to be 'embodied'. A further challenge is to resituate the human body into its surroundings, in its place. To be embodied is also to be 'embedded'. For Merleau Ponty, human being is essentially an embodied and embedded entity. To be is to be in some place.

The environmental thinker, Val Plumwood, points out sensitivity to place plays an important role in developing ethical dispositions towards the natural world (Plumwood, 2005). In fact, phenomenological reflection on place lies mid way between overcoming ontological dualism and developing ethical dispositions.

6.2 The concept of place:

Whenever we read any biographical or autobiographical account of an individual it always starts with a description of the place to which the person belongs to. The place sets the background of the person or is one of the most important aspects that builds his personality or influences his works.

J.E. Malpas in his work "Place and Experience" writes that it is something of a truism to say that that which is closest and most familiar to us is often that which is most easily overlooked and forgotten. This forgetting has its conceptual roots in regarding scientific knowledge as supreme. While the 'sense of place' is a familiar theme in poetry and art, philosophers have generally given little or no attention to place and the human relation to place.

After Aristotle's accounts of place in his Physics, Place was engulfed by Time as well as space, the dominant cosmic parameters in the modern period. The neglect of place may be attributed to what David Abram describes as the culture in which we are raised , where we are asked to distrust our immediate sensory experience and to orient ourselves instead on the basis of an abstract, 'objective 'reality known only through quantitative measurement, technological instrumentation and other exclusively human involvements.

David Abram writes that the renewed interest on our understanding of place springs from phenomenology's return to things themselves or the practice of reflecting on our direct experiences. The very idea of place, so deeply dormant in modern Western thinking, was brought into the daylight of philosophical discourse. By regarding the body as the crucial clue, Kant, Whitehead, Husserl and Merleau Ponty made essential and lasting contributions. They have begun to retrieve the importance of place for Western thought (Casey, 1997).

Since the last few decades, scholars from various disciplines have explored the concept of 'place. Some of the key features of such studies have been place attachment, place identity, sense of place, emotional relationships to place, place dependence. Manzo points out that

while all of these concepts address people's relationships to places, the exact connection between them remains unclear.

Recent studies of the significance of place are inspired by the works of a group of scholars who belong to the school of "humanistic geography" such as David Ley, Edward Relph, Marwyn Samuels, and Yi-Fu Tuan. Their primary aim was to understand the lived relationship between people and the geographical world in which they find themselves. How and why, for example, are places important in human life, what are they experientially, and how do environmental qualities contribute to their constitution? What does it mean to be emplaced humanly in a world that always includes geographical dimensions such as space, distance, nearness, mobility, materiality, landscape, region, and nature. Some significant works are Edward Relph's "Place and Placelessness" (1976) and Yi Fu Tuan's Space and Place (1976) The emphasis of such works on the experiential features of place in terms of its subjective or lived aspects led to the convergence of their method with that of the philosophical method called phenomenology.

6.3 Phenomenological significance of place:

Much of modern philosophy is based on the dualistic notions of the incorporeal mind and the corporeal matter. This dualism lies at the heart of Descartes' solipsistic egocentric cogito which according to him is a placeless entity all by itself. However, as pointed out by David Seamon, in our day-to-day activities we are engaged in different situations and experiences. Such everyday experiences are necessarily place bound. They occur in some place. Seamon explores in his book A geography of the lifeworld (1979) that a satisfying human existence involves links with the locality in which one chooses to live. A sense of personal satisfaction as well as sense of community is both inescapably grounded in place. Following Descartes idea of the placeless solipsistic cogito, much of social sciences in the last several decades seems to suppose that people are now easily able to transcend physical space and environment because of advances in technology and the sciences, indeed the predominant western lifestyle today involves a patchwork of isolated points-home, office, places of entertainment, recreation etc. all linked by a mechanical net of transportation and communication devices. At the same time, however many thinkers as well as people on the streets speak about a growing sense of homelessness and alienation. They speak of people's increased disrespect for places and the natural environment. According to Val Plumwood's

philosophy of nature, sensitivity to place plays a very important role in developing ethical dispositions towards the natural world.

Phenomenological enquiry reveals and criticizes such modernist assumptions, while traditional phenomenological notions, in particular Heidegger's notion of Dwelling and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the body subject, form a more eco-friendly framework for enquiring into the character of interactions within the natural world and the basis of values in those interactions. Phenomenologists seek to return the human subject to its essential nature i.e. the human experiencer as an essentially embodied and embedded subject. A phenomenological perspective on the issue of human alienation from nature indicates that this problem has its partial roots in the growing rupture between people and place. The so called 'conquest of terrestrial space may have been successful technologically and economically, but not humanly. At least experientially it seems that people become bound to locality. The quality of their life becomes reduced when these bonds are broken in various ways.

The following are the distinctive features of a phenomenological approach to the environment

(1) understanding grounded in real-world experience;

(2) human immersion in world; and

(3) describing the lifeworld—a person or group's everyday world of taken-for-grantedness of which the person or group is typically unaware.

These philosophers, mostly influenced by the works of Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, try to make a move from the founder of phenomenology, Husserl's original emphasis on pure intellectual consciousness and instead work towards a reflexive understanding of everyday human life and its meanings (Moran, 2000).

By overcoming the traditional dualistic ontology ecophenomenologists seek towards the ethical subject who would act in environmentally sensitive ways. It is here that the present paper tries to show that this transition from a new ontology to an ethical subject is not possible without taking into account the significance of place. Also it would like to draw on the philosophy of Heidegger and Ponty to show that the terms being, place and ethics are indeed incomplete without one another and they actually mean the same.

We have seen that Descartes's reductionist ontology led to the dominant worldview which accords a superior place to humans as soul possessor of conscious minds and devalues the natural world as inert, lifeless and purposeless. As per this view material reality is a strictly mechanical realm and our subjective experiences add nothing to it. Cartesian dualism uprooted humans and rendered them homeless in a world perceived as radically 'other', essentially alien and meaningless. In contrast to this the human mind or soul is held to be of paramount importance. Everything outside this human essence –even the human body thus seemed to require ruthless subjugation and control.

The Phenomenological significance of place can be traced to Martin Heidegger. Heidegger raised anew the question of the meaning of Being. His understanding of being reveals that Dasein is not merely the solipsistic subjectivity but rather is always being-in-the-world. In his work Being and Time, Heidegger argued that consciousness was not separate from the world and human existence. He called for an existential correction to Husserl that would interpret essential structures as basic categories of human experience rather than as pure, cerebral consciousness. According to Heidegger we are always already in an environing world which he calls 'umwelt'. For Heidegger, human beings never just exist, but rather find themselves somewhere. 'Dasein' literally means being there. Both human awareness and existence are bound up with being in places and so, it may be argued, what is valuable emerges from the interconnection and interaction of humans in their environment.

This embeddedness in our lived world is a basic determination of Dasein's existence and the presupposition for being able to comprehend anything at all. In the words of later Heidegger, "the way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is...dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell." The loss of dwelling is one of the principle symptoms of modernity's sickness in his view. Jullian Young in her Book "Heidegger's Philosophy" writes that to dwell is, first, to be cared for, ultimately 'safe' in the dwelling place, and second, to care-for the things of the dwelling place, to be their guardian. Heidegger makes a connection between dwelling and guardianship. Heidegger's philosophy suggests a primordial belonging together of humans and place, of ontology and implacement. Thus, Edward Casey in his work "Getting back into place" proposes that a placeless ontology is meaningless. That to be is to be in place. There is no being

except being in place. In his words, “To be a sentient, bodily being at all is to be place bound, bound to be in a place, bonded and bound therein.

In his work Phenomenology of Perception, Maurice Merleau Ponty broadened Heidegger's correction to include the active role of the body in human experience. Merleau Ponty sought to reinterpret the division between body and mind common to most conventional Western philosophy and psychology. As a philosophical tradition, therefore, phenomenology has changed considerably since it’s founding by Husserl, moving from cerebral structures to lived experience. (Seamon, 2000) The chief concern of his work is to establish the primitive openness of human consciousness towards the world through the intermediary of body by characterizing the existential structure of human being as “being-in-the-world”.

Merleau Ponty gave an account of our experience of others in our bodily being in the world. He made a fresh approach to the problem of other minds by characterizing a person or a subject of experience as a bodily being. According to him we encounter others not just as minds but as fellow flesh and blood creatures with whom we share a common material world. In Merleau Ponty’s philosophy we find that the problem of self and other completely dissolves. He presents us with a renewed understanding of self and other in which there is no hierarchical relationship. Both self and other are bodily beings and subjects of experience. They coexist as bodily beings in a shared world. In this shared meaningful world, bodies interact with bodies and not with minds. Minds do not exert power over immaterial objects. Such understanding of the self-other relation is extended to the self and its natural surrounding by contemporary environmentalists. In this context David Abram in his popular work, “The Spell of the Sensuous” quotes Merleau Ponty that the natural objects are equally sensitive and responsive to the beings around it and to us. The reversibility of subject and object extends to every object that we experience.

Ponty believes that perceptual experience of the world is ontologically basic rather than the secondary world presented to us by scientific realism. For Ponty the world or the other is not that which I ‘think’ but which manifests itself in perceptual experience in accordance with our bodily structure and skills. Things manifest before us in relation to our ways of inhabiting the world which is always bodily in nature. What he wanted to establish is that we do not exist here as pure detached consciousness locked in the inner sphere but are always given to the world in which things are given to us in relation to our bodily abilities and we get a grip on the things we encounter. (Diprose & Reynold, 2008)

6.4 The importance of place:

As Gordon (2010) quoted from Ben Macintyre's work "The Importance of a Sense of Place", in today's world, "We travel faster, more widely, move more often and settle for shorter periods than ever before, yet at the same time we seem to crave a place to stay and return to ever more intensely. Place marks us all, and leaves its traces."

Place is inextricably attached to our very being. The sense of belonging to a particular place is a fundamental component of the way that most people understand who they are. People's country of origin, the region , city, town, or village in which they grew up, the houses in which they lived, the schools they attended, the shops they visited and the special places where they played with their friends are all likely to form essential components of their identity underpinning their feelings of security and belonging.

There has been a recent wave of interest in the concept of place in various disciplines like Geography, Archaeology, Philosophy and Phenomenology. This interest is inspired by the works of a group of scholars who belong to the school of "humanistic geography" such as David Ley, Edward Relph, Marwyn Samuels, and Yi-Fu Tuan. Their primary aim was to understand the lived relationship between people and the geographical world in which they find themselves. How and why, for example, are places important in human life, what are they experientially, and how do environmental qualities contribute to their constitution? What does it mean to be emplaced humanly in a world that always includes geographical dimensions such as space, distance, nearness, mobility, materiality, landscape, region, and nature. Some significant works are Edward Relph's "Place and placelessness" (1976) and Yi Fu Tuan's "Space and Place" (1976). What is distinctive of these works is that they emphasize the experiential features of place in terms of its subjective or lived aspects. This has led to the convergence of their method with that of the philosophical method called phenomenology.

Another such thinker, J.E. Malpas in his work "Place and Experience" writes that it is something of a truism to say that that which is closest and most familiar to us is often that which is most easily overlooked and forgotten. This forgetting has its conceptual roots in regarding scientific knowledge as supreme. While the 'sense of place' is a familiar theme in poetry and art, philosophers have generally given little or no attention to place and the human relation to place.

Edward Casey, in his works on place like Getting Back into Place (1993) and The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History (1997) argues against the temporocentrism that has characterized much of the history of philosophy, and is especially characteristic of modernity. Instead, according to Casey's descriptive analyses, place is primary, and should not be confused with, or subordinated to, space or time. These texts, with their systematic and wide-ranging discussions of place, embodiment, built and natural environments, dwelling and journeying, the history of philosophy, representations of place, etc. have indeed played an important role in opening "a renewed understanding of place." Casey's approach to understanding place is phenomenological. He gives phenomenological descriptions of the varied ways of being in place. His descriptions are relevant for anyone seeking to understand embodiment and place. He talks about how place is formed by cultural, social and political forces, how place is permeated by time and history and the importance of edges, boundaries and other places and collocations of places in understanding any singular place.

Since the last few decades, scholars from various disciplines have explored the concept of place. Some of the key features of such studies have been place attachment, place identity, sense of place, emotional relationships to place, place dependence.

The environmental crisis can be examined in this light according to many thinkers in the continental tradition of philosophy. The fact that we have lost sense of meaning and value in relation to our natural surroundings owes largely to the modernist outlook whereby we have remained confined to our scientific understanding of space and time. Under such a framework, 'place' is a forgotten or neglected realm.

However recently there has been a sincere effort to distinguish the scientific understanding of space from place which has historical, cultural, ethical dimensions to it.

6.5 Distinguishing Space from Place:

Chawla (1992) writes that our places of origin shape who we are whether we like it or not. Place comes into existence when people give meaning to a part of the larger, undifferentiated space in which they live. Whilst abstract knowledge about a place can be developed in a relatively short space of time, the 'feel' of a place takes longer to acquire, growing out of a large number of routine activities and everyday experiences, as well as more significant life events. Long-term residence therefore strengthens place identity, facilitating local social ties, providing the time to invest places with personal meanings, and linking significant life events

to place, although the quality and intensity of experiences are usually more important than simple duration (Tuan, 1977).

Place exists at different scales, ranging from a particular part of the house or garden in which a person lives, through the streets, shops and other facilities and landmarks of the local neighbourhood or town in which they grow up, out to the wider countryside, region and nation of residence (or origin). When people talk about where they 'feel at home', they might be referring to any or all of these levels, capturing the special meaning of different places for the individual, typically based on the experiences and memories associated with them, rather than their physical properties (Tuan, 1974, 1977).

Place attachment is normally understood to be part of a person's overall identity, consisting of the memories, feelings, beliefs and meanings associated with their physical surroundings. Places imbued with personal, social and cultural meaning therefore provide a framework within which personal identity is constructed.

While the notion of "space" represents a three-dimensional, measurable extension of elements grouped together, at a more experiential level, place itself would include the "character" of the space, which one can loosely term as the social and culturally defined space. According to Casey (1993) the power of a place is not merely determined by its location on a map, but includes the relationships of the elements within it. He writes,

"The power of a place such as a mere room possesses not only where I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but how I am together with others (i.e., how I comingle and communicate with them) and even who we shall become together."

The fact that we have lost sense of meaning and value in relation to our natural surroundings owes largely to the modernist outlook whereby we have remained confined to our scientific understanding of space and time. Under such a framework, 'place' is a forgotten or neglected realm.

However recently there has been a sincere effort to distinguish the scientific understanding of space from place which has historical, cultural, ethical dimensions to it.

Edward Casey notes that both geography and phenomenology have come to focus on place as experienced by human beings, in contrast to space whose abstractions discourages

experiential explorations. Space is understood as the encompassing volumetric void in which things (including human beings are positioned an contrast to which place is the immediate environment of my lived body- an arena of action that is at once physical and historical, social and cultural.)

6.6 The relation between self, body and place:

Self body and landscape address different dimensions of place in contrast with space. The self has to do with the agency and identity of the geographical subject, body is what links this self to lived place in its sensible and perceptible features, and landscape is the presented layout of a set of places, not their mere accumulation but their sensuous self presentation as a whole.

For the most part, western philosophical theories of human self hood have tended to tie it to awareness, and hence to consciousness. A paradigmatic instance is Locke's view that the self's "personal identity" is entirely a function of the consciousness of its own past through memory " as far consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought of that person. It is the same self now as it was then. So for Locke, the self's identity is a matter of linking up one's present consciousness with a past consciousness, and has nothing to do with place.

There has a growth of interest in the concept of place since the publication of Edward Relph's Place and Placelessness (1976) and Yi-Fu Tuan's Space and Place (1976). They emphasized the experiential features of place.

6.7 Place and Ethics:

The American novelist and essayist, Scott Russell Sanders writes,

"In belonging to a landscape, one feels a rightness, an at-homeness, a knitting of self and world. This condition of clarity and focus, this being fully present, is akin to what the Buddhists call mindfulness, what Christian contemplatives refer to as recollection, what Quakers call centering down. I am suspicious of any philosophy that would separate this-worldly from other- worldy commitments. There is only one world, and we participate in it here and now, in our flesh and our place."

As the environmental thinker, Val Plumwood, points out sensitivity to place plays an important role in developing ethical dispositions towards the natural world. In fact phenomenological reflection on place lies mid way between overcoming ontological dualism and developing ethical dispositions. Writing on the inseparable connection between ontology and place Robert Mugeraur in his thoughtful book, "Interpretations on behalf of Place" writes that to be necessarily located somewhere means to exist within a particular set of norms and beliefs within a received history and language; insofar as we are living we strive for meaning and value. He says that being ontologically implaced we find ourselves within a cultural, moral, and linguistic ethos, and that these links between ontology, place and ethics are hardly spurious.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to highlight some important issues discussed in the chapters of the thesis and point towards some possible future areas of study relevant to the current work.

The overall idea of the thesis is to restore the sense of meaning of nature in our lives. Recognizing the fact that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis of meaning, the thesis emphasizes the need to relook at our concepts of nature, humanity and the human-nature relationship which serves as the basis of all our dealings with nature.

In contrast to this view, the first chapter discusses how many environmental philosophers believe that the contemporary industrial and consumer society are the direct causes of the environmental crisis. They, thus, turn to science and technology to offer solutions in the face of the environmental crisis that engulfs us both locally and globally. However with the growing realization that the environmental crisis is human induced and that our current mode of life as humans on this planet is not sustainable, merely technical solutions are not enough. According to one environmental thinker Anthony Weston, the environmental crisis is not only the environmental degradation that we witness around us but it is a crisis of the senses, of imagination, and of our tools for thinking, our concepts and theories themselves. He writes that beyond ecology, philosophy too can and must contribute to 21st century environmentalism.

It is here that the thesis delves into the role of philosophy in addressing the environmental questions. As philosopher Martin C. Dillon points out, "What can a philosopher contribute to the contemporary debate about ecology? It is true that philosophers have no claim to technical knowledge about how to stop global warming, protect endangered species, or reduce the pollution of our planet's earth, air, and water. However, philosophical efforts are always directed toward clarification, thus, environmental philosophy is especially important at a time when the words "environment," "ecology," and "ecosystem" are used in so many senses by seemingly contradictory interests. Environmental thinkers seek to identify the fundamental flaws in the conceptual structures that inconspicuously inform contemporary discourse about our environment.

The thesis, thus, delves into the conceptual roots of the environmental crisis and how clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions is primary for effecting a change in our attitude towards the natural environment. Such is the role that philosophy can play towards resolving the environmental crisis.

Thus, although we are convinced that an ethical relation with the environment is the need of the hour we need to first secure the foundations for an alternate worldview which challenges the damaging attitudes and practices that arise from currently dominant conceptions.

Tracing the philosophical roots of the environmental crisis, the thesis identifies western metaphysical dualism and scientific objectivism as the root causes. The reason for the crisis of the senses and our imagination owes to the overpowering of our understanding and worldviews by the dualistic tendencies in western philosophy and the naturalistic tendencies of the objective sciences.

Such tendencies lead to anthropocentrism in environmental philosophy i.e., to the assumption that human beings and their interests matter morally in their own right while everything else matters morally only insofar as it affects human beings and their interests. Any view that understands morality simply as a matter of the obligations that humans have to one another, early theorists argued, cannot claim that humans have direct moral obligations to the natural world; thus, such views fail to capture an essential aspect of our relationship with the natural world.

This leads to a mistaken image of ourselves as separate from, rather than embedded in and dependent upon, nature. This makes us fail to appreciate the ways in which nature is an interconnected whole, such that events affecting one part of it have ramifications for others.

Another issue that the thesis highlights is the growing human disengagement from nature. Due to the dualistic worldview and the impact of science and technology on our lives, we are so distanced from and have lost touch with our natural surroundings that it becomes more and more challenging to motivate people to adopt environmentally sustainable ways. This has led to loss of meaning and significance in human lives leading to feelings of hopelessness and loss of sense of identity.

Also the methods of the positive sciences have developed in us the attitude of taking the world for granted. As we have got used to view the world in a particular way, the world no

longer astonishes us. As a result we have become indifferent, nothing surprises us anymore. As Jostein Gaarder in his work "Sophie's world" writes, "we need to once again see the world as if for the very first time." In other words we need to restore the faculty of awe and wonder. This is precisely what inspired phenomenologists like Merleau Ponty who believed in the enigmatic nature of the world around us. The starting point for restoring our lost touch and the value and meaning of nature in our lives is to pay close attention to our 'experience of' nature.

Thus, in the second chapter, the method of phenomenology, which is the study of direct experience, is suggested as an appropriate approach for taking account of our experiences of nature. In light of the limitations mentioned earlier, contemporary philosophers of the environment point out that so far environmental philosophy is based on what the scientist or other philosophers talk about, but not as we experience it. This according to them has led to alienation from nature. In order to restore nature its meaning, we need to adopt a different approach, an approach that is based on our direct, lived experience of nature. An account of our direct, first person experience of nature helps us to discover that dimension of nature's significance which is a matter of description of our subjective experiences. All attempts at objective third person accounts of the human nature relation merely distort its meaning because we do not interact with nature in fixed, causally determined ways. Such accounts are bound to be incomplete and lack that which is needed for an effective ethics of the environment. It cuts us from our actual experience of nature and leads to an understanding of nature that sets it apart from us as that other which is to be either used or conserved.

They therefore seek to return to and draw our attention to that experiential dimension of nature which is implicit in the history of philosophical reflection on nature. The thesis therefore undertakes a phenomenological approach towards reflecting on environmental issues which is based on returning to our direct experiences of nature. Although phenomenology does not seek to explain the terms, nevertheless, phenomenology provides a way for recovering the sense of the terms nature and environment as they appear in our lived experience of the world we inhabit. In particular to the phenomenological approach helps in making evident the centrality of the earth in all human experience and that the human mind is dependent upon and influenced by our forgotten relation with the encompassing earth. (Abram, 1996)

Phenomenologists share the conviction that philosophy must start from experience, even if Western philosophy has perennially sought to deny its debt to this source. It is necessary to rediscover the relationship between our sensory awareness of the world and our abstract thought about it, between our pre-reflective experience and reflection on this experience. Patient description of experience and of the means by which abstract scientific knowledge is constructed from experience is an essential prolegomenon to reconceiving our relationship with nature. In addition to making possible a clearer understanding of the epistemic foundations of our abstract sciences, such a phenomenological investigation of nature also provides us with access to the originary value-laden character of the world that science attempts to thematically explain.

Although phenomenologists do not all agree on the best manner of characterizing or describing experience, or on the nature of the subject that experiences, this general tendency to start from experience, taking this term in a broad sense already demonstrates a basic convergence of the phenomenological method with the concerns of contemporary environmental thought. Our conviction that nature has value, that it deserves or demands a certain proper treatment from us, must have its roots in an experience of nature. As Neil Evernden has argued, those approaches to nature that strip it of all experienced qualities leave us with an unrecognizable abstraction, and certainly not with any version of nature that could have inspired our initial appreciation.

The reason for such emphasis on the experiential dimension on the part of phenomenologists like Husserl owes to the fact that for him phenomenology was a method that attempted to give a description of the way things 'appear' in our conscious experience. Phenomenology for him is the science of appearances. But the way things appear in conscious experience may be very different from the way things actually are in reality. Moreover, the study of ''appearances'' would be considered less important than the study of the real world as we tend to give natural-scientific descriptions of things a higher status than the world we experience through our senses. However, for Husserl, the world we experience is in fact primordial, that is to say, prior to natural scientific descriptions of the world. We saw round objects in the world before this experience became abstracted into the mathematical concept of the circle. According to Husserl, it is precisely on the basis of lived experience i.e. ''appearances'' that we have been able to construct the abstract terminology and explanations

conceptualized by natural science. Unfortunately, according to Husserl we have forgotten this grounding of science in the primordial experience of the world.

It was precisely this significance of the primordial experience of the world which inspired phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty to continue debates about what it means to be human, about the relations between individual human beings and between individuals and society, about language, art and expression, about the relation between science, common experience and philosophy, about the nature of time and history, and about the possibilities for human progress. Several headlines of his phenomenology such as 'returning to the things themselves', or 'the world is at the heart of our flesh', have inspired environmental philosophers to believe that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology may hold the foundations for a truly ecologically sound philosophy.

In fact as Dermot Moran writes, Merleau-Ponty has made the most original and enduring contribution to post-Husserlian phenomenology in France, through his attempts to offer a radical description of the primary experiences of embodied human existence. In opposition to all forms of dualism, in his major work, Phenomenology of Perception (1945), he offers a phenomenological account of our 'being-in-the-world' as a corrective to the distorted accounts of experience found, on the one hand, in rationalism, idealism, and what he calls 'intellectualism', and, on the other hand, in empiricism, behaviourism, and experimental science.

The thesis also identifies the importance of reviving the philosophy of nature. Although philosophy of nature as found in the works of Schelling, Goethe and Hegel has become an isolated area of inquiry and no longer considered a standard fare in philosophy, yet philosophers have increasingly felt the need to revive some non discipline-specific, pre-scientific, primary knowledge of nature. Such knowledge about nature needs continually to be evoked, reassessed, and related to developing specialized knowledge. To engage in this task would constitute a creative philosophical role within, or dimension of, the philosophy of nature. The aim would be to bring forth such background knowledge as the framework for ongoing scientific inquiry and for interpreting its results. Such philosophical attention to nature is neither outmoded nor senseless, but its sense is readily buried and forgotten. We do not have to invent the philosophy of nature, but we may, from time to time, have to rediscover or to reinvent it.

Independent of any science, human beings find nature as the nonhuman reality in and with which they live and through which they have to find their way. Through perception and action, we are in constant, manifold transactions with nature in this sense. This is what Husserl calls nature as "lived" and Dewey the nature experienced in our "doings and sufferings." Whitehead speaks of our "enjoying" the world in this sense, Heidegger of our understanding it, and Wittgenstein of our "knowing our way about" in it. These characterizations are not identical, but they do converge on an important thesis. Common experience and common speech, as well as the testimony of philosophers, permit us to say that, in some perfectly obvious way, we know what nature is.

The last twenty years have witnessed significant regrowth of interest in *Naturphilosophie*, prompted especially by the spread of environmental problems. Philosophy of nature can thus give us an improved appreciation both of how nature is an interconnected whole and of the dependent place that we occupy within this whole – an appreciation that can help to motivate us to practice more environmentally sustainable ways of life.

Ecophenomenologists emphasizes such an experiential turn in environmental philosophy which phenomenology offers. This however does not mean reducing the world to consciousness or that meaning of the world is lodged in human subjectivity. Although for Husserl, phenomenology teaches that our access to knowledge is via consciousness, but following Merleau-Ponty's understanding of perception and embodiment, the world is experienced as already meaningful in and of itself. Thus, phenomenology offers a different understanding of the world. It does not reduce the world to consciousness. Phenomenology opens a space for experience-based investigation of the environment, which has made it an attractive and fruitful perspective for scholars across the humanities, social sciences, and design fields. By critically assessing the epistemological and ontological assumptions that inform the historical and contemporary relationship with nature, including those of metaphysical naturalism and instrumental rationality, ecophenomenology seeks to reawaken our attention to the world as we directly experience it, with all of the philosophical consequences that such a revindication of experience would entail. The concepts of the lifeworld, the earth and elements, chiasmic flesh, and poetic dwelling illustrate directions opened by a phenomenological approach to environmental ethics, although these are far from exhaustive. As Toadvine points out, by reframing our understanding of what the environment is and how we know it, phenomenology guides us toward a richer sense of the natural world

and the response it invites from us. Ecophenomenology explores human relation to nature by specifically looking at how the human subject experiences the natural environment. Basing it on the theoretical frameworks set by phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, ecophenomenologists explore newer horizons that may lead towards renewed sensitivity to our natural surroundings. The starting point towards such sensitivity is our understanding that humans are essentially embodied and embedded in this world.

In an attempt to broaden the horizon of environmental ethics, the thesis brings about a dialogue between painting and phenomenology, between yoga practice and phenomenology and also the concept of place as shaping our relation with the natural environment.

A question may arise here that what can phenomenology show us that has not already been demonstrated by other radical ecology movements? Although there are numerous attempts to deal with the environmental crisis the thesis shows how phenomenology as a method help to overcome the assumptions and commitments upheld by Platonism, Christianity, capitalism, Cartesian dualism, patriarchy, and the like, phenomenological approach suggests that what is lacking in other contemporary approaches to the natural world is that they need to complement their efforts with an approach that leaves our connection with our own world intact. Ecophenomenological project is primarily seen as identifying this forgetfulness accompanied by efforts aimed towards remembering the forgotten realm for it is not enough to diagnose our forgetting; there is also a matter of remembering—remembering the earth. This requires attentive seeing and practice.

It instills in us certain virtues which we can term as environmental virtues like paying attention, showing respect, taking care of the land itself, being sympathetic to other's views etc. When extended to our natural surroundings such environmental virtues can elevate our position of mere selves to ecological selves and help us experience our true essence as a member of a much larger universe.

The alternative experience and account of nature to which ecophenomenology gives us access is potentially revolutionary. The rediscovery of a natural world that is inherently and primordially meaningful and worthy of respect might help us to overcome our cultural estrangement from the world around us. Ecophenomenologists argue that our dominant ways of understanding subjectivity, scientific objectivity, materiality, and animality cut us off from the actual experience of our environment. The rediscovery of our perceptual, embodied, and

intersubjective interactions with our surrounding world opens us to dimensions of nature's meaning and value.

It makes us learn to be spell bound once again and to recognize our status as co participants within that mysterious world of nature.

This thesis seeks to highlight how phenomenology questions the over reliance on scientific objectivity. A phenomenological approach requires that we suspend the natural attitude of taking the validity of the objective world for granted and we reflect on the pretheoretical situation on which the scientific theoretical activity is based and carried out. The point is to show that scientific concepts derive meaning from the pretheoretical way of being or interaction with world. Scientific theories are a transformation of our more fundamental everyday manner of being in and with the word. This was Husserl's project in some of his later works like 'The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Philosophy' and also of Heidegger in his work 'Being and time'.

The third chapter focuses on the elements in Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy particularly in his most important work the 'Phenomenology of Perception' which set the background for discussing his understanding of the human-nature relation. John J. Compton writes that he finds the project of Merleau-Ponty to be most concretely suggestive of the basic understanding of the human-nature understanding that we are seeking. Unlike the natural sciences which have trained us to see nature as material realm for Merleau-Ponty, the most fundamental way in which human beings find themselves in the world is in their bodily 'perceptual interaction with it. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of perception is founded upon sharing. Empiricists and rationalists never relate to the human entity as a Being-in-the-world, who cares for and is responsible for the world that is central to its being.

Thus, Merleau-Ponty sought to renounce Cartesian rationalism in favour of a genuinely concrete philosophy. The latter would not take up its abode in a realm allegedly beyond the vicissitudes of daily life. On the contrary, the new, way of philosophizing would elucidate the impossibility of escaping one's concrete co-existence with others, and would stress the need to participate responsibly in shaping the future.

Thus, after highlighting the limitations in the approach of traditional Environmental Philosophy and suggesting the method of phenomenology as offering a renewed approach to reflecting on the human nature dialogue, the thesis argues that prior to engaging in an 'ethics'

of the environment we need to restore the sense of nature through a phenomenological rethinking of the human-nature dialogue.

The thesis, thus, critiques the traditional approaches in philosophy like empiricism and intellectualism which shapes our worldview and draws our attention to the realm of lived experiences at the pre-scientific, pre-theoretical level of our interaction with nature.

This pre-scientific, pre-theoretical realm is the world of direct experience, the intersubjective world of life, the Lebenswelt or "life-world" according to Husserl. The world in which we act is something more than just the physical environment in which we move around. The world is a set of experienced meaningful contexts that are irreducible to the purely physical objects that surround us. The 'world of immediate experience', the world 'already there', 'pregiven', the world as experienced in our everyday and natural attitude, is what Husserl calls the 'lifeworld'.

The more pragmatic aspects of the lifeworld are distinguished from any theoretical attitude we might take towards life; the lifeworld involves our pre-theoretical attitude to life – our un-contemplated life of action, which turns out to be the life on which all theorizing is based and from which all theorizing is ultimately derived. When we do science, for example, we do it as a scientist (along with other scientists) with two feet firmly planted in the lifeworld. Yet, the world as science explains it is not the lifeworld.

It's the world of particles, atoms, molecules, or it's the world of stars and distances and events that we never see or experience, and find it difficult even to conceive. The scientific world is a theory about the world – in the same way that metaphysics offers theories about the world. But before we try to explain the world in any kind of theoretical fashion, we are living in the world.

Husserl's concept of lifeworld helps us to recognize a more primary, corporeal dimension of our existence which is midway between the transcendental "consciousness" of his earlier analyses and the utterly objective "matter" assumed by the natural sciences. This is the intersubjective world of life, the Lebenswelt, or "life-world".

The life world is the world of our immediately lived experience, as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. Easily overlooked, this primordial world is always already there when we

begin to reflect or philosophize. It is not a private, but a collective, dimension- the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are entwined.

It was Husserl's genius to realize that the assumption of objectivity had led to an almost total eclipse of the lifeworld in the modern era. We often forget this living dimension in which all our actions are rooted. The emphasis on the restoration of the lifeworld leads us to appreciate the fact that different cultures have different lifeworlds and also that if the world experienced by humans are so diverse, how much more diverse , still, must be the life-worlds of other animals- of wolves, or owls or bees.

Despite the multiplicity he also talks about some basic structures of the lifeworld which are shared and are common to different cultures and also different species. This is his recognition of the earth as the forgotten basis of all our awareness. According to him every theoretical and scientific practice grows out of and remains supported by this forgotten ground of our lived experience and everything has value and meaning only in reference to this primordial and open realm.

Husserl's' legacy was further taken up later phenomenologists like Merleau ponty who showed the relevance of phenomenology for the ecological questions that now confront us.

Husserl's emphasis on paying attention to the intersubjective realm of the lifeworld made the concept of the body come to the forefront. Rejecting Cartesian dualism Merleau ponty established the body as the very locus of the experiencing subject. To affirm the importance of the body is to acknowledge our existence as one of the earth's animals unlike the western philosophical tradition of equating humans with the incorporeal intellect that sets them apart and above the non humans.

The concept of the lifeworld exerted a profound influence upon Merleau Ponty. In fact the concept of the lifeworld appears to be primary for Merleau Ponty's philosophy of nature. His philosophical project was to draw our attention to the forgotten ground of all our interactions i.e. the lifeworld. He sought to reflect on and recover the lived dimension of the human-nature relation. Such reflection brings to light the fact that the world we inhabit is not an inert, mechanical realm but a living field.

Merleau-Ponty, indeed, criticizes Husserl's account of the phenomenological reduction as tending towards a form of idealism, because it is conceived of too much on the Cartesian

model. As Descartes used his method of doubt to, as it were, strip away successive layers of external reality until only the *cogito,* the "I think", was left, so Husserl, according to Merleau-Ponty, talks as if the phenomenological reduction were a matter of setting aside the "external world" and its existence in order to get to the certainty of an inner realm of pure consciousness. However for Ponty, it is not possible to conceive of oneself as a disembodied soul while adopting the stance of the life-world, since our ordinary experience of ourselves is of a body-mind unity actively engaged with the world around us. We can arrive at Descartes's conception only by starting from unquestioned acceptance of a scientific construction of the world (including our own bodies) as an array of purely physical objects without any element of thought or consciousness. Once that is done, we are bound to think of our own conscious experience as belonging to *something else,* an entirely non-material "mental substance" that is detached from anything material, even our own body. But a genuinely radical "reduction" would make us aware of the priority of our ordinary lived experience over any theoretical construction of science whose purpose is only to enable us to explain and predict the phenomena of ordinary experience.

Merleau-Ponty's own conception of phenomenology is more closely related to that of the later Husserl, but it is also true that he developed that conception in new directions of his own.

Ponty sought to restore the world of perception in the Phenomenology of Perception and "to show how communication with others, and thought, take up and go beyond the realm of perception which initiated us to the truth". On the basis of the conception of the subject as essentially *embodied* or "incarnated", he aimed to exhibit the mind as a domain of *expression.*

Human experience is, as we have seen, on Merleau-Ponty's view essentially meaningful. Our involvement with our natural and human milieu implies that we cannot regard that milieu as a purely "objective", value- and meaning-free, set of states of affairs, but must see the things and people with whom we deal as having a "meaning" for us related to our dealings with them.

From the other side, the phenomenological manner of thinking, as practiced by Merleau-Ponty, implies that the subjects of experience are not "transcendental egos", but ordinary human beings, located in time and space and at a particular point in history. Their accounts of the world and themselves are therefore their attempts to make sense of their own experience from that point of view, and give rise to no timeless a priori truths of the kind claimed by

traditional metaphysics. The results of philosophical reflection must be provisional. Human beings are faced with a reality that is, in Merleau-Ponty's word, "inexhaustible", never to be fully comprehended by them, and yet they inevitably live in a world that is meaningful for them in its relation to their projects and activities in it. Our being in the world humanizes the world, makes it always *our* world, but, paradoxically, an essential part of its being a human world is that it stretches indefinitely beyond any human attempt to encompass it. There is a necessary gap between ourselves as subjects and the objective world of our experience, but it is never a gap that amounts to total detachment.

Ponty believes that we do indeed, as phenomenologists, have to suspend our ordinary active involvement with the world before we can engage in reflection about our experience - to the extent that what we normally take for granted as "common sense" comes to appear to us as strange and paradoxical. But this loosening of our normal ties with the world can never amount to completely "putting the world in parentheses", since radical reflection itself depends on the unreflective life from which it emerges and from which it derives its "material". Phenomenological philosophers do not cease to be human beings, involved in the flux of experience within the world, when they begin to engage in reflection; the "suspension" takes the form rather of seeking to get back to the position of a "perpetual beginner", like a child who has learned nothing, can take nothing for granted, and so confronts the world of experience directly and naively, in wonder. But it is clear that we can never fully recreate that naïve position in ourselves: "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction."

Unlike the mathematics-based sciences, phenomenology would seek not to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience (Abram, 1996). Husserl’s idea of intersubjectivity introduces us to the ‘real world’ in which we find ourselves. The real world is a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles the mutual inscription of others in my experience and myself in their experiences effects the interweaving of our individual phenomenal field into a single phenomenal world or ‘reality’.

Thus, a phenomenological exploration of these issues suggests that our immediate experiences in our day to day life reveal a different way of relating to our natural environment. Our immediate subjective experiences reveal that our felt alienation is only superficial and that a

renewed understanding of our relationship with nature will help us retrieve the lost sense of meaning and value.

Such philosophers try to re-conceive our relations to ourselves, to the environment, and to "the other," where this latter category includes non-human animal others. Moreover, the self and the other participate in an active dialogue. We are not connected causally but essentially always tied to the other in a reciprocal relationship.

In the Phenomenology of Perception Merleau-Ponty undertakes such a program and explores diverse features of the world, the cogito, intersubjectivity, space and temporality via investigations of the body-subject; the embodied subject as most fundamental mode of being in the world. About fifteen years later, Merleau-Ponty condemns this project. In one of the working notes published in his last unfinished work, The Visible and The Invisible, he states that 'the problems posed in Phenomenology of Perception are insoluble because he starts from the consciousness-object distinction. Even though the Phenomenology of Perception emphasizes the continuous relational reality of us and the world, and thus rejects the existence of separate subjects and objects, the two remain visible as two moments of a dialectical circularity. In The Visible and The Invisible, Merleau-Ponty is much more radical and aims to avoid every seed of dualism. He warns that philosophy normally elects certain beings, sensations, representations, thought or consciousness in order to separate itself from all being. Instead he claims that 'it would have to take as its theme the umbilical bond that binds it always to Being, the inalienable horizon with which it is already and henceforth circumvented. In that way Merleau-Ponty attempts, in The Visible and The Invisible, to dispense with inherited notions of selves, others and things, and instead tries to focus on the reversibility that ties them together. Here the central notions are the chiasm or intertwining, and the flesh, which totally replace the former key concepts of the body-subject or being-in-the-world. At its most basic level, Merleau-Ponty considers the flesh as the most fundamental element of which everything is made, through which everything comes into being. Or closer to Merleau-Ponty's own words, it is that 'brute being' that upholds the world and me inwardly and renders them present to each other. With reference to the chiasm then, Merleau-Ponty aims at the continuous state of reversibility in which all entities and aspects of life, of being, are intertwined.

In the subsequent chapters, the thesis discusses how this objective of Merleau-Ponty's philosophical project to reflect on the world as one lives it is sought through the work of painters, through yogic practices and finally through the concept of place.

In the fourth chapter the thesis discusses Ponty's interest in the works of the painter Cezanne. The importance of a phenomenological approach to environment is as Merleau Ponty pointed out that "it reawakens our experience of the world" and it is in this respect that Ponty pointed out that it is similar to art, particularly painting. Phenomenology like great works of art embody the finely tuned attention of their creators. And for this reason they can open our eyes to the depth, richness and strangeness of the world we inhabit. Where the ecological movement often seems pre-occupied with fixing, solving, or controlling the ecological crisis, Merleau-Ponty can show us how this still assumes a position of distant mastery and propose a more intimate means of working alongside various ecological crises.

Merleau-Ponty expresses in his phenomenology that the human body plays a significant role in our perception. It enables a synthetic combination of our sensory taking in different objects' qualities from the world on the one hand, and on the other, our subjective grasping them in their meanings for us. This primacy of embodiment has its vivid illustration in aesthetics in which we see examples of Western (Paul Cezanne) and non-Western artists (Chinese landscape painters) who aim at a balance between representing visible forms of nature and interpreting their deeper meanings for human existence. Emphasizing on the primacy of embodiment in perception, Merleau-Ponty, however, leaves silence of the relationship between the body and moral education. This overlooked aspect of the moral underpinnings in embodiment is strongly developed in Chinese landscape paintings in which Chinese philosophical traditions expressed the essence through the silk surface, that is, a harmonious unity in a person's relationship with nature, with herself, and with others. Chinese aesthetics is therefore in its essence an education of living a dignified and harmonious life.

The chapter discusses how Ponty's interest in painting springs from the similar emphasis on the primacy of embodiment in perception as found in Cezanne. Both the artist and the phenomenologist aim at a balance between representing visible forms of nature and interpreting their invisible, yet deeper meanings for human existence.

In the fifth chapter the thesis compares the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty with yogic practices and comes to the conclusion that both the traditions emphasize performing or engaging in an activity that brings forth the essential relation between inner and outer body. They draw our attention to the very experience of engaging with body. Like yoga, existential phenomenology affirms the domain of subjectively lived experiences and seeks to inculcate in us virtues which help us to appreciate different multiple subjective standpoints. Both the philosophical traditions can help us to overcome the sense of alienation that springs from the Descartean understanding of the transcendental subject leading to the solipsistic self. On the other hand we become more aware of our bodily subjectivity which becomes charged and enlightened and helps us widen our limited perspectives. Thus we become better equipped to perceive deeper and clearer. Our subdued, dormant subjectivity gets enlightened.

Such comparisons give us an idea of enhanced and enlarged subjectivity whereby a renewed meaningfulness evolves giving us a sense of our belongingness to our real home. We find that both the philosophical traditions can help us to overcome the sense of alienation that springs from the Descartean understanding of the transcendental subject leading to the solipsistic self. On the other hand we become more aware of our bodily subjectivity which becomes charged and enlightened and helps us widen our limited perspectives. Thus we become better equipped to perceive deeper and clearer. Our subdued, dormant subjectivity gets enlightened. We realize that when we cut a branch we do not just lose a branch but hamper a chain of events connected with it. We realize that just like the body and mind are not divorced, I and my world are not separate entities. We are essentially embodied and embedded.. Within these approaches the self is in a way released from its bondage in the inner sphere of the psychological world and realizes its bond with the surrounding Earth, the smell of the soil, the comfort of the sky, the sound of the water, and the various subtle ways in which the self participates in a meaningful dialogue with everything around it.

In the sixth chapter the thesis draws attention to the forgotten realm of place. Another dimension that the phenomenological approach restores is that the experiencing subject is not just embodied but is essentially embedded in place. A return to place can help us in renewing our sensitivity to our place of belonging. The sense of place has the potential to serve as a pragmatic foundation for addressing the profound local and global challenges, such as climate change and economic disparity, that are emerging in the present century." The

concept of place is one of the most obvious but forgotten realm and never spoken of as such. This forgetting of place leads to the problems associated with human alienation from nature.

By engaging in a phenomenological approach this new worldview is sought through by taking account of our direct experiences in our day to day lives experiences in order to understand what it means to be a part of nature. Thus, Ecophenomenology explores human relation to nature by specifically looking at how the human subject experiences the natural environment. Basing it on the theoretical frameworks set by phenomenologists like Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, ecophenomenologists explore newer horizons that may lead towards renewed sensitivity to our natural surroundings. The starting point towards such sensitivity is our understanding that humans are essentially embodied and embedded in this world.

The thesis identifies Ponty's major work The Phenomenology of Perception as offering the most relevant contribution towards redefining the human nature relation. Ponty's understanding of perception and embodiment as outlined in this work is fundamental to his understanding of the nature of the human experiencing subject and its essential relation to the world. According to Merleau Ponty, the task of phenomenology is to help us to see the primordial bond more clearly, to bring it to our attention. As a truly radical philosophy, phenomenology should alert us, for example, to the fact that ideas are never absolutely pure thoughts but rather, cultural objects necessarily linked to acts of expression whose source is the phenomenal body itself as already primordially expressive. In short, phenomenology must awaken us to an awareness of consciousness as incarnate in a body and inhering in a world. The notion of 'incarnate subjectivity' is therefore central to Merleau Ponty's phenomenology. As genuinely radical reflection, phenomenology recognizes that our primordial relationship to the world is not a thing which can be any further clarified by analysis; the dynamic, internal relation between body-subject world can only be brought to our attention. This bringing to attention is itself, however, a 'creative act' which brings truth into being by disclosing behind reflection that mysterious perceptual realm which is our very 'access to truth ' (Langer, 1989).

In fact Husserl's phenomenology and the efforts of those who followed him like Merleau Ponty have been to make us return to the 'lifeworld' that is the pre-scientific world of experience. They question the rampant objectivism and scientism that is so widespread today and that is leading to the mindlessness we see around us. The positive sciences have had such

immense success that they are no longer reflecting on their own foundations and eventual limitations but merely concerned with advanced technical issues. They are in need of an ontological and epistemological clarification but have also lost their existential relevance.

The phenomenological projects of Husserl was "to return to the things themselves"' toward the world as it is experienced in its felt immediacy. Unlike the mathematic-based sciences, phenomenology would seek not to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience (Abram, 1996). Husserl's idea of intersubjectivity introduces us to the 'real world' in which we find ourselves. The real world is a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles the mutual inscription of others in my experience and my self in their experiences effects the interweaving of our individual phenomenal field into a single phenomenal world or 'reality'.

Thus a phenomenological exploration of these issues suggests that our immediate experiences in our day to day life reveal a different way of relating to our natural environment. Our immediate subjective experiences reveal that our felt alienation is only superficial and that a renewed understanding of our relationship with nature will help us retrieve the lost sense of meaning and value.

Such philosophers try to re-conceive our relations to ourselves, to the environment, and to "the other," where this latter category includes non-human animal others. Moreover, the self and the other participate in an active dialogue. We are not connected causally but essentially always tied to the other in a reciprocal relationship.

Thus, the phenomenological approach helps us to interpret the world afresh. If we are to survive the present crisis and to live well in the coming millennium, we must develop a new philosophy of nature and create new relationships between ourselves and the rest of nature. We must dwell lightly and lovingly on the Earth and be in tune with the harmony of the universe. We must enable the individual self to become part of its larger social and ecological self, and find its rightful place in the universe as the self -in-the-Self. What makes the final, unfinished work of Merleau-Ponty amenable to environmental philosophy is his ontological monism. The attraction of monism, of course, is that it puts all beings on the same ontological plane without immediately privileging this or that being's place in nature. Humans are not

regarded as superior to nonhumans, or less natural, by virtue of their possession of a soul or rationality immune to natural laws.

In the words of philosopher Peter Marshall, having once experienced the self in the Self, a person knows intuitively that it is true and beautiful and that it can always be attained in the right conditions when we try and reflect and pay attention to our experiences of nature. It brings a sense of stillness and wholeness. Our immediate subjective experiences reveal that our felt alienation is only superficial and that a renewed understanding of our relationship with nature will help us retrieve the lost sense of meaning and value. Within such a phenomenological approach the self-other dichotomy dissolves; a renewed meaningfulness evolves giving us a sense of our belongingness to our real home.

Thus, we see that one of the fundamental ideas underlying Merleau Ponty's ontology is that the human mind cannot be cut off from nature. He sought to establish the rootedness of human awareness in the natural environment. The self is in a way released from its bondage in the inner sphere of the psychological world and realizes its bond with the surrounding Earth, the smell of the soil, the comfort of the sky, the sound of the water, and the various subtle ways in which the self participates in a meaningful dialogue with everything around it.

Such a liberating state will help us to see, feel and understand that all the activities we engage in are perhaps not right. It will help us to develop the attitude that will help us to respect the difference yet value of the non human world and not treat them as just means for some end.

Phenomenology brings us back to that world which is from the start shot through with lived significance. Although the world discloses itself in terms of our interests, attitudes and practical concerns, we are not cut off from the rest of nature, from its various possibilities. Our understanding of the world is not ours alone but is shared by our non human companions. We inhere in the word and are involved with it. Nature is not just that which we perceive but that something into which we are always already taken up.

Thus, the thesis seeks to broaden and enlarge the notion of the experiencing subject as an embodied, embedded, social, creative and ecological self. Reflecting on these aspects of the experiencing self we realize that such a self would necessarily be an ethical subject who would act in environmentally sensitive ways.

Future scope of research:

1) Merleau Ponty's Philosophy of Language

The thesis keeps scope for examining Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Language and its implications for a new philosophy of nature. Merleau Ponty's philosophy is credited with offering an alternative to the ancient philosophies of thinking, knowing and language based on the representation theory. However, Ponty believes that human thought and language are not merely representational or mimetic in nature but are essentially creative. It does not merely mirror or copy outside reality but possesses the possibility of yielding new ways of thinking, speaking and understanding. Thus, taking us beyond an understanding that considers language as based on the representation theory, Ponty sets the ground for an expressive philosophy of language.

Such a philosophy embraces the idea of the living body and its expressive life. It establishes language as a product of our sensorial experiences of each other and the world. Thus, such a philosophy reaffirms human's connection with the rest of the animate nature and leads to a renewed appreciation of the non human realm.

2) An exploration of the idea of sacred places through a study of religion and the body:

Given the huge impact of religious beliefs on the lives of people and the escalating environmental crisis much study has been devoted in recent times into exploring the connection between religion and environment.

The sacred places revered by different religions are among the most visible aspects of the relation between religion and environment. When the idea of such sacred places can be extended to the religious vision of a sacred earth it can indeed prove to be a powerful force in the environmental movement.

In this light one can explore how religion can prove to be a force which helps us to perceive nature as a whole to be charged with divinity and sacredness. In doing so, one can revisit the role of the human body which is a central feature in all experience. Among the great religions too we find references to the importance of the body in experiencing sacredness. The Buddha proclaimed that within this very body is the world and that all lands are within our bodies for both the body and the world are composed of the four great elements or mahābhūta: earth,

fire, air and water. Such a study can provide a phenomenological understanding of how the body and religion may provide the means for reconnecting with nature and to understand its spiritual significance rather than only emphasizing certain physical places. Beautiful mountains, vast oceans, peaceful woodlands which are not directly linked with religious worship but evoke similar experiences of sacredness from us. The serenity, magnificence and calmness of some places have the power to make us undergo experiences that are mystical and mysterious and may also lead to moral sensitivity towards our natural environment.

3) A study of nature and culture:

As the thesis shows, so far environmental ethics has been based on traditional dualistic ontology that has acted like a fuel to the present environmental crisis. Such ontology involves a host of hierarchical, binary oppositions one of which is nature and culture. However, from a phenomenological perspective the thesis identifies that nature and culture are not separate but inter connected.

An important contribution of phenomenology has been identified by ecophenomenologists as allowing one to experience the world from the perspectives of other social groups and other cultures and that other social and cultural approaches exist as valid alternatives to one's own. It enlarges the sense of culture to include non-human beings and their complex relations thus while value theories and right theories within environmental ethics is usually based on the human subject as the locus of moral agency the intertwinement of natural and cultural entities disclosed by phenomenology invites a rethinking of moral agency as extending to the nonhuman realm as well.

Thus, phenomenology and post modern thought now opens up varieties of ways to think about nature to experience the natural world in all its diversity. In fact as Raymond Williams observed in his work Problems in Materialism and Culture, that there is not one nature but culturally speaking there are many different natures. Nature and culture are intrinsically linked and natural phenomena reveal themselves to human beings only through human perceptual, cognitive or practical activities.

Bibliography

Abram, D. (1988). Merleau Ponty and Voice of the Earth. *Environmental Ethics* , 101-120.

Abram, D. (1996). *The Spell of the Sensuos.* New York: Vintage.

Agnihotri, S. B. (1991). Mind-Body Equilibrium. *India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 18, No. 2/3* , 133-142.

Bannon, B. (2009). Developing Val Plumwood's Dialogical Ethical Ontology and Its Consequences for a Place-Based Ethic. *Ethics and the Environment, Vol. 14, No. 2* , 39-55.

Bannon, B. E. (2011). Flesh and Nature: Understanding Merleau-Ponty's Relational Ontology. *Research in Phenomenology* , 327–357.

Bannon, B. E. (2014). *From Mastery to Mystery: A Phenomenological Foundation for an Environmental Ethic.* Ohio University Press.

Barnes, J. (2001). The lived experience of meditation. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 1(2).* , 1-15.

Barua, A. &. (2014). Phenomenology, Psychotherepy and the Quest for Intersubjectivity. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* , 1-11.

Barua, A. (2015). Language and Life World: Wittgensteinian and Heideggerian Perspectives. *International Journal of Global Education, 4(1).*

Bergesen, A. (1995). Eco-Alienation. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, Vol. 21, No. 1, THE 25TH Anniversary Of Earth Day* , 110-126.

Berleant, A. (1992). Beyond Disinterestedness. *British Journal of Aesthetics* , 187.

Berleant, A. (1992). *The Aesthetics of Environment.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Bossche, M. V. (2012). An Aesthetics of Nature:Consequences of Merleau-Ponty's embodied ontology. *Journal of Philosophical Investigations* , 129-137.

Bourdeau, P. (2004). The man nature relationship and environmental ethics. *Journal of Environmental Radioactivity* , 9-15.

Box, T. (2006). Listening to the land. *Rangelands* , 49-50.

Brook, I. (2005). Can Merleau-Ponty's Notion of 'Flesh' Inform or even Transform Environmental Thinking? *Environmental Values* , 353–62.

Brown, C. S. (2003). The Real and the Good:Phenomenology and the Possibility of an Axiological Rationality. In T. Toadvine, & C. S. Brown (Eds.), *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself* (pp. 3-19). New York: SUNY.

Brown, C. S., & Toadvine, T. (2003). *Eco-phenomenology Back to the Earth Itself.* New York: SUNY.

Bullington, J. (2013). *The Expression of the Psychosomatic Body from a Phenomenological Perspective.* Springer.

Burns, K. A. (2008). Warren's Ecofeminist Ethics and Merleau Ponty's Body-Subject: Intersections. *Ethics and the Environment, Vol. 13, No. 2* , 101-118.

Cafaro, P. (2004). Place and personal commitment in teaching environmental ethics. *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology, 8(2)* , 366-376.

Callicott, J. B., & Frodeman, R. (2009). *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy.* USA: Macmillan Reference.

Caputi, J. (2007). Green Consciousness: Earth-Based Myth and Meaning in Shrek. *Ethics and the Environment, Vol. 12, No. 2* , 23-44 .

Carlson, A. (2000). *Aesthetics and the Environment: The appreciation of nature, art and architecture.* Routledge: London.

Carman, T. (2008). *Merleau Ponty.* New York: Routledge.

Carman, T., & Hansen, M. B. (Eds.). (2005). *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau Ponty.* UK: Cambridge University Press.

Carman, T. (1999). The Body in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. *Philosphical Topics, 27*, 205-226.

Casey, E. S. (1996). How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena. *Senses of place 27* , 14-51.

Cataldi, S. L., & Hamrick, W. S. (2007). *Merleau ponty and Environmental Philosophy.* Albany: SUNY.

Chawla, L. (1992). Childhood Place Attachments. In I. Altman, & S. M. Low, *Human Behaviour and Environmnet* (pp. 63-86). Boston: Springer.

Chattopadhyaya, D. P. (1992). *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy.* Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research.

Clarke, M. (2002). Ontology, Ethics, and "Sentir": Properly Situating Merleau-Ponty. *Environmental Values* , 211-225.

Coeckelbergh, M. (2015). *Environmental skill: Motivation, knowledge, and the possibility of a non-romantic environmental ethics.* New York: Routledge.

Compton, J. J. (1988). Phenomenology and the Philosophy of Nature. *Man and Nature* , 65-89.

Compton, J. J. (1979). Reinventing the Philosophy of Nature. *The Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 33, No. 1* , 3-28.

Davood Mohammadi Moghadam, H. A. (2015). A Brief Discussion on Human/Nature Relationship. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* .

Deakin, R. (2007). *Wildwood.* New York: Free Press.

Devenish, S. (2002). An applied method for undertaking phenomenological explication of interview transcripts. . *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* , 1-20.

Dhyansky, Y. Y. (1987). The Indus Valley Origin of a Yoga Practice. *Artibus Asiae, Vol. 48, No. 1/2* , 89-108.

Dillon, M. (1988). *Merleau Ponty's Ontology.* USA: Indiana University press.

Diprose, R., & Reynolds, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Merleau Ponty Key Concepts.* Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Dreyfus, H. L., & Wrathall., M. A. (2006). *A companion to phenomenology and existentialism.* UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Dwivedi, R. C. (1987). Yoga according to the Kashmir Śaivism. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 68, No. 1/4,Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar 150th Birth-Anniversary Volume* , 407-411.

Edgerton, F. (1924). The Meaning of Sankhya and Yoga. *The American Journal of Philology, Vol. 45, No. 1* , 1-46.

Eliade, M. (1963). Yoga and Modern Philosophy. *The Journal of General Education, Vol. 15, No. 2* , 124-137.

Eliade, M. (1969). *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom.* Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ellis, J. (2004). The significance of place in the curriculum of children's everyday lives. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education* , 23-42.

Embree, L. (2001). The continuation of Phenomenology: a fifth period? *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* , 1-7.

Evernden, N. (1993). *The Natural Alien.* London: University of Toronto Press.

Evola, J. (1955). Yoga, Immortality and Freedom. *East and West, Vol. 6, No. 3* , 224-230.

Feibleman, J. K. (1949). A Defense of Ontology. *The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 46, No. 2* , 41-51.

Fisher, A. L. (1969). *The essential writings of Merleau-Ponty.* Nueva York: Harcourt Brace.

Foltz, B. v., & Frodeman, R. (2004). *Rethinking Nature.* Indiana University Press.

Foss, J. E. (2009). *Beyond Environmentalism: A Philosophy of nature.* New Jersey: Wiley.

Gaarder, J. (2015). *Sophie's World* (Second ed.). (P. Moller, Trans.) London, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Gallagher, S. (2012). *Phenomenology.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giorgi, A. (2014). Phenomenological Philosophy as the Basis for a Human Scientific Psychology. *The Humanistic Psychologist* , 233–248.

Gold, J. (1996). Plato in the Light of Yoga. *Philosophy East and West, Vol. 46, No. 1* , 17-32.

Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education. *American Educational Research Journal* , 619–654.

Hanna, F. J., Wilkinson, B. D., & Givens, J. (2017). Recovering the Original Phenomenological Research Method: An exploration of Husserl, Yoga, Buddhism, and New Frontiers in Humanistic Counseling. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling* , 144-162.

Hass, L. (2008). *Merleau- Ponty's Philosophy.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Heinämaa, S. (2003). Merleau-Ponty's dialogue with Descartes: The living body and its position in metaphysics. *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation: Phenomenology in the Nordic Countries* , 23–48.

Henry, A. (2011). Reclaiming the Body. *The Furrow, Vol. 62, No. 12* , 661-665.

Holdrege, B. A. (1998). Body Connections: Hindu Discourses of the Body and the Study of Religion. *International Journal of Hindu Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3* , 341-386.

Howarth, J. (1995). The Crisis of Ecology: A Phenoemenological Perspective. *Environmental Values* , 17 - 30.

Inwood, B. (. (2014). *Oxford studies in ancient philosophy.* United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Jack, G. (2010). Place Matters: The Significance of Place Attachments for Children's Well-Being. *British Journal of Social Work* , 755–771.

Janz, B. B. (2009). Thinking Like a Mountain: Ethics and Place as Travelling Concepts. *In New visions of nature, Springer* , 181-195.

Jensen, D. (2004). *Lestening to the Land: Conversations about nature, culture and eros.* USA: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Joshi, K. S. (1965). On the Meaning of Yoga. *Philosophy East and West, Vol. 15, No. 1* , 53-64.

Kaebnick, G. E. (2000). On the Sanctity of Nature. *The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 30, No. 5* , 16-23.

Kaminoff, H. M. (1983). Place-Identity:Physical World Socialization Of The Self. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* , 57-83.

Kaplan, S. (1992). The restorative environment: Nature and human experience. *The role of horticulture in human well-being and social development* , 134-142.

Kee, H. (2018). Phenomenology and Ontology of Language and Expression: Merleau-Ponty on Speaking and Spoken Speech. *Human Studies* , 415-435.

Khanna, M. (2004). A Journey into Cosmic Consciousness: Kundalini Shakti. *India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 30, No. 3/4* , 224-238.

Kipnis, A. B. (1994). Yogic Meditation and Social Responsibility. *Buddhist-Christian Studies, Vol. 14* , 111-125.

Klaver, I. J. (2005). Continental Environmental Philosophy. In M. E. Zimmerman, J. B. Callicott, K. J. Warren, I. Klaver, & C. John, *Environmental Philosophy: From animal rights to radical ecology* (pp. 281-295). NJ.

Kohak, E. (1984). *The Embers and the Stars.* London: University of Chicago Press.

Langer, M. (2004). Merleau Ponty and Deep Ecology. In L. E. Dermot Moran, *Phenomenology:Critical Concepts in Philosophy, Volume 4* (pp. 118-135). New York: Routledge.

Langer, M. (2003). Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. In T. Toadvine, & C. S. Brown, *Eco-Phenomenology: Back to the things themselves* (pp. 73-103). New York: SUNY.

Langer, M. M. (1989). *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Perception: A Guide and Commentary.* London: Macmillan Press.

Lawlor, L. &. (2007). *The Merleau-Ponty Reader.* United States of America: Northwestern University Press.

Lea, J. (2008). Retreating to Nature: Rethinking 'Therapeutic Landscapes'. *Area, Vol. 40, No. 1* , 90-98.

Leguizamon, C. J. (2005). Dichotomies in Western Biomedicine and Ayurveda: Health-Illness and Body-Mind. *Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 40, No. 30* , 3302-3310.

Lessing, A. (1972). Spinoza and Merleau-Ponty on Human Existence. *Southwest Philosophical Studies*.

Levitt, S. H. (1994). On The Nādis, With A Note Concerning The Cakras. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 75, No. 1/4* , 171-176.

(2007). An Inquiry into the Intercorporeal Relations Between Humans and the Earth. In K. Liberman, S. L. Cataldi, & W. S. Hamrick (Eds.), *Merleau Ponty and Environmental Philosophy* (pp. 37-51). New York: SUNY.

Liu, S. (2009). Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of space: preliminary reflection on an archaeology of primordial spatiality. *The 3rd BESETO Conference of Philosophy, Session* , 131-140.

Locke, P. M. (2016). *Merleau-Ponty: Space, Place, Architecture.* Athens: Ohio University Press.

Low, D. (2012). Merleau-Ponty, Ontology, and Ethics. *Philosophy today, 56(1)* , 59-77.

Low, D. (2000). *Merleau Ponty's Last Vision.* Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Macshane, F. (1964). Walden and Yoga. *The New England Quarterly, Vol. 37, No. 3* , 322-342.

Madison, G. B. (1981). *The Phenomenology of Merleau Ponty.* USA: Ohio University Press.

Malpas, J. E. (1999). *Place and Experience.* Cambridge University Press.

Mancuso, G. (1983). Yoga And Compassion: Their Correlations. *Peace Research, Vol. 15, No. 3* , 28-38.

Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* , 47–61.

Matthews, E. (2006). *Merleau Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed.* Great Britain: Continuum .

Matthews, E. (2002). *The Philosophy of Merleau Ponty.* McGill-Queen's University Press.

Moran, D. (2001). Introduction to Phenomenology. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* , 109-112.

Moran, D. (1997). Towards a philosophy of the environment. In J. Feehan, *Educating for Environmental Awareness* (pp. 47-48). Ireland: Walsh Printers.

Mugerauer, R. (1994). *Interpretations on behalf of Place.* USA: State University of New York Press.

Murty, K. S. (1961). Yoga: The Path to Freedom from Suffering. *The Review of Metaphysics, Vol. 15, No. 1* , 118-124.

Nazir, J. (2016). Using phenomenology to conduct environmental education research: Experience and issues. *The Journal of Environmental Education VOL. 47, NO. 3* , 179–190.

Nenon, T. &. (2010). *Advancing phenomenology: essays in honor of Lester Embree.* New York: Springer Science & Business Media.

Neruda, P. (1984). *Still Another Day.* (W. O'Dally, Trans.) Copper Canyon Press.

Ness, P. H. (1999). Yoga as Spiritual but not Religious: A Pragmatic Perspective. *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy, Vol. 20, No. 1* , 15-30.

Ouderkirk, W. (1998). Mindful of the Earth: a bibliographical essay on environmental philosophy. *Centennial Review* , 353-392.

Paranjpe, A. C., & Hanson, K. (1988). On Dealing with the Stream of Consciousness: A Comparison of Husserl and Yoga. In A. C. Paranjpe, D. Y. Ho, & R. W. Rieber, *Asian Contributions to Psychology* (pp. 215-235). New York: Praeger Publishers.

Patrik, L. E. (1994). Phenomenological method and meditation. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* , 37-37.

Pereira, P. J. (2004). Reconnecting Body and Soul. *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal, Vol. 23, No. 2* , 6-25.

Perriam, G. (2015). Sacred spaces, healing places: therapeutic landscapes of spiritual significance. . *Journal of Medical Humanities* , 19-33.

Persson, A. (2010). Embodied worlds: a semiotic phenomenology of Satyananda Yoga. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 16, No. 4* , 797-815.

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the Human Sciences.* USA: SUNY Press.

Ponty, M. M. (1964). *Sense and Non-Sense.* (H. L. Dreyfus, & P. A. Dreyfus, Trans.) USA: Northwestern University Press.

Ponty, M. M. (1964). *The Primacy of Perception.* (J. M. Edie, Trans.) USA: Northwestern University Press.

Ponty, M. M. (2004). *The World of Perception.* New York: Routledge.

Ponty, M. M. (1988). *In Praise of Philosophy and Other Essays.* (J. Wild, J. Edie, & J. O. Evanston, Trans.) Northwestern University Press.

Ponty, M. M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception,translated by Colin Smith.* Great Britain.

Puligandla, R. (1970). Phenomenological reduction and Yoga Meditation. *Philosophy East and West* , 19-33.

Quinn, C. (2009). Perception and Painting in Merleau Ponty's Thought. *Perspectives:International Postgraduate JOurnal Of Philosophy* , 9-30.

Ravindra, R. (1978). Is Religion Psychotherapy? An Indian View. *Religious Studies, Vol. 14, No. 3* , 389-397.

Relph, E. (2008). *Place and Placelessness* . UK: Pion Ltd.

Reuter, M. (1999). Merleau-Ponty's notion of pre-reflective intentionality. *Synthese* , 69-88.

Safit, I. (2014). Nature screened: An eco-film-phenomenology. Environmental Philosophy. *Environmental Philosophy* , 211–235.

Schweizer, P. (1993). Mind/Consciousness Dualism in Sāṅkhya-Yoga Philosophy. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 53, No. 4* , 845-859.

Seamon, D. &. (2018). Lifeworld, place, and phenomenology: Holistic and dialectical perspectives. 15-16.

Seamon, D. (2015). *A Geography of the Lifeworld (Routledge Revivals): Movement, Rest and Encounter*. New York: Routledge.

Seamon, D. (2007). A lived hermetic of people and place: Phenomenology and space syntax. *6th International Space Syntax Symposium* (pp. iii-1). İstanbu: Department of Architecture Kansas State University.

Seamon, D. (2000). A Way of Seeing People and Place: Phenomenology in Environment-Behaviour Research. In S.Wapner, J. Demick, T. Yamamoto, & H. Hinami (Eds.), *Theoretical Perspectives In Environment-Behaviour Research* (pp. 157-78). New York: Plenum.

Seamon, D. (1984). Emotional experience of the Environment. *American Behavioral Scientist* , 757-770.

Semple, F. J. (1994). Editors' Preface: The Body Into Text. *Yale French Studies, No. 86, Corps Mystique, Corps Sacre: Textual Transfigurationsof the Body From the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* , 1-4.

Sharma, R. K. (2011). Embodiment, Subjectivity, And Disembodied Existence. *Philosophy East and West, Vol. 61, No. 1* , 1-37.

Silverman, H. J. (2008). Art and Aesthetics. In R. Diprose, & J. Reynolds (Eds.), *Merleau Ponty: Key Concepts* (pp. 95-108). Stocksfield: AcumenPublishing Limited.

Sinari, R. (1965). The Method of Phenomenological Reduction and Yoga. *Philosophy East and west* , 217-28.

Sinha, A. (1999). Putting the Mind Back into Nature. *Scientific and Philosophical Studies on Consciousness* , 159-167.

Sinha, A. (1999). Putting the mind back into nature: The origin and evolution of consciousness. *Scientific and philosophical studies on consciousness* , 158-167.

Sinha, A. (1931). Whose life is it anyway? A review of some ideas. *The Lancet* .

Slowik, E. (2010). The fate of mathematical place: Objectivity and the theory of lived-space from Husserl to Casey . *In Space, time, and spacetime* , 291-311.

Smith, C. (1962). *Phenomenology of Perception.* Great Britain: Gallimard.

Sokolowski, R. (2000). *Introduction to Phenomenology*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Sparrow, T. (2011). Ecological necessity. *Thinking nature* , 1-19.

Spurling, L. (1977). *Phenomenology and the Social World.* New York: Routledge.

Stein, W. B. (1971). The Yoga of Reading in Walden. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol. 13, No. 3* , 481-495.

Stent, G. S. (1998). Epistemic Dualism of Mind and Body. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 142, No. 4* , 578-588.

Stewart, N. (2010). Dancing the Face of Place: Environmental dance and eco-phenomenology. *A Journal of the Performing Arts* , 32-39.

Stone, A. (2005). Introduction: Nature, Environmental Ethics, and Continental Philosophy. *Environmental Values* , 285-294.

Taipale, J. (2014). *Phenomenology and Embodiment:Husserl and the Constitutionof Subjectivity.* USA: Northwestern University Press.

Taylor, C. (2003). Ethics and Ontology. *The Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 100, No. 6* . , 305-320.

Taylor, C. (1959). Ontology. *Philosophy, Vol. 34, No. 129* , 125-141.

Tenner, E. (2003). Body Smarts. *The Wilson Quarterly (1976-), Vol. 27, No. 2* , 12-15.

Thomson, I. (2004). Ontology and ethics at the intersection of phenomenology and environmental. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* , 380-412.

Toadvine Jr., T. A. (1997). The Art of Doubting. *Philosophy Today* , 545-553.

Toadvine, T. (2005). Limits of the Flesh: The role of reflection in David Abram's Ecophenomenology. *Environmental Ethics* , 155-170.

Toadvine, T. (2009). *Merleau Ponty's Philsophy of Nature.* North Western University Press.

Toadvine, T. (1997). The art of doubting: Merleau-Ponty and Cézanne. *Philosophy Today* .

Tsevreni, I. &. (2011). Participatory Creation of a Place-Based Teaching and Learning Methodology for Children's Participation and Citizenship in the Urban Environment. *Children Youth and Environments, 21* , 293-309.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

Tuan, Y.-F. (1974). *Topophilia:A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Welten, W. (1992.). Recent Conceptions of the Philosophy of Nature. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia, T. 48, Fasc. 1, Filosofia da Natureza* , 59-75.

Werner, K. (1998). *Yoga and Indian Philosophy.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Whicher, I. (2010). A Re-Evaluation of Classical Yoga. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. 91* , 133-154.

Whicher, I. (1998). Yoga and Freedom: A Reconsideration of Patañjali's Classical Yoga. *Philosophy East and West, Vol. 48, No. 2* , 272-322.

White, D. G. (1996). *Th e Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Willis, P. (2001). The “things themselves” in phenomenology . *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* , 1-12.

Wilson, R. L. (1976). An Introduction to Yoga. *The American Journal of Nursing, Vol. 76, No. 2* , 261-263.

Wollan, G. (2003). Heidegger's philosophy of space and place. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of* , 31-39.

Wujastyk, D. (2009). Interpreting the image of the human body in premodern India. . *International Journal of Hindu Studies* , 189–228.

Young, J. (2002). *Heidegger's later Philosophy.* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerman, M. (2004). What Can Continental Philosophy Contribute to Environmentalism? In B. Foltz, & R. Frodeman (Eds.), *Nature Revisited: New Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Indiana University Press.

Zysk, K. G. (2007). The Bodily Winds in Ancient India Revisited. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 13, Wind, Life, Health:Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* , 105-115.