

**EXPLORING THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE SELECT
WORKS OF COLIN WILSON**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

English

By

Sanjay Kumar

Registration Number: 41900204

Supervised By

Dr. Muzafar Ahmed (25623)

Department of English (Associate Professor)

Lovely Professional University, Punjab



LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY PUNJAB

2025

DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the present thesis titled “**Exploring the Nature of Consciousness: A Phenomenological Study of the Select Works of Colin Wilson**” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr Muzafar Ahmad, working as Associate Professor, in the School of Social Sciences and Languages of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of another investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



(Signature of Scholar)

Name of the scholar: Sanjay Kumar

Registration No.: 41900204

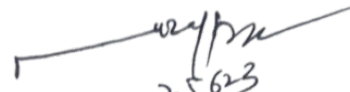
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “**Exploring the Nature of Consciousness: A Phenomenological Study of the Select Works of Colin Wilson**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Department of English, School of Social Sciences and Languages is a research work carried out by Sanjay Kumar, 41900204 is bonafide record of his original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



(Signature of Supervisor)

Name of supervisor: Dr Muzafar Ahmad

Designation: Associate Professor

Department/school: Department of English, School of Social Sciences and
Languages

University: Lovely Professional University, Punjab

ABSTRACT

Consciousness and experience are constitutive of each other. Each experience is lived in a given state of consciousness and the quality of consciousness decides the meaning one draws out of an experience. So, analysing and understanding human consciousness and experience holds great significance for transforming human existence in terms of meaning, value and purpose with which human beings live their life. Phenomenology engages in these analyses and understanding more effectively, and reveals the essence of human consciousness and experience woven into the fictional narratives.

This thesis argues that a phenomenological analysis of Colin Wilson's novels is an important and worthwhile endeavour, providing an opportunity to analyse and understand Wilson's vision and sensibility that evolves out of his work. The present research work attempts to explore the select nine major novels of Colin Wilson. The thesis, which is titled as "Exploring the Nature of Consciousness: A Phenomenological Study of the Select Works of Colin Wilson," explores and interprets the select works through the lens of theory of phenomenology particularly from the standpoint of Husserlian phenomenology. Given to the nature of Wilson's writings, the theory of phenomenology can offer novel insights into Wilson's *weltanschauung* (worldview). This critical endeavour manages to deconstruct some of the established popular misconceptions regarding the writing, characters, themes, and use of different genres by Colin Wilson by offering various credible arguments and interpretations, even though it does contain some disagreements with them.

The theory of phenomenology helps the readers, scholars and researchers to elucidate and understand the human experience and consciousness. Phenomenology serves as a powerful tool for unraveling the complexities of human consciousness, revealing the fundamental nature of human existence. It illuminates the different structures of human experience that involves a person's body, states of mind and consciousness. It lays bare the essence of human experiences in the life-world and the mechanism by which human beings act through different modes of consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology in particular makes a deep analysis in this direction. It analyzes human consciousness in its 'natural', 'intentional', and 'transcendental' dimensions and presents 'reduction' as a potent method to apprehend the

consciousness in its pure state. It reveals the intentional powers of consciousness that bring value, purpose and meaning to a person's experiences. It also makes an access to the foundational structures of consciousness i.e. transcendental subjectivity, which constitutes the source of man's intentional powers. Understanding consciousness in its structure and functioning is crucial to its evolution which has a significant bearing on the way human beings perceive the objects in the world and which in turn affects the quality of consciousness with which human beings live their life.

Subjecting Colin Wilson's work to phenomenological analyses yields some significant outcomes which has the prospects of evolving human consciousness from its everyday trivial states to what Wilson calls as the 'other modes of being.' Wilson's idea of the 'outsider' is already a step in this direction which is a transitional state between the 'natural' and 'transcendental,' a recognition of the fact that phenomenology is the method to study consciousness and intentionality is a tool to change consciousness. The study examines these aspects while the characters make their journeys, which are more subjective than objective, through different life experiences. After experiencing and understanding the world from different perspectives, they come up with a purged vision of life, which enables them to renew their perception and gain a new sense of self.

Wilson shows how a person's existential status might change as a result of his internal maturation through the development of a new consciousness. The study focusses on the portraiture of this development. Wilson opens the door for discovering the all-encompassing fundamental fact of existence in this way. His idea of overcoming life's setbacks and rising above 'natural lives' in order to discover the ultimate truth is reflected in his novels. In order to better comprehend how humans take their existence for granted in the naivete of everyday consciousness, this research largely analyzes Wilson's thoughts regarding evolutionary ideology. Because humans construct a wall around their everyday consciousness throughout daily tasks, there is less opportunity for reflection or peace, which hinders the evolution of consciousness. With the goal to engage in what Husserl refers to as the *epoche*—wherein all the unnecessary and contingent accumulations of the lifeworld are left out—Wilson uses 'outsider consciousness' as the starting point of this evolution, which brings the first recognition of this naivete. Wilson also aims to pay attention to how human subjectivity and consciousness actually function while transacting with the objective

world. Wilson comes to the same conclusion as Husserl—namely, that consciousness is intentional. Wilson views intentionality as a means of bringing about a shift in consciousness. In consonance with Husserlian phenomenology, Wilson's phenomenological investigations lead him to the realization that the transcendental ego is the fundamental building block of human consciousness. Wilson sees the transcendental ego—which Husserl argues endures death—as an esoteric force capable of transforming individuals into visionaries as it is the source of human freedom.

This study examines the selected texts in order to learn about the various states of consciousness experienced by the characters as they attempt to transcend their mundane existences and find themselves in some transcendental realm. It discusses the problem of modern man, who wastes his energy on the ‘triviality of everydayness.’ It talks about the psychology of ‘outsiders,’ who have the capacity to become gods and who offer hope for restoring one's lost dignity. The characters, caught in a variety of spatiotemporal situations and psychological complexities struggle towards this dignity. In addition to the author, the thesis examines the themes, characters, and ideas from a phenomenological standpoint. It's a reflection on what people have done with their lives and what kind of life they ought to lead.

The nine novels that are taken up in the thesis include: *The Mind Parasites*, *The God of the Labyrinth*, *The Philosopher's Stone*, *The Glass Cage*, *Man without a Shadow*, *Necessary Doubt*, *Ritual in the Dark*, *The Black Room* and *The Personality Surgeon*. The thesis is divided into five chapters with an introduction that contextualizes the contribution of thesis and the conclusion that discusses the findings of the study.

The first chapter discusses the different philosophical aspects and tenets of phenomenology. It traces the history and development of theory of phenomenology by first discussing its use in different meditation techniques across the cultures and discusses how phenomenology has been dealt with in Greek philosophy and the other philosophies of the West. It identifies two important understandings of the human self, one as the cartesian/Hegelian concrete ego and the other as the empiricist ego of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. It also discusses the two important strands of phenomenology – descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology. It throws light on the individual and sociological aspects of phenomenology including the embodiment

phenomenology of Maurice Merleau Ponty and deconstruction phenomenology of Jacques Derrida. It differentiates between psychology and phenomenology and more specifically highlights the ideas and concepts of Husserlian phenomenology that are relevant to the findings stated in the thesis. It discusses the importance of phenomenology in the field of psychology as adopted by Amadeo Giorgi, who treats psychology as a humanistic science. The chapter also introduces the author by providing his biographical account. It also highlights the philosophical ideas of the author that he has woven into the narrative of the select works, that are explored and analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter captures and analyzes man's position as caught in the 'natural attitude'- states of everyday consciousness. It contextualizes different dimensions of the states of mind of the characters in the Husserlian notions of natural attitude which Wilson equates with "fallacy of insignificance" or "Life-failure" (Wilson, *New Pathways in Psychology* 10). The select novels are analyzed and understood in terms of these notions from a phenomenological perspective. The chapter further explores Wilson's diagnosis of the disease, which he symbolically terms as the 'Robot' and the structure and organization of mind and the dispositions, motivations and impulses that strengthen this 'Robot'. Husserlian concept of 'Natural Attitude' with its varied recognizable manifestations among the characters and the narrative is the main focus of this chapter. The chapter establishes that this condition is caused by the man's robotic consciousness, which results in a life that is mechanical, meaningless, and hollow, where humans act with passive intentionality and have few opportunities to move to alternative modes of existence.

Chapter 3 portrays the application of phenomenological reduction as a potent method to reflect on one's consciousness and experience. It explores the phenomenological ways and methods employed by different characters of the select works, who consciously or unconsciously engage in epoche and the necessary reductions to bracket off the unnecessary existential trappings, coverings and psychic distortions to catch the essence of different experiences, so as to bring more understanding and purpose to their lives. The chapter establishes that phenomenological reduction paves the way for reflecting back on the conscious self which has implications for how human beings perceive the objects of their experience which affects the quality of consciousness. The chapter shows how characters

abandon their natural standpoint. Epoche modifies their way of perceiving and behaving, allowing them to see the outside world from a fresh angle. A fresh awareness emerges in them which gives them a fresh perspective to understand the world. Characters in the select novels attempt to achieve this fresh perspective by redefining and reconstructing the meanings of their lives through a variety of reductions. They achieve this, by giving up on the distractions of the subjective world and the business of the external, objective world. Bracketing proves to be an effective technique for them in breaking the robot's automatism and conquering their 'forgetfulness of existence', which they had otherwise taken for granted.

The fourth chapter focuses on the Wilson's ideas about creating a pathway to what he calls 'other modes of being' or 'peak experiences' (the term he borrows from Abraham Maslow) or what he typically calls the 'Faculty X'. Wilson sees this possibility in man's will and imagination which are the other terms for Husserlian 'intentionality.' This is how Wilson interprets the Husserlian idea of intentionality. The characters by engaging in different position takings, willing, imagining, valuing and paying attention to different experiences recognise the transformative potential of intentionality. By this extension, they find that consciousness is relational which brings value and meaning to their experiences. The chapter analyses these structures of intentional consciousness and its possibilities as the characters go through different experiences, in the selected works. The chapter shows how the characters continuously strive to maintain consciousness, will and attention to act with their true self and attain to value and freedom. Wilson depicts his characters as using intentionality as a powerful tool to bring a qualitative change in their perception and consciousness.

Chapter 5 explores how intentionality has its source in the foundational structure of consciousness, called as the transcendental ego by Edmund Husserl. It shows how characters synthesize their experiences through this transcendental base and try to establish themselves in pure subjectivity. It applies the Husserlian concept of 'Transcendental Ego' and contextualize it as the ultimate goal of Wilson's characters to bring freedom and meaning to their existence. The chapter establishes that the odysseys of these characters from the natural attitude to transcendental subjectivity yields a self which is foundational, meaning constituting and transformative. This journey takes these characters through varied dimensions of consciousness and gradually they evolve and go up the ladder of the selves to attain

to their true self. It also explores as how Husserl and Wilson engage in the same quest of seeking the hidden higher self which is essentially evolutionary and that leads to self-knowledge. The chapter depicts how the characters find a new domain of existence, in the form of ‘transcendental ego’ that forms the basis of their consciousness. The select novels show the characters' journey towards this area of themselves, which they eventually come to see as the ultimate source of all meaning, worth, and purpose. As a result, they enter a higher form of being and their consciousness and existence itself takes a refined quality.

In the concluding part, an examination of Wilson’s ideas discussed in the previous sections is carried out. It summarizes the major findings and conclusions of the thesis. It also presents the accomplishment of the objectives, followed by its implications in the spheres of the individual and social lives of human beings and available areas regarding this topic for further studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first acknowledge my thanks to the all-pervading divine spirit that infused in me the strength to pursue this research project. I am highly thankful to my supervisor Dr Muzafar Ahmad whom I am truly indebted for his invaluable advice and the unwavering moral support in writing of this thesis. I am also grateful to Lovely Professional University for its assistance at every stage of the research. I express my sincere gratitude to all the esteemed panelists of all the end term evaluations that helped to build my thesis. On a personal note, I would like to express my warmest thanks to my family who constantly supported me throughout my studies.



Sanjay Kumar

Registration No. 41900204

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INTRODUCTION

The present research work entitled, “Exploring the Nature of Consciousness: A Phenomenological Study of the Select Works of Colin Wilson,” is a qualitative research work through the lens of the theory of phenomenology. It is an endeavor to know the underlying nature and essence of Colin Wilson’s work and develop an understanding of the author’s vision that emerges out of his writing in totality. The nature of consciousness cannot be known in a laboratory. It remains elusive to any scientific measurement, and rather is the last great mystery of science. But it can be analyzed well in the interior narratives of the fictional works, as one of the most truthful outlets for expressing human experiences is literature, which manifests consciousness in its varied dimensions. The fictional world of Colin Wilson has been analyzed from different perspectives but there has been no prior attempt to understand it through the lens of the theory of phenomenology. Colin Wilson’s engagement with the themes like sexuality, human will, imagination, human perception and consciousness makes him a fit case to be subjected to such an academic scrutiny. There is much profit to be gained from the study which has not been given the due attention that it deserved. The phenomenological approach elucidates many significant areas of Colin Wilson’s work which has implications for the individual and social lives of human beings.

The varied experiences and different states of the consciousness of the characters have been explored in the nine select novels which include *Ritual in the Dark* (1960), *Man without a Shadow* (1963), *Necessary Doubt* (1964), *The Glass Cage* (1966), *The Mind Parasites* (1967), *The Philosopher’s Stone* (1969), *The God of the Labyrinth* (1970), *The Black Room* (1971), and *The Personality Surgeon* (1985). Support from some non-fictional works of Colin Wilson has also been taken to have a clear understanding of some of the philosophical ideas that the author has woven into the select texts. Canonical works of Edmund Husserl act as the foundation of the study. Besides Husserl, phenomenological ideas of other theorists of phenomenology like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean Paul Sartre and others have been incorporated as the secondary texts for the study.

The English existentialist Colin Wilson investigates many facets of human consciousness in his writings so as to comprehend and identify the nature of

consciousness. His writings are important for understanding the phenomenology of various human experiences as well as the life-worlds in which human beings live. Phenomenology investigates and clarifies human consciousness and subjectivity in varied dimensions. Consciousness is necessary to make sense of the life man lives in both his subjective and objective worlds. The principal exponent of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, examines the natural, intentional, and transcendental aspects of consciousness. He uncovers the fundamental nature, values, and knowledge structures that underlie the archaeology of human consciousness, exploring its ontological, axiological, and epistemological dimensions.

The select novels of Wilson have been written in different genres which express Wilson's life long search for meaning and purpose. By employing the diverse genres, Wilson adopts different approaches to understand human experience and perceive the reality which he believes constantly lurks beneath man's ordinary lives. And this is exactly what phenomenology endeavours to do. Raval avers that "this relentless search of meaning on behalf of man down the ages to realize the essentiality of the final "Be," has been and continues to be the crux of this brave but little-known philosophy." (225) Wilson links this search to the core humanistic issues, which have to do with the necessity of breaking the mental chains that have been placed around human beings and thereby putting a stop to man's propensity for existential despair, and making an effort to lead heroic and meaningful lives. Wilson's fictional life-world traces the evolution of a new consciousness, and in this journey, he demonstrates how mankind's inner evolution could bring a transformation in his existential status. In this process he paves the way for identifying the holistic underlying reality of existence. Wilson's fiction reflects his philosophy of how to overcome the life-failure and transcend 'natural lives' to realize the objective truth.

This research primarily analyses Wilson's ideas of evolutionary doctrine and tries to understand how human beings take their existence for granted in the naivety of everyday consciousness. Human beings during their everyday activities build a wall around their ordinary consciousness which leaves no room for any peace or contemplation and thus reduce any chances of evolution of consciousness. Such an existence hinders any access to 'unknown modes of being' and dilutes the sense of purpose and value. Wilson uses 'outsider consciousness' as the beginning of this evolution which brings the first recognition of this naivety and strives to engage in

what Husserl calls as the epoche to leave out all the inessential and contingent accumulations of the life-world and pay attention to how human subjectivity and consciousness actually operates while transacting with the objective world. Like Husserl, all this makes Wilson to conclude that consciousness is intentional. Wilson understands intentionality as a tool to change consciousness. In consonance with the Husserlian phenomenology, Wilson's phenomenological pursuits lead him to the discovery of the transcendental ego which constitutes the foundational structure of human consciousness. Husserl who contends that transcendental ego survives even death is understood by Wilson as an arcane entity which as the source of man's freedom can transform human beings into visionaries and give rise to epiphenomenon like psychokinesis and telepathy.

All these texts will be analyzed through the lens of theory of phenomenology, especially the ideas propounded by Edmund Husserl, to know about different states of consciousness of the characters, which caught in different spatio-temporal situations and psychic complexities, strive to escape their trivial existences and establish themselves in some transcendental realm. The thesis will analyze the characters, themes and ideas from a phenomenological perspective besides the author himself.

Husserl contends that phenomenology is akin to archeology which tries to penetrate deeper and deeper into the reality of consciousness. In *The Mind Parasites*, the narrator Gilbert Austin is an archeologist, who along with his friend Wolfgang Reich needs great knowledge and great powers of intuition to see the civilization that lies behind tiny fragments of exhumed evidence. The novel is an allegory which objectifies the hindrances (parasites) and dramatizes phenomenological self-analysis and perusal to suggest inner growth and evolution.

Personality is a product of 'natural attitude' and has its own limits which betray the 'essence'. Charles Peruzzi the protagonist and psychotherapist in the novel, *The Personality Surgeon*, engages himself in helping people to come out of their trivial personal limitations and bring them some glimpses of some other modes consciousness which gives them a new identity and image.

In the novel *Ritual in the Dark* Gerard Sorme, the main character and Wilson's doppelgänger, travels around London encountering strange and highly motivated people, each of whom has a past filled with semi-mystical visions that, for better or

worse, identify them as outsiders. The novel is an exploration of the psychic phenomena of such outsiders who strive to bring freedom and meaning to their lives.

Wilson's novel, *The Man Without a Shadow* explores the phenomenon of sexuality and black magic as a means of transcendence. According to Gerard Sorme, sexual conduct is one of the methods to broaden one's consciousness, which he thinks is necessary for a more fulfilling life, but his belief is challenged by the dangerous Caradoc Cunningham who believes that consciousness can be expanded by drugs, orgies and black magic. Sorme analyzes his sexual drive and finally realises that a phenomenological understanding of this drive has implications for one's state of consciousness.

The novel, *The God of the Labyrinth* examines the life study of philosopher Rake Esmond Donnelly, who lived in the eighteenth century. Wilson's doppelgänger Sorme comes across a variety of people, including sex gurus, sadists, fetishists, pyromaniacs, and nymphomaniacs. The main focus of the book, however, is Sorme's pursuit of the mind's hidden abilities, which ultimately brings him into contact with the enigmatic cult of phoenix. Sorme traverses the labyrinths of his own consciousness and understands the essence of human sexuality.

Necessary Doubt is written in the style of a thriller. The main character, Zweig, a professor of Heidegger philosophy, had a brief sight of Neumann, a former student of his, who represents the Newman, or the new consciousness, at a London train station. In Heidelberg in the 1930s, this student had been an introspective and unhappy young man. Nietzschean theories of transcending good and evil had influenced him. Years later, Zweig had read in the newspapers about Neumann's inheritance of millions from an elderly man who passed away under suspicious circumstances. And now Zweig saw him with an elderly and clearly well-off gentlemen. Woven as a thriller, the novel actually traces the subjective journey of Zweig who is ripe to evolve into a Newman.

The novel, *The Glass Cage* deals with theme of how humans are caged in the traps of their own making. A William Blake scholar uses a combination of instinctive deduction and psychic penetration to lead and find the murderer. The novel gives insights into human nature, including its more aberrant aspects. It is about how a murderer's mind phenomenology unfolds into dangerous and extreme situations due to the dullness and meaninglessness which appears in his life.

The novel, *The Philosopher's Stone* centers on the experiences of a young intellectual Howard Lester and his fellow researcher Henry Littleway, who discover that a higher level of consciousness can be introduced by implanting a tiny piece of a metallic alloy into the prefrontal cortex. The story symbolically conveys the message that right use of human faculties can change the quality of consciousness.

The Black Room which is apparently an espionage story, deals with the techniques and methods of how human subjectivity could be made independent and stable by cutting it off from the incessant stimuli of the external world. The protagonist of the novel, Kit Butler makes an evolutionary leap into a higher level of consciousness through a phenomenological analysis of his mental experiences.

Phenomenology: The Theoretical Implication

The pioneering figure in the field of phenomenology is the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). He was born in Moravia, Austria, attained earlier education at Vienna and studied astronomy along with mathematics and physics at Leipzig. Later, Husserl showed remarkable interest in philosophy and strived hard to turn it into a rigorous science, the result of which was the theory of phenomenology. Husserl acutely realised the crisis in the European sciences and culture wherein the human subjectivity or the self stands taken for granted and made subordinate to the concerns of the objective world. Husserl's main preoccupation was to know the structure and functioning of this subjectivity or human consciousness and restore the centrality of the self which is the source of man's knowledge and action. He not only makes a descriptive analysis of human consciousness but chalks out a method to live a disciplined life by engaging in answering the questions about the freedom and destiny of human beings which leads to a qualitatively better existence.

Husserl's study of the consciousness can be distinctly divided into three stages. In the first stage he analyses consciousness from its 'natural standpoint' – a state of consciousness with which human beings live their everyday routine lives. It is person's life-world wherein, immersed in the transactions of the world he forgets himself and hardly takes any reflective stance to gain the awareness of being aware of anything. At the second stage, Husserl proposes stopping or suspending what he terms as the "natural attitude" in order to concentrate on the relationship between the object of experience and subject. Husserl uses the term *epoche* for this process which reveals

that intentionality is the basic feature of consciousness. After peeling off the layer after layer of the consciousness, Husserl, in the third stage, lays bare its foundational structure in the form of transcendental ego which he firmly believes survives death also.

Later theorists like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre, more or less, took phenomenology to the existential direction. The phenomenological ideas put forth by Martin Heidegger primarily revolve round the concept of *Dasein* – being-in-the-world. It is to figure out one's being and analyse existence in each of its encounters within the life-world. Heidegger's ideas of 'forgetfulness of existence' and 'triviality of everydayness' reflect what Husserl calls as the 'natural attitude.' It is again how human beings steeped in their life-worlds are bogged down by everyday trivialities during which they forget the essence of their existence. Maurice Merleau-Ponty added one important dimension of embodied consciousness to phenomenology that is how body as a continuum of consciousness works as a gestalt to perceive the experiences and draw the meanings. Like Husserl, Jean Paul Sartre considers phenomenology as a way to experience the reality directly but disregards the intentional nature of consciousness. He regards consciousness as passive and mechanical which lacks any transcendental structures.

Thus, Husserlian phenomenology along with the relevant ideas from other phenomenologists constitutes a formidable framework to explore and understand the experiences and different states of consciousness of the characters. Understanding nature of consciousness and its different dimensions constitutes the core of phenomenology. In the select works the characters while going through different experiences, journey through different states of consciousness and strive to evolve into some higher states of being. This entails an essential transformation in human consciousness which has greater implications for the quality of life that human beings live.

Scope of the study

The evolutionary doctrine of Wilson is not only individualistic, for an individual's evolution is a significant step and is simultaneously a social evolution. Observing characters in their struggle to affirm life in the midst of maze of life-negating circumstances has a vast scope, particularly in the contemporary times when man has

lost his connection with the inner sources of his being. People nowadays talk about the happiness indices of the nations; despite having sophisticated technology and material comforts at their disposal, human beings with every passing day, instead of creating joy and bliss, are getting more steeped into the mire of misery and boredom. The study will look into the issues of sexuality and crime, which being the major preoccupations of Wilson, has a great significance in the contemporary world, especially India. The thesis explores this predicament of modern man, who wastes his energies in the 'triviality of everydayness'. It discusses the psychology of 'outsiders,' who are potentially gods in making, and surely a ray of hope for regaining the lost dignity. This work will help students, teachers and researchers to appreciate the literature which provides deep insights into human psyche and spirit, which is the need of the hour, ever than before. Wilson scholarship has explored the aspects of consciousness studies within his novels, the thesis will in certain ways add to this scholarship as well. By employing the methods of phenomenology, the experiences of different characters, who struggle to actualize themselves, will be analyzed, with reference to some selected works of Colin Wilson. It is a sort of introspection of what human beings have done with their lives and how they should live.

Review of Literature

Wilson's fiction as well as non-fiction has aroused the interest of scholars and thinkers across the world. It has been studied and analyzed in varied perspectives. In order to contextualize the usefulness of this research work, it is necessary to go through the studies devoted to Colin Wilson provided by different writers. While working on the dissertation, I came across the following opinions expressed by the noted writers and scholars in their books and research papers:

Weigel, John A. (1975) in his book *Colin Wilson* focuses on the Wilson's courage to rebel against the deterministic philosophies by creating the outsider as hero, who is potentially capable of bringing freedom for himself and the community.

Bendau, Clifford P. (1979) The author of *Colin Wilson: The Outsider and Beyond* talks about Wilson's fictional, non-fictional and critical works, up to the publication of his landmark novel *The Space Vampires* published in 1976. It is a chronological account of Wilson's writings intended to highlight that his theories, his life and his individual works are interrelated.

M. Lewin (1983) In *Colin Wilson and the Sexual Mystique*, the author in her research study, explores Wilson's beliefs about sexuality as a means of helping man find his divine essence. The problems between science, mysticism, and sexuality are overcome when she evaluates Wilson's theory of human sexuality in the context of eastern tantra and scientific discoveries.

Dossor Howard F. in (1985) In *Colin Wilson: the bicameral critic: selected shorter writings*, the author gives his personal reflections on the philosophical writings of Wilson, especially the ideas about the split-brain theory wherein he talks about the different functions of the two brain hemispheres.

Moorehouse, Jhon & Newman Paul. (1988) In the *Two Essays: The English Existentialist and Spiders and Outsiders* by Colin Wilson, the authors reveal how Wilson presents his ideas of evolutionary doctrine by using the genre of fantasy and the journeys of different 'outsiders' through a complex world (of spiders) with protagonists like Niall, who features in Wilson's Spider world series to their ultimate goal of self-realization.

Colin, Stanley. (1990) In "*Nature of Freedom and other Essays*," gives an account of Wilson's ideas about human potential and talks about Wilson's belief that a proper use of imagination and will, can lead to human evolution and freedom.

Trowel, Michael. (1990) In his book titled, "*Colin Wilson: A Positive Approach: A Response to a critic*," the author makes an assessment of those critics who praised Wilson's *Outsider* and made a U-turn when its sequel and subsequent works of Wilson appeared. The author contends that Wilson himself being an 'outsider' appeals only to the 'outsiders,' who take their life seriously and concern themselves with ultimate questions of life.

Dossor, Howard F. (1990) In his *Colin Wilson: the man and his mind*, identifies the major themes of Wilson and gives a summary of different topics. Dossor elaborates and clarifies these topics and gives an in-depth understanding to the reader. It critically evaluates the different genres through which Wilson expresses his philosophical ideas.

Dalgleish, Tim. (1993) In his study, entitled "*The Guerilla Philosopher: Colin Wilson and Existentialism*" examines Wilson's ideas as put forth in his new

existentialism philosophy from the perspectives of continental existentialist philosophy of Sartre and psychological theories of Freud.

Lachman, Gary. (1994) In his book, “*Two essays on Colin Wilson*,” the author explores Wilson’s ideas about optimists and pessimists and how they arrive at their respective positions. Lachman explicates Wilson’s fundamental theme that life is worth living and critiques the worldviews of pessimists.

Shand, John and Lachman Gary (1996) The authors of *Colin Wilson as Philosopher* describe Wilson as a writer who addressed the negative biases in philosophy, literature, culture, and science with his "New Existentialism" philosophy. They hold Wilson’s work as life-affirming amidst the absurd, nihilistic and abstract ideas put forth by continental existentialists and analytical philosophers.

Robertson, Vaughan (2001) In this research paper, *Wilson as a mystic* the author classifies Wilson as a legitimate English mystic in the tradition of George Fox, William Blake, and Thomas Treharne. Wilson's ‘New Existentialism’, in his words, is an existential apotheosis into unrestricted mystic praise. The author highlights the mystical impetus of Wilson, which at times overwhelms his clarity of logic, expression and sense.

Greenwell, Tom. (2002) The author in his two-act literary comedy play, *Chepstow Road*, portrays Wilson as one of the angries of “angry young man era” with humorous scenes and dialogues, recalling the time and spirit of that age.

Meadley, Robert. (2004) In his book, *The Odyssey of a Dogged Optimist*, gives a humorous, brilliant and scholarly defence of Colin Wilson, which came as a response to the criticism of various works of Wilson. The writer also examines Wilson’s work which he finds compelling and insightful.

Spurgeon, Brad. (2006) In his book *Colin Wilson: Philosopher of Optimism*, the author provides a clear and readable narrative of Wilson's lifelong struggle against a pessimistic worldview, succinctly demonstrating how human beings can improve their life by altering their perspective on the world. A portion of his biography and a contemplation on his life's work, along with any potential future implications, are included in the book.

Tredell, Nicolas. (2007) The author of "Existence and Evolution": The Novels of Colin Wilson examines the nature of Wilson's existentialism as well as Wilson's connection to Shaw and Wells.

Daly, Adam. (2012) In his *The Outsider writer*, (2012) which is basically the detailed assessments of different writers whom he categorizes as the 'outsider writers,' presents Wilson among those writers who have upended the academic mainstream's cozy conspiratorial consensus, the cultural elite, and the corporate capitalist market and expresses his desire to bring emancipation for such writers who feel out of the step with their fashions and tastes.

Tredell, Nicolas. (2015) Authoritative analyses and plot synopses of all of Colin Wilson's published novels and short stories may be found in *Novels to Some Purpose: the Fiction of Colin Wilson*. Sections on unpublished, proposed, and incomplete work are also included. It links his studies of philosophy, psychology, sexuality, crime, and the occult to his fiction and places it within the framework of his life, autobiographical writing, and existential literary critique.

Lachman, Gary. (2016) The book *Beyond the Robot: The Life and Work of Colin Wilson* explores Wilson's life as a bildungsroman, tracing the intellectual and spiritual growth of a person demonstrated by both his life and the concepts he offers in his new existentialism philosophy.

Colin, Stanley. (2016) In his *An Evolutionary Leap: Colin Wilson on Psychology* the author summarizes the significant contribution Wilson has made to the field of psychology. The book describes how Wilson used information from split-brain experiments, Maslovian psychology, and psychologists from the pre- and post-Freudian periods to build his theory of psychology.

Bray, Nigel. (2016) A critical analysis of Wilson's work is presented in *Bargaining with the Devil: The Work of Colin Wilson in a Cultural Context*, which also emphasizes Wilson's contribution to quantum psychology.

Coulthard, Philip. (2019) Wilson's work is covered in depth in *The Lurker at the Indifference Threshold: Feral Phenomenology for the 21st Century* by the author. The author sheds light on Wilson's theory and positions it as a counterbalance to the

bureaucratic academia and the neurosis that postmodernism and Derrida's deconstruction have brought about in current culture.

Research Gap

The above literature review of the works on Colin Wilson, reveal that the previous studies have been done to bring out the different spiritual, philosophical, psychological, religious, and mysterious aspects of his writings. Several of these studies focus on Wilson's philosophy of 'New Existentialism'. Some talk about the narrative style and quality of prose and some discuss the plot and character, besides Wilson's use of different genres that suits the expression of his philosophy.

There are no previous studies which explore the works of Colin Wilson within the theoretical framework of phenomenological studies. Wilson's writings which are replete with themes like imagination, will, sexuality, perception and consciousness, have never been subjected to any phenomenological study especially to the ideas and concepts put forth by the pioneering phenomenologist Edmund Husserl. So, the application of phenomenological approach to the selected works of Colin Wilson will be a novel and innovative endeavor to understand the select works in a new perspective.

Objectives of the Proposed Work

1. To design the theoretical framework of phenomenology.
2. To critically analyze Colin Wilson's select works in the light of theory of phenomenology.
3. To explore consciousness and its different dimensions in the select works of Colin Wilson.
4. To trace the inner journeys of protagonists, striving to attain the higher states of being.

Proposed Methodology

The current investigation is classified as qualitative research. The best methodology would be content analysis, where the researcher would examine the goals through discussion, interpretation, and textual analysis. This research is an attempt to analyze

the works of Colin Wilson in the light of theory of phenomenology as informed by the different ideas and concepts put forth by the pioneering phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, with some critical analyses, and an attempt to understand and analyze the vision, Wilson has created in his writings, and the odysseys of his characters, who have set out to realize that vision. Husserlian phenomenology which is a sort of introspection relies on intuition and makes a scientific inquiry to know the nature of consciousness. It gives birth to the knowledge which is a result of direct experience, uninfluenced by the distortions of the mind. Phenomenology perceives objects of experience directly without any subjective distractions. It provides a means of comprehending consciousness that goes beyond idealism, which views phenomena as only mental reflections, and realism, which views appearances as objects.

In order to establish and validate the objectivity of human consciousness in relation to the living world, phenomenology aims to pave a new course. Phenomenology is the attempt to observe things as emanation of consciousness. It captures and explores the consciousness in its ordinary, transcendent and intermediate states. It focuses on the essence of consciousness by overcoming the 'natural attitude.' Erosion of self or subject that leads to crises and life failure (which is very much the case of contemporary world) gave rise to phenomenological method which ensures the centrality of human self by reaching the state of pure consciousness which is the source of all knowledge.

- 1) Conceptual and analytical methods will be used to understand the different ideas within the fictional narratives which will be subsequently evaluated and interpreted in the light of the Husserlian theory of phenomenology.
- 2) Interpretive method will be used to analyze and understand the different states of consciousness and experiences of the characters, which caught in different spatio-temporal worlds, seek to understand the value and purpose of their life.
- 3) Explorative approach to find out how Colin Wilson as a neo-existentialist, through his characters, reacts against the pessimistic biases which has led to life failure and how 'outsiders' are potentially capable of bringing a new consciousness to birth.
- 4) The M.L.A. 9th edition will serve as the sole model for the study's format. Additionally, a variety of journals (JSTOR, ProQuest, Web of Sciences, SJR, DOAJ, World Cat, etc.) will be consulted for assistance. Furthermore, information relevant to

the current topic will be gathered from YouTube, newspapers, journals, and online sources.

Chapterization

This dissertation is divided in following seven parts: -

- Chapter I – Phenomenology: Issues and Perspectives
- Chapter II – The Natural Attitude
- Chapter III – The Phenomenological Reduction
- Chapter IV – Intentional Consciousness
- Chapter V – Transcendental Ego and Evolutionary Consciousness

Conclusion

Bibliography

CHAPTER 1

PHENOMENOLOGY – ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

Husserl's phenomenological exploration peels back the layers of human consciousness, exposing the empirical, psychological, and pure ego as foundational elements of subjective reality. Husserl considers 'empirical ego' and 'psychological ego' as products of the 'natural attitude' and 'pure or transcendental ego' as the absolute existent. Human beings as subjects have awareness, both of themselves and everything else present in their consciousness. Human beings as experiencers, think, act, perceive, feel and will. Consciousness acts as a pivot in its subject-object distinction and comprehension of the world around. Different people have understood it in different ways. For Leibnitz it is an *activity* – “the monad in force,” for Descartes, ‘a thing that thinks,’ and ‘thought stream’ for William James, the ‘perpetual Heraclitean flux’ of conscious experience (Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* 60).

Phenomenology is an apt tool to know the conscious experiences of the characters, who caught in different spatio-temporal worlds, reveal the different aspects of consciousness. Husserl contends that “the element which makes up the life of phenomenology as of all eidetic sciences is ‘fiction,’ that fiction is the source whence the knowledge of ‘eternal truths’ draws its sustenance” (Heinämaa & Taipale 2). Fiction explores the complex world of lived experiences from those who live it, helping one to understand the phenomena at a deeper level of conscious, which in turn helps a person to explore his own nature. Phenomenology seeks to understand the essence of phenomena that appear in life-world descriptions of any kind including fictional narratives. The value of phenomenology is immense because it gives birth to the knowledge which is a result of direct experience, uninfluenced by the distortions of mind. It is a method of direct perception which is gnosis or *jnana*. It opens the door to understand consciousness beyond idealism – experience of phenomena simply as reflection of mind and realism – objectification of appearance into things. Phenomenology studies the structure of different types of experiences like perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire and volition to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity, including linguistic activity (Smith). It studies

the phenomena as experienced in various acts of consciousness. Colin J Hahn in his research work points out that the crowning achievement of Husserlian philosophy is its relentless efforts to untangle the threads of subjectivity ... as Gordian Knot was untangled by Alexander. (2) The tenets of phenomenological theory have tremendous consequences for the way human beings carry out their activities in their daily practical life provided the inquirer turns to himself in full awareness of his life. It is an old fallacy on part of the philosophers to understand the physical world which they think would enable them to understand consciousness better whereas contrarily, a better understanding of consciousness would certainly enable an individual to understand of what it means for something to be real.

In this study all the major novels of Colin Wilson are examined and analyzed mostly relying on the theories of Edmund Husserl who proposed the theories of phenomenology in his seminal works such as *Ideas*, Vol. I, (1913), Vol. II and III, (1952), *Cartesian Meditations*, (1931), *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* (2001), *The Paris Lectures* (1967), *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Part I and II, Husserl's *Shorter Works* (1981) and other parts published in parts of *Husserliana*.

The word phenomenology has been derived from the Greek "Phainomenon" which means "appearance". Thus, it is the study of appearances. An appearance is anything of which one is conscious. Every appearance is a manifestation of some essence of which it is an appearance. *Cambridge dictionary* defines phenomenology as "the study of phenomenon (things that exist and can be seen, felt, tasted etc.) and how we experience them." "Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy which deals with consciousness, thought and experience." (*Collins*), it is the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a preface to or a part of philosophy (*Merriam Webster*). Phenomenology is portrayed as the study of essences (Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 163), and the exploration of human experience (Polkinghorne 18). Phenomenology is the radical and thoroughgoing method for 'the analysis of the experience and the part played by the mind in grasping the process of experience. It is basic to all situations or events of life, real or ideal. (Raval 223)

Phenomenon (in phenomenology) must not be understood as the physical objects out there in the world but the objects that appear to the consciousness.

Phenomenon refers to the processes and components of awareness itself, not to any natural objects. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first-person point of view. Phenomenology focuses on the way world appears to the person experiencing the world (Moran 27). Broadly speaking, “phenomenology is a theoretical point of view which advocated the study of the experiences of individual rather than the physically described, objective reality that is external to the individual” (Cohen 462). Phenomenology is a shift from intellectual speculation of reality to pure description of what is.

Phenomenology – A Historical Perspective

For a proper understanding of the theory of phenomenology, an account of its development through the years till the time it proliferated both as a discipline and methodology shall be in the fitness of things and such a continuum would be appropriate.

The roots of phenomenology can be traced back to Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, where human existence is understood to be an intertwining of consciousness and mind. By a deep phenomenological understanding of the mind which is a manifested duality, one can access the primordial awareness or pure consciousness which is non-duality. As a practice in yogic and meditation techniques, a seeker in search of the Truth, has to “clear his mind of all accumulations and memories” – “*Adhyaropa apavadha*, the term which can be almost translated to Husserlian phenomenological reduction” (Datta 34) to attain to a pure state of being (what Husserl calls ‘apodictic knowledge’). The eastern mystical traditions, however, do not hold the existence of pure, transcendental ego as the final or ultimate principle. Its goal is not the intentional consciousness, which holds the phenomena in their essence but empty consciousness, the attainment of which becomes possible when a seeker, frees itself from all the afflictions of the mind and eventually after passing through different stages, enters into higher states of consciousness where the knower and the known are one, which is called moksha. In different eastern mystical practices like Advaita Vedanta of Samkara, Shankaracharya, Shaivism and Sufism, phenomenology is practiced as a basic tool to study consciousness at its different stages. There is a close affinity between the meditation techniques employed in these practices and the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl. Pure ego and consciousness (*Caitanya*) are the two central themes in Husserlian phenomenology

and the vedantic/shaivic philosophies respectively. Despite the marked differences between the two, Indian and western philosophies could be seen crossing the roads at many places. If the former, beyond all doubt, provides a richer and deeper understanding of ‘self,’ the later doesn’t lag behind in making a scientific analysis of the different layers of consciousness. Interestingly, “Husserl’s choice of life of philosophy was propelled by a deep religious conviction, who compared himself to a Moses leading his people to the promised land” (Moran 62). This ‘promised land’ is the land of pure ego or transcendental subjectivity.

The phenomenological practices, though not being the part of a larger philosophical project of Greek philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, have always been there as ‘accounts’ (*logos*) of ‘what appears’ (*ta phainomena*). Jhon Russon in his paper, *To Account for the Appearances: Phenomenology and Existential change in Aristotle and Plato*, remarks:

To give an account (*logos*) of the matter in question, one must move from the properties of the thing to the thing itself. To Plato identify those properties, though, Aristotle turns neither to the idiosyncrasies of his own perspective nor simply to some putatively independent object in the world, but to the history of the human engagement with the reality in question, and in so doing, he precisely turns to how that reality has shown itself to us: the Phainomenon.” (Russon 161)

Knowledge is a product of ‘experience’ and it is, knowing that ‘accounts for the phenomena.’ Human beings primarily, live in self-reflection which leads to experience or to use Aristotle’s term, *emperia*. Aristotle’s concept of ‘form of the forms’ has a likeness with the essence of things which is the prime concern of phenomenology. Both Aristotle and phenomenology agree that corporeity is essential in making the sense of the world around a person. A person’s living body is always the center, irrespective of the perspectives from which he perceives the world. In connection to this, Villeria Bizzarri, remarks that “We can then affirm that Aristotle (and later, phenomenology) seems to be right in conceiving the subject as ontologically and epistemologically bound with corporeity. (12) One can find different phenomenological ideas in Aristotelian ontology and metaphysics.

Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* and theory of platonic Idealism has phenomenology at its center, as a tool to understand the shadows and reflections of phenomena so as to reach the essences or higher truth. ("Analysis of Allegory of Cave") Man in his natural attitude is like those cave people who can attain to freedom only after performing the phenomenological epoche, break the fetters of mundanity and penetrate the transcendental sphere.

The term phenomenology was first used by the Swiss philosopher Johann Heinrich Lambert in his *Neues Organon* (1764) in which he applied it to that part of his theory of knowledge which distinguishes truth from illusion and error. It signifies a *science of appearance (Schein)* which allows a person to proceed from appearances to truth, just as optics studies perspective in order to deduce true features of the object seen. (Moran 27).

Husserl recognized Immanuel Kant as a significant contributor towards establishing transcendental subjectivity as a ground of one's entire experience, in both of his works, '*Critique of Pure Reason* and *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, he discusses phenomenology in general. Kant introduced a distinction between the phenomenon or appearance of reality in consciousness, and the noumenon, or the being of reality-in-itself. According to him whatever is known is phenomenon, because it appears to one's consciousness but there is an underlying reality, noumenon, which is the unmanifested part of the phenomenon. In Kant's understanding, phenomenology is the appearance of objects in terms of motion, color and other properties as witnessed by the observer. Kant, however, did not succeed in proving how mind can know the noumenon or the thing in itself, which unlike phenomenology leads to abstraction instead of reaching the essence of things given in pure perception. "Like Kant, Husserl also tried to root the sources of experience into the transcendental ego. However, Husserl's inquiry into the genetic constitution of the transcendental ego marks his departure from the Kantian paradigm." (Todariya 265)

The systematic use of the term phenomenology came with Hegel's, '*The Phenomenology of Spirit*', (1807) which traces the development of consciousness through different stages and wherein phenomenology was understood to be an ascent of consciousness from the sensuous stage to absolute knowledge through varied forms of self-consciousness. (Bhadra 1) He understood phenomenon as the appearance of absolute mind. Unlike Husserl who dealt with epistemological problems, Hegel's concerns were ontological. "Hegel's study of phenomena is dialectical. It is a three-

fold analysis of subject of experience involving the process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which is the necessary process of human thought.” (Lauer 2) It starts with the subject of experience as the immediate subject which as a rising consciousness in its spiritual journey becomes the absolute subject. Husserl was not satisfied with Hegel’s concept of absolute mind which he thought lacked the spirit of a scientific philosophy.

Husserl gives due credit to Rene Descartes (1596-1650) - the father of modern western philosophy, for discovering the subjectivity as the foundation where philosophy of experience can be described. Descartes contended that two things are certain, one a person’s own existence and second the world outside there i.e., the objective and the subjective world. Husserl labels him as “the genuine patriarch of phenomenology.” and regarded his own transcendental phenomenology as “a new, twentieth century Cartesianism”, and insisted that “the only fruitful renaissance is the one which reawakens Descartes’ Meditations” (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* 3, 5). Both believed in suspending the everyday common-sense convictions and scientific theories to arrive at some secure epistemic foundation. However Cartesian doubt was intended to seek further knowledge beyond the mind and Husserlian epoche is to know the nature of the consciousness.

A contrary understanding of subjectivity as opposed to the Cartesian *cogito* and Hegelian absolute subject can be found in Locke, Berkeley and Hume, which is called as the empiricist *cogito*. Empiricist cogito is constituted of the phenomena as impressions received from the senses. It can be well equated with the Husserlian concept of ‘empirical ego’ or embodied consciousness which is an ensemble of varied psychic episodes. John Locke argues that knowledge comes out of experience. Everything, present in the mind comes through senses. Man is born with his mind like a blank sheet of paper, ‘*tabula rasa*.’ Everything he then learns arises from things that happen to him. So, what a person calls the mind – all the thoughts, responses, reactions – is a ‘construct’, like a house built of pieces of Lego. Bishop Berkeley went a step further by saying that things can be known only through mind and one can assume that external world does not exist. Thus, everything is an illusion. This doubt was further enhanced by David Hume, who believed that a person does not see ‘things’ but ‘ideas’ or ‘impressions,’ which blow like leaves in the wind. For him all human knowledge is based on ideas or impressions. The soul, which Descartes thought he had proved, is an illusion, because when man looks inside himself, he does not become

aware of 'the essential me', but merely of thoughts and sensations. One does not 'think' merely 'free associate,' one thought or feeling leading automatically to another. So human beings are also made of Lego and do not possess any true self.

Phenomenology as a discipline and method was quintessentially and considerably developed by Edmund Husserl. Since the present research work deals with an analysis of Colin Wilson's select works, predominantly, from the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology, a separate section has been devoted to phenomenological theory of Husserl in the subsequent part of this chapter which along with the ideas from other phenomenologists would form the basis of the later discussions of Colin Wilson's work. Husserlian phenomenology will be outlined in detail, concentrating upon those elements which are most pertinent to an appraisal of Colin Wilson's select works.

In post Husserlian era, as the *zeitgeist* moved on, phenomenology assumed different forms and adaptations in different fields of study like social sciences, psychology sociology etc. "The solipsistic part of Husserl's phenomenology was soon abandoned by the likes of Heidegger, Schutz and Scheler in favor of a description of the givenness of the world, not in the solitary experience of the Ego, but in *Dasein*, social interaction and the "religious act" (Arp 236). Broadly speaking, phenomenology split into two strands of *Descriptive* and *Hermeneutical* phenomenology, within which *Phenomena* were began to be described and interpreted in different contexts. *Hermeneutics*, which engaged in 'interpretation,' became a major preoccupation of Hans-George Gadamer; Paul Ricœur made a *critical* study of (Husserlian) phenomenology and Alfred Schutz focused on the *Sociological* aspects of phenomenology. Besides this, *Deconstruction* phenomenology of Jacques Derrida and Marxian perspective of phenomenology emerged as a diametrically opposite strands to this theory. Husserlian phenomenology, however, revived in the *Descriptive* phenomenology of Amadeo Giorgi who employed its tenets in his theory of psychology. Almost all these adaptations and modifications, however, retained the basic tenets of Husserlian thought wherein the notions of 'experience' the 'experiencer' and the 'life-world' in lesser or greater degree, held the center stage.

Hermeneutical phenomenology has its roots in Heidegger, who wanted an explication of the 'mode of being human,' which according to him is the proper and sole theme of phenomenology. By 'hermeneutics' Heidegger does not just mean the method specific to the historical and cultural sciences, but the whole manner in which

human existence is interpretative (Moran 256). Unlike Husserl who was interested in how consciousness acts in different ways, Heidegger, focussed on the state of this consciousness in the ordinary world of day-to-day life. This consciousness is not separate from the world but is to be interpreted in Dasein's encounters with this world. In his *Being and Time*, Heidegger asserts that "phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic in the primordial signification of the word, where it designates the business of interpreting" (Moran 292). Hermeneutics is the interpretation of human life in varied contexts and situations which can be cultural, historical or linguistic. Pertinently, 'Dasein' is the individual who lives in what Husserl calls as the 'natural attitude' and constantly steeped in his transactions of the life-world.

So, the self, which Husserl revived as 'transcendental ego' was obliterated by Martin Heidegger when he replaced it with 'Dasein.' He made phenomenology ontological when he set out to know the nature of being. Heidegger reduced the transcendental dimension of phenomenology to the ontic dimension of anthropology. Husserl and Heidegger both focus on the human experience as it is lived and arose against the Cartesian dualism which is objective, empirical and positivist. Unlike Husserl, who studied 'how we know things,' Heidegger wanted to know the nature of being or 'what it means to be.' He was interested in the *is-ness* of things. Heidegger's main concern was how to live 'authentically' - that is, with integrity in a complex and chaotic world. His use of phenomenology is subservient to this quest. As a development to Husserl's idea of "well known forgetfulness," Heidegger appropriates that Being degrades itself in the mediocrity of everyday life and suffers from the forgetfulness of existence which means that human beings can become so bogged down by the actualities of just surviving day by day that they forget to enjoy the knowledge and feeling of being alive in the world. He believed that "understanding is a basic form of human existence in that understanding is not a way we know the world, but rather the way we are" (Polkinghorne 45). Man, and the world constitute each other and meaning is drawn out of this constitution. In his '*Being and Time*', he rejects any body-mind or object-subject duality and opens up questions about the nature of self and the meaning of human existence. His main interest was ontology or the study of being. He attempted to access being by analyzing the human existence, which he called 'Dasein' or 'Being-in-the-world' with respect to its temporal and historical character and not the Cartesian 'thing that thinks'. Unlike Husserl, who understood human beings as knowers within different acts of consciousness like perceiving,

recalling and thinking, Heidegger concerned himself with man's situatedness in a world, where he has been 'thrown.' Heidegger's "Being towards Death" has also a great significance as it impels one to think over how man should live his life authentically and utilize his time towards himself and the world. Bakewell remarks: "Heidegger's later writing has an increasingly mystical notion of what it is to be human – an open space or a clearing, means of 'letting beings be', dwelling poetically on earth – the old Dasein has become less human than ever." (Bakewell 187). Heidegger believed that the source of knowingness is consciousness and the mind in its discursive conceptualization easily becomes solipsistic, thus foreclosing the knowingness of the awareness.

Drawing from Heidegger, Hermeneutical phenomenology was further developed by Hans George Gadamer (b 1900), who made it central to his philosophy. Hermeneutics is the art of interpretation or understanding, and, for Gadamer, always "signifies an ongoing, never completable process of understanding, rooted in human finitude and human 'linguisticity'" (Moran 307). According to Gadamer, both the hermeneutic experience and the realization of experience occur through language, thus endorsing Heidegger's belief that language 'speaks' man. Gadamer contends that 'matters' are revealed or get manifested in conversation and it is through language and dialogue which makes the truth to manifest. According to Gadamer, "dialectic has to be retrieved in hermeneutics." (Moran 270) Taking over Husserl's notion of internal and external horizon in perception, Gadamer contends that through 'fusion of horizons' a person gets a better understanding of both past and present as he makes a composite whole and brings meaning to the experience. Gadamer, however, talks about the different horizons in which people live. They need to make a consensus to reach a mutual understanding. Like Gadamer, Paul Ricœur took a hermeneutical stance in phenomenology and critically analyzed different aspects of Husserl's thought. Unlike Husserlian 'pure ego,' Ricoeurian ego is not the 'spectator of the world' but a 'capable human' who has the power to act. It is a 'wounded cogito,' caught between his voluntary powers of praxis and the limits imposed by the facticity (Davidson & Vallée xii, xiii). Man in confrontation with the world, and along the passage of time, comes to know of his life and those of the others. Ricoeur believed that language is polysemic, which can be interpreted in multiple ways to understand different life experiences.

Jean Paul Sartre, in his realist philosophy, adapted phenomenology to *existential* concerns, engaging with the concrete and ordinary existence. In his, “*Being and Nothingness*” (1943), he talks about human consciousness, as always grappling with the world outside. He understood consciousness as a ‘nothingness’ which perpetually engages in fulfilling itself. Unlike Husserl, he understood intentionality as mechanical, and interpreted it, in his own way, as the capacity of human mind to reach out to the objects in the world, which gives the human mind an immense freedom so that no pre-defined nature can hold it back. Sartre rejected the Husserlian notion of transcendental ego, as it has no significant role in the process of consciousness and hence there is no need for ‘*epoche*,’ as human beings live in a meaningless world and despite being ‘free’ there is no way to get out of this muddle which he calls ‘contingency.’ Husserl saw this contingency in all physical objects, but regarded consciousness, which is the absolute being, free from it. Sartre, however, recognized that phenomenology is a way to apprehend the reality directly.

Among different phenomenologists, Maurice Merleau-Ponty is the first, who gives a rich description of the experiences of embodied consciousness. In his ‘*The Phenomenology of Perception*’, he emphasizes the role of body in human experience – ‘body image’. Merleau Ponty extended Husserlian phenomenology in an existential direction, “to take cognizance of our corporeal and historical situatedness” (Moran 423). Merleau-Ponty focused on role of attention in the phenomenal field, experience of body in space, time and movement and body as a sexual being. He contended that body is ‘permanently present’ in all the perceptual experiences and have to be referred even after the bracketing is done. Ponty makes it clear that body has its own intelligence which acts as an intentional whole in its encounters with the world. He argues that “it is not consciousness, but the human body that is intentional, through “motility.” Our bodies are not simply objects in the world (to which each of us has privileged but yet contingent access). The body is our Being-in-the-world, the perspective from which we perceive, judge, value.” (Solomon 272) His is a sort of embodiment phenomenology. The world is not encountered primarily as an object of belief but as an expressing gesture, a face or a figure (Ponty 319). However, Ponty’s focus on physical perceptions brings him close to Gestalt psychology, emphasizing the fact that whole is more significant than the part, as it is former which explains the later and not the other way round. In his later writing, like “*The Visible and the Invisible*” (1964) Ponty’s understanding about subjectivity changed drastically. He

began to understand that subjectivity is not mind alone i.e., within the confined noetic-noematic frame of the mind, but a vast non-dual awareness of Being, which is the source of both subjectivity and objectivity. In this connection Rudolph Bauer points out that “This subjectivity is the opening of the being within the body-mind continuum. This continuum is what Ponty calls as the medium of the flesh” (Bauer, 85).

All the above discussed philosophers laid the foundation of the science of phenomenology and threw light on the basic phenomenological concerns like, spatiality, temporality, subject, object, body and self. They acknowledge the Husserlian proposition that consciousness is not passive but ‘intentional.’ They believed that phenomenological method is meant to unravel the mysteries of consciousness beyond the spheres of mental and psychological. The universe and ourselves are pre-reflectively one; this is a fact that Husserl, Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau Ponty all recognized well. This prereflective oneness is the oneness of pure consciousness.

Phenomenology does not engage only with individual subjectivities but is quite relevant to the sociology of everyday life. An individual subject experiences the world in intercourse with other subjects, which gives rise to intersubjectivity and sociality. Phenomenology insists on understanding sociality in its most fundamental form as *intersubjectivity*. Phenomenology cannot be divorced from the sociological aspects of life-world. A full elaboration of transcendental philosophy necessarily involves the move from an egological to a transcendental-sociological phenomenology” (Zahavi 57, 104). Inspired by Husserl’s concepts of intentionality and life-world, Alfred Schutz shows how subjectivity constitutes meaning in social actions and situations. So, it is essential to analyse the social being, who acts in the capacity of an agent and in his shared experiences with other such agents constitutes the community of ‘we.’ Schutz’s phenomenological perspective thus emphasizes that “the primary object of sociology is not institutions, market conjunctures, social classes or structures of power, but *human beings*, that is, acting and experiencing individuals, considered in their myriad relations to others, but also with an eye to their own, meaning-constituting subjective lives” (Overgaard & Zahavi 101). Like Husserl, Schutz believes that human beings take their life-world, where they live in ‘natural attitude’ for granted, and perform different activities in an unquestioning manner except when their ‘typifications’ go awry and they are forced to revise them.

Otherwise, “the life-world itself is the undoubted ‘foundation of any possible doubt’” (106). Thus, sociological aspects of phenomenology establish that social reality and individual subjectivity are constitutive of each other. The emphasis on sociological dimensions of life reaches to its extreme in the shape of Marxism which essentially stands in stark contrast to phenomenology. The former attacks subjectivity and the latter reasserts subjectivity. Marxism gives consciousness a social and non-subjective character. For Marxists, it is not consciousness that constitutes the world or a life, but rather a life or the world constitutes consciousness. Consciousness is a product of the praxis that individuals carry out in the life-world and has no independent agency. Unlike phenomenologists, Marxists consider the world as primordial which constructs the ego. This ego has no essence but caught in the web of spatio-temporal world it strives to change the world through its actions. Thus, having a materialist genesis, Marxism seems to be caught in the ‘natural attitude’. Nemeth while comparing Husserl with Gramsci, points out that former’s concept of ‘life-world’ and the latter’s idea of ‘common sense’ is one and the same thing as both focus on how an individual subjectivity remains subordinate to the social and cultural forces. (168) The human being’s subjective, active, agential, and free nature is destroyed by it and rendered as an empty shell, an automaton; while it might be an active subject, it is only active in the sense that matter is active, or even self-active. Subjectivity and interiority are absent from the active subject. Its sole interiority is really a displaced exteriority because it is merely a mirror of its external interactions. Phenomenology, on the other hand essentially deals with subjectivity and interiority. “It has always been led to pit its theses against those of Marxism; it came to rest spontaneously after the decentring of the transcendental ego, in favour of the Lifeworld.” (Lyotard 127)

In the twentieth century, phenomenological philosophy became a driving force behind different literary tools, ranging from formalism to deconstruction. It involved textual interpretation which was more inspired by the Heidegger’s ‘Hermeneutics of being’ than Husserl’s ‘transcendentality’. Due to the influence of structuralism, phenomenology focused more on linguistic aspects of the text, and believed that language is important to draw meanings out of experiences. It further inspired the Geneva critics to analyse the texts closely and know the author’s ‘life world’ by delving into his oeuvre, without paying any heed to the biographical details. The text was made subject of phenomenological inquiry and consciousness critics

endeavoured to get at the author's consciousness through the text. This brought phenomenology close to Deconstruction. Sartre's successor, Michel Foucault under the influence of Becket's writings, negated the possibility of any 'epistemic foundation.' He believed that these 'epistemes' replace one another in endless meaningless progression which never get anywhere. Jacques Derrida, Foucault's most influential successor, under the influence of linguist philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure, contended that words have no innate 'meanings' but vary freely in different contexts. Applying this notion to philosophy, he considered it as a kind of spume on the sea of language. Derrida negated any kind of 'underlying reality' which he terms as the 'presence,' so there is no such thing as 'real me' or self. He made a radical reading of Husserl and put forth his infamous theory of deconstruction. Derrida rejected any notion of transcendental phenomenology and the idea of essences. He argued that origin of meaning is not located in subjectivity as believed by Husserl, but produced in the play of 'différance' and the 'trace.' The meanings endlessly divide and differ and devoid of any original source, they are never complete. It is only through repetition and reiteration one brings back the 'presence.' "The absolute has to be re-activated through time and history by the iteration of the noema and the repetition of presence in absence, being in non-being; that bifurcates the a priori. This absolute is always deferred and delayed, spatially and temporally, communicated to us through the passage of différance" (Chin-Yi 79). For, Derrida accuses Husserl of remaining trapped in the 'metaphysics of presence' and the way later proposes the constitution of meaning. Husserl assumed that all meaning is constituted by the transcendental ego, but he never adequately explained how the transcendental ego itself gets constituted. It is as if one can empty out one's own experience of everything contingent, factual, and singular, and still be left with pure presence to oneself, or temporal self-presence. Indeed, Husserl sometimes seems to be maintaining that a kind of formal, empty self-presence can survive even death (Moran 479). The constitution of 'ideal objectivities' about which Husserl talks is not possible as the boundary between primal presentation and retention is necessarily diffuse and porous therefore causing an intermingling of presence and non-presence. "Without such an intermingling, there would be nothing but the pure flow of time, with no intuition, no protention, no retention – and, thereby, no consciousness whatsoever" (Cohen 118). Therefore, since the living present is 'infinitely deferred', a person never experiences a genuine presence.

With the publication of *The Death of the Author* (1968) by Roland Barthes, the reader was made the sole interpreter of the text 'immanent' to him. He replaced the 'work' with 'text' and regarded the latter as wide enough to generate multiple meanings. The reader who now holds the centre stage, employs all his background experience and perspectives to interpret the text. This is how the classical phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger gave birth to 'Reception theory.' This shift of focus from author to reader also marks a transition from structuralism to post-structuralism, which further enhanced the recession from the centre i.e. The Transcendental Ego.

Thus, with the passage of time, the transcendental subject established by Husserl gradually faded into insignificance. The 'outer' was given more importance than 'inner.' The 'postmodern legacy' placed the human subject at the mercy of external factors and instead of searching for freedom and meaning, gave itself to language, history and cultural determinisms. The human being ceased to be a personal centre or subject and instead became the result of social and cultural influences, a product of ongoing modifications and changes as demonstrated by narrative, cultural, feminist, pragmatist, and other approaches. This, for the most part, led to reductionist concepts of the human being without taking into account their spiritual dimension. All these factors resulted in the erosion of 'self.' Husserlian phenomenology basically started with the idea of restoring the centrality of this 'self' or subject by reaching the state of pure consciousness which is the source of all knowledge and meaning.

Husserlian Phenomenology

In the preceding section, the theory and method of phenomenology was discussed in its rudimentary and more elaborate forms, modified in accordance to the suitability and trends of a particular age. In the following section, Husserlian phenomenology, which starts with Brentano's Descriptive psychology will be discussed in detail.

Phenomenology in twentieth century has its beginnings in the efforts of Franz Brentano (1838-1917) who desired a scientific reformation of philosophy which engages in *description*. Brentano rediscovered the intentional structure of consciousness and advocated scientific description of consciousness. Husserl admits that Brentano laid out "a pure descriptive science of psychic life based upon the inner evidence of experience." (Moran 95) Brentano's *descriptive psychology* focuses on bringing into light the inner mental life without any causal or genetic explanation.

Human beings must grasp their inner perception as opposed to the outer perception and introspection. Brentano sets out to do ‘empirical psychology’ by descriptively identifying the domain of the mental in terms of intentionality. Building on the insights of Brentano, Husserl developed his theory of phenomenology which described the subjective and intersubjective life of consciousness.

Phenomenology as one knows it today is essentially the vision of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who was inspired by Brentano, particularly by his idea of making philosophy a rigorous science and theory of intentionality. His contribution makes him the central figure in the development of phenomenological movement. Husserl’s life long search was to bring certainty to philosophy. He points out that he has endured enough suffering from a lack of understanding and oscillating doubt and realises that he must acquire clarity in order to survive. Husserl believed that certainty is ensured by clarity, since, once something is fully understood, it is impossible for anyone to dispute it because it is ‘self-given’ in all of its simplicity and fullness.

Husserl desired to give philosophy a scientific foundation which he knew could be achieved through phenomenology. In his article ‘*Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*’ Husserl emphasizes that in order to achieve the ideal of science in philosophy, its methods and theories need to be clearly defined. (Moran 124) He conceived phenomenology as the theory of science, a systematic knowledge about the essential structure of consciousness. Husserl desired to unravel the mystery of subjectivity and to know how knowledge is constituted. Husserlian phenomenology traces the knowledge back to its original source in immediate experience ‘given’ or constituted in subjectivity. Husserl was radically breaking with the tradition with the famous phenomenological slogan, “back to things themselves.” Dermot Moran comments:

By going back to the things, themselves, Husserl means we cannot be satisfied with employing concepts whose evidential basis has not been properly clarified by being brought back to their original sources in intuition. The ‘things themselves’, then, are the immediately intuited essential elements of consciousness, viewed not as psychological processes, but in terms of their essential natures as meaning intentions (108)

Husserl strongly reacted to the ideas espoused by Naturalism and Historicism, as he argued that both of them lead to relativism and never to certainty. Naturalism, considers only physical world as real with all its objects, subject to its rigid laws. Husserl objects to the way Naturalism ignores the essences and its disbelief in the underlying reality. His idea is that science is unable to address the issues of ultimate truth and validity as it relies on naturalism. Husserl explains that the way natural science and consciousness deal with the objects is quite different and the former is unable to explain how objects are constituted in the consciousness. Mrinalkanti observes that “naturalism gives a theory of the naturalization of consciousness with all its intentionally immanent data.” (1) Experience is caught in its wholeness by the consciousness and not in parts as the natural science deals with the objects. Hence the methods of natural science are inappropriate to study human experience and consciousness.

Historicism interprets human existence from a historical point of view and attempts to understand life within a particular spatio-temporal world, shaped by the socio-political milieu of the times. It is a well-established fact that any given story or event lacks a single, definitive truth; instead, it is the result of a struggle between competing interpretations, the choice of which is ultimately dictated by power rather than logic. History deals with the facts related to varied worldviews (*Weltanschauung*). “They hold no universality and hence are invalid. They deny the objective validity of cultural formation” (Moran 79). So, historicism is unreliable and does not reflect any objective truth.

Husserl, in overcoming the problem of relativism, attacked the ideas of positivism, pragmatism and Neo-Kantianism. Positivism interprets and derives meaning and knowledge from data of sensible experience without aiming at revealing the ultimate causes, pragmatism contends that anything that has practical applicability is truth and Neo-Kantianism believes that objects are perceived and given meaning by a conscious subject within, but fails to clarify the nature of that subject. Husserl refutes these theories and philosophies as they fail to access the absolute truth and only reflect subjectivism and relativism as against arriving at any kind of certainty. According to Husserl certainty is only possible through intuition, which leads to absolute truth. “Our cognitive acts and ‘lived experiences’ or ‘thought processes’ can become knowledge only when they are confirmed or illuminated by fulfilling intuitions” (Moran 96).

Highlighting the centrality of intuition in Husserlian phenomenology, Emmanuel Levinas remarks that it is “precisely the method by which we are going back to concrete man” (Luft & Overgaard 73).

Husserl’s phenomenology also sets itself against psychologism, which he repudiated as subjectivism. “Phenomenology (a study of *phenomena*) as such is a more fundamental study than logic or psychology; it goes to the fundamental structures of conscious experience which constitute the very conditions of the possibility of any conscious experience whatsoever.” (Moran 63) Conscious experiences have their own essential structure which do not depend on any empirical details and cannot be understood on the basis of such psychological processes which may be having some relation with that experience. Phenomenology focuses on the structures of transcendental subjectivity without paying any heed to physical and physiological elements. Unlike psychology which concerns with ‘empirical consciousness,’ its concern is ‘pure consciousness.’ Husserl concluded that thinking or mental processes which tend to be idiosyncratic can give absurd results which can lead to skeptical relativism as psychology considers only the accidental dispositions of human psyche. Husserlian phenomenology goes beyond psychology. Psychology deals with mental processes and phenomenology with the essences. “Psychology is now seen as describing mental processes as events and real facts in nature, whereas phenomenology is understood as contemplation of pure essences on the basis of exemplary individual intuitions of experiences (including freely imagined experiences)” (Moran 106). Pure intuition and reflection are the methods used in phenomenology, which forbids the copositing of objects that are not aware.

In fact, Husserl’s refutation of psychologism is to avoid viewing the inquiring self as occupying the same ontological and epistemological status as the examined self. It is only after assuming the phenomenological attitude that transcendental ego can examine and analyze the empirical self. Karl Jaspers opines that this empirical self is an object of psychological research as it is conditioned both biologically and historically. It enters into the relationship with external world and has some degree of predictability. In the same vein, Henri Bergson uses the term ‘superficial self’ for the empirical self, which he understands as a shadow of ‘deep self’ and which remains at the mercy of the demands of one’s social life. (Jastrzebski 796)

Phenomenology, however, throws much light on psychology and helps to understand it in diverse forms. It analyzes the experiences more accurately than the

positivist and empirical approaches of psychology. In this direction, American psychologist Amedeo Giorgi (1931b) has made significant contributions in developing phenomenological psychology. By employing different phenomenological procedures like epoche, reduction and imaginative variation, he describes the psychical idiosyncrasies of individuals and reveal the psychological essences of human experiences. The method discovers and articulates the psychological meanings of the experiences and describes the nature of phenomenon. Giorgi emphasized that psychology is best realized as a human science rather than a natural science, but in order to produce reliable knowledge about human subjectivity, psychology's practices must adhere to certain scientific standards. He defines psychology as a “the study of subjectivity” as psychology endeavours to understand subjectivity precisely at different levels both as the individual subjectivities and how subjectivity expresses itself in the world. (Giorgi 135).

Phenomenology is a way of seeing rather than a set of doctrines or theories. It apprehends a ‘thing’ as the direct object of consciousness in its purified form. It catches the essence of things while living through an experience. It is a science of experience. “The methods of phenomenological inquiry seek to articulate the meaning of experienced phenomena, ‘to go to the things themselves’, rather than measure them.” (Moran 108) It is about emotions – sadness, happiness, sexuality etc. and its relation to one’s mode of being. It is a science of essences, which lays bare the subjective structures of conscious experience. It studies consciousness in its intentionally constituted world. It is a way of revisioning the reality.

Intentionality, a term first used by Brentano and later perfected by Husserl, constitutes the main principle of phenomenology. Husserl calls it the “fundamental property of consciousness”. (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 33) Since consciousness is nearly always consciousness of something, its nature is intentional. Every experience has meaning, ‘aboutness’. It is the representational character of consciousness. “Every act of loving is a loving of something, every act of seeing is about seeing of something.” (Moran 16) Intentionality means that consciousness is always intentional or directed. The term ‘intentionality’ has its origins in the Latin verb ‘*intendere*’ which means ‘to point to’ in the sense of being the consciousness of something. ‘Intending’ is a conscious relationship between man and an object. Webster defines the word ‘intend’ as “to mean, signify”. It is the meaning that gives the act its intentional character. Every intention comprises of two things, the meaning

and the movement towards something, that is, the act. Apart from intention meaning has no meaning. Intentionality gives an account of all those possible ways in which things can appear to human consciousness. Thus, every experience is intentional. Three important ideas, intentional act, intentional object and intentional content, which are central to intentionality and theory of consciousness, need to be understood. Intentional act refers to any living experience or the kind of mental event like remembering, believing, evaluating etc. Intentional object is the topic, thing or state of affairs that the act is about. And the way an object is presented or thought about by the subject is its intentional content. Intentional content can be thought of along the lines of description or set of information that the subject takes to characterize or be applicable to the intentional objects of her thought (Spear). In addition to this, an intention can be 'empty' if it has no experiential evidence or 'fulfilled' when it is intuited in experience. The 'presence' and 'absence' of the object holds equal importance in phenomenology, as the absence of the empty intentions enables one to further explore the mind and human condition. Intentionality (in phenomenology) is a technical term, which must not be confused with the meaning of its normal usage. Husserlian phenomenology is basically epistemological as it endeavors to know the nature of consciousness. The phenomenological notion of intentionality refers to knowledge and not to any theory of human action. Phenomenology attempts to unfold the different layers of the 'person' man is constituted of, and engage in a systematic analysis of human consciousness. Husserl thought phenomenology as akin to archeology, which goes deeper and deeper penetrating different layers of existence. In this connection, J.N. Mohanty remarks:

The identity of a person is a complex high order identity of various layers of identity; philosophy has to unravel these, peeling of onion skins. Intentionality of Husserl is horizontal, it points to something that is outside of itself. Every experience of the other is the experience of one who can say 'I'. Who can peel off the different layers and, who can remain vigilant, exploring the self-quest." (84)

Robert Arp expresses the same idea when he says that, "In Husserlian phenomenological methodology, the ego demerges from epistemological level to level until finally achieving universal consciousness" (Arp 225). Husserl seeks to analyse

the whole structure of consciousness and lay bare all its complexities till he discovers its foundations in the form of the 'transcendental ego.'

In order to understand the relationship between the consciousness and the world and the correlation between the objective and subjective side, Husserl primarily concerned himself to explore the mystery of consciousness and how it attains to the constitution of objective knowledge. Husserl believed that the nature of consciousness can be understood if phenomenology is made a presuppositionless inquiry by removing all sorts of distortions caused by different theoretical biases including naturalistic and psychic experiences. Bracketing out these distortions by the disciplinary technique of 'epoche' is necessary to purify the consciousness and grasp the things adequately and apodictically in intuitive evidence. In this process, phenomena are isolated by suspending all consideration of their objective reality or subjective association. "Stripping away distractions, habits, clichés of thought presumptions and received ideas in order to return our attention to what Husserl called the 'things in themselves'." We must capture the things as they appear and not what we think they are supposed to be" (Bakewell 46). This means that the path towards real consciousness involves eliminating any exteriority and standpoints that impede the pure, presuppositionless activity of consciousness. Therefore, phenomenology starts with a set of 'bracketings' that minimize or suspend the underlying assumptions of a particular standpoint in order to reveal their essential origin.

Husserl contends that the phenomenological 'epoche' (Greek term for suspension of judgment) or 'bracketing', i.e., setting aside various assumptions and beliefs about a phenomenon, in order to analyze how the phenomenon presents itself to the consciousness, is one of the essential features that focuses on the phenomena under investigation. At the most basic level, epoche is a technique used by phenomenologists to highlight what ordinary men take for granted that is their recognition of reality. Nothing is erased or lost in the epoche but what was previously taken for granted is later acknowledged thoughtfully as a conscious performance and is being examined further. The phenomenologist is still very much in the world, he keeps all of his knowledge and curiosity, and he never stops caring about others. The sole distinction (and a significant one, at that) is that he now selectively reflects on the life he used to live with naivety.

Suspension of natural attitude is necessary to get at the essence of the phenomenon. The phenomena under consideration are analyzed independent of their objective reality or subjective association. Bracketing signifies freedom from the unstable, superficial appearances and naive way of thinking. It is to reach the 'being' of things which lies under the rubric of existence. "This method involves 'bracketing' or 'suspending' all our natural attitudes towards the objects in the world and towards our psychological acts, suspending all our theories about these matters, and leading back our attention to these pure essences of consciousness." (Moran 136) 'Bracketing' enables one to analyze the perceptions closely for emotional prejudices or distortions before they creep into conscious awareness. In natural attitude one studies and remains preoccupied with the object of experience; in a phenomenological attitude one studies the way this object is given or presented to the consciousness. Gabriel Marcel also talks about such an attitude – the tendency of humans to stuck in habits, received ideas and a narrow-minded attachment to possession and familiar scenes. People fall into 'crispation'- a tensed, encrusted shape in life, as if everyone secretes a kind of shell which gradually hardens and imprisons them (Bakewell 91) The 'shell' needs to be cast off like in Husserlian epoche. Reduction enables one to 'stand back' and view things from a distance. In this connection French phenomenologist Paul Ricouer, states:

By means of this reduction consciousness rids itself of a naiveté which it has beforehand, and which Husserl calls the natural attitude. This attitude consists in spontaneously believing that the world which is there is simply given. In correcting itself about this naiveté, consciousness discovers that it is in itself giving, sense-giving. The reduction does not exclude the presence of the world; it takes nothing back. It does not even suspend the primacy of intuition in every cognition. After the reduction, consciousness continues seeing, but without being absorbed in this seeing, without being lost in it. (147)

Husserl talks about three types of 'reductions' which must be used to reach the transcendental subjectivity or pure ego. They are 'the phenomenological/psychological reduction, transcendental reduction and the eidetic

reduction. In psychological reduction, spatio-temporal world – the world seen from ‘natural standpoint’, is suspended and focus is made on the pure mental processes. It lays bare the contents of the consciousness and enables one to analyse the phenomenon which is immanent to consciousness. The epoche forbids an individual from making any conclusions about spatiotemporal existence.

In the ‘natural world’, human beings live with their common-sense assumptions and beliefs wherein their perceptions are colored by different prejudices and biases which give rise to a ‘taken for granted’ and ‘casual’ attitude. This casual engagement is often taken for granted and becomes an absorbing, self-immersed collection of happenings that are implicitly understood without a conscious response. ‘Facticity’ is intrinsic to natural attitude, which drags man down into situations and inhibits him from flying free. It is the way that humanity's entire existence is realized when it follows its natural practical course of everyday life. In the *Crisis* Husserl explicates it thus:

In my naive self-consciousness as a human being knowing himself to be living in the world, for whom the world is the totality of what for him is valid as existing, I am blind to the immense transcendental dimension of problems. This dimension is in a hidden [realm of] anonymity. In truth, of course, I am a transcendental ego, but I am not conscious of this; being in a particular attitude, the natural attitude, I am completely given over to the object-poles, completely bound by interests and tasks which are exclusively directed toward them. (205)

In the natural attitude, human beings achieve partial truth because it is devoid of any contemplation. In transcendental reduction, on the other hand, the focus is made on the act itself and those hidden intentional acts which project the transcendent objects are uncovered and the ‘pure or transcendental ego’ is revealed. It suspends prephilosophical or commonsensical ideas about this subject, including ideas about its personality, historical identity, and status as a metaphysical substance that is related to a body. Husserl speaks of a transcendental reduction in which “consciousness is completely withdrawn from the natural world by suspending belief in such a world, and lay bare the world of transcendental subjectivity”. (Bhadra 20)

In the final eidetic reduction, the individual existence of the object in question and the subject of consciousness i.e., ego is bracketed and the focus is made on 'essences.' Ego which represents the worldly subjectivity or empirical self also needs to be suspended to reach the transcendental subject. In fact, eidetic reduction ensures that object of perception and object of ideation differ and individual and essences are different kinds of things. It is through the process of 'imaginative variation', that the phenomena are reduced into necessary essences and arbitrary elements are ignored. The focus is made on these essential elements to understand how subject experiences the object. A domain of experience consists of a web of ideal possibilities and relationships are called essences. Thus, phenomenology focuses on the essential and not the empirical structure of consciousness.

Husserl employs several terms and concepts to convey how meaning is constituted in the intentional acts of consciousness. Three elements, 'noesis', 'noema' and 'hyle' associated with these acts are significant regarding the way a person experiences the world. 'Noema' means 'to think' or 'to perceive' and 'noesis' refers to 'act of thinking'. 'Noesis' is the experience of the subject (Ego) and 'noema' is the meaning drawn out of the totality of this experience. Whereas the noesis is immanent in the mental act and hence a mental entity, the noema is an abstract entity that transcends to the mental act. Noema is the meaning-given in the act and noesis is the meaning-giving element of the act. The terms 'noesis' and 'noema' both derive from 'nous', the Greek word for mind or intellect. Husserl brings one more term, *hyle* to attention. *Hyle* has a direct bearing on the noesis and can consequently affect noema. The hyle's constraining effect is crucial in bringing about the notion of *reality* and thereby the distinction between reality and fantasy. Fantasy is characterised by a perception of reality that is absent from reality due to the absence of restrictions.

Husserl's 'reductions' simply want to purge the mind of all those factors which dilute the experience by not presenting the 'things themselves' to the perceiving subject. Its aim is to what Husserl calls 'overthrow' the attitude with which a person accepts the existence of the world around him. In reduction this attitude is cast off and what remains is purely encountered in perception.

'Temporality' is one of the important concepts in phenomenology. Human beings comprehend an experience along a temporal duration. Husserl in his essay, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, specifies several terms like

Adumbration, Retention, Protention, Horizon and Synthesis involved in the phenomenological analysis of an experience in terms of temporality. Adumbration refers to individual moments of experience, the 'aspects' or 'profiles' which are revealed in one's outer perception. Human beings do not perceive objects in isolation but apprehend them through 'aspects,' 'adumbrations' against a background of other objects in the midst of the 'surrounding world.' The unity of all these 'profiles' constitutes the object of consciousness. 'Retention' means that previous experiences are 'retained in the consciousness', 'Protention' is expectation of future experiences, 'Horizon' is the meeting point where previous and expected experiences are connected. It is the context or background for all the meaningful encounters with the world. Husserl says that 'horizons' are different unique possibilities associated with all of human 'lived experiences.' They are the 'potentialities' which can turn into actualities in a person's perceptions. The object in its other 'profiles' constitute the 'internal horizon' and the background against which object appears constitutes the external horizon.' Horizons can be temporal, spatial, linguistic, cultural, historical, and so on. "The ultimate 'horizon of all horizons' is the *world*" (Moran 182). 'Synthesis' is where all experiences about a phenomenon are united and understood by the consciousness.

Before one enters the transcendental, an understanding of mundane, which is social, linguistic, cultural and intersubjective, is but essential to know the basic dimension of human consciousness. The life-world, which is the ground of all praxis, whether theoretical or extra-theoretical, is constantly present and already exists for those who are aware of it. Human existence is fundamentally characterized by its inherent situatedness within the universe. Uncertainty defines human existence, but waking consciousness transforms this ambiguity into an opportunity for dynamic engagement, integrating self and world in every instant. This engagement is perpetual which characterizes the life-world.

Husserl puts the subject at the center and defines it within the boundaries of the mundane and the transcendental. He describes the enworlding of this subject in historicity and facticity and its fate in transcendental realm after executing the necessary reductions. Life-world is the foundation and source of all original evidence and intelligibility, where from the acts and functions of human consciousness draw meaning and all interpretations become possible. The life-world is identical with the

world that can be commonly talked about. Every new apperception leads essentially, through apperceptive transference, to a new typification of the surrounding world and in social intercourse to a naming which immediately flows into the common language. This world is characterized by Husserl as with “blinkers on” and “naïve.” (Hamblet 242) This way of living is sleepy. Husserl defined the life-world as including both the domain of transcendental existence and the concrete everyday life. The life-world pertains to human subjects, therefore it is not just about engaging with the objective ‘outside,’ but also about engaging with the ‘inside,’ with all of its inclinations, desires, and other varied activities. Man’s individual interests and passions drive the world around him.

Husserl, who is often accused of privileging theoretical preoccupations over lived existence, though belated, did fully and subtly take the cognizance of lived world of personal, social and historical processes and the whole human cultural world in general. One can vividly find in his writings the detailed description of the man’s engagements with the things in the ‘natural attitude.’ According to Husserl, individuals are entrenched in the natural attitude or what he also calls as the “psychomundane attitude” (Husserl, *The Crisis* 248). This attitude is fraught with individuals’ subjective preconceptions and assumptions, developed through education, culture, family and beliefs which color and influence the experiences. In his later writings, Husserl refers to natural attitude as *Urglaube*, or primal belief, that characterizes it as the world-life of consciousness, which is always predetermined. It has such a strong hold on consciousness that people have to pull away from it before they can even acknowledge its presence.

In the entire oeuvre of Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences* holds a great significance because it talks about the complexities of human existence in multiple dimensions and one gets a comprehensive picture of man in his ‘natural attitude.’ The *Crisis* discusses the ‘natural attitude’ in the form of life-world which is a universal phenomenon and wherein, time and again, man finds himself caught in different states of the mundane.

Husserlian phenomenology throws much light on two significant concepts – life-world (*Lebenswelt*) and intersubjectivity. Life-world is what Husserl calls as life lived in the ‘natural attitude.’ It reflects the world of embodied consciousness where ego acts through the living body. It is immediate and human beings continuously

encounter it from the perspective of a concrete living person. It is where man toils, the domain of his praxes. In *the Crisis*, Husserl describes it as a ‘pre-predicative’, ‘pre-given’ and pre-theoretical world, which has no theories but is full of surprises. It is both the ‘ground’ and ‘horizon’ of human experiences which imparts meaning to existence. “Life-world is one more constituted layer of meaning uncovered by Husserlian reduction and itself constituted by the transcendental ego.” (Moran,181)

Husserl considers the world of science as a part of life-world. In *Crisis*, he contends that scientific progress has undoubtedly resulted in material progress but unfortunately it has ignored the most fundamental, decisive and genuine questions, that are crucial to human existence. Transcendental phenomenology of Husserl reflects on such questions and penetrates down through all the habitualities, beliefs, acceptances – the naïve attitude, to lay bare how consciousness functions and enables one to make sense of the world around. Every person lives in the same natural or material world, where he interacts with other persons as egos. Husserl was interested in the process by which the ‘other’ is created in one’s mind. Husserl thought that man’s knowing of his self allows him to understand others.

Levinas regards the concept of intersubjectivity important which involves *egological* reduction wherein human beings discover the ‘other.’ “A phenomenological intuition of the life of others, a reflection that opens the field of transcendental intersubjectivity and completes the work of the philosophical intuition of subjectivity” (Cohen 74). According to Husserl, for any meaningful experience, the objective world and the other selves are necessarily presupposed, which can never be suspended or changed by any method. Man can come to know the reality of other minds by an act which makes the other “co-present” i.e., perceiving by analogy which Husserl calls as “appresentation.” By analogy, one understands that other resembles his own body and knows it as another organism. In the social world, individuals function through appresentation and make communication possible with other human beings. Human beings exist in a ‘communicative surrounding world’ wherein they live in an agreed upon system of values and meanings. Husserl regards the ‘other’ as a supplementary category to understand the world they inhabit. Husserl, however, reiterates that such an understanding is necessarily preceded by self-understanding.

This self-understanding has its genesis in what constitutes as one of the Husserl’s significant phenomenological discoveries of ‘transcendental ego.’ A pivotal

contribution of Husserlian phenomenology is the discovery of the transcendental ego, which enables a profound exploration of consciousness, venturing beyond the conventional boundaries of mental and psychological inquiry. The transcendental ego emerges as an immaterial, perfect, and absolute entity, unencumbered by sensory distortions and the prejudicial influences of the life-world. Having shed psychophysiological and temporal conditioning, this state of consciousness emerges in its essential purity, beyond the bounds of time. “It is not a consciousness conceived of logically but an actual consciousness.” (Lyotard 51) Husserl differentiates the transcendental ego from the flux of noetic-noematic experiences, situating it as an enduring, enabling ground that facilitates all egoic acts without being consumed by them. It encompasses an immediate, pre-reflective awareness of one's own existence, constituting the fundamental self-awareness that defines ipseity – the ‘self-aware cogito.’ Through its rigorous, presuppositionless inquiry, phenomenology conscientizes consciousness, unveiling the authentic self and facilitating an existential awakening. In fact, phenomenology's core methodology revolves around this essential inquiry which leads to transcendence. The essence of this transcendence, according to Husserl is “the winning of a new region of Being, the distinctive character of which has not been defined, a region of individual being like every genuine region.” (Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 119) The main proponents of phenomenology, Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty insightfully identify this being as a prereflective oneness between humans and their surroundings, stemming from the unified realm of pure consciousness. The human being's fundamental identity is rooted in the transcendental ego, a primordial entity that underlies the structure of consciousness. Husserl's investigation of consciousness led him to the discovery of “true self” (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* 10). Husserl posited that the transcendental, as the wellspring of pure consciousness and subjective-objective knowledge, forms the core of phenomenological inquiry. Stripped of all contingent aspects, the transcendental ego reveals itself as pure consciousness, devoid of personality, identity, and individual characteristics. Dermot Moran points out that “For the mature Husserl, however, knowing what subjectivity is yields not just knowledge but *self*-knowledge in a very special sense. Self-knowledge, thus, is the central goal of Husserl's phenomenology, although interpreted in his own peculiar way.” In fact, Husserl's work underscores the importance of “self-awareness”, “self-apperception” or “self-knowledge” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 99,156) By

establishing philosophy as a rigorous scientific endeavor, Husserl unlocked the domain of transcendental subjectivity, which rational discourse had failed to comprehend. Husserl's works elucidate the transcendental consciousness, characterizing it as an enduring, immortal, and timeless dimension of human consciousness.

The interpretation of transcendental ego diverges into two main streams: one esoteric, shrouded in mystery, and the other, a critical component of the empirical ego's structural framework. Husserl's philosophical journey began with a scientific examination of consciousness, revealing its structural elements, yet culminated in a groundbreaking transcendental turn, which he likened to a revolutionary "Copernican reversal". ((Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 55)) and as "the greatest existential conversion that is expected of mankind" (Husserl, *The crisis* 137). Husserl asserts that phenomenological inquiry into self and consciousness culminates in "a complete self-transformation". (Moran 161) Andrea Staiti remarks that, "Husserl sees a transformative power in the phenomenological attitude," and that practicing phenomenology, for him, "is a way for the individual to achieve a dignified sense of self, enabled by the discovery of the transcendental, non-naturalistic dimension of her subjectivity" (17)

Thus, given to its comprehensive approach, which includes all modes of perception and consciousness, Husserlian phenomenology educates man's vision, defines his position so as to broaden how he sees the world around and studies the human consciousness and experience at a deeper level.

Edmund Husserl, a pioneering phenomenologist had a tremendous influence on the writings of Colin Wilson. Drawing heavily from the philosophy of Husserl, especially the concept of "intentionality", Wilson contends that human consciousness is "intentional". A proper understanding of the structures of consciousness can lead man to higher states of consciousness. Wilson believes that human beings have, "will to perceive as well as perceptions" (Lachman 147) and intentionality is man's will to perceive. According to Husserl, the ultimate aim of phenomenological reduction is to reach the essence of the things. In this sense Wilson's concept of 'other modes of being' or 'Faculty X' and Husserl's perception of 'transcendental subjectivity' complement each other because both of them imply one and the same thing. Wilson understands phenomenology as an attempt to observe things as an emanation of

consciousness, and ultimately to increase the control of the human being over his own existence. In one of his seminal works, *Super consciousness*, Wilson asserts that phenomenology reveals the “Evolutionary Impulse” of mankind which takes us to the new and higher levels of consciousness characterized by meaning, freedom and ecstasy. (137) Many other such phenomenological attitudes, implicit as well as explicit can be found throughout the oeuvre of Colin Wilson. In fact, the select works of Wilson function analogously to Husserlian phenomenology. Like Husserl, the phenomenological ideas of Wilson are crucial in addressing the existential concerns of man which emanate from human experience and consciousness. Wilson declares that “All my work is existential in the sense that it badly wants to stick to living experience” (Wilson, *Man without a Shadow* 19). Moreover, it is important that Wilson’s work should to be discussed in the background of today’s crucial philosophical and scientific debate about the nature of consciousness and of a post-materialist idealist ontology.

Wilson’s evolutionary doctrine of ‘New Existentialism’ was also influenced by Alfred North Whitehead’s “*Philosophy of Organism*,” which gave rise to the concept of ‘prehension’- a hold over or gaining insight into the experience. Elaborating on it, Wilson says that things can be perceived in two ways, the one is “Immediacy Perception”- the ability to see and observe without necessarily understanding the phenomena and the other is “Meaning Perception” which makes an understanding in relation to the whole phenomena. These two modes of perception work together and enable a perceiver to fully understand the experience at hand. With reference to Whitehead, Lachman remarks, “The universe for him is shot through with life, and the most living thing in it is human consciousness. This places him within Wilson’s broader conception of existentialism.” (Lachman 120) This theory of perception of Whitehead hints upon the Husserlian concept of ‘intentionality,’ which like an arrow is shot to grab the object of perception.

Author’s Introduction

Colin Wilson was born on June 26, 1931, at Leicester England. He left school at age 16 and subsequently worked as a laboratory assistant, civil servant, laborer, dishwasher and factory worker. He also served the Royal Air Force (1949-50), where he clashed with the authorities and left by feigning homosexuality. He lived in Paris

and Strasbourg during 1950-51. He married Betty Troop and had a son from her, but eventually the marriage failed. During this period of depression, Wilson kept working on his novel '*Ritual in the Dark*' and three young writers, Bill Hopkins, Stuart Holroyd and Laura Del Rivo became his close friends. After spending some time in Paris, Wilson returned Leicester and married Joy Stewart, his second wife and mother of their three children. Angus Wilson, then superintendent of British Museum's Reading Room advised Wilson on '*Ritual*' and Wilson began to sleep rough (in a sleeping bag) on Hampstead Heath to save money and worked in a coffee bar while he wrote his first book- *The Outsider* (1956). The book catapulted Wilson to instant fame at an age of 24. "*The Outsider*," which is Wilson's seminal work examines the existential crises of different types of outsiders who see "too deep and too much" and struggle to attain "self- realization". Wilson, due to his contribution to "Declaration," (anthology of manifestoes written by people associated with the movement) was grouped with the "Angry Young Men" but Wilson was more interested in religious and spiritual issues – changing people rather than the system.

Wilson is tied to entire spectrum of humanities- a novelist and a writer on philosophy, sociology, music, literature and the occult. With the publication of '*Religion and the Rebel*' (1957) Wilson lost the good opinion of literary establishment. Wilson, however kept on writing and subsequently wrote his first novel, *Ritual in the Dark* (1960) and the second, '*A Drift in Soho*'. Many of the books of Wilson deal with psychology, crime, the occult, human sexuality and Wilson's own original form of existential philosophy. An extremely prolific author, he wrote more than hundred books, of which, twenty-five are novels. Colin Wilson is a proponent of the "affirmation" theory. He argues that underneath the surface of everyday trivialities, which breed apathy and pessimism, there is a constantly rejuvenating reality that each person must reach in order to give their life meaning and purpose. This, Wilson believes, can be achieved by proper use of imagination and will. Wilson is interested in the evolution and regeneration of the inner life of man since he is an evolutionary existentialist. Wilson pursued existentialism as a life-affirming philosophy; employed phenomenology to study consciousness and his mission was to show how one could use the self-discipline to avoid the despair that seemed to underlie the classic existentialists. (Solomon 343) Wilson's Existentialism is more in line with Goethe's idea of *Bildung*, which is the "cultivation" or "formation" of an individual, as Lachman notes. (Lachman 110) and which, in his opinion, can be attained by phenomenological

reflection, directing human energy in the proper directions. Wilson's positive philosophy which he calls as New Existentialism is expounded in his seven-book series – the outsider cycle. And this philosophy is well reflected in his fictional works. Most of the Wilson's protagonists (the outsiders) caught in the circumstances and goaded by their own 'vastations' can be found striving to go up the 'ladder of Selves' and achieve the 'Faculty X' as Wilson calls it – the consciousness of other times and other places. Wilson's life-long preoccupation has been the search for the key to the man's deepest being and heroes of his novels reflect that inner quest. Wilson's writings represent his innermost feelings and thoughts about the problems of life. His works appeal to the serious-minded people rather than people who read books for entertainment. Howard Dossor remarks:

“[placed] in the setting of a carefully developed philosophy and acknowledged as an illustration of that philosophy, the novels attain an ever-greater significance”. He continues: “They are more than an entertainment; they are an invitation to the reader to realize something of his own potential” (Dossor 285).

In his third book of 'Outsider Cycle' *The Age of Defeat* (1959), he bewailed the loss of the hero in twentieth century life and literature; convinced that human beings were becoming embroiled in what he termed 'the fallacy of insignificance'. It was this theory that encouraged celebrated American psychologist Abraham Maslow to contact him in 1963. The two corresponded regularly and met on several occasions before Maslow's death in 1970. A biography and assessment of his work, *New Pathways in Psychology: Maslow and the Post-Freudian Revolution*, based on audiotapes that Maslow had provided, was written by Colin Wilson and published in 1972. Maslow's observation of 'peak experiences' in his students - those sudden moments of overwhelming happiness that everyone experiences from time to time, provided Colin Wilson with an important clue in his search for the mechanism that might control the Outsider's 'moments of vision'. Maslow, however, was convinced that 'peak experiences' could not be induced; Colin Wilson thought otherwise and, indeed, in later books like *Access to Inner Worlds* (1983) and *Super Consciousness* (2009), suggested how they could be induced at will.

Wilson was also known for what he termed 'Existential Criticism' which suggested that a work of art should not just be judged by the principles of literary

criticism or theory alone but also by what it has to say, in particular about the meaning and purpose of existence. In one of his pioneering essays in the *Existential Criticism: Selected Book Reviews* he remarks:

“No art can be judged by purely aesthetic standards, although a painting or a piece of music may appear to give a purely aesthetic pleasure. Aesthetic enjoyment is an intensification of the vital response, and this response forms the basis of all value judgments. The existentialist contends that all values are connected with the problems of human existence, the stature of man, the purpose of life. These values are inherent in all works of art, in addition to their aesthetic values, and are closely connected with them.” (Stanley 107)

He went on to write several more essays and books on the subject. Among the latter were *The Strength to Dream* (1962), *Eagle and Earwig* (1965), *Poetry & Mysticism* (1970) *The Craft of the Novel* (1975), *The Bicameral Critic* (1985) and *The Books in My Life* (1998). He also applied existential criticism to many of the hundreds of book reviews he wrote for such journals as *Books & Bookmen*, *The Literary Review*, *The London Magazine*, *John London's*, *The Spectator*, *The Aylesford Review*, and others throughout his career. Some of these were gathered together in a book entitled *Existential Criticism: selected book reviews*, published in 2009.

By the late 1960s Wilson had become increasingly interested in Helena Blavatsky, Kabbalah, primitive magic, Franz Mesmer, Grigori Rasputin, Daniel Dunglas Home, and Paracelsus (among others). He also wrote a markedly unsympathetic biography of Crowley, *Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast*, and has written biographies on other spiritual and psychological visionaries, including Gurdjieff, Carl Jung, Wilhelm Reich, Rudolf Steiner, and P. D. Ouspensky.

Originally, Wilson focused on the cultivation of what he called "Faculty X", which he saw as leading to an increased sense of meaning, and on abilities such as telepathy and the awareness of other energies. In his later work he suggests the possibility of life after death and the existence of spirits, which he personally analyzes as an active member of the Ghost Club. He also wrote non-fiction books on crime, ranging from encyclopedias to studies of serial killing. He had an ongoing interest in the life and times of Jack the Ripper and in sex crime in general.

Wilson's novels are an exploration of his ideas on human potential and consciousness, as a way to put his ideas into action. He once remarked: "For me fiction is a manner of philosophizing..... philosophy may be only a shadow of reality it tries to grasp, but the novel is altogether more satisfactory..." (Wilson, *Voyage to a Beginning* 160) After a major spinal surgery in 2011, Wilson suffered a stroke and lost his ability to speak. Due to pneumonia, he was hospitalized in October 2013 and breathed his last in December 2013.

Wilson makes an extensive survey of previous philosophies and literature, and holds majority of it responsible for encouraging and perpetuating a static and passive consciousness. He sketches a thorough picture of different philosophical ideas that have unsuccessfully tried to understand man's existential reality. Philosophers of different ages, in their own way, created a body-mind dichotomy wherein they focused on one aspect while ignoring the other. This resulted in a position which is lopsided and life-negating. Starting from the Greek philosophers like Socrates and Heraclitus, Wilson points out that while Socrates emphasized that only spirit is real and matter is somehow unimportant and unreal, Heraclitus considered only the world of 'becoming' as real and everything else an illusion created by senses. Philosophers from Ecclesiastes to Aristotle onward have been inclined to declare that life is a cheat, that its 'contras' outweigh its 'pros' (Wilson, *Beyond the Outsider* 19). Descartes in search of some certainty recognized that 'thinking' gives man a self-awareness and thus declared, "I think, therefore I am." Wilson says that the later philosophers like John Locke and Bishop Berkeley made mind central in knowing and meaning constitution. Locke said, that when man is born, his mind is like a clean slate -*tabula rasa*, and all his thoughts, responses and reactions constitute his mind. According to Berkeley, knowledge comes only through mind as if the outside world does not exist (Wilson, *The Ultimate Colin Wilson* 103). Later, it was Hume who did the damage by reducing everything to materialism. He declared that there is no self, inside him and he is merely an aggregation of thoughts and impressions. So, all the man's interpretations of the phenomenon will be what 'sense datum' provides him. In phenomenological terms, such an understanding will be naïve, of natural standpoint.' Wilson is critical of such an approach of making a piecemeal analysis which is surely going to create an illusion. Tim Dalglish in his *The Guerrilla Philosopher: Colin Wilson and Existentialism*, points out that mind as merely as *tabula rasa* to be scrawled on a contingent universe did not, for Husserl, capture at all the nature of consciousness. (Dalglish ch. 4).

According to Colin Wilson, the first philosopher who talked about a reality other than mind was Immanuel Kant, who contended that beyond the order-imposing human mind, there is an underlying reality which he called as noumenon which is unknowable. Later it was Johann Gottlieb Fichte who said that if noumenon is unknowable, one must not bother about it, thus leaving man alone, living in the world of his senses. Thus, Wilson concludes that there are two selves in man, one is the everyday self and the other self behind the scene. Regarding this Wilson further adds:

Descartes had sat in his armchair, or more likely lay in bed (he was notoriously lazy) and asked: 'What can I know for certain?' He answered: 'Two things are certain — my own existence and that world out there.' We call them the subjective and the objective worlds. Fichte said: 'No, there are three worlds — that world out there, and two "me's", the ordinary me and the me who is behind the scenes creating the world out there.' The next question is: how could the ordinary 'me' begin to explore the extraordinary world created by the 'other me'? And this, of course, is the true task of phenomenology (Wilson, *The Ultimate* Colin Wilson 106).

The ideas espoused by the earlier philosophers created the image of the man as passive and mechanical. They primarily focused on the mental life. Wilson argues that human brains secrete thoughts in the same way that the liver secretes bile, and that their so-called mental lives are nothing more than physical experiences. The brain absorbs sensations, processes them, and produces cognition, much like the stomach and intestines receive food and digest it. In this situation, the 'I' behind the scenes and its will to act remains concealed. This sort of approach gradually paved the way for positivist philosophy which totally relied on logic and glorified the reason, proclaiming that, anything that cannot be reduced to logic is meaningless. And behaviorism which saw nothing except sensory impressions denied existence of consciousness. It was based on associationism which understood humans fixed and static. The primary takeaway of these strands of thought was that consciousness is an illusion created by the body and series of sensory perceptions and there is nothing called 'I.' Romanticism came as another shift in human consciousness, which thought man, in some way, as a sleeping god. It revolted against this celebration of reason and man as a rational being. They tried to live in the world of meaning but their world-

rejection make them more prone to dejection and defeatism. Wilson expresses the dilemma of romantics when he points out that “the romantics died protesting: 'I am discouraged. Life is too heavy a burden. I am afraid to live.' And yet they had at least stated the problem: Why does life fail?” (Wilson, *Beyond the Outsider* 163) Clifford P. Bendau further clarifies it by saying that, Wilson sees the Romantic’s movement from a strong sense of optimism to an even stronger pessimistic sense of world rejection as a direct result of the inability to sustain the vision of freedom (Bendau 7).

This problem of meaninglessness, according to Wilson was further taken up by existentialists. Wilson labelled existentialism as Romanticism Mark II and considered it to be an attempt to map and explore human complexity (Wilson, *Age of Defeat* 107). Wilson gives full credit to Sartre and Camus for their valuable psychological insights especially their recognition of the triviality and boredom life is beset with and the occasional moments when man feels free and can make choices. Wilson however contends that Sartre failed to offer ‘what to choose’ and this is the weakness of his existentialism. Sartre’s concept of ‘contingency’ is quite contrary to Wilson’s ‘intentional mind’ (as inspired by Husserl). In this connection Howard.F. Dossor observes that “Wilson argues contingency is a concomitant of passivity which is best defined as absence of will. Lifeless objects are perfectly contingent.” (Dalglish ch. 4) Tim Dalglish further adds by pointing out that the central problem Wilson identifies with Sartre’s ideas has created a passive non-intentional consciousness by ridding the mind of a stable essence or archer to fire intentional perception. (58) This failure was further strengthened by his connecting politics and existentialism, thus negating the central premise of existentialism that ‘Truth is Subjectivity’. Albert Camus was found by Wilson as an existentialist who showed human absurdity and misery and intense physical affirmation of it. He advised to stoically endure this absurdity and meaninglessness with the admonition that one must “imagine Sisyphus happy.” Wilson believed that existentialism failed to find any remedy to meaninglessness but certainly confirmed the diagnosis. Wilson concluded that the ‘existential’ philosophers of the 20th century essentially created a new romanticism with the added precision of a new philosophical vocabulary. Many of these men failed in their quest for meaning in a world of chance, much like the romantics. The later existentialists advocated for a stoic declaration of dignity in resistance to the absurdity of the universe, in contrast to the romantics who conceded defeat. Stoic acceptance is

insufficient for Wilson. In the end, existentialism failed since it did not allow for further advancement.

Wilson contends that this meaninglessness and pessimism, more recently had its new guise in the form of postmodernism, post-human and scientific materialism. The philosophers like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault demolished the existence of any subjective reality and understood it simply as the endless flux of matter. Wilson regarded their philosophies as reductionistic which engaged in dry linguistic analysis and denied any transcendental values beyond everyday consciousness. Celebrated for his "deconstruction" theory, Derrida attacks metaphysical philosophers with contempt, arguing that the concept of the self is an illusion.

Wilson contends that in such an atmosphere of reductionism and determinism, creative activities cannot flourish. So, existentialism which started with the assertion, "I am" moved to the Cartesian assertion of "I think" but by the time one reaches to postmodernism, the "I" disappeared into an arbitrary structure. The existential attitude which is an attitude of self-consciousness eventually grew into an attitude of selflessness. Wilson believed that Camus, Sartre, Derrida et al had misrepresented the inherent potential of humanity, which he thought could evolve to a better state of being and had instead focused on a stoic resignation to the fate of man.

Besides the psychologist Abraham Maslow, the only two philosophers whom Wilson gives credit of coming out of this cul de sac were Edmund Husserl and A.W. Whitehead. In comparison to the Humean mode of perception which is 'string of sensations,' Whitehead contended that humans perceive things in two ways – immediacy perception and meaning perception which work together to give depth perception. Immediacy perception is just like the Humean 'string of sensations,' and meaning perception is made possible by one's will and creative drives (Wilson, *New Pathways in Psychology* 40). So, any psychological theory, which excludes meaning perception will be considered deficient, as a science because it would fail to differentiate between 'narrow consciousness' and 'intensity consciousness.' In fact, majority of these theories denied the 'consciousness' with a few like Cabanis who recognized the existence of 'moi centrale' - the central ego which is the archer behind the arrow. On the heels of Brentano's concept of 'intentionality,' this idea was later strengthened by Edmund Husserl who contended that human consciousness is

‘intentional.’ Husserl uses the Kantian term, ‘the transcendental ego’ as the essential self which engages with the world in all its transactions.

Wilson believes that the modern psychology based on the study of sick people cannot give a fair idea of the workings of human mind. For instance, Freud focuses more on the human fantasies and worries and makes his conclusions based on such subjectivities, especially the frustration of sexual drives which he rationalized to be the root cause of all problems. He also rejects religion as a desire for a father-figure without deeply going into its subtlety. Freudian psychology has a strongly emotional element in its ‘reductionism’ and an emotional assertion is not to be trusted and philosophically speaking, his feet were firmly cemented into ‘the natural standpoint’ the ‘triviality of everydayness’ (Wilson, *New Pathways in Psychology* 74). Wilson further analyses the major figures of psychoanalysis and concludes that Adler was preoccupied with ‘the will to power’, Jung with ‘occultism’ and Rank with the ‘artist’, which they applied to human race in general. Wilson believes that these post-Freudian psychoanalysts, to some degree, did give value to human will and freedom and agreed in one or the other way that human being is an evolutionary animal. They were quite close to what Wilson calls as the ‘meaning psychology.’ Wilson acknowledges, particularly in Rank's writings, that although a seeker's quest for meaning may begin in a highly subjective manner, they will eventually filter it out in order to arrive at an impersonal and objective reality.

On the other hand, Wilson's existential psychology, which draws inspiration from Abraham Maslow, is upbeat, emphasizing an objective reality and bringing the reader closer to more profound states of awareness. Maslovian psychology is based on the premise that human beings are driven by the sense of values that they assign to their actions. A loss of these values flattens the will and leads to ‘life-failure.’ According to Wilson, psychology hitherto ignored human will and imagination and mostly considered human being as automaton. Wilson, however, gives credit to William James for giving an in-depth description of human psyche and connecting it to human experience, particularly his idea of ‘horizons of distant fact’ that points to the Wilson’s ‘intensity consciousness.’ Wilson points out that James’ contribution is significant who brought the awareness that something about ‘normal’ human consciousness is flawed. Usually, for some strange reason, human beings don't obtain the best results. Man’s sense of values, which only seem to come alive during times

of extreme excitement or crisis, appears to be the primary source of trouble. If not, it hoggishly snores, and he barely survives on half the pressure. The cooperation of the conscious and subconscious minds appears to be the source of the problem. Man will let loose his subconscious allies behind the scenes if he maintains a certain level of conscious straining; religious experiences are the best example of this. It is true that human beings are capable of experiencing reality on a far larger and more profound scale than what they are used to. Wilson, however, points out that though he comes quite close to Maslow's position, his inclination to pragmatism and failure to make a proper use of intentionality marred his broader and subtler philosophy. Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' confirmed Wilson's stand that man has an evolutionary imperative to become a new consciousness (Maslovian self-actualization). Wilson vehemently argues that in the present-day world human beings have unprecedentedly stuck at the 'need for sex' and the desire to attain economic and other securities, which generates boredom and stifles the evolutionary drive. Wilson believes that such an attitude slackens consciousness and weakens the individual's urge to live. A phenomenological understanding of these aspects is the only way to come out of its vicious circle and pave the way for transcendence. This transcendence, Wilson believes will give birth to a new consciousness which Wilson terms as the "Faculty X." Maslow makes it clear that beyond the mind there is a 'central reality' or 'essence' which needs to be observed and interpreted. Wilson further adds that these fallacies of earlier psychology which caused a narrower perception of things were later corrected by Husserl. According to Husserl, consciousness being 'intentional' can achieve 'primal perception' through 'intending.' Husserl provides an archaeology of consciousness and experience which begins with an analysis and description of the life-world and its structures to the layered structure of human subjectivity which culminates in the knowledge of transcendental consciousness. Wilson through his fictional characters and narrative speaks of the same analysis and description of consciousness and experience, with an added emphasis on the existential concerns than Husserl, whose approach is more scientific. In this connection, Gary Lachman avers:

Husserl, too, was aware of the "passive consciousness" problem but his approach was different. As mentioned, his central insight is that perception is intentional. We believe it is a passive process, but as

Wilson pointed out, there is a will to perceive as well as perceptions. Husserl's phenomenology is a method of uncovering this will to perceive, which he called "intentionality." At present it works unconsciously. The aim of phenomenology is to bring its processes to awareness (177).

Husserl, like Wilson do focus on human values. Quentin Lauer remarks that "Husserl's own phenomenological investigations were, it is true, chiefly logical, epistemological, and to a certain extent ontological, still phenomenology even as he conceived it is at its persuasive best in the realm of values." (9-10). And that is what Husserl laments in his *The Crisis* that science has failed to create any values or meaning, despite its significant material progress. The questions about the meaning or meaninglessness of the whole human existence remain unresolved. Wilson holds phenomenology as a prospective field of inquiry which would bring mankind out of this crisis so as to pave the way for the birth of a new consciousness.

According to Wilson, phenomenology is the study of the way consciousness perceives objects. He understands consciousness is a variable that governs how and what one perceives. Like Husserl, Wilson's concern is human subjectivity. Wilson declares that he will explore the depths of the inner world of the 'outsider', from whom this odyssey to transcendental subjectivity shall begin. Taking a cue from split-brain theory, Wilson points out that "our left brain acts as a 'front man' to engage in daily practical problems and is always found in a hurry, while as the right brain tends to function in relaxation but adds a dimension of meaning to our lives." (Wilson, *The Essential Colin Wilson* 188). This suggests that in the 'natural attitude' human beings generally occupy their left brains and only occasionally their center of gravity shifts to the right brain. Using the expression from D.H. Lawrence, Wilson calls the left-brain ego as "Head consciousness" which he thinks causes many of the problems of modern man. Wilson's deduction from this split-brain theory and his concepts of 'Fallacy of Insignificance' and 'Faulty X,' has marked resemblance with the Husserlian notions of 'natural attitude' and 'transcendental ego' respectively. A shift or what Husserl would call "epoche" between the two brings a corresponding change in the quality of consciousness. Wilson's fiction explores the varied dimensions of consciousness possible within the horizons of these extremes. In this connection, Howard Dossor points out that, "Wilson's philosophy has to do with the nature of

human consciousness. Perhaps no one has gazed on this facet of our identity than he has done.” (Dossor 3)

Besides an impressive body of non-fiction writings, Wilson has written a total of twenty-five novels. These novels which have been written in different genres, express Wilson’s life long search for meaning and purpose. Perception of reality which was the Wilson’s obsession finds best expression in his novels.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURAL ATTITUDE

Phenomenology reflects upon everyday experiences to gain a sense of their order and structure. These everyday experiences are lived from what Husserl terms as the 'natural standpoint'. Natural attitude is characterized with a loss of subjectivity. It steeps human beings into the objective world wherein they remain oblivious of their inner world. 'Natural attitude' is one of the significant themes of Husserlian phenomenology which Husserl first discusses in *Ideas I* and later elaborates and recognises as the 'life-world' in *The Crisis*. In order to get a clear picture of life-world, it is important to analyse and describe its different structures so as to know the phenomena of everyday life in its mundanity. The analysis and description of the everyday consciousness, carried out in this study encompasses both the concepts, especially for understanding Wilson's conception of narrow consciousness and its existential concerns which implicates the Husserlian notions of the 'natural attitude,' that is the everyday horizon of human experience. According to Husserl, the world ordinarily perceived in the natural attitude is an unconscious assumption which human beings take for granted. Husserl considers this world as 'naïve' with "blinkers on." (Hamlet 242) This kind of life is asleep and unaware of itself. In everyday lives - natural attitude or being-in-the-world, human beings hardly bother to reflect on their actions and they go on with their preunderstandings, assumptions and biases unquestionably. When a person views an object from the natural standpoint, he experiences it as it appears to him without exerting any intentional effort to reach its 'eidos.' This is because the world exists 'out there' in its natural order of space and time. This life has a certain casualness in its engagement with the worldly affairs, which devoid of any theory, is full of surprises. "It is a practical world and not a theoretical world. Its opinions and beliefs are relative and so Husserl calls this life as 'dogmatic, which permeates our daily life.'" (Zahavi 68). Wilson equates this attitude to mental sickness which man takes for granted as a natural condition. In the natural attitude, human beings normally engage with the facts and facticity which is superficial and seemingly simple and straightforward, involving a naïve way of thinking. This naivety of the natural attitude, according to Sebastian Luft not only

consists in the fact that “being in the natural attitude I do not know of being in it, but also in the fact that, since I do not know of it as an attitude, I live in the belief that it is the only possible ‘way of life.’” (Luft 159). It is a person’s usual, everyday, ordinary attitude towards the world – a world of his daily activities and praxes. In principle, natural attitude is nothing but everyday life prior to doing philosophy, meaning it is prescientific and prephilosophical. It is the default mode of our being. It is the Heideggerian *Dasein*, which is embodied in the everyday world – a ‘world at hand’ wherein one is bound to live an ‘inauthentic’ existence. It is the state of everyday consciousness, where human beings transact with the life-world; a common natural and material world which exists separate from their own egos. According to Sartre, in this ‘contingent’ spatio-temporal world human beings often act in ‘bad faith’ and such a world is characterised by ‘nausea’ or what Wilson calls ‘indifference threshold’ – a state of psychological passivity or habituation that takes existence for granted. Tim Dalglish observes that, “what Sartre calls bad faith; Wilson verbalizes as the common acceptance or ‘*taken for granted*’ of existence (both one’s own and the world’s).” (33) In these states human beings remain oblivious of how their consciousness operates and functions in the outer objective world and the inner subjective world. They lose their true self and suffer from self-division. Howard F Dossor states thus:

Modern man is a divided man. He is outside himself looking upon himself with a nostalgia for unity. He is outside his own society, for he has no center within himself and can identify no center within others to which he might address any communication. He is divided from his past from his future. He is divided from his dreams. Ultimately, he is divided from his own life for he experiences life, not so much as living but as drifting (57).

Contemporary times witness an acute crisis, wherein man has receded from his own self ever than before. Science and civilization have turned a human being into a good working unit and robbed him of his will and imagination which constitute the very foundation of human freedom and joy. The postmodern, post structuralist and post human ideologies have replaced realities with abstraction which has rendered life meaningless and abdicated purpose of life. Human sexuality has lost its naturalness and gripped human mind in a monstrous fashion. It has given rise to a condition which

has caused many pessimistic biases to crept into human psyche and society. It has created a civilization which has resulted in the forfeiture of human happiness and ultimately led to “nausea” or “Life-failure” – an overpowering feeling of ennui that persists in people and is reinforced by negative feedback. This life-failure, in varying degrees, is very much a current phenomenon as it used to be in other times and Wilson captures it well to find the solution. In this regard, Biagio Gerard Tassone observes:

The central contribution to existential phenomenology that Wilson makes in his writings is undoubtedly his prolonged analysis of the problem of ‘life-failure’. Life-failure, put simply, is closely related to a tendency people have of taking things for granted. As Wilson puts it, in day-to-day life, and especially in the pursuit of utilitarian goals, we tend to narrow our awareness and ultimately diminish the contents of our consciousness. The problem of life-failure arises when we stop acting while nonetheless retaining the adopted narrowness and deflated mental range of what can be called a ‘practical attitude’. (50)

Wilson gives a fresh and clear picture of man’s position in what Husserl calls as the ‘natural standpoint’ or what he himself terms as the ‘fallacy of insignificance.’- man’s inability to find meaning or significance in life. It is the everyday state of consciousness which Wilson calls as the ‘Robot.’ Gnostics would call this Robot as ‘Duality’, Gurdjieff calls it “sleep” (Wilson, *War Against Sleep* 47) and Nietzsche labels it as “Mechanical Intentions” (Nietzsche 350). Heidegger would call such an existence as “inauthentic.” (Moran 230) It is the Blake’s “Spectre” (Rose 130) - a stronghold of one’s own identity, personality, habits etc. It is the concept of man as “an empty consciousness that passively receives data from the outside world.” (Tredell, ch. 2). ‘Robot’ is human psychic condition which has become more complicated in the modern culture. According to Wilson, ‘Robot’ is how, human consciousness operates on ‘auto-pilot’, narrowing one’s perception so as to handle the everyday life, and least concerned about the need to get beyond it. He believed that ‘Robot’ controls the part of a person’s brains that in the modern culture has become over-used and over-developed. The contemporary mind with its dispositions, motivations and impulses further strengthens this ‘Robot’ and creates a sort of

psychasthenia. Regarding the nature of this 'Robot' Gary Lachman remarks that "it tends to allow our energies to "leak," which in turn produces a distinct feeling of "life failure," the boredom and apathy that erode our sense of values." (143) This attitude is based on a naturalistic viewpoint which treats the world as absolute reality. This blinds one to the fact that the universe is made up of particular senses, each of which requires absolute consciousness as the field in which sense is granted.

In his *The New Existentialism*, Wilson points out that "with all our leisure, our knowledge, the prospect of endless new realms to conquer, we have never been so bored and depressed, and the increased rate of suicide and neurosis is becoming one of our major social problems" (162). Wilson attributes this phenomenon to the 'Robot' which is a state of 'upside-downness' and that, as an over-active servant, maintains the indifference threshold. Wilson defines 'indifference threshold' as the edge of human consciousness that gets activated by pain but not pleasure. Indifference threshold has become a primary characteristic of modern consciousness. All human beings take their happiness for granted and only question life when they are in pain. Wilson refers to it as a peculiar limitation of human consciousness.

The present age of internet and social media which is hell-bent in keeping human beings in a mechanical and robotic state further augments this predicament. It has given birth to a life world, in which human consciousness has turned more passive, lukewarm and acutely caught in what Heidegger calls as the "triviality of everydayness." (Bakewell 230) Wilson often employs the image that people are like grandfather clocks driven by watch springs, to convey this human condition. The civilised man is like the lobotomised pigeon of William James' experimental table who has lost all spontaneity and now only responds to the external stimuli. The ordinary man is condemned to a form of blindness by his habit-bound existence; he plods through life like a blinkered horse, never seeing far beyond the end of his nose. He is like a sleepwalker. Wilson makes a diagnosis of this disease, called Robot, and lays bare the different dimensions of everyday consciousness. Wilson desperately wants the answer to the existential question – 'Where is the life we have lost in living?' And responds, that it is with the robot. Wilson, a libertarian philosopher, set a lofty goal for himself: to identify and treat mankind's ills.

Both Husserl and Wilson contend that man's perception in the natural attitude is vague and hazy and he never pays attention to the 'I' that lurks beneath, and the way this 'I' perceives the world. It gives rise to a narrower state of consciousness which encourages a "worm's eye perception", (Wilson, *Super Consciousness* 16) Husserl contends that natural attitude affects a person's thinking and understanding about the nature of reality and consciousness. So, in order to overcome the natural attitude, it is necessary to first make this stance of everyday life explicit.

Wilson quite elaborately analyzes and describes this narrow and everyday state of consciousness, and his novel, *The Mind Parasites* symbolises this state which according to Wilson tells lies about reality. 'Mind Parasites' means the habits that make a person's attention diffuse and unfocussed and prevent him from concentrating, thus giving rise to vagueness and a tendency to waste time on trivialities. Wilson states that *The Mind Parasites* "was an attempt to state symbolically what I felt to be wrong with human beings" (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 29). In order to understand this wrongness, Wilson suggests that Phenomenology must start from ordinary consciousness. He therefore starts writing notes about the issues with man's inner world and the geography of consciousness. Nicholas Tredell remarks that "the parasites provided Wilson with an engaging symbol of the problem that preoccupied him - the fickleness of human consciousness, the failure of human will" (Tredell, ch. 7). This failure is caused by the unreflective and naïve attitude that human beings adopt in their everyday life.

Wilson discusses this naivety in varied dimensions, highlighting the different madnenses of human mind. According to Wilson, in order to understand the nature of consciousness, one first needs to understand it in its everyday state (Husserl's natural attitude). To understand the Husserlian notion of 'general thesis of natural standpoint' is to understand the world in its materiality and actuality; it is to understand the life-world which is both objective as well as subjective. In this attitude a person acts with a narrowed awareness, which Wilson believes, forfeits one's will and imagination that ultimately leads to life-failure. Wilson contends that 'natural attitude' is characterised by a person's tendency to devalue life and sink into passive states. The novel *The Mind Parasites* lays bare this life-failure in a science fiction setting. By employing the science fiction genre, Wilson highlights both the passive perception of everyday existence and the need to make this perception more 'intentional.' In his *The Strength*

to *Dream*, Wilson states that “popular science fiction should have the effect of jerking the imagination out of its anthropocentric prison yard and stirring it into a new kind of perception” (120). This ‘prison yard’ is man’s everyday state of consciousness which characterises the ‘natural attitude’. The novel is a recognition and analysis of the natural or practical attitude, symbolised by parasites, which act as the hinderances to man’s growth to some higher form. They prevent the mankind to investigate its existential mysteries. They bind him to the contingency, limit the perspective, create a spiritual vacuum and condition them by what Wilson terms as the ‘fallacy of insignificance’. It is all about how consciousness has stuck in the trivialities and the detection of the causes that perpetuate such an existence. In *Parasites*, Wilson employs the Lovecraftian mythos to comment upon his own conception of the original sin, which he believes pushes the mankind to lower levels of degradation and weakness and which is taken as the norm for human condition. John A Weigel points out that “Wilson was admittedly much influenced by Lovecraft’s stories and by his enthusiasm for the supernatural and the macabre which was based on his serious concern over the limitations of ordinary science and ordinary consciousness” (91) Husserl also found the methods of science deficient in understanding the complexities of human experience and consciousness and considered it as a part of the ‘natural attitude’.

The narrator of *The Mind Parasites* is a middle-aged archaeologist Gilbert Austin who along with his friend Wolfgang Reich engages in excavations, burrowing earth miles down to find the ancient cities. These archaeological endeavours serve as equivalents to one’s subjective explorations, symbolizing the way that experience and habit patterns seep into human minds through successive geological layers. Husserl contends that phenomenology is akin to archaeology which tries to penetrate deeper and deeper into the reality of consciousness and experience. Austin declares in the novel that ‘I became an archaeologist through an almost mystical experience...I knew I had to devote my life to ‘digging up the past’ and trying to reconstitute the vision of reality (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 37).

In this story, one learns that Weissman in his ‘Historical Reflections’ states that ‘mind parasites’ are responsible for pushing the mankind to passive states not only on individual levels but it affects a whole range of human affairs like art, literature, culture, politics and psychological and social phenomena that is the man’s

entire life-world. It brings home the point that a state of automatism has taken all the affairs into its grip and now it has become a norm.

In the beginning of the novel, it is revealed that Austin and Karel Weissman “spent a great deal of time discussing problems of the meaning of death, the limits of human consciousness” Both agreed that “our everyday lives had a quality of unreality” and they tried “experimenting with the consciousness” (33). Weissman had committed suicide and data reveals that suicide rates have increased considerably. According to Austin, the reason suicide rates are rising is that a growing number of people, including him, are awakening to the folly of life and they have decided not to continue. This is the extreme of human passivity and shows that parasites are actually the mankind’s psychic problems, which cause it to devalue life and succumb to low-pressure consciousness. People live most of their life in this low-pressure state. “It is a truncated life in which one’s flowing bodily and affective responses to the world are lived naively and one’s reflection and imagination are characterized by instrumental responses to pragmatic, immediate needs or transitory desires” (Applebaum 30). The parasites symbolise this instrumentality which continuously preoccupies man and leaves no room for him to reflect on these responses. Austin detects the aim of parasites “was to prevent human beings from arriving at their maximum powers, and they did this by ‘jamming’ the emotions by blurring our feelings so that we failed to learn from them, and went around in a kind of mental fog.” (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 92) It means that man lingers in a state of semi-consciousness and his habituality prevents him from turning into a conscious being. Some Blakean spectre catches hold and imprisons him in the habitus - a complex of habitualities shaped by experiences, repeated practices, and attitudes that are laid down or sedimented through the person’s embodied history. In this regard, Clifford P. Bendau observes that “Blake’s “spectre” like Wilson’s” mind parasite blocks out the true nature of reality. What appears to be metaphysical reality is coloured by the predispositions of the ego.” (13) It is these predispositions which characterise the natural attitude and hinders the perceiver to get to the essence of any experience.

Husserl observes that, “The Ego always lives in the medium of its ‘history’; all its earlier lived experiences have sunk down, but they have after effects in tendencies, sudden ideas, transformations or assimilations of earlier lived experiences” (Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a*

Phenomenological Philosophy 350). Human beings live in this attitude unreflectively and regard it as their normal condition. One gets a clear picture of this attitude from the conversation between Darga, Fu'ad and Reich in the novel, which reveals that human beings are able to maintain their sanity because they view the world from a "worm's eye perspective", which is a "intensely personal viewpoint." (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 47) Whether something impresses or terrifies them, they see it through this windscreen of personality. Oddly enough, terror has the opposite effect, making them feel less important while still strengthening their feeling of individual existence. The moment their complacency is shaken, they suddenly lose their sense of self and start to see themselves as little more than insignificant objects in the wide world, similar to flies or rocks.

The expressions, 'intensely personal viewpoint' and 'worm's eye perspective' signify the subjective prejudice which Husserl believes distorts the reality and goes contrary to the spirit of phenomenology, which seeks objective truth. In Wilson's scheme of things such a perspective affects the perception and generates meaninglessness.

Austin seeks to venture into the vast expanse of the mind, driven by insatiable curiosity, and contemplates the boundless inner space within each individual. But due to the mundane and utilitarian narrowed perception, human beings fail to sink into themselves and explore their innerscapes. These innerscapes, which Wilson presents as "ruins of Kadath" are the Jung's "racial unconscious" or Huxley's "mind as a planet with its own valleys, jungles, deserts and oceans, where all kinds of creatures live" (54). Wilson understands mind as the 'back garden' which is full of worms and insects. Hence, in terms of phenomenology, it is necessary to study consciousness since it is where the parasites seek shelter.

Weissman's *Historical Reflections* reveal that the human race is experiencing mind-cancer, which Austin equates to the twentieth-century spiritual malaise of neurosis or anhedonia. According to Weissman the most remarkable faculty of the mankind is the power of self-renewal or of creation. The loss of this power has debilitated the human creative urges and he owes it to the existence of mind parasites. It is the man's habituation, the 'Robot' which takes over in almost all the activities and gives rise to mechanistic consciousness. Such a consciousness is bound to create

boredom and meaninglessness. It works like a machine that lingers in the natural attitude without an iota of self-awareness. Weissman expresses it aptly thus:

One of man's deepest habits is keeping alert for dangers and difficulties, refusing to allow himself to explore his own mind because he daren't take his eyes off the world around him. Another one, with the same cause, is his refusal to notice beauty, because he prefers to concentrate on practical problems (71).

So, Weissman holds such an attitude as the root cause of these suicides. He suggests that in order to revive the 'self-renewal' man must learn to relax and break this habituation. Human mind works on habit and to break these habits, particularly the negative ones, is tremendously difficult. Weissman first responded well to mescaline; nevertheless, upon regaining awareness of ordinary life, he felt as though he was an ostrich with its head buried in the sand. Something terrifying was still lurking beneath, some sickness of the mind. This sickness is nothing but the everyday habitualities that have turned human beings into automatons. Husserl across his writing career, thematizes the concept of natural attitude in different ways. However, while responding to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, he explicates it more clearly when he remarks that it is an exploration of the being-in-the-world in the natural attitude, of what is given in the moods of everydayness (anxiety, boredom, anonymity, and so on). (Moran 191) These moods deeply influence the way human beings encounter the entities in the world. Mostly, they sap a person's energies and never let him to make any conscious reflection.

Colin Wilson considers human mind as a vast electronic brain. With a little knowledge about few of its knobs and buttons. Human beings are only able to make it do simplest things, to deal with the most obvious, everyday problems. Human machine is conditioned to perform in a habitually-constituted horizon, where all the human affairs generate and perpetuate the conditioned and mechanised state of consciousness without ever pondering over how the consciousness actually works. In the course of novel, Austin and Reich gradually understand the secret of 'parasites' and how they work in human consciousness. Austin realises that 'parasites' have consequences for the all the domains of human endeavour. In man's general need,

even science has failed to answer the basic questions regarding the meaning and meaninglessness of life as it is very much the part of his natural attitude. David Carr in his introduction to Husserl's *The Crisis* endorses the latter's admission that science made tremendous advances in material progress and welfare but "in our vital need science has nothing to say to us" (Husserl, *The Crisis* Introduction xxvi) It remains indifferent to the human concerns and instead with its different theories and principles has turned man into a machine. Referring to the Karatape diggings in the novel, Austin analyzes that he treats these excavations as purely mechanical and ignores the pivotal role of mind, thus rendering man as a passive "reasoning machine." (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 98) Austin realises that throughout the years, humankind's scientific advancements have only served to solidify the idea that humans are passive beings and that people take their mental limitations for granted since they are so accustomed to them. They are like sick men who have forgotten the meaning of health.

In *The Mind Parasites*, Colin Wilson touches upon another important dimension of everyday consciousness which manifests in human sexuality. Like rest of the human experiences, sexuality has also turned mechanical wherein human beings act naïvely. They flow passively in sexual drive without being aware how it works through their bodies, not in physiological terms but phenomenological terms. Human beings hardly reflect on their sensuous data or what Husserl calls the 'non-intentional matter' or 'hyle' that they experience in their natural attitude and consequently they fail to draw any meaning out of such experiences. The 'I' behind the scene does not participate actively to draw meaning from the act and thereby makes the experience unsatisfactory. This unsatisfaction has resulted in promiscuity and sexual perversion, as man finds all possible ways to bring satisfaction in his sexual urge. Wilson conveys the same thing in the *Parasites* when Fleishman expounds his theory of sexual impulse. Man fails to analyze his energies in the sexual act which results in the frustration of this urge. The resulting perversions lead to a kind of polluting of man's sexual springs which has an element of absurdity about it, "like drinking whisky to quench your thirst" (100). Wilson believes that the sexual urge and evolutionary urge are closely connected, but due to the former becoming more abnormal and 'unnatural' (but quite normal in the 'natural attitude') obstructs any possible evolution. Fleishman understands that man is in a state of perpetual conflict with himself and his lower self. The lower self is purposefully utilizing the energies of higher self for its own ends. But what are these purposes? Man has exhausted his higher impulses and his lower

self, lingers in a decadent civilisation where his 'natural' (in Husserlian sense) tendencies are strengthened and perpetuated by the ways of modern life which particularly in the prevailing conditions are enslaved by the world of internet, social media and artificial intelligence. So, the mind parasites have grown stronger ever than before and given birth to a horizon where human mind has lost its capacity of imagination and renewal of its power of perception. People have become zombies of the mind parasites, and sleepwalkers. In a state of awakening, Fleishman looks at the crowds and cries out – "I feel as if I'd died over the weekend and been born a different person' 'It's strange, but all these people strike me as being *asleep*. They're all somnambulists.' (105)

In his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Syntheses* (2001) Edmund Husserl says that "passive intentionality is an egoless form of intention where the experiencing subject is not fully active to create the understandable meanings." (26) Austin in his analysis reveals that the poor quality of human life and consciousness is due to the feebleness of the beam of attention that human beings direct at the world. Ordinarily, in day-to-day life, "our attention shifts around from second to second; we do not really have the trick of focusing and concentrating the beam" (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 107). Due to inactiveness of the ego or the 'I,' human beings fail to focus, and consequently they go on encouraging human habit of vagueness and the tendency to waste time on trivialities. Man's mind flickers inattentively and this brings dullness and meaninglessness in his life. Austin reflects that man heavily relies on the ordinary assumptions and different identities which are actually the encumbrances of the spatio-temporal world. Human beings take these supports in the beginning but gradually they take it for granted and never question them without ever standing alone. These supports which constitute one's personality are illusory which keep human beings oblivious of the essence - the pure consciousness. Howard Dossor explicates thus:

Consciousness is the instrument which man seeks to illuminate the world. It follows that if man operates his consciousness at a reduced level of intentionality, he will see less of the world than is available to him. In a profound sense, the world he sees will be devaluation of the

real, full world. It would be as if he tried to examine the riches of an art gallery lit by nothing more than a candle. (62)

Colin Wilson also talks about the habit circuits through which human beings do most of their living. If these circuits are broken, man's free will is instantly released. Ribot, one of the colleagues of Austin and Reich completely surrenders to the parasites, who have fully taken control of his habit circuits. This surrender gives rise to a new consciousness which works in terms of the parasites and from Ribot's perspective it was a 'no consciousness' at all. Interestingly the word Ribot is a variant of robot, which signifies its resemblance to the mechanistic consciousness. These inhabitants are nothing but man's habitualities which pin him to the execution of day-to-day affairs and strengthen his 'passive intentionality,' thus giving rise to what can be called as the contingent consciousness. Man is a creature of different 'horizons' which constitutes his Lebenswelt - the horizon of all horizons. According to Wilson, human beings normally and 'familiarily' dwell in the sexual, emotional and social horizons (which he names as 'circuits') and seldom pay attention to their higher horizons which are poetical and mystical. Parasites strengthen a person's emotional and social horizons and keeps him oblivious of the poetical and mystical. Wilson believes that human beings like animals live mechanically on reflex and habit. These habits are deep rooted which human beings often overlook. Man remains unaware of his subconscious forces and only in crisis or emergency becomes aware of them. He, functions as a slave to these habits and acts in passivity.

Wilson in the *Parasites* pays attention to one important dimension of human consciousness and that is splitting of the self. When man loses his single centre and breaks into two or more centres he fails to bring 'synthesis' in his experiences. According to Husserl, man sees an object by interpreting the actual contents of his perceptions as contents of some given object. The interpretation is directed to what he intends to see. There is a unified subject behind the interpretation that brings the synthesis. The term 'subject' here simply refers to the centering that every egological life possesses. When a person's interpretations fail, it correspondingly affects his intentionality, which leads to the 'dissolution of the ego' or a splitting of the self. In such a situation, one fails to make a coherent sense of the experiences. Austin equates this personality split to the mind cancer which in Husserlian paradigm is a result of the frustration of the interpretation of the intended object and a failure to experience

a single stream of consciousness at a time. “Man has lost touch with his ‘inner being,’ his instinctive depths, he finds himself trapped in the *world of other people*, who are entirely concerned with their personal little values, with its pettiness and malice and self-seeking.” (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 177). In his natural attitude, man lives what Socrates calls an *unexamined* life. As a result, nearly all of man's potential remains unfulfilled. Husserl considers such a life to be absorbed in the facticity of psychical ego which fails to fulfil human possibility because it remains caught in the attitude of “transcendental blindness” (Fink 130). In this state, Wilson believes human beings don’t have any true values but are characterised by a devaluation of their selves.

Wilson points out that man is a lazy creature. He dislikes inconvenience and has created civilization to escape this inconvenience. Civilisation consoles him and makes him feel secure but it simultaneously strengthens his sleep in the natural attitude. Commenting on the nature of parasites, Austin points out that human beings are ‘conditioned’ by the parasites, who in turn ‘condition’ other human beings, thus creating a culture and civilisation that thrives on negativity and passivity (89). This leads to psychic entropy – a condition when an individual loses its psychic integrity and is carried away by distractions. The novel *The Mind Parasites* recognises man’s predicament as a ‘natural’ being and makes a phenomenological investigation of an essential wrong-headedness that saps his vitalities and renders his consciousness passive.

Wilson’s another science fiction novel *The Philosopher’s Stone*, primarily focuses on a search for ways and methods of expanding consciousness and longevity. But in this search, it does explore different dimensions of consciousness which human beings develop in the triviality of everydayness. It discusses those aspects wherein human beings take their consciousness for granted and their naivety and unreflective attitude becomes a major impediment in achieving the higher states of consciousness. Howard Lester, the protagonist of the novel has an acute recognition of the ‘ordinariness’ of the everyday life which he considers, with a sense of unreality, as an illusion and feels of being trapped in a universe of “blind natural forces” (22). Lester believes that any search for longevity and immortality begins with the recognition and unmasking of the ‘automatism’ which Wilson names as the robot; which tends to reduce the amount of ‘conscious’ activity, thus making the reality shadowy and existence inauthentic. Lester states thus:

Every living creature is a conflict between will and habit, freedom and automatism. Man has reached the highest degree of freedom so far - all other animals are mere machines compared with him – but it is automatism – gradually creeping automatism – that kills him off. The machine wins; he stops willing’ slowly, the batteries run flat and lights dim.... (103)

Human beings carry out their daily routine life almost in a state of semi-consciousness. The ‘robot’ has taken the charge of all their activities and they hardly participate in any conscious action. Wilson uses another image to convey this state – “most human beings live like trains – they just chug forward through life, held on course by the railway lines of convention and habit.” (106) This state of affairs has implications for the quality of consciousness with which human beings engage the world and perceive the objects of their experience. Certainly, it will engender boredom and meaninglessness in life.

Like *The Mind Parasites*, this novel explores what Wilson calls as the ‘Upside-Downness,’ a quality that life assumes in its natural attitude. Earlier in the novel, when at Lyells, Lester realises that the primary issue facing human existence is not difficult. Human beings are too enmeshed in the here and now, like a record needle on a phonograph. Because they only hear a succession of individual notes and are never able to appreciate the music as a whole.

Lester along with his fellow experimenter Sir Henry Littleway try to find out how human consciousness can be freed from the fetters of the trivial and pushed to its heightened states. In this endeavour, Lester reads a book by Aron Marks at Littleway's recommendation, and comes to the realization that man is limited to a narrow range of awareness which preoccupies him most of his life. Space, time, and meaning are the three dimensions in which he is constrained. Insofar as he senses values, they are animal values—hunger, thirst, fatigue, the desire for territory and self-assertion—and he takes life as it comes. These are only instincts, so fundamental that he does not recognize them as values.

Human beings perpetually remain caught in the spatio-temporal world and their orientation is above all social. This tells upon their will and power of imagination

and sense of purpose which constitute the very foundation of man's evolutionary urge. "But the habit, repetition and triviality narrow his horizons. He descends from the mountain top into the valley" (57). Wilson like Husserl lays bare the nature of consciousness which the former believes to have a weblike structure. Ordinarily this web is smaller and broken which consequently fails to make the connections and draw the meanings. Such a state gives rise to 'nausea' or what Wilson terms as the 'fallacy of insignificance'. Lester understands that consciousness typically has strands that don't extend very far, like the web of a little spider. Human beings don't really believe that other periods and locations exist. Though they aren't real, they still remember them. Moreover, human life is so chaotic that this web breaks regularly.

Man's naivety is born out of inattention, which strengthens his habit patterns, thus giving rise to robotic consciousness. Everyday consciousness is a thin searchlight beam which narrows down the perception and makes one slave to the trivial. It is the Heidegger's 'triviality of everydayness' that pins human beings to the immediate and gives birth to what Wilson calls as the 'worm's eye view'. Such a state further leads to self-division, which is the primary cause of narrow states of consciousness. Lester in conversation with Littleway, concludes that since all human problems can be reduced to one word, triviality, the self-division that results from it, is now responsible for the majority of human problems. People are under the control of the demon of the trivial, and all human evils can ultimately be traced back to the limited scope of human consciousness.

Wilson employs several images and symbols to show different dimensions of everyday consciousness or the so called 'normal' modes of perception – the naïve or natural attitude. For the 'naïve man', comfortable in the naïve attitude, the world is just as it seems, static and unchangeable. But naïve man is unaware that he is confusing his own interpretation of the world coloured by his personal attitudes for the objective world itself. These personal attitudes are limited by different unquestioned beliefs and by a failure to recognise the all-pervasive constitutive function of consciousness. Lester's and Littleway's experiments with Honor Weiss reveal how one succumbs to emotional distortion and slips back to naivety. "Weiss prefers to retreat into her warm damp little cocoon of emotion and ordinariness" (105). She has forfeited her will and is unable to take the call of the evolutionary imperative.

Human personality springs out of the preoccupation with the ‘natural standpoint’, the everyday life-world. Husserl claimed that the ego always existed within the confines of its history, with all of its past experiences having vanished but leaving behind inclinations, tendencies, and assimilations of past experiences. This is what constitutes human personality. The complexity of personality is highlighted when someone realizes that the person, he has always taken for granted was actually composed of habit patterns and a layer upon layer of geological responses to past experiences. It feels like the person is half nude to go back to his childhood. However, one also realizes that most people are permanently stunted by the seeds of mistrust of life, which are sown in humans at a very young age.

Wilson contends that man’s desire for different securities engenders an ‘inauthentic existence’. He ordinarily lives in the ‘forgetfulness of being’, (to use the Heidegger’s terminology) and it is only in the face of death that a person remembers the being and realises the significance of life which he otherwise takes for granted. Lester understands that majority of people struggle with an insatiable need for security. They waste their lives chasing financial, sexual, and home security, only to realize that security is negated by death and that they would have been better off saving themselves the misery from the start. Security which is bereft of any challenge, lulls people to sleep and perpetuate the life in the ‘natural attitude’.

Like *Parasites, Stone*, uses the symbols from Lovecraftian mythos to convey the ideas on mind and consciousness. ‘The great old ones’ have been described as the forces that make every possible attempt to thwart any evolution. They “blunt the senses” (180), and “when the brain is dull trivialities assume larger proportions – for example one is more inclined to worry when one wakes up in the middle of the night, because vitality is low” (180). So, these forces induce a sort of sleep or unawareness. These forces are also attributed with the power to infect objects with “psychic poison” (181) which can lead to the death of the person who disturbs them. This death, however is metaphorical and implies the death of vitality and life. Towards the end of the novel, Lester, with a sense of urgency, declares:

It is man’s destiny to be immortal. For five million years, he has managed to side-step the issue. Now the choice has to be made. And to me, it seems absurd. Who could possibly prefer being asleep to being

awake, especially on a spring morning? And yet there are many men who open one eye, scowl at the sunlight, and pull the blankets over their heads. Sleep seems infinitely desirable to the sleeper (267).

Most of the time man remains asleep. His mind still awash with subjectivities which sway either way like a boat on a rough sea. In a way, ordinary consciousness is like a tiny ballast put on this vessel. It provides some active self-control, but not quite enough.

Wilson has mostly employed the themes of sexuality and crime in his fictional works to explore the horizons of human consciousness in its nadir and zenith. His commonplace stories of everyday routine life, which is the “universal ground of all praxis” (Husserl, *The Crisis* 244) gives a glimpse into different dimensions of consciousness which otherwise go unattended. Wilson states that “murder is the meaninglessness of life become dynamic, a dramatization of the hidden futility of life. It is the human act, with all its inherent values, placed upon the microscope slide where it cannot dissolve into the featureless landscape of all other human acts” (Lachman 138). These human acts are significant in so far, they throw light on the form, human consciousness takes in different situations in the life-world.

Another important novel of Colin Wilson that depicts how people remain steeped in the trivialities of life and develop different attitudes which lead to life-failure is *The Glass Age*. Published in 1966, it highlights the rational and empirical dimensions of human consciousness, the narrowness and limitation of which is understood in contrast to the intuitive and mystic sensibility of its protagonist, Damon Reade. The novel is subtitled as ‘an unconventional detective story.’ Its unconventionality lies in the fact that it highlights some existential philosophic ideas in the form of a detective story. Damon Reade, the protagonist of the novel thinks that, in life, everything is mysterious and you never know who the criminal is or what kind of crime has been done. It's like a detective novel. You have to remain vigilant and persistent in connecting the dots because you have an innate sense that something is amiss. In conversation with detective sergeant Lund, Reade says, “while you are engaged in living – dashing about doing things – you never have time to wonder what it is all about Then you look at people and wonder what is wrong with them I can't imagine how people can take life for granted” (Wilson, *The Glass Cage* 11).

This is the way how human consciousness engages the world from its natural standpoint. There is certainly something wrong with man's life, and in phenomenological terms, individual needs to be a 'detective' to penetrate the curtain of everyday appearances so as to arrive at the 'things as they are in themselves' Reade points out to Lund that this 'something wrong with the man' is the 'original sin.' Wilson believes that the man's tendency to fall from the perceptually expanded vision of reality into the narrow perception of everyday experience is like the Christian concept of original sin. Wilson basically hints upon the fact that man is potentially capable of living in the broader horizons of meaning but unfortunately tends to keep dragging in narrower states. In such states, human energy is liable to take any negative direction. Colin Wilson wants the human energies to be directed inwards as he believes that man must "recognise the interior forces he has at his command. Failure to do so will prove disastrous" (Bendau 41). Crime is a negative manifestation of these forces that is when individual's 'indifference threshold' increases beyond certain limits, Wilson's interest in murder is directly related to his concept of indifference threshold. He argues that the people who commit crimes are those whose consciousness has become such a thick sludge that only the most drastic measures may release it and allow it to flow for a spell. However, there is a difference of degree rather than kind between these individuals and rest of the people. Wilson refers to this as a "tax on consciousness," and while most of the people find fewer extreme ways to cope with it, entire humanity is susceptible to the 'indifference threshold.' In his *The Outsider*, Wilson states that most of the men in their everyday life, are tied to the 'thought riddled nature' which enfeebles the will and blocks their power of intuition by blurring the senses and making the perception vague. Reade recognises it and realizes that in lower states of consciousness, the ideas that could be quickly dismissed when one is conscious, cling like leeches, which render the consciousness passive. Husserl says that thoughts and conjectures sullies the consciousness which renders it passive and hinders the pure 'seeing' with which a person apprehends an experience.

After his interaction with Lund, Reade subsequently sets out to meet his friend Urien Lewis at Keswick where he meets Sarah. Lewis who is the guardian of Sarah and Reade to whom Sarah is inclined, both show mixed feelings of protective fondness and sexual attraction towards her. Reade tells Lewis about the detective Lund's visit and the Thames murderer who leaves quotations from Blake at the crime spot and both

discuss at length the psychic condition of such an offender. He points out that 'inhibitions' prevent individuals to express their feelings freely which builds the inner tension and eventually explodes in the act of violence. Later, Sarah gets along Reade to take a stroll outside, down the street and to the lakeside. The scene at the lake suddenly brings intensity in Reade's consciousness and he contemplates that "I don't think most people really enjoy being alive. They spoil it by being trivial and stupid. Remember Wordsworth's phrase about seeing things 'apparelled in celestial light'? How can you see things that way if you're always thinking about yourself?" (Wilson 18). Thinking is a psychological fact which distorts the conscious apprehension of any act. Due to this 'thought riddled nature' human beings often fail to get at the essence of the experience.

In *The Glass Cage* Wilson's portraiture of the Thames murderer highlights the two extreme possibilities of human consciousness. He is not a "lost soul," and the individual who is totally given to "materiality" cannot be a Blake scholar. In *The Outsider*, Wilson points out that an individual may start as an outsider but end as a saint. (308) Human beings embody both the strains of triviality and transcendence. An individual can be quite entrenched in what Husserl calls as the 'psychomundane' or can be the inhabitant of some transcendental sphere which he may achieve, consciously or unconsciously, by choosing the new possible horizons. In Wilson's scheme of things, crime has a metaphorical significance. It is the individual's tendency to linger in psychomundanity. Lewis perceives the Thames murderer as a someone distinct from the ordinary, yet possessing an aura of artistic quality.

Later in the novel, Lewis and Damon enter into an argument over latter's marriage proposal to Sarah. The argumentation between the two reveals the two different approaches to reality which has a bearing on the understanding and the meaning one draws out of life. Reade is reclusive by nature and reflects upon the life-world that surrounds him. He pens books about the contemporary world's crises. Lewis shows no interest in any philosophy or reflection. These things don't matter to him. What matters to him is the burden of practical attitude, wherein he unreflectively drags his life. He calls Reade's approach as "impractical" and "out of touch with life" (27). Reade terms Lewis' approach to life quite contrary to what he understands. Lewis' world is that "of neurosis and boredom and the rest of it" (27). He rejects the world built by people like Joyce, Sartre and Becket, who he thinks, have rendered life

pessimistic and meaningless. Wilson outrightly rejects that “modern man is a stranded fragment of life in an empty universe” (28). Husserl in many of his writings talks about the actions and motivations of persons which he categorises as empirical (inductive) way and intuitive way, however he characterises the latter as authentic and genuine and discourages the former as unable to grasp the objects of experience in their essence. Reade’s way is intuitive which infuses purpose in his actions while as Lewis’ is inductive (associative) which is unable to grasp the essence and hence causes boredom. Lewis acts through impressions and sensations and represents the empiricist cogito. He free associates and lacks any conscious reflections. Phenomenology’s basic tool is intuition which catches the experience in its essence and this is what Reade personifies.

Damon Reade subsequently leaves Keswick for London and finds some lodging with the help of his old friend Kit Butler. Reade discloses the purpose of his London visit to Butler and both start the search of Thames murderer. After visiting several murder sites, Reade could not make anything about the identity of the murderer and the purpose of his crimes. Then, Reade is suddenly struck with the idea that he should try to know the mind of the murderer but fails to do so as he was trying to penetrate an impervious horizon. One of the Wilson’s main contentions is that consciousness is ‘relational’ and one often draws meaning out of an experience by making a sense of the things which are intrinsically connected to each other. He makes the comparison and concludes that the murderer would not have his own ingrained feeling of vital purpose; instead, there must be a sense of exhaustion and disorientation in his state of mind. Reade attempted to bring such a state of mind into focus, but it caused a feeling of spiritual nausea and a sinking feeling.

This exhaustion and disorientation distort the ontological horizon of the murderer which impels him to commit the crime. In Husserlian sense, the murderer is further pushed down to ‘psychomundanity’ which creates a different life-world for him. Colin Wilson examines the subjective dimensions of such an individual, who he thinks acts with an increased ‘indifference threshold.’ Reade reflects that “crime is essentially negative, like meanness or hypochondria or chronic jealousy” and one must realise its “absurdity and irrelevance” (Wilson, *The Glass Cage* 49). And these are the traits with which mankind lives its life ‘unexamined.’ It stifles man’s capacity for freedom and sometimes puts him on the abyss of criminality. Man carries out the

daily activities in a mental fog. He has forgotten to concentrate the forces of instinct and intuition to penetrate the dull, boring surface of his life. In the novel when Mrs. Bryce expresses her inability to understand such forces, Reade points out to Bryce, "Then you probably shielded your thoughts without intending to"(50). Reade clearly hints upon the passive states of her consciousness where the attention moves like a foraging squirrel and she fails to grasp the meaning. Reade's interest in the Thames murderer brought him close to some other people at the party, especially Harley Fisher who got ready to provide Reade the press cuttings related to the murderer. Fisher tells Reade about another visitor, Royston Meredith and the latter's interest in the murders. At Fishers, Reade in conversation with others, declares that the murderer will ultimately commit suicide. He explains that in ordinary states of consciousness human beings are preoccupied with the world around them. They are always gripped by its problems. One maintains sanity by living in this little narrow consciousness that seems limited by the outside world. Man's ordinary perceptions which are shaped by matters like social conventions and emotional habits keep him oblivious of his inner spaces. Ordinarily it is only through drugs or drink that an individual cuts off the outside world and confront his inner spaces and Wilson thinks that these spaces like a jungle are filled with memories and other strange alien things which frighten us. Murderer too, according to Wilson, confronts this jungle before committing the murder and consequently he commits suicide.

Reade's sexual encounter with Sheila pushes the story further and Reade suffers from post-coital sadness, acutely realising the instinctive wisdom and sympathy of Sheila who enjoys sex as a child enjoys ice-cream. This throws light on the casualness sex has gained in the modern world. Ordinarily it is only in sexual experience that one gets a glimpse of the intentional consciousness but man has taken it for granted too. Wilson in one of his seminal works makes a significant remark:

But that, of course, only underlines the basic problem: that, after coitus, 'man becomes sad', because he quickly returns to his unconcentrated and defocused state. In sexual excitement, it is as if the spirit itself becomes erect, and becomes capable of penetrating the meaning of life. Normal consciousness is limp and flaccid; its attitude towards reality is defensive. This is what Sartre called 'contingency', that feeling of being at the mercy of chance. And this is the problem that, in *The*

Outsider, I had called ‘original sin’. ... endless sexual encounters are an attempt to escape his sense of contingency. (Wilson, *The Misfits* 44)

Wilson clearly shows the inadequacy of the rational and empirical consciousness in understanding the personality of the Thames murderer. “Concentrating on minute particulars and failing to see the wood for the trees” (60). Reaching to the essence of phenomena is only possible through intuition. The Thames murderer must be a divided self, a victim of self-conflict. Majority of the people swing between these modes of consciousness though they don’t go to the extreme of committing murders. Colin Wilson employs an analogy to clarify such a situation. According to him, everyman is a Jekyll and Hyde; a Jekyll of ‘passive consciousness’ a Hyde of ‘intentionality.’ (Wilson, *The New Existentialism* 102). Luckily, the ‘Jekyll’ self has less access to man’s subconscious energy which would otherwise prove disastrous. Man is especially prone to pessimism because of the delusions of passive consciousness, which means that he can ‘intentionally’ colour his observations negatively. In the novel, the murderer is deluded to indulge in a negative act, which is the worst degree of ‘life-devaluation.’ The murderer misdirects his energies and easily sinks into passivity in which the world seems deprived of meaning. Consciousness cannot evolve through murder, in fact, it devolves.

Damon Reade along with his friend Kit Butler make frantic searches for the man named Orville Sundheim whose book ‘William Blake, Witness to the Truth’ made him a prime suspect of Thames murders. After making prolonged efforts, searching clubs and through telephone directories, Reade succeeds in tracing the son of Orville Sundheim and getting an appointment to meet him at the latter’s residence, at Green Park. On their conversation on William Blake and his ‘visions’, Reade points out that generally, people are victims of their feelings, which they ordinarily overcome by drink, entertainment and sexual imagination. Contrarily, mystics turn their minds in the right direction, which enable them to control their feelings and prevent their vitality from escaping. In passive states, human beings tend to slip to easy pleasures which reduce their vitality and cause more sinking into passivity. Gradually, one’s perceptions get accordingly coloured and a particular sense of the reality is developed. Towards the end of the novel, Reade points out that “Sundheim was sinking back into the state of unreality from which only violence was an escape. It was necessary to

arouse his interest again, to keep him from the vacuum that lay so close to his sense of meaning” (120)

Human beings never look back to maintain the vitality in their consciousness. Husserl believed that people are always subject to their natural attitudes. The emergence of the post-human era's social media, internet, and artificial intelligence have all contributed to the entrenchment of this attitude in the modern day. As a result, humans have become extraordinarily automated, reinforcing the Husserlian natural attitude. Colin Wilson's comparison of this consciousness to the Christian idea of original sin—which consistently erodes man's vitality—seems appropriate.

Metaphorically speaking, Reade's whole endeavour was to recognise or 'detect' Sundheim who symbolises the passive state of consciousness which is fraught with man's indulgence in food and sex. Wilson's description of George Sundheim is worth noting:

Sundheim glanced up for a moment and grinned almost sheepishly. Then he returned to the beef on his plate and began cutting it with powerful short jerks of his knife, then shoveled it into his mouth two slices at a time. As he came toward the end of the champagne, he began to chew more slowly, like a sated animal. Veins stood out across his forehead, and a drop of sweat trickled down from the hairline. He thrust the last of the bread into his mouth and washed it down with champagne. (94)

In Wilsonian psychology, it has been observed, that this energy related to food and sex, is misdirected. This is quite typical of man's natural attitude. Reade continues and points out that, “Sundheim strikes him as man with a broken mainspring. He will tick when you shake him, but otherwise he stops” (Wilson, *The Glass Cage* 23). He as an automaton works on stimuli-response mechanism and has no real consciousness of his own. To get rid of this state, man like the snake in the novel, needs to cast off his slough of passivity to evolve into a new consciousness. The 'glass cage' itself is a symbol of one's imprisonment in the natural attitude which fetters human consciousness.

Necessary Doubt, which has been described as “a phenomenological thriller” (Stanley 31), further throws light on those ordinary states of consciousness which imprison man in habituality and makes life mechanical. It highlights those aspects

which limits human consciousness and also talks about the ways, how these limits can be obliterated. Karl Zweig and his student Gustav Neuman, the two main characters of the novel, in their own way, experiment to know the nature of consciousness. Neuman once relates a story to Zweig about how his father put a kettle on to make coffee, but the gas was so low that it took an hour to boil. And his father concluded that his brain is like that kettle which wouldn't boil. And Neuman realises in a flash: "what is wrong with all human consciousness. The pressure is so low that it never boils. We live at half pressure. We are all psychologically undernourished because the pressure of consciousness is so low" (230). In this state of low-pressure consciousness, which characterizes the natural standpoint, "the persistent naturalistic distortions and the very object-positingthetic structure of the consciousness" (Moran 78) limits the consciousness and hinders a proper grasping of the experience at hand.

The novel talks about the 'limitation' of consciousness, that one experiences in the world. Zweig in his investigations of Gustav's articles in *Monatschrift*, once leafs through a Heideggerian commentary and is astonished to know that The world as it is experienced by man is essentially one of limitation. It strikes Zweig that the idea resembles with Gustav's idea that a suicider views life as a prison and commits the deed as a protest against limitations. Later, he concludes to Natasha that, "I feel as if I am about to see something important . . . but I cannot explain what. It is to do with the idea of limitation. The natural standpoint . . ." (182). David Cerbone in his *Understanding Phenomenology*, points out that the charge of naivete only indicates a limitation, on the part of the natural attitude, which indicates that there are questions that are in principle beyond its reach. (17) Within this attitude it is not possible to understand the self in its essence.

Wilson considers personality a prison which is a product of different habits and attitudes that one develops over a period of time. Man gets so much identified with it that he never thinks of the self beyond it. He takes things for granted and ignores the essences. It gradually dawns on Neuman that men construct their personalities in the same way that they build houses in order to shield themselves from the outside world. However, they are compelled to dwell there after they have constructed a house. They end up as its prisoners. And most individuals build the house too rapidly because they are so eager to hide behind their four walls. And most

of the people who appear to be at ease and confident in the world detest their homes—that is, the identities they had created for themselves.

According to Wilson, man initially rations his consciousness to attend to the trivialities of the present. He creates languages and symbols and all other apparatus of civilization, but it ultimately leads to life-failure. Neuman expresses it thus:

The sheer complexity of the apparatus we create is beginning to overwhelm us. And yet we cannot break the habit of living in the present, limiting the consciousness. It suddenly seemed to me that my father's discovery would solve my own problem. For I was aware that my own habits prevented me from achieving the vision I wanted' (237)

To linger in these habitualities is what Wilson calls as the original sin – to drift unreflectively and purposelessly in the naivety.

Wilson's *Sorme trilogy* revolves round the character of Gerard Sorme, whose experiences of both the subjective world and the physical world gives valuable insights into the nature of consciousness. The novels, *Ritual in the Dark*, *Man without a Shadow* and *God of the Labyrinth* constitute this trilogy. In these novels, Wilson predominantly deals with the themes of sexuality, and crime. Wilson's interest in criminal mind is to convey the fact of man's frustrated energies which do not always end in the extreme acts of criminality but tells upon the quality of one's consciousness. According to Wilson, murder is a "gesture of revolt" *against reality* — a reality, that the murderer had completely lost touch with". (Moore 6) Wilson's treatment of crime reveals that when human beings are depressed, they feel as though they have a tenuous grasp on reality. If they let themselves go much lower, they begin to see the world through a worm's eye perspective, which for the murderer also encompasses the reality of other people. All of a sudden, the world appears pointless and uninspired to them, yet underneath it all, a grudge grows and yearns for a cathartic release. However, when a person's hold on reality weakens, so do his moral judgments; as a result, these so-called "cathartic expressions" turn false and destructive. Criminals and murderers have fallen down this hole and are trapped in an increasingly surreal loop where reality isn't what it seems.

Human sexuality in its perversions and fetishes is likewise a distortion of the basic innocence and essence of sex. It is the result of man's living in the states of low-

pressure consciousness or what Wilson calls as the worms-eye-view perception. Such a perception sinks people more into passivity which is typical of the lives lived in the natural attitude. Wilson's treatment of crime and sexuality reflects two extremities of consciousness which parallels the Husserlian notions of natural attitude and the transcendental. The mystic and the criminal—the man whose sense of the goodness and worthiness of life is constant and fully conscious, and the man whose self-pity and lack of self-belief have driven him to express his vitality in the most negative way he can find—are the two extremes we encounter in these novels.

The novels explore the different experiences and attitudes that man assumes in his narrower states of consciousness, thus unmasking man's fate in the 'natural attitude'. Wilson notes that he felt like a pathologist dealing with terrible material and seeing it detachedly since it was so intense and horrible. In a way, it was akin to alchemy, transforming the darkest aspects of human psychology into affirmative consciousness rather than self-destructive criminality. In this connection, Steve Taylor states:

What we think of as our 'optimum' state of being is in fact a near pathological state of discord, disconnection and alienation from reality. Our normal consciousness is so narrow and limited that we're cut off from the essential wonder and meaning of the world, and from the well-springs of optimism and vitality within our own being. As a result, we're trapped in a dangerous subjectivity, suffering from a sense of unreality and inner frustration. (In one of his later major works, *A Criminal History of Mankind*, Wilson describes how this pathological psyche gives rise to crime and violence, and is responsible for the constant conflict and discord which has filled the last few thousand years of human history.) (82)

Such a psyche breeds negative attitudes of crime and violence and become the victims of a form of biophobia which is a negation of the active force of life. Nietzsche calls it the 'denial of life.' *Ritual* seeks answer to the basic existential question – how one should live? In this search, it analyzes the physical, intellectual and emotional dimensions of human being. In the novel the characters of Austin, Sorme and Glasp

represent these dimensions respectively. Austin and Glasp get carried away and they react to their emotions, while as Gerard's attitude is not 'natural' but phenomenological' who analyses his emotions and grasps the essences. Dossor points out that "Sorme is engaged in an intelligent search for an understanding of the human condition rather than the immediate satisfaction of his own needs" (256). The confrontation and interaction of these characters gives an understanding of the different phenomena of human mind and consciousness. *Ritual* is a compelling philosophical thriller that delves deep into philosophical issues of existence, knowing, consciousness, meaning, and purpose. It concerns with the phenomena of murder and sexuality and their psychological and philosophical implications. It talks about as how the indifference threshold of a murderer increases to the level where he is impelled to commit the crime. The complexity of sexual impulse as a major theme in the novel, holds much significance, especially its overwhelmingness in the contemporary times. Regarding *Ritual*, Clifford P. Bendau points out that, "as evidenced by the title the story deals with the mythic appeal of both sex and violence, and lends to a questioning of both human actions and motives" (Bendau 33). The misery of humanity is dramatized in the *Ritual*, which focus on the criminal and degenerate methods in which people have attempted to adapt to life energies they could sense but were unable to use creatively.

Wilson describes his protagonist, Gerard Sorme, as the 'Simple Simon,' who wanders around London in his aimlessness. This shows his initial attitude to life which is naïve and unreflective. Sorme at the threshold of a higher form of life has a recognition of everyday life as full of boredom and meaninglessness. "He declares that his experience is *bitty*. We live more or less in the present. Our experience is all in bits" (Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* 54). Human beings impose patterns on life which are basically false. They hide the meaninglessness by these forms and patterns and live a false life. During one of his frequent conversations with Father Carruthers, he expresses this recognition more acutely and points out that "sometimes I wake up in the night with a sort of forboding. Then I feel arbitrary. I feel somehow absurd. I feel, who am I? and what am I doing here? I feel we take life too much for granted. We take our own existences for granted. But perhaps it's not natural to exist." (67) Throughout the novel, Sorme experiences sudden moments of an entrapment of the existence – the 'vastations'. An entrenchment in the trivial that he is unable to get rid

of. Life stared at him like a blank wall. He had an innate desire to break through the wall and establish his reality outside of it, but he was also terrified when he realized he was stuck in existence and couldn't escape it. Later, Sorme analyzes this experience and draws two distinctions: Wilson's own worldview's typical polarities, which are the sense of imprisonment that characterizes the vastation and the sense of unlimitedness to which he knows that he strives. Gerard is at his low indifference threshold and it is clear that Wilson is preparing him for some important psycho-philosophical insights.

Sorme's interaction with Nunne gives him some significant insights into nature of existence. In the beginning he raises questions about ordinary existences: "Why the time trap? Why the enclosure? Invisible bonds, non-existent bonds, bonds that cannot be broken because they are non-existent. Human beings like blinkered horses" (83) Sorme clearly hints upon the state of natural attitude which Husserl describes as a world with 'blinkers on' and 'naïve.' Wilson describes this recognition as the basic feature of outsider consciousness, the first step to know the nature of consciousness.

At Balalaika club, Sorme's conversation with Austin highlights how man, lives in his ordinary states of consciousness. Sorme tells Austin that before meeting him, he used "to feel purposeless and live a day-to-day life" (Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* 198). "I got to the stage of living like an animal just eating and sleeping and feeling a contempt of myself cover me like soot.... I think I'd just forgotten to live. I let myself slip into a state of sloppiness and boredom, that's all" (199). Sorme plunges into a deep sickness at the club and insisted to be alone. When his sickness subsides, he has some glimpse of the reality, which he thinks would survive the death too. He thought of Austin as "too involved... will never be free... and nobody is really himself" (203). Sorme's experience highlights the unreality of the life man ordinarily lives, the unconnectedness to his own centre or the self and the uncertainty of the everyday existence.

Human beings live in distractions and engage in thousand and one things to avoid looking into themselves. They take themselves for granted. They remain oblivious of the reality of the unreality in which they live because it is secure and comfortable. In the contemporary world, this comfort has brought the curse of lukewarm consciousness where man fails to summon his energies to achieve any active state of consciousness. Wilson argues that within every man is chaos. This is demonstrated by a girl Gerard once knew who worried about other people's issues in

order to be happy, as well as by Gertrude's obsession with social work and persuasion, which causes her to live in a false reality.

Wilson's idea of unreality is the reflection of life in the 'natural standpoint', which keeps one at the periphery, away from the centre or reality. Gerard points out that "people are made of marshmallow. Very few people are real inside. They need people and distractions as a cripple need crutches." (357) Gerard's interest in Austin is a sentimental response to a romantic life. Gerard later realizes that Austin too leans on something which is unreal. Human beings live in the world of illusions which turns their life as a non-existence. Such an existence made Gerard to feel like an insect. Glasp who was listening patiently to Gerard, realises that, he needs other people to escape his inner world and avoid to reflect on 'who he is'? Christine is also beneficial to him since she challenges him to consider other people. She helps him realize that thousands of people are living in extreme agony and will never have the opportunity to experience the things Gerard is experiencing. They don't feel like insects, nor do they feel like gods or giants. These are just regular men and women that suffer or are bored for the most part of their life.

Towards the end of the novel, the conversation of Gerard with Gertrude Quincey provides further insights into the phenomenon of murder and sexuality. Gerard asserts that when a killer's self-contempt, boredom and misery reaches to a degree where the appetite for freedom from them overpowers him, he sees no option but to kill. Same thing happens with a sexual neurotic, who seeks freedom in sexual fantasies but can't find them enough until he kills a woman and attains freedom. According to Wilson all these acts have a purpose to escape from the personality, which has been developed on self-contempt, the exhaustion and pettiness. Unlike poets and mystics, whose expression is positive, such people seek freedom in negative ways to escape the trivialities of life. Sorme justifies Austin's behaviour as "creative energy gone awry" (Bendau 33). Gertrude, however, fails to understand these subtle distinctions because her naivety fails to comprehend it. "She knows only categories and chapters from the Book of Kings. She can never know, real, good or evil" (386). It is "a woman's world, a world of people" who live at surface in a taken for granted attitude. This also throws light on the fact that dogmatic religion is very much a part of the natural standpoint which is unable to access the reality.

Sorme deeply analyses the attitude of different people around him and his attitude to life gradually changes. *Ritual* clearly highlights the difference between a

life lived unconsciously, at the mercy of the creative energies available to everybody, and the one that can be lived consciously to discover the purpose of life.

Man Without a Shadow which apparently sounds pornographic and obscene, is a fictionalised version of Wilson's analysis of the sexual impulse, which is an examination of sex as a component of human experience. The novel which is in the form of diary has events which are not only described but also lived by the narrator. In this regard, Gary Lachman points out that "in *Man Without a Shadow* and its sequel, *The God of the Labyrinth*, the last of the Sorme trilogy, Wilson puts into action, as it were, the phenomenological insights spelled out in *Origins of the Sexual Impulse*." Timothy Leary in his introduction to the novel, states that "It's a psych-probe satire that gives you insights into the human realities of a specific culture from the down-and-dirties of daily life to the up and-atom frontiers of science-philosophy" (6). It is worth noting, however, that these realities are not 'specific' but have a general significance as the insights pertain to the universal human nature.

Wilson, who declares himself as a hedgehog – saying one single thing in different ways, analyses human sexuality in two main perspectives, one, the way human beings ordinarily treat it and act under its sway and the second how sexual impulse can lead a person to other modes of consciousness. With human sexuality as the main focus, Wilson shows his curiosity to understand the flux of human subjectivity in the so-called normal states of consciousness. In *Shadow*, Sorme seeks an understanding of his existential reality by examining his life in different moods and states, he lives in the 'here and now.' He wants to live a life which is richer in all its dimensions and depths. He compares his attention to a phonograph needle which is limited to a small area of the here and now. He feels everything overly intrusive. When he opens his eyes, he realizes too late that what he was looking at was pushing him backward and encroaching on his consciousness.

Wilson understands that sexuality consumes a considerable part of human life. It overwhelms people who get carried away by its sheer force. Nothing grips human mind so strongly as sex. It works like a magic and human imagination remains preoccupied with it. Man's understanding of it is also an understanding from a natural standpoint which has implications for the quality of his consciousness with which he lives his life. Regarding sex, Wilson's basic contention is that the closest thing that humans have ever experienced to magic or the supernatural is the sexual power. It

merits ongoing, in-depth research. For the philosopher, there is no study that's so profitable. He may observe the universe's purpose in operation in sex force.

In their ordinary states of consciousness, human beings take their sexual urge for granted. They flow with its current unquestionably. Wilson believes that sex is such a powerful drive which can lead to perversions and can easily drive a man to murder and rape. This power is lurking beneath and man's casual approach to it has turned him into some sort of a machine. Sorme realises this truth and says that, "I suppose we take sex too casually. But sex is an act of magic, an incantation of the unseen, the strangely intelligent and patient forces of evolution" (73). Sorme muses that the rising number of sex crimes is not surprising given that present culture is sitting on a sexual powder keg. Man's unawareness of these powers, time and again goads him to different stupidities and he feels cheated. Wilson believes that in order to fully understand this state of humanity, one must understand both the act and the actuality of sex. Man's sexual urge involves both his physical being and mental being which undergo through a turmoil. This turmoil leads to a discharge and a shift of the consciousness to another dimension. Normally people don't pay attention to this dimension and the pleasure element drifts them till the experience ends in a relaxation. Promiscuity seems to be an attempt to follow this pleasure element with a hidden desire to know the reality. Man has a tendency to live superficially, at surface. He doesn't plunge deep into his experiences and dig into their essences. Sexual experience which is one of the significant human experiences has also met the same fate. This is well conveyed by Howard Dossor thus:

The sexual tragedy of our age is that humanity has at its disposal a powerful instrument of self-projection which is used as a toy. Faced with the complexity of contemporary life and overwhelmed by a sense of incapacity in its midst, humanity uses its sexuality as a consolation. This is what Eliot understood when he described life as simply 'life, copulation and death'. We often copulate with an overwhelming sense of boredom (174).

For mankind sex has become a disturbing experience, because men and women meaninglessly use the sexual act to compensate for the 'triviality of everydayness.' They take its essence for granted and every time this experience slips away from their grasp.

Sorme's sexual encounters with Carlotta and Diana and Cunningham's sexual/magical experiments gives him further insights into the phenomenon of sex. Sorme understands that it is the human imagination which imparts sexual meaning to a given object. One needs to observe the inner experience and its connection to the release of sexual energy i.e., one's sexual response is not to the object outside but what is immanent to the consciousness. In ordinary state of affairs, one's focus remains without on the object, and its mechanism, which is meaning constituting and within, is neglected. Sorme realizes the same thing when he says that it is trick played by the Life Force, which time and again takes human beings into confidence and they feel cheated. "Now I try again to remember how the conjurer performed the trick. Because it *was* a trick" (47). Sorme understands that, sex is a drive of which mankind knows nothing. Its mechanism still eludes and every time man is carried away by its sheer force.

Wilson contends that all his work is an endeavour "to *see* the value of life" (66). People live within their limited horizons and "easily relapse into a state of sullenness". They "*assign a fixed value to life,*" (67) and get convinced that this is the only possibility of life. This tantamounts to a devaluation of life which engenders an enfeeblement of will and imagination which consequently leads to life-failure. This negates any possibility of evolution or other states of being. According to Husserl, this is man's natural attitude to life – accepting and living life as it is given, with all the presupposed convictions and values. Wilson says that "Natural Life," "taking life as it comes," is death (67). Sorme penetratingly analyzes this human predicament, he states thus:

These people in the street all take life as it comes. Tonight, they feel drunk and happy; in two days' time, they might be completely miserable; but they never try to connect the two states, and ask which was the "right" reaction to life, or how far either of them is right. They crystallize their conclusions about life in a few convenient rules of thumb—a stitch in time saves nine, never say die, no use crying over I spilt milk, and so on. They live from minute to minute, learning almost nothing (69).

Wilson laments that man takes his consciousness for granted and tends to get steeped in worldly preoccupations. He indulges in different stupidities like respect, public opinion etc. which turn him into moron. The different conditionings do not allow him to know the reality and he lingers in naivety, implicating almost every dimension of his existence. Husserl says this “practical living is naïve. It is immersion in the already-given world, whether it be experiencing or thinking or valuing or acting.” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 152) Man is yet to recognise his existential reality and the title of the novel hints upon the same fact. Tredell rightly points out that, “Wilson’s novel employs the idea of lacking a shadow or reflection as a metaphor for an absence of existential substance, a condition which Sorme tries to counteract by pursuing intenser states of consciousness; sex is one of his means of pursuit” (Tredell Ch. 5). Sorme's discussions with Oliver Glasp and Caradoc Cunningham deepen the understanding of these states of consciousness. According to Sorme, “the diffuseness of human consciousness” (93) is the true reason why man’s goals and values are neither absolute nor consistent. Each sexual experience is an opportunity to know the reality or “find our bearings” (94) but the attitude with which human beings confront their existence leaves almost no chance to reach to its meaning and purpose. *Shadow* reveals that every orgasm provides a strong impression that life has meaning and purpose, life eludes and man never discovers its meaning and purpose. Every piece of art, poetry, or symphony ever composed is an attempt to stop life from passing you by. Even with millions of books in the globe, human beings still don't know as much as the early humans about what life is all about. Sorme finds Cunningham enigmatic and is astonished by his insight. Cunningham avers:

That we take all our moods and feelings for granted, as something “sent to us.” In fact, we seem to assume that they *are* us. We are passive. We wake up feeling gloomy; we are contented to wait until Fate sends events to cheer us up. The desire for life is stimulated by a crisis, but subsides when the crisis is overcome, *and we are content to let it subside*. And yet we are always more detached from our feelings than we realize; otherwise, how could you feel “happy to feel happy,” or even feel “happy to feel sad”? (99)

Sorme begins to show eagerness and develops interest in Cunningham to know from him the secrets of human mind and consciousness. Initially, Sorme describes Cunningham as a man who has no spiritual perception but later thinks whether Cunningham can show him the way towards a state of higher consciousness. Sorme eventually rejects Cunningham's magic and points out that human consciousness is feeble and the things like sexual orgasm, alcohol and drugs can momentarily raise its pressure otherwise human beings are incredibly unstable and inconsistent. Sorme states that "all this feebleness is the outcome of our fluid consciousness, which is too passive. It merely photographs things, and loses the photographs almost as quickly as it takes them. The consciousness never seems strong enough to see meanings in things; all it can do is just observe blankly." (124)

Sorme declares that though Cunningham displays a positive approach to life, he still lingers in trivialities – a search for power and fame in the objective world out there. Sorme's preoccupation is subjective and he is in search of the solution for the problem. Sorme is completely and terribly sick of his consciousness. He feels limited and incapable to perceive or consider anything other than the here and now.

Sorme believes that solution to these narrower states of consciousness lies in the mystery of sexual orgasm, which provides one a glimpse into a higher order of being. Religion and civilization which should have facilitated man to realize his potential and get rid of these states, contrarily, pushed him more into them. Religion which was reduced to dogma and civilization, gave rise to a habit bound existence and turned man into an automaton. Sorme laments over this human condition and his broodings reveal that human beings have been imprisoned in a massive bunker, where there has been enough difficulty to keep them up at night and enough entertainment to pass the time, but not enough motivation to keep them from being worthless and slothful. Religions were formed to explain the mystery of man to himself, but they perished when the ignorance and prejudice that kept them alive was eradicated. Civilizations have grown out of the human need for self-assertion and have crumbled when that need wore out. However, man still exists essentially in a meaningless universe, lacking a guidance other than a collection of instincts that civilization has diluted.

Wilson's *God of the Labyrinth* in the fashion of *Shadow* further explores and discusses the sexual impulse. In his introduction to the *God*, Gary Lachman observes

that “Wilson’s fascination with sex is never aimed at the act itself. Sex, for Wilson, is important because of what it can tell us about his other lifelong obsession: consciousness” (9). Most of the Wilson’s novels ramble and have a fragmentary structure but the sheer force of his ideas and the quest for some larger than life individual, which mostly acts as a symbol, pushes the story forward.

God, likewise begins with a search for Esmond Donlley – an alternate state of consciousness which once in a while, possesses Sorme and throws him into a vision. In the beginning of the novel Wilson strikes a comparison between human subjectivity and the objective world outside. Sorme says that the “everyday world carries us along like a stream and where we are no better than a piece of driftwood” (18). Ordinarily there exists a gap between mind and reality. This gap is widened by the boredom and fatigue which characterizes a person’s ordinary states of consciousness and that results in the slackening of the will and inhibition of imagination. Sartre calls this state as “nausea.” Sorme’s sexual experiences with Helga and her subsequent death bring him this realization and he concludes:

Human beings are like car tyres; to get the best results, you need to keep them inflated. If your tyre is flat, and you drive it a couple of miles, you’ve destroyed it. The same when the will is flat. I’ve been allowing my will to get steadily flatter over the past week or so, and wondering why I get so exhausted. (28)

Wilson, here makes the point that in everyday states of consciousness human beings are bereft of any sense of reality. Consciousness is not supposed to perceive meaning; it perceives objects. Meaning is created by the power of will or effort or what Husserl calls the intentionality and sex energy inflates human will, makes a person’s consciousness intentional and momentarily gives him a glimpse into the reality and meaning. Otherwise with a passive intentionality, which is ingrained in man’s mode of perception of natural attitude, fails him to draw meaning out of his experiences and his habit-bound existence undermines this sense of reality. Husserl points out that such an existence, in its natural order of space and time is always ‘out there,’ wherein one looks upon an object from the natural standpoint. Human beings experience it as it appears to them without making any intentional effort to reach its “eidos” Sorme states thus:

This easily becomes a habit: grasping things without their meaning. It becomes difficult to re-connect your upper levels with your instincts and feelings. The horse refuses to be harnessed to the cart, as it were. You go around merely 'seeing' things without their meanings. And you say: 'The world is meaningless.' (36)

Like other experiences, in naivety, sexual experience seems to slip through the fingers like fairy gold. Failure to know its essence leads to perversions and a pursuit to an ever-receding goal. Sorme learns the same thing when he goes through the journal of Esmond Donlley that "human beings are trapped in a labyrinth, whose god is a supreme confidence trickster." (153). In, *God*, Sorme in search of Esmond follows this labyrinth and tries to demystify human sexuality with its bizarre sexual orgies and sect of phoenix.

The Black Room, an espionage story at surface, has a real premise to put forth Wilson's philosophical ideas of mind and consciousness in a fictionalised form. Wilson uses black room as a philosophical symbol for discipline and an urgency to pay attention to one's inner world, and in this exercise, he does throw some light on the outer, which consumes most of man's energies and keeps him overwhelmingly preoccupied. Kit Butler, the protagonist of the novel states:

All men are stuck in a kind of fog. They're surrounded by a wall of fog. They think this is perfectly normal, but it is not. It means that because they can't see much beyond their little situation, they tend to vegetate. They need some immediate stimulus to keep them alert. This is so fundamental in human nature that you might call as original sin. It is a kind of disease we all suffer from. (Wilson, *The Black Room* 19)

This realisation comes to Kit after the black room experiment and it becomes clear to him that the conditionings of the 'natural standpoint' make human beings complacent and puts them in a half-awake state. Wilson uses different ideas and images to show how man drifts in the natural attitude and how only in a crisis situation one is shaken out of this complacency. These situations which can become the possible horizons of human consciousness slip away from man's grip and he lingers in boredom and

absurdity. Man is prone to forgetting because the human body is so weak and floppy. Majority of men are little more than leaves on a stream; they drift along, hoping for the best, rather than being self-controlled, self-driven animals. That is what Wilson means when he says that men are like grandfather clocks that are wound by watchsprings.

Through the experience of Kit Butler, who literally and symbolically lives in a narrowed state of consciousness, the novel depicts that ordinarily, boredom and tiredness are the common features of man's everyday life. But this tiredness is false. "The fatigue is a kind of confidence trick" (70) which pins a person to triviality and states of passive consciousness. Wilson conveys this state in another image when he says, "My consciousness is usually narrow, muffled, limited, like playing a piano with your feet on the damper pedal" (71). The black room is an experiment to bring oneself in direct confrontation to these states which one otherwise takes for granted. It erodes a person's identity and he becomes demoralised and passive. Intelligent people face this situation in everyday life. Kit recognises that human mind is a dodgem at the fair, constantly racing in different directions. Most individuals give up attempting to control their ideas because they become so tired of it and let their thoughts do what they want. And this is awful in the black room.

Most of the people avoid to move inward. They get frightened by the uncontrollable rush of thoughts and prefer to drift in the 'natural attitude' which saves their effort to develop a disciplined subjectivity. Wilson reinforces the idea (of passive consciousness) by another image, when Kit asks, "have you ever seen small crystals of glass when the windscreen of a car is shattered? Most human beings are like that inside – full of disconnected crystals, different feelings, thoughts, impulses" (80). This means that human personalities are disintegrated and have no unity inside. Black room is a device to bring the realisation that there is something fundamentally wrong with human consciousness. "Consciousness is like a leaky bucket. And in the black room, it begins to leak so badly that it loses all compression" (110). And it is man's moods of boredom and blankness that causes the leakage. These moods are an impediment in the evolutionary imperative of man as they stuck him to the present. Wilson labels man as "an evolutionary error" (131). Wilson says that it causes human will to slacken and "we don't live; we drift" (170). People create a wall around their consciousness by their daily activities, which prevents them from finding any calm or time for reflection. This decreases the likelihood that consciousness will evolve. An existence

like this weakens the sense of purpose and meaning and prevents one from accessing what Wilson calls as the "unknown modes of being."

In his *Introduction to the New Existentialism*, Wilson states that "The world itself is a gigantic 'dark room' that proves that human beings are too dependent on physical stimuli" (Wilson 125). Man is stuck in the big black room of this world where his consciousness acts mechanically at the mercy of external stimuli. If this stimulus disappears, he becomes blank and possesses nothing substantial what one may call as consciousness. He mostly lives in what Heidegger calls as the 'forgetfulness of existence' and takes his consciousness for granted. Man becomes so bogged down by the actualities of just surviving day by day that he forgets to enjoy the knowledge and feeling of being alive in the world. Gary Lachman points out that "The black room shows the limitations of consciousness in high relief. But these limitations, Wilson argues, are really habits we have developed..." (Lachman 207).

Contemporary world takes more interest in personality development in order to make it a sellable commodity in the marketplace. It focuses more on its utilitarian dimension but all this happens at the cost of the forfeiture of one's essential being. Wilson's novel *The Personality Surgeon* makes a phenomenological analysis of the cult of personality which is fraught with myriad ills that act as the major impediments in man's journey to self-actualization.

Personality is a product of 'natural attitude' and has its own limits which betray the 'essence'. It is the outer self, the part that has learned to cope with other people and with the world. It reacts mechanically to events and circumstances. Charles Peruzzi the protagonist and psychotherapist in the novel, engages himself in "helping people to come out of their narrowness and trivial personal limitations and bring them the glimpse of that immense richness that lay out there in that world beyond the immediacy of here-and-now" (Wilson, *The Personality Surgeon* 213). Charles analyzes different states of emotion and thought which have a bearing on the type of personality and subsequently moulds them to the desired ones. Wilson implicitly refutes many of the ideas of earlier psychologies and puts forth his own ideas of phenomenological psychology by exploring human personality in its different dimensions. Being a social animal, a human personality knows itself through the interaction with other personalities which creates its self-image. Every experience gets filtered through this personality and in the process, reality is stained by the mediocrity of everyday existence. Wilson contends that ordinarily, man lives with a pseudo self-

image. He needs a mirror to find out his existential reality – an image which would be true to his self. Normally personality takes over people and cages them into a fixed identity. This identity is put into a person's head by other people which he takes for granted and never questions. Certain ideas and emotions freeze a person and he gets trapped in them. Gabriel Marcel terms this situation as 'crispation'-. a tensed, encrusted shape in life, as if everyone secretes a kind of shell which gradually hardens and imprisons them. Wilson contends that such a mode of life gives birth to a false personality. "And most people spend their lives being dominated by this false personality; overreacting to problems, feeling upset or angry or vulnerable when it is quite unnecessary" (Wilson 194). It gives birth to what Heidegger calls as an 'inauthentic existence,' where human beings live with all their falsifications and deceptions. So, the novel unmasks the different appearances with which human beings live their lives and analyzes them in their different manifestations. Ordinarily, human beings forget the reality of their true self and get lost in the appearances which are endless, arbitrary and ephemeral. In the ordinary states of natural attitude, human beings remain the victims of the different emotions like anger, envy, timidity and other passive states. Sometimes this passivity can push down the individual to certain disordered states where mind fails to draw the meanings adequately. Dossor points out that although schizophrenia and neurosis are serious illnesses, its milder forms occur every day to almost everybody. (110) This idea is corroborated by Charles Bernard who argues that "as with all clinical cases of anxiety disorders, depression can be seen as an extreme type of natural attitude." (31) Charles confronts such personalities in the novel and captures their moods in facial expressions and gestures and brings them a recognition of their disordered personalities. Charles sums up this in the following words:

It now seemed self-evident that the trouble with most human beings is a kind of modesty, a conviction of their own helplessness, and that this in turn is due to a failure to grasp their own potential. They feel passive, as if they were victims of fate or circumstance. This attitude means that they make no real attempt to control their lives, it is rather as if a driver insisted on sitting in the passenger seat and trying to control the car from there. Obviously, it would be ten times as difficult as sitting

behind the wheel. In most human beings, self is displaced, sitting in the passenger seat instead of the driver's seat (257)

This depicts a state where man seems to be a mechanical being who lives at the mercy of external environment and other people. He learns entirely for their sake, and the mind eventually recedes from reality, and in turn becomes almost entirely socialized, and a victim of the physical world.

The recognition of this naïve attitude is one of the basic premises of Wilson's philosophy. In his *The New Existentialism*, he avers that the 'new existentialist' "accepts man's experience of his inner freedom as basic and irreducible" and 'the new existentialism' concentrates the full battery of phenomenological analysis upon the everyday sense of contingency . . . it uncovers the complexities and safety devices in which freedom dissipates itself". (Wilson 180) And therein lies the first step towards understanding the nature of human consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology too begins with this recognition of the prejudiced consciousness which flattened under the triviality of everyday life characterises one's natural attitude. Both Wilson and Husserl contend that 'normal' consciousness is partial and it is not possible to make any sense of life from this partial understanding. There is only a dull acceptance of how things apparently seem to a person from his 'natural standpoint.' Wilson conveys this state as the problem of robot which engenders an empty, meaningless and mechanical life where human beings act with passive intentionality and where the possibility of moving to other modes of being are reduced and thus limited.

The select novels which have been written in different genres highlight this limitedness in multiple ways. By employing different images and symbols, Wilson brings home the point that it is not possible to have a fuller understanding of experiences while living them from the natural standpoint. The natural attitude is characterised by narrower state of consciousness. It increases the 'indifference threshold' and human beings are subjected to 'fallacy of insignificance'. This attitude which is considered normal inhibits human will and imagination. This state of passive consciousness leads to 'psychic entropy' which gives rise to an infirm subjectivity. Wilson equates this fall of consciousness from an integrated one to a passive one as the original sin which ultimately leads to life-failure.

Wilson's novels *The Mind Parasites* and *The Philosopher's Stone* which have been cast into a science fiction setting employ different symbols and images to depict the natural attitude in the form of man's habituation, the fickleness of consciousness,

the convention, habit and automatism which gives rise to a robotic or mechanistic consciousness. The limitations of rational and empirical consciousness which is the product of impressions and associative thinking has been well portrayed in Wilson's detective novel *The Glass Cage*. *The Necessary Doubt* highlights the natural attitude in the form of low-pressure consciousness which turns out to be a major hindrance for its protagonist Karl Zweig to discover Gustav Neumman who represents a new consciousness. Wilson's Sorme trilogy explores the dimensions of consciousness in sexuality and crime. It makes a phenomenological analysis of sexual experience and recognises the lack of man's existential reality. Gerard Sorme the protagonist of the trilogy realises that sexual experience which normally gives a glimpse into the possibilities of human consciousness is taken for granted by human beings and crime shows that how man's intentionality can take a negative direction when his 'indifference threshold', which is one of the manifestations of natural attitude, reaches to the maximum levels. *The Black Room* symbolizes the life-world itself wherein human beings drift in a habit bound existence which is driven by stimuli-response mechanism. Kit Butler realises that this mechanism keeps him oblivious of any conscious activity and reduces the powers of will and imagination. The novel *The Personality Surgeon* unmasks the different appearances with which human beings live their lives and analyses them in their different manifestations. It makes a phenomenological analysis of human psychology and reveals the pseudo self which man builds in the routine course of everyday life.

CHAPTER 3

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

One of the important concepts and a methodological procedure that Husserl bequeathed to the mankind is epoche or reduction. A shift from the natural attitude to the phenomenological attitude is known as phenomenological reduction. It is the focusing of intentionality from the broad natural attitude that aims at any and all things in the world to the more focused phenomenological attitude that aims at one's own intentional life, its related objects, and the world. Epoche is a Greek term which means 'cessation' or 'suspension'. "It involves 'bracketing' or 'suspending' all the natural attitudes towards the objects in the world and towards our psychological acts, suspending all our theories about these matters, and leading back our attention to these pure essences of consciousness" (Moran 136). It also means 'putting out of play' or 'parenthesizing' of the objective world. It is one of those fundamental manners in which human beings lose, make and remake the meanings of their lives, by which they forge a new world or at least experience it in a new way. It minimises the existential interference and allows a person to reflect on his experiences. Reduction leads one to a solitary self-reflection. It frees a person from the sedimentation of world-grounding beliefs and presuppositions that accumulate in him while encountering the world in natural attitude, which constantly seeks to reassert itself. Reduction lays bare the subjective domain of inner experience and reveals the essence of consciousness and subjectivity whereby one gains the ability to apprehend the self as a pure ego. "This subjectivity remains hidden as long as we are absorbed in the pre philosophical natural attitude, where we live in self-oblivion among objects, but which the epoche and the reduction is capable of revealing." (Zahavi 51) In this context, The Delphic motto, "Know thyself" gains a new signification. In the natural attitude, a person loses himself in the world. "One must lose the world by epoche in order to regain it by universal self-examination" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 157). Reduction tantamounts to the overcoming of the 'forgetfulness of existence' and a lowering of what Wilson calls as the 'indifference threshold' and perceive the things without any distracting subjectivities which tend to pull one out of the life and distract the "pure intentional look." (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* LIV) Epoche is a step towards

achieving the epistemic modesty which will bring new meanings to human life. It means self-discipline which is the only way to achieve freedom. Epoche reveals both the subject and the object in their essential nudity which fetches a new perception of both the perceiving self and the perceived object.

Husserl believed that the nature of consciousness can be understood if phenomenology is made a presuppositionless inquiry by removing all sorts of distortions caused by different theoretical biases including naturalistic and psychic experiences. Bracketing out the distortions by the disciplinary technique of epoché is necessary to purify the consciousness and grasp the things adequately and apodictically given in intuitive evidence. Epoche is all about breaking the habit circuits, bring cessation in the naivety and make one understand the essence of any given experience. It is to get beyond the natural attitude that Husserl compares to a blind person who has been given the ability to see. In *Ideas*, Husserl makes it clear that in his transcendental philosophy it is necessary to free oneself from presuppositions and preconceptions through “a radical attitude of autonomous self-responsibility” (Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 54) It is with this self-responsibility that man embarks on the path of self-discipline to bring change in his perceptions and consciousness. In order to come out of the dire flat state of natural attitude, human beings need to discipline their consciousness so as to see the world as full of joy and meaning. The disciplines of epoche enable a person to excavate the habituality of the ‘natural attitude’ and realise them as living intentions. As a consequence, it takes away the boredom and meaninglessness which characterize one’s routine daily life.

The objective of this chapter is to explore the ways in which the notion of Epoché or ‘Bracketing’ may be applied to the select novels of Colin Wilson. In order to overcome the life-failure engendered by the natural attitude, Wilson’s characters consciously or unconsciously engage in bracketing to deeply understand their experiences of varied life phenomena and reach to the essences in their own consciousness and move towards evolution. Wilson’s text is literally the description of experience, rather than telling or explaining of a tale and it is in this respect it could be understood as a phenomenological project: as a reduction from the thematised world of meaning to the pre-reflective world of phenomena. According to Biagio Gerard Tassone, “Wilson applies Husserl’s method of reduction (more specifically: the bracketing of the natural attitude and application of the ‘*epoche*’) and undertakes

an ‘intentional analysis of perception’ (Tassone 56). Such a phenomenological analysis lays bare the robotic dimensions of human consciousness and gives rise to a need to shock the mind out of its normal habituation which steals human energies and perpetuates the life in the natural attitude.

Wilson’s portraiture of the different protagonists of his novels, represents the outsider consciousness, who having an acute recognition of the mundanity and triviality of ‘natural attitude,’ actually start their journeys by ceasing to live in its naivety. These journeys which have been objectified in the fictional narratives are verily the subjective explorations into human consciousness. As a ‘Recouerian wounded cogito,’ the outsider strives hard to break the shackles of facticity to enter a new state of consciousness. Wilson’s ‘outsiders’ ‘step back’ from the passivity imposed by the trivialities of the objective world and distortions of the subjectivity and seek refuge in some other modes of consciousness. It is a change in perspective with which a person seeks a given experience. Vaughan Rapatahana observes that, “since meaning came from man and was not somehow imposed upon him by external things. By ‘bracketing-out’ (Husserl’s ‘reduction’), Wilson meant a systematic – he called it a ‘scientific’ – analysis of human mental states which ‘reduced away’ any erroneous preconceived ideas.” (7) As an existentialist, Wilson employs the epoche to understand the human existence itself. In this regard, Koestenbaum states:

A logician using the epoche examines a logical essence just as a biologist examines a unicellular organism under a microscope. Both the organism and the essence are data given objectively, that is, in opposition and confrontation to the ego. The existentialists have expanded the notion of givenness even further by focusing the epoche on moods and other aspects of the human situation. (XXVI)

Wilson employs different genres to put across his ideas about mind and consciousness. He uses science fiction as a device to lay bare the structure and functioning of human consciousness. In *The Strength to Dream*, Wilson states that the role of science fiction is that of liberating the imagination from its ordinary bondage of passivity and blankness. This liberation is accomplished “not by pity and fear, but by attempting to evoke wonder and amazement.” (117). This means it helps in suspending the presuppositions of the everyday trivialities and focus attention on one’s inner spaces. In fact, Husserl advocates the bracketing of this outlook which is tacitly understood

in many of our quotidian experiences. (*Paris Lectures* LVIII) Several of the Wilson's novels deal with crime and horror, which Wilson believes jerks a person out of the naivete and engenders a change in his attitude. "Horror and tragedy act as a mirror which shakes us out of our complacencies and puts us into a reflective and phenomenological attitude to transcend our obsessions and morbidities" (Moore, *Beyond Murder: Colin Wilson, Criminology and the Evolution of consciousness* 14). Wilson contends that it gives rise to a psychological mechanism which he calls as duo-consciousness, wherein an individual can strike a comparison between two states of consciousness and choose the one at the cessation of other. It is a phenomenological act which recreates a deeply existential vision of the states of consciousness and fetches a person a better understanding of his creative urges.

In *The Mind Parasites*, Austin and his team keep fighting with the parasites, which symbolise a fight against a habit bound existence or the naivete so as to keep it 'out of play' and explore the different realms of consciousness. In this novel Wilson makes it explicit that if mankind would defeat the parasites, the doors of evolution would instantly open and "man would take the legacy of Husserl" (78) and at another place he states as "how Husserl's methods could be used to combat the parasites" (156). Scientific methodology of analysis, which Husserl considers as a part of one's natural standpoint also needs to be bracketed, because with its limitations, it is not able to discover the truth. Phenomenology is a method to discover this truth by first suspending the outer world and learn to explore the consciousness. Early in the novel when Reich and Austin spent the night at excavation site, Austin had an insightful experience which made him to bracket off the outer world. He completely becomes unaware of everything outside of his self and using all his strength he gazes into his inner spaces. His attention turns inward and he could vividly perceive his thoughts and feelings. Reduction liberates one's gaze from the prejudices of the natural world and actual factual world and spares it to reflect back on how one perceives the things. Bendau observes that "It is only when our "doors of perception" are cleansed that man is able to see the true reality of supra-natural meaning" (13)

Austin wishes to penetrate the realm of mind, which he thinks, by its power of imagination can generate more possible horizons. As Husserl says that a person can let his imagination run free and contemplate some essential and possible worlds of being to achieve the essence of any experience. It is through 'imaginative variation' that a person gains the 'eidetic intuitions' and develops the understanding of the

phenomena in his mental world. But it is only possible when the outer world, where 'our freedom is limited, can be defied' (48). Wilson basically wants to suspend the objective world in its entirety and focus on the subjectivity and its immanence. Kierkegaard in his *Postscript* emphasises the same position when he says that, "To objective reflection, truth becomes something objective, an object, and the point is to disregard the subject. To subjective reflection, truth becomes appropriation, inwardness, subjectivity, and the point is to immerse oneself, existing, in subjectivity." (71) Austin is digging the human psychoscape to unravel the secrets of human mind which "like the real world is a planet with its own jungles and deserts and oceans, inhabited by all kinds of strange creatures" (54). Wilson believes that drugs like mescaline and LSD can facilitate to move into the deepest levels of being which breaks the habituality and brings a qualitative change in consciousness. In fact, these drugs cut off an individual from the outer world and leads him to self-observation or introspection so as to know how his consciousness functions. Here one should not suppose that Wilson advocates use of drugs to attain such insights rather he believes that in the long run, they sap one's will and self-discipline but they can only be used on experimental basis to find the more positive ways to evolve into a higher consciousness. Christopher Gutland observes that, "phenomenology cannot only be seen as a kind of introspection, but also as a quite sophisticated method for practicing it." (12) Man's energies in the natural attitude get dissipated, when they execute the *epoché*, energy suddenly flows inwards and brings more concentration and space for analysing what is immanent to consciousness. In his *Access to Inner Worlds*, Wilson contends that for practical purposes, my feelings and emotions constitute a separate entity. The emotional body wastes an enormous amount of my time with its damned feelings. (19) Reduction facilitates this recognition which can take place by several means. Austin experiments with mescaline and attempts to turn his attention inward, to observe the exact state of his perceptions and emotions and what he recognises is a feeling that he calls as the vampires of the mind – the forces that resist any analysis and keep man's focus on the outer; to prevent him from exploring the worlds inside himself.

Once these forces are bracketed, there will be a tremendous sense of mental relief, "a vanishing oppression, a surge of energy and optimism" (78). Wilson says that for the first time, man will become an inhabitant of the world of mind. In

Husserlian scheme of things he will no longer drift in the objective world but will witness what is 'given' to the consciousness. Weissman's *Historical Reflections* reveal the same thing. Inspired by his friend Rupert Haddon, Weissman begins to use Husserl's phenomenological methods to cure his depression and nausea. He used his mind to probe his own sickness – a conscious reflection on what is wrong with one's consciousness. Weissman time and again feels some alienness or strangeness and not any physical thing inside himself. He finally defeats the parasites and reconnects to his own deeper sources. He can, in Husserlian sense bracket his daily narrowed way of seeing the world and perceive it with a renewed sense – a reconstitution of meaning and perception. The vampires which are the symbol of man's naivete, make Weissman to continue perceiving the world from natural standpoint, where he drifts in boredom and ignorance. Once the natural standpoint is bracketed, the energies turn *inward* and "man takes up the legacy of Husserl, realising that he has many 'selves' (78), which layer upon layer exist in human consciousness. This recognition leads him to a deeper exploration of his subjectivity. Earlier, Weissman tries some small amounts of mescaline to overcome this difficulty, which enables him to do a more deeper and closer *inward* observation and that eventually leads him to feel something *living and alien* inside himself.

In fact, Wilson discourages the use of drugs to study consciousness and advocates the Husserlian way of "the conscious reflection alone" (85) After making Fleishman their disciple, Austin and Reich teach him how 'to close the mind to the parasites and become the master of the country of the mind and travel to it and map it.' (104) In his *Ideas I*, Husserl states that "the phenomenological method proceeds completely in acts of reflection" (139) Reflection is the phenomenon upon which both Husserl's and Wilson's whole enterprise of phenomenology rests.

Most of the time, people reject their limited states of existence without even being aware of any particular disciplines. They achieve this by putting aside their inclination to be pessimistic, worrying about life, and contemplating the accomplishment of significant goals. By utilizing the inner secret lives, man becomes aware of this trick. Charles W Harvey observes:

In naturalistic language these occurrences might be referred to as the *act* of doubt, the *event* of disengagement, and the *deed* of

reconstruction. I believe that these happenings are instances of the proto-methodological prerequisites for developing the formal methodological procedures of epoche, reduction, and constitution as Husserl developed them. And, although he was nearly compulsive about making phenomenology scientific from bottom to top, there is evidence to suggest that Husserl had recognized these not so scientific existential conditions for the possibility of phenomenological reduction. (194)

Human beings engage in commonplace numerous epochés that exist across the gamut of daily social life. In the routine course of daily life, human beings constantly remain within some variant of the epoché and that the commonplace world of the natural attitude is itself made up of several unreflective versions of the epoché. Average individual is unknowingly constantly engaging in an epoché of doubt to make and remake the adjustments within the spatio-temporal world.

Austin in his explorations of the inner world, ‘rejects’ his old personality and its assumptions and gains more awareness of the different encumbrances of the spatio-temporal world which he had hitherto taken for granted and wanted to leave for self-knowledge. Austin seeks to find his true self in the most profound way. The same way a fearless thinker rejects nationalism and religion, he rejects everything conventional that offered him a sense of identity like his place and time of birth, the fact whether he is a human being rather than a dog or a fish. He let go of all these accidental trappings and is left naked facing the universe.

Quoting Wilson, Howard Dossor makes a similar point when he states that, “Personality is a distorting glass that lies between man’s inner reality and the reality of the outside world. In a poet this distorting mechanism suddenly vanishes; the inner and the outer world face each other directly with no distorting glass between them.” (182) In the natural world, human beings live with their common-sense assumptions and beliefs with their perceptions coloured by different prejudices and biases thus giving rise to a ‘taken for granted’ and ‘casual’ attitude while engaging with the world. Epoche enables a person to take a reflective attitude and execute different reductions to penetrate these layers of prejudices and biases so as to capture the essence of experiences. Consciousness and its different features get revealed through this

reflective consideration wherein the consciousness turns towards itself and the domain of this phenomenological reflection is rigorously defined by the epoche. “Both epoche and reduction can consequently be seen as elements of a transcendental reflection, the purpose of which is to liberate us from a natural attitude, dogmatism and to make us aware of our own constitutive (that is, cognitive, meaning giving) contribution.” (Zahavi 46) Wilson sets an apt analogy for making his point about the man who keeps lingering ‘out there’ and the one who descends into his own self and transcends the spatio-temporal horizon. He points out that people are incapable of entering their own minds as for they exist in the physical world. A man who can lose himself in thought over a lengthy train ride has transcended both space and time, but a man who yawns and glances out the window is forced to experience every minute of the journey. It is precisely this capacity to go inside one’s own self and confront the mind parasites that imbues man the ability to combat them. Through this analogy, Wilson hints upon the fact that human beings need to first recognise their habit patterns which prevent them from achieving any degree of freedom and meaning. It highlights distinction between a naïve attitude and a phenomenological attitude. Wilson perceives this change in adopting the attitude of ‘epistemic modesty’ which keeps us open and enables us to bring changes in our lives away from any form of dogmatism and skepticism. He characterizes the natural attitude as habit circuits and points out that to destroy these circuits is very difficult. It is “to stripe man of everything....as if you have stripe him of his skin” (129). But these habit circuits are to be bracketed to achieve the true consciousness. Austin realizes that by basic methods of phenomenology he and his associates will be able to defeat the parasites and release their entire will to explore the dimensions of consciousness. They do so in a typical Husserlian fashion thus:

We drew the blinds, locked the doors, and all sat and concentrated hard. I had become so used to this operation that I did it almost automatically. The first step was identical with the one I take when I wish to fall asleep; complete dismissal of the outside world, forgetfulness of my body. Within seconds, I was plunging downwards into the darkness of my own mind. The next step took some practice. I had to detach myself from my ordinary physical personality. The intelligent part of me had to remain wide awake, and move down into this world of dreams and memories (145).

Austin says that he can analyse his inner world peeling layer upon layer of the content of his consciousness. With complete consciousness, he makes his way across the dream layer. He feels as though he was floating beneath the water in this odd, silent environment known as the dream layer of the mind.

Unlike Husserl, Wilson does not proceed with the systematic process of reductions to know the nature of consciousness but he does analyse the contents – the moods, thoughts and perceptions to apprehend the consciousness in its purity and intensity. And most of the time, Wilson states, people suspend their naivete when confronted with some emergency which compels them to concentrate on the issue at hand and suddenly the energies rush in and the bracketing occurs. Poets and mystics, who have some degree of control and discipline, now and then detach their minds from the trivial and enter some other horizons. But the *epoche* is a discipline which needs practice to be learnt. Austin realises that he “knew that there is some ‘knack’ of getting deeper, but acquiring a knack takes a certain amount of exploration, of practice” (147). Wilson says that to achieve such a detachment and knack of analysis is akin to “putting the mind in and out of the gear so as to know the secret of godhead” (168). Bracketing is a source of insight into the essential nature of experience. Austin and his associates learn about the nature of parasites and their implications for evolution of consciousness only by bracketing off the ‘interferences of doubt, fatigue, depression, delays and accidents which confront them on their voyage to freedom.

Wilson advocates the phenomenological exploration of man’s inner spaces aided by the *epoche*, that Austin and his team employs. By incorporating the elements of death, danger and risk in the story, Wilson has shown the need of urgency in one’s efforts to escape the hold of automatism and access the freedom and meaning. And this he believes is possible by bracketing off the automatism and pave the way for analysing and understanding the structures of consciousness.

This fight against automatism is further taken forward by Wilson in another science fiction novel *The Philosopher’s Stone* which depicts a metaphorical journey into the realm of mind. “Through it, Wilson is urging his readers to take control of their lives, to investigate and extend the powers of perception, and to use the powers of mind more fully” (Bendau 47). Howard Lester and Henry Littleway engage in different experiments to find out the ways to pull man out of his narrower states of

consciousness and induce wakefulness in his everyday routine life which he spends, almost in sleep. *Stone* which has been described as the ‘parable of longevity,’ employs the metaphor of Neumann metal as an agent of transformation to achieve that wakefulness. In this endeavour, Lester “with the aid of Neumann metal escapes his intellectual limitations and enters into a higher form of life” (Dossor 276). Howard’s ideas about it were corroborated by the voice he heard from the radio, which says that, ““Man’s evolution has been the steady growth of his independence from the body and the physical world. His mind seems intent on defying the processes of time” (Wilson, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 41) Stefano Vincini and Shaun Gallagher observe that:

For a strictly defined pure phenomenology, the human subject, as a psychophysical being, falls outside of the pure phenomenological field. This includes one’s body. The body is a material thing in the material world; it is a worldly being in the sense that it is part of the world. Affirming the body’s existence implies affirming the existence of the material world, so it must be avoided from within the framework of the phenomenological reduction. (32)

Inspired by the ideas of Marks, which is an obvious reference to Abraham Maslow, Lester seeks to achieve some wider horizons of being which Marks terms as ‘value experiences.’ This, Lester believes, is possible when a person effects “a transition from social orientation to genuine creativity” (Wilson, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 44). Man needs to bracket off his interest in the outer and concentrate on the inner to attain to such experiences. Lester further concludes that this transition can be achieved through other means like sexual orgasm, alcohol, art, poetry and music as all of them can trigger an inner concentration which keeps the outer ‘out of play’ and the whole attention shifts to the inner. Lester later experiences the same “states of detachment” when he takes some alcohol and can recall how the romantic poets could achieve that “sense of detachment,” “freedom from personal problems” and “floating high” into some other realm (53). Poetry is a relaxation that makes consciousness web-like and reveals the deepest layers of human mind.

Littleway’s purpose of achieving ‘newness’ also depends on man’s ability to ‘snap out of’ the limited habit patterns or what Wilson typically calls as the robot. Hypnosis is one more possible way to ‘suspend’ the naivete that is perpetuated by the robot – the deep-seated habit patterns – that the hypnotist loosens and brings the

relaxation. “The hypnotist soothes the waking self, the personality, out of existence, and reaches straight to the ‘robot,’ our deeper mechanical levels, to which tense and confused personality often gave contradictory orders” (87). Lester and Littleway with their experimenting of lodging the Neumann alloy in the prefrontal cortex, which is symbolic of the man’s use of mind to bracket off the material consciousness, led them to the first stage of their development of “‘contemplative objectivity.’ Lester is able to view things clearly and come to terms with his existence by breaking through the barriers of his own personality.

Husserl says that epoche enables a person to apprehend the things in his consciousness as they really are given, bereft of any subjective distortions. Both Lester and Littleway want to “*escape the subjective*” (132). Lester, however points out that “it is not a question of ‘escaping’... but of ceasing to be bullied and negated by it” indicating that the world out there exists but needs to be suspended in order “to become the satellite of the inner star” (148)

Wilson’s idea of ‘contemplative detachment’ that he advocates is significant in so far it resembles the notions of epoche put forth by Husserl, as both intend to enter the territories of human consciousness and explore the structures of transcendental subjectivity. Towards the end of the novel, when Lester has developed his telepathic powers to a considerable extent and at Mudd family he exercises his powers of intuition to understand Roger’s state of mind, he slips into epoche and states:

Then I launched myself into a sea of serenity, ignoring my personality, my interest in the people in the room, as if observing the earth from some distant point in space. I ceased to hear Roger’s voice, ceased to be aware of the room..... I focused my time-vision on Roger, completing the epoché, the act of detachment, trying to intuit him purely as an object. (215)

Wilson’s detective novel *The Glass Cage* lays bare the intuitive capacity of its protagonist, Damon Reade, who has developed some powers beyond ordinary logic and calculation by suspending the overwhelming grip of the immediate and the conventional. He unconventionally relies on the faculties of intuition and intellect to unmask and detect the criminal, George Sundheim. Reade hints at leaving out the

conventional attitude to life, finally symbolised by the snake casting off its slough and entering a new state of consciousness. Rationality is not enough to elucidate and transcend the natural attitude. A method is required which will loosen its grip on people and they can intuit the reality as it is. James Morley states:

Something much more potent than reason alone was needed to loosen the intentional threads that bind our awareness to the belief (or natural attitude) that the world is independent of our consciousness of it. It is in this context that Husserl developed the methodological *epoché*. The *epoché* is the means through which Husserl discovered the blind spot of the natural attitude as well as the "method" for overcoming its limitations and rediscovering the world in the manner of an explorer encountering a vast new continent. (225)

In the beginning of the novel, Reade broods over the gloom that overwhelms him after Lund departs. The thought of the murderer goads him to reflect on “the idea of boredom, neurosis, materialism, and wilful stupidity.” (Wilson, *The Glass Cage* 13). He acutely recognises the passivity of life and so clears his mind of all thoughts and emotions, envisioning nothing but nothingness and blackness. He returns to the image of Blake, seeing the sunlight falling on the waves and opening his eyes to new frontiers of meaning, a consciousness of some vast, all-encompassing source of purpose. This way Reade changes his perceptions after suspending the inessential that has accumulated over his consciousness. John Weigel points out that Reade “insists on discipline not only in himself but in others. When necessary, he can empty his mind of all ideas and concepts and concentrate on emptiness” (88). In the very act of concentration, he is able to intuit the reality lurking beneath the superficial. Availing Gramsci’s telling phrase, ‘Archaeology of thought’ (Nemeth 166) – just an archaeologist clears the rubbles and debris of the site of an archaeological ruin, before he discovers the original plan and structure of the edifice, in such a manner the philosopher of phenomenological persuasions goes on bracketing the non-essential accretions only if the essences are disclosed. For this Heidegger used a Greek term *Aletheia*, meaning disclosing. Truth is *Aletheia* or disclosure. (Moran 199)

Reade had another such experience, when after a sexual experience with Sheila, he closes his eyes and slips into a strange contemplation. He focuses intently, pulling himself farther and farther from his physical self and his personality, into the depths

of his own darkness. It was tempting to lose his self in thought, to leave his body there and transcend into a condition of awareness of the vast silence that permeates human insignificance. He sought to intuit the experience instead of giving in to the need to judge it on any moral grounds. Then, all at once, he realised that what he needs is purification. Reductions achieve a purification of consciousness from the mundanization of the natural attitude and Reade gets a glimpse of this purification in sexual experience.

In his preliminary note to the *Necessary Doubt*, Wilson describes the novel's protagonist Zweig like theologian Paul Tillich in that Zweig is an existentialist theologian with a university appointment. In addition, Wilson states that the novel's title is borrowed from the theology of Tillich. In the novel, one of Zweig's earlier publications is titled as 'Necessary Doubt'. Its argument is that true religious faith must be built on doubt, rather than on blind acceptance, that "man's capacity to doubt is his greatest dignity, and that even a saint should never discard his ability to doubt." (7) Doubt means self-questioning which ensures access to truth and parenthesising of what is irrelevant and impeding. Gustav Neuman is a symbol of a quest for new consciousness which Zweig pursues by learning to execute the necessary doubt to convert into some evolutionary sphere. This conversion, according to Tredell, is achieved by Wilson by employing a science fiction device. (Tredell Ch. 6) Interestingly, Husserlian epoche has its genesis in the idea of Cartesian doubt, which demands that man questions and doubts the existence of the world, of God and of all other human beings, and even his own worldly existence. However, contrary to Cartesian doubt which is sceptical in nature, Husserlian epoche negates and abandons one's natural claims and assumptions and the scientific arguments and presuppositions about being. In fact, doubting (reduction) is not possible until ego (I) is not considered separate from cogitations i.e. thoughts. Out of Descartes's 'I think,' Husserl analyses and later brackets *thinking* to lay bare the 'I' in its essential nature. Zweig's method is phenomenological, as he analyses his own experiences, and after executing the reductions understands the essence of those experiences. Before Zweig knows the mystery of Neuman he practises the necessary doubt to achieve certainty.

One significant point that Wilson emphasizes throughout the *Sorme trilogy* is that sex makes one to get rid of the personality and aid in bracketing to experience the intensity consciousness. Wilson while declaring the purpose of his seminal work, *Origins of the Sexual Impulse*, echoes Husserl, when he states:

The whole method of this present book has been phenomenological ... has tried to confine itself to a steady contemplation of "the facts" about sex, without theoretical preconceptions like "conscious and unconscious", the death wish, race-consciousness, etc..... all psychology so far, has begun with a set of preconceptions, and has made its solution dependent on making the "facts" fit in. (225)

In *Ritual*, Sorme is an artist-philosopher who instinctively rejects the everyday world as boring and unsatisfying. He has an acute recognition of this state – a state which can be fairly equated with the Husserlian notions of natural attitude. Both Wilson's and Husserl's concerns are existential as both advocate of getting rid of such a state to access reality. In fact, "Husserl himself conceived of his transcendental phenomenology as a distinctive existential possibility, and that in particular the transcendental reduction included for him a liberating conversion of human existence." (Spiegelberg 67) Sorme perceives the everyday world as unreal and illusory and he realizes that he must free himself of it, to feel the real. He anticipates this freedom (from the naivete) in his sexual explorations and his understanding of the Nunne's sexual murders. He admits that he was "stimulated by a sadistic queer and an infatuated girl that had given him a vision of all knowledge and freed him from triviality and immediacy" (Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* 160) Sorme's sexual experiences with Gertrude and Caroline brings him in contact with a new dimension of his consciousness and how to suspend even one's moral judgements to grasp the positive quality of consciousness that the sexual experience offers. It is a matter of change of perception. Ordinarily this change occurs in sexual experience when man is able to summon his energies or spirit, but, since physical methods cannot sustain for long, one needs discipline to learn to jump from the objective to subjective world. Like a piece of music, a poem or alcohol, sex can temporarily make this happen but such a control over consciousness takes place momentarily. Sorme points out that "the orgasm is just raw energy, light and heat. What makes it important are the ideals it illuminates" (266). Sorme observed the emotions Caroline aroused in him and concludes that men pursue the ideal of universal feminine.

Sorme's realisation for the need to detach his self from the existence, to question it, arises in his experiences of the vastations. According to Nicholas Tredell, Sorme in his analysis of his vastations "formulates a contrast, however, between the sense of entrapment that characterizes the vastation and the sense of unlimitedness to

which he realizes that he aspires - two characteristic polarities of Wilson's own world-view." (Tredell ch. 4) What Sorme needed was the way or method to bring about such a detachment. Earlier Sorme identifies or rather wants to become Nunne in whom he saw the image of Vaslav Nijinsky. Nunne who has been portrayed as an embodiment of Romantic confusion and despair, initially allures Sorme but after realizing the triviality and boredom with which Nunne drags his life, Sorme strives to detach himself.

Sorme is an intellectual and he subjects his experiences of sex and Nunne to rigorous analysis and concludes that he should have outgrown both. In his conversation with Father Carathuriers, it is revealed, that Sorme says that he wanted to completely outgrow sex and enter into the territory of his mind. And regarding Austin Nunne, he shares the same conclusion with Oliver Glasp, that he wanted to outgrow Austin's world long ago because Austen is not real inside. He is living a life of unreality. Sorme wants to bracket off both the sex as well as all the strains of romanticism, sadism or "hallucination, dream or vision" (Tredell, ch. 4) which Austin symbolises. Sorme realises that man lives in different illusions, "we need something to lean on" (Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* 357). Sorme finds most of the people around him leaning on one or the other thing to continue their lives. Man, lives in different illusions but if "he could kill his illusions he'd become a god." (357) And when the illusions disappear, man gets access to the real self. Sorme is undergoing purgation to evolve into some higher form and as one moves towards the second part of the novel Sorme gradually detaches himself from Austin.

Sorme's infatuation with Nunne has blinded him so much that despite getting confirmed about the latter's involvement in Whitechapel murders, his perceptions of Nunne show no change and he remains ambivalent towards his being guilty. It is only when Stein showed the corpse to Sorme that the latter is thrown into contemplation, goading him to suspend his blind faith in Nunne and change his perception. Sorme finally brackets off Nunne and attains to an affirmative state of mind. It was a sort of conversion for which Sorme was disciplining himself throughout the novel. Regarding phenomenological reduction, *Internet Encyclopaedia of philosophy* states that, "it is a *species* of meditation because, unlike ordinary meditation, which involves only the mind, this more radical form requires the participation of the entire individual and initially brings about a radical transformation of the individual performing it similar to a religious conversion" (Cogan) Sorme's journey was not less than a religious

conversion which he attained by suspending all his perceptions and conceptions about sex and Nunne. Austin Nunne and Oliver Glasp who were the embodiments of physical and emotional energy respectively failed to analyse their experiences and suspend their attitudes to grasp the essences. But Sorme succeeded only after he assumed the phenomenological attitude.

Phenomenology is understood as contemplation of pure essences on the basis of exemplary individual intuitions of experiences. Wilson in his *Man Without a Shadow* declares that his novel *Shadow* is an “ideal way” to know the essence of sexual experience not by any systematic way but through intuition. It may be fragmentary but it would go to the heart of the experience only by intuition. Sorme states:

I make short, violent attacks on the faceless reality in an attempt to take it by storm, driven wholly by an intuition, not by reason. And sex is the ideal driving force for my pneumatic drill; my mind may get tired and bewildered brooding on the problem of how we ought to live; I think of sex, and feel a shock, as if I’ve touched a live wire. Something is revealed. And what I want to try and get at is this inconsistency in the sexual impulse. (Wilson, *Man Without a Shadow* 50)

It tries to tell the truth about sex- laying bare its essence. In author’s note, Wilson says that the novel includes “metaphysical discussions of sex”. John A Weigel remarks that “one believes that Wilson did intend to tell the truth about sex intelligently and accurately” (Weigel, *Colin Wilson* 82) And the truth is that in sexual experience, man gets the clue for getting rid of the naiveté which otherwise stops him to know the truth.

In the beginning of the novel Sorme compares the mind to “scratches on gramophone record that *always* make the needle jump the tracks driven along the paths of associative thinking” (Wilson, *Man Without a Shadow* 17), but now he has learnt to bracket off this habit. He states that “in this mood, I am freed from the “scratches”; I can sink into my own being, leaving my conscious self-sitting contentedly here on the bed, ignored, while I clamber down a rope into the mineshaft of myself.” (18) Sorme apprehends his true self after ceasing to be distracted by the psychological idiosyncrasies, which in the course of everyday life has debilitated his vitality.

According to Wilson, human vitality is muffled in the routine trivialities of life, as “if someone had attached hooks to my clothes and hung weights on them” (32)

and I often ask “who has tied this tin can to man’s tail?” (32) But there are moments when this triviality can be put out of play and man can move into himself, “when I could see new areas of myself, when the possibility of getting rid of the tin can and becoming a god did not seem too distant.” (32) Wilson believes that path to it lies in the sexual impulse which needs to be purified and a new language fixed for it to understand it. Wilson, however, points out that sexual impulse, ordinarily goads a person and time and again he feels tricked and cheated. Sexual freedom facilitates a momentary freedom, but it indicates that key lies in the power of imagination. In essence it is the power of imagination that plays the vital part in sexual experience. And it is possible through imagination that man can escape the trivial and enter the inner realms for greater freedom. It opens new horizons, the varied possibilities that can turn into reality any moment. These possibilities are latent in the sex drive and Sorme’s sexual experiences with Caroline, Gertrude, Carlotta and other women have brought him that realization. And once man gets a glimpse of new possibilities or horizons, he would be impelled to suspend all his presuppositions and presumptions to open and know the new dimensions of consciousness.

One of the curious facts that Wilson conveys is that in normal circumstances human beings are carried away even by small inconveniences in life and they hardly make any effort to cast off the gloom and spring back to living. But a crisis or emergency or pain immediately pushes them to a sort of stock taking and they eventually avoid or suspend their ‘Natural life’ and learn how to live. Human beings calculate and analyse their perceptions as the crisis or pain pins them to it. Sorme finds it annoying because he feels like he hasn’t really begun to live because he has no idea how to begin sorting through the chaos that is human existence. He wonders why it doesn't concern other people. He wants to take a closer look to know why it happens.

Wilson recognises this power to goad a person to look inside in sex act which drastically shifts his attention to the inner phenomenon. It shows that man has the ability within him to conquer all of life's setbacks and annoyances, to finally go past them as an adult man moves past the measles and mumps. Sexuality is a window into power and a form of call to greatness.

Sorme believes that the enigma of sex is that the indulger is under a false notion that the other person conceals some reality which he himself lacks. Sorme wants to cut through this illusion and he gradually develops the understanding that

man is a victim of sexual confidence trick and if somehow, he would be able to prolong the sex experience, “could cling to some ledge while we are up there” (180) i.e., pay attention how it is given to our consciousness, “man would be permanently on a new plane of being.” (180) Wilson, however contends that sexual experience is accompanied with a suspension of distractions – distractions which characterise one’s natural attitude. The repeated blind dragging that attends sexual experience eludes a proper analysis of this drive. Sorme has made it a habit to thoroughly examine each emotion and break it down into its component elements. He makes a good effort in casting off the traditional and conventional notions of sexual experience to understand the phenomena of human sexuality in its essence. According to Clifford P. Bendau, “Gerrard Sorme has grown more sophisticated since *Ritual*. He is now able to observe and note his inner experiences as they relate to the release of sexual energy.” (38) Wilson’s analysis of human sexuality has much significance particularly the way it implicates human imagination and the overall consequences it yields for the human beings at both individual and social level. It represents the attitude of man in examining his own sexuality, and it does it with a level of intellectual candour that seems to be missing in the matter.

In the beginning of his novel *The God of the Labyrinth*, Sorme while contemplating on the business of writers points out that a writer should “refuse to be a part of the everyday life, stand aside and must not be absorbed.” (18) Human beings must attend the mind and not get carried by the environment. Like the previous two novels of the trilogy, *God* advocates an objective study of sexuality. It insists on analysing the sexual experience with a sense of detachment to uncover the evolutionary intimations hidden in human sexuality.

Wilson saw the *Black Room* as a crucial symbol because it represents a crisis situation on the brink of daily existence where people can either rise above or fall deeper by moving toward the independence of the physical world through the release of latent mental powers—a trait that Wilson believed to be unique to the next phase of human evolution. This evolution is necessarily preceded by reduction and ordinarily and mostly, a crisis effects this reduction. Quoting Tredell, Dossor remarks that black room is a technological equivalent of the tub of Diogenes, of the cell of medieval anchorite ... the purpose of which is to cut out all external stimuli in order that its inhabitant might confront his own inner reality (271) Wilson believes that body

has its limitations which limits the mind and turns it passive. The mind needs to be detached from the physical to release its powers, this may free him from the oppressive dearth of stimuli in the black room by causing a severe sensation of crisis that could result in either extreme fear or a feeling that he is capable of controlling his response. According to Heidegger, it occurs when the care-structure of our existence is shattered and our ontological and epistemological foundations are shifted to another realm. (Moran 224)

The Black Room, which is an experiment in sensory deprivation, scientifically cuts all the external stimuli or inputs and facilitates a focus on the internal phenomenon i.e., what is given to the consciousness. In this way, it analyses the human subjectivity and reflects the different responses of people. Its purpose is to suspend the objective world and make a person attentive to its own consciousness. It is to transcend the ‘forgetfulness of existence.’ It is all about discipline, which under ordinary conditions is induced by a crisis situation or can be deliberately done with an experiment like the black room. Kit Butler, the protagonist of the novel points out that “If only I could learn the trick of shaking my mind awake, without the need for crisis, I would have found the secret of turning men into supermen” (Wilson, *The Black Room*, 53). Ordinarily people have no goals outside of surviving, staying in a dark environment creates feelings of apathy and dullness which subsequently forces a person to work for recovering and regaining the stability of his subjectivity.

The dullness and apathy that the ‘black room’ induces, naturally leads to “a collapse of the sense of reality and the values and hence a retreat into one’s inner world” (67). The black room state of mind, according to Wilson is a condition of “spiritual dyspepsia” (67), which creates “false fatigue” ... All people have a “fatigue threshold” (70), which characterises a person’s business in the natural attitude, that brings it down. And the cause of it is that man lacks a discipline, the discipline which could lead to a *cessation* of false fatigue and an increase in the fatigue threshold. Butler declares that “I believe that it could be done if you could devise the right kind of disciplines *outside*. Disciplines all designed to stop the mind from falling asleep when there is no crisis...” (72). But the crisis like situation, which would ensure a suspension of naivete – “the drifting moods of boredom and blankness” (110) and development of self-consciousness can solve the ‘black room’ problem. Unlike Husserl who is more interested in immanence and meaning constitution, Wilson says

that this suspension is accompanied with an awakening of subconscious. An awakening which he equates with the religious conversion.

Butler's experiences at station K further throws light on different mental disciplines. Ernst Stauffmann, the chief of the station has devised the concentration machine as a possible solution to the black room problem. Ordinarily, man's attention is unfocused which Stauffmann believes is due to the alpha rhythms that his brain generates in everyday routine life. The concentration machine helps to bracket off these rhythms. It is a possible antidote to the black room problem. But Butler points out that he would like to solve the problem as an artist. He believes that as a musician, he can use music to suspend the routine life of close-upness and relive certain instances of profound understanding. According to Husserl Aesthetic attitude and phenomenological attitude are similar because both advocate a suspension of any existential interference, to experience the reality of phenomenon as a pure manifestation. (Rozzoni 120) Butler wants to maintain this state – "and I would do my best to preserve a certain self-discipline and prevent myself from getting too low". (288) In the 'natural' states of consciousness, man's energies dissipate and to use the Wilson's image, the springs of the grandfather clock slackens. But the self-discipline increases his concentration and infuses strength to the spring, thus restoring the vitality. In Husserlian scheme of things it is a shift from passive consciousness to intentional consciousness which is preceded by epoche facilitated by intense efforts of concentration. This concentration, Wilson believes can be caused by music, sex, or any crisis situation which "unites the whole being and prevents the subconscious from going off duty" (290). Man must convince his subconscious to exert effort as well if he wants to be truly strong. It's about startling the mind to get it out of its lazy state.

Butler tells Ehrlich that he has learnt the discipline of keeping his moods 'out of play' and concentrate for intense experience. "I have ceased to experience the old ups and downs of temperament – or rather, I know how to compensate for them. It's a matter of losing the mental habit of passivity" (291) and bring more consciousness to one's experiences.

Station K in its own way is an abode of discipline, which has its own methods of analysing each human experience and observing the changes those experiences bring to the consciousness. Irmelin makes Butler understands that sex has turned into a fever in the majority of civilizations because it is the only way to satisfy all of the

primal cravings for excitement, risk, and adventure. Staufmann's conviction is that man requires a great degree of discipline. When he achieves it, everything falls into place. Black room facilitates this achievement by cutting all the external engagements and pushing the individual to attend his own subjectivity. Mind in its ordinary states is asleep. When Wilson talks about 'a high level of discipline,' he means to "accustom the mind to stay alert" (306). And to remain alert is to be attentive to what is happening in one's inner world and prevent the mind to slip into its *habitus*.

Staufmann's concentration machine reflects the human subjectivity on the screen objectively. It is what Husserl calls as the 'givenness' which can be analyzed on the screen. Each thought and emotion which generates a particular rhythm is displayed as dots on the screen. Butler's experience at the concentration machine is significant. He closes his eyes, brackets off the objective world and then ceases to think. Staufmann is surprised to see that the dot on the screen disappears which indicates a distraction-free subjectivity, which Butler achieved through epoche. He states that "it had revived the sense of inner purpose, of drive and direction, and feeling of nervousness had vanished" (314). Staufmann too reaches the same conclusion and he realises that he has always been fascinated by the issue of life- failure and why things may get so monotonous and uninteresting out of the blue. He now knows the solution. He points out that human beings are exhausted and out of breath. When they will shed that "mental fat", (314) their feeling of purpose will become vibrant.

Epoche literally corresponds to the gesture of suspension of the usual course of thoughts by interruption of their continuous flux. When a person 'gets rid of the 'mental fat' – the pre-given and unquestioned values, he moves towards meaning and freedom. In the natural attitude, subjectivity is sub-ordinate to the world. But with epoche, an individual becomes able to recognise a more free and powerful state of consciousness in its purity, which now controls the world.

Wilson's *The Personality Surgeon* is an analysis of human personality and identity, which employs a videotape as a mirror to let people see their personalities and how they would like to be. Charles Peruzzi, the personality surgeon, by tempering with the tape shows how personality can be changed which suits a particular individual. It foreshadows the concept of photoshop and other modern day computer technology tools which could make such changes possible. Like most of the Wilson's

other novels, *The Personality Surgeon* too reflects some of the phenomenological ideas which throw light on human perception and consciousness. The novel engages in different therapeutic practices which as Koestenbaum points out has affinities with the Husserlian phenomenology. Koestenbaum observes that, “The process of psychotherapy is a systematic and repeated application of the kind of honesty and distancing that is characteristic of the epoche. It can be argued that psychotherapy is the epoche applied to one's personal life.” (*The Paris Lectures* LXXIV) The phenomenologically-grounded psychology is more able to discern the truth of psyche and the world. It helps human beings to reach an authentic existence, providing a framework that directs a search for meaning and purpose.

Wilson's novel, *The Personality Surgeon*, is about self-image – an image that a person aspires for and the one he has assumed in the complex web of relations that exist in life – the life-world. Charles Peruzzi, the personality surgeon, deals with different case studies to analyse human personality in its varied dimensions. He helps the people to cast off the different false identities, which more often conflicts them with the different life situations. These identities are projected with certain predispositions that a person possesses and with which he perceives the world. Wilson believes that human mind imposes various distortions that affect the quality of perceiving consciousness. Charles helps his patients to bracket off these distortions which have accumulated over the period and create a self-image by changing the perception. It is losing the ‘doxic certainty’ with which a person perpetuates his life in the state of for grantedness. It is a change in perspective – a “shift of standpoint” (Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 6,7) what Husserl calls reduction. The article titled *Some Reflections on The Personality Surgeon*, states:

There are many characters which are completely crippled by minor ailments, defects, or personal hang-ups which in turn drain their energy and cause their lives to be a ‘fabric of errors’. In each instance, the surgery does not so much enhance, enrich or expand their personality, but reduces its size to a more reasonable level, whereby the character can see his or own tendency towards triviality – and how, in that sense, trivialities blind us to our evolutionary impulse, which is far less personal. (Moore 3)

In the beginning of the novel Topelius tells Charles that “mental health depends on the sense of identity. When people don't know who they are, they become confused

and distressed” (Wilson, *The Personality Surgeon* 12). Charles discovers that a shock or a crisis puts them out of this confusion of personality or fixed identity and point them to embark on a new life. Wilson cites different cases where people ceased to imprison themselves in the hardened shells of personality, when they had to face a shock or crisis. Achieving self-image is equivalent to what Abraham Maslow calls self-actualisation, which is preceded by a cessation of the dull and narrow existence. In this regard Gary Lachman remarks that “self-actualization results in a kind of self-forgetting, in the sense of becoming absorbed in the impersonal pursuit of an idea or creative work. Essentially this is an *escape* from personality, a release from its stuffy constraints.” (Lachman, *Beyond the Robot* 167)

Bob Engledow, who after his retirement lost his identity and purpose and developed a persistent rash is suddenly cured by his desire to see her daughter alive again. A surge of vitality springs forth and the shell of sloth and passivity is broken. Similarly, the air hostess, Sharon Engstrom, who due to disfiguring facial scars and an eyelid twitch, suffers from a weak self-image – of seeing herself as a freak, is suddenly changed when she heard of the prospects of her getting cured. Charles also restores the self-image of Engledow’s daughter Lesley and Ben McKeown’s son Nicky by adjusting them to their suitable engagements in drama school and chess respectively. With the help of Ben McKeown, Charles sets up a laboratory and pursues his researches in ‘personality surgery.’ Charles’ experiences with several patients led him to some important conclusions. He found that most of them suffer from mental problems rather than physical. They are the victims of a weak subjectivity – “a certain inner collapse, like letting the air out of a tire.... a collapsed human being [that] can be destroyed by almost any illness” (Wilson, *The Personality Surgeon* 80). Wilson here advocates a sort of reverse therapy. For instance, the symptoms of illness come up when we are living a life based on repressed emotions and lies; how rigid ideas keep us trapped and how we get healthy again by taking risks. How we become ill by relating to people dishonestly and can get well again by becoming more authentic. Most importantly health depends upon vitality and vitality depends on exercising your love of life.

‘Normal’ human beings are able to shift and adjust their personalities in accordance to the situation they face. Charles tells Sandor Kos that, “the personality is no more than a mask. When I talk to you, I am a different person than when I talk to my wife or my patients” (87). But some people get fixed in a mask and are unable

to get out. The mask becomes their identity which generates a typical and constant habituality, thereby becoming the victim of their own personality. Charles states that “certain personalities attracted certain kinds of events. He had noticed it among his patients, particularly the inadequate ones. They seemed to get into the same kind of trouble again and again. And this could not always be blamed on their ineffectuality.” (105)

Lesley is a case in point, who is not able to cast off her ‘inadequate personality.’ But Charles brings her the recognition that by playing a part in the play, she can “try on a new personality, exactly as a woman might try on a new hat in front of the mirror” (108). Charles verified the truth on the screen and upon glancing at the Lesley seated next to him, who was amusedly watching Lesley on TV, he realized that there were actually two Lesleys. Lesley as she wanted to be—charming, innocent, irrational, and calmly unaffected by criticism—and as she believed herself to be, being herself. Furthermore, Lesley could envision the kind of person she aspired to become when she observed herself on the screen.

Lesley brought a cessation to what she was – “for eight years she had been trapped in a vicious circle,” (110) but now she has succeeded in breaking the shell – “and now, all at once, she could see how to break out of it” (110). Lesley had substantially unencumbered herself from her previous image. By constantly questioning herself and the world around her, she renews and redefines herself at every moment in her identity and recomposes herself which is essentially preceded by the *epoche*.

A similar crisis confronted Nicky, who was unsure about his self-image. “Nicky’s self-confidence had been as fragile as thin ice” (146). Charles restored his self-confidence by recognising that Nicky “is playing the wrong part” (143). The moment Nicky played chess with Lesley, they both displayed “the concentration and purpose of adults” (146). Charles concludes that Nicky was changed because he was “merely forgetting himself and focusing his entire attention on the game” (146). Nicky’s self-confidence and sense of purpose is restored and Charles was achieving new insights into the theory of ‘self-image.’ He states:

And the beauty of it is that people would learn to *change themselves*. It wouldn’t be like psychiatry or plastic surgery where the patient is in the hands of a doctor. They would be like sculptors, remodelling their

own personalities. And the doctor would only be the man who shows them their own possibilities... (157)

Human beings live in unawareness and need a mirror to see their potentialities. Man cannot get rid of the naivety with which he lives his life unless there is a mirror to reflect back. Vigilance and self-awareness are important to recognise one's true identity. Ordinarily, human beings live with an image as others perceive them. If a person has a mirror that can reflect this image, then she will also be able to change it. Mirror is a symbol for self-discipline and introspection. Human beings must cease to be what they are not, and be what they are, and that is the whole business of personality surgery. Charles concludes that, it is all about "personality control" (212). It is to dismantle and analyse the personality which has frozen into a rigidity and subsequently bracket off "the trivial personal limitations." (213) Charles, however believes that this can be done by analysing the screen image of personality objectively, "examining it frame by frame," (212) and thus gaining more control over it. With each passing day, Charles' study of personality surgery deepens and he could now minutely observe and describe the different expressions, gestures, moods and attitudes. Alvin Rinkler tells him "So what you're trying to do is to show people aspects of themselves they've never seen before." (222). Charles achieves this by making the analysing subject to distance itself from different worldly entanglements. Hanne Jacobs in his paper, *Phenomenology as a way of life? Husserl on phenomenological reflection and self-transformation*, states:

the phenomenologist accomplishes what is impossible in the natural attitude: she observes herself seeing. The phenomenologist captures the act of perception, not because she finds somewhere inside herself an act of perception that gives access to the outside world, but because she describes the way in which she sees the world by describing the subjective manners of its appearance (spatio-temporal, habitual, personal, and cultural). Thus, if phenomenological reflection is at a distance, it is in a way that our living in the world is never at a distance. We are always over there with the things, blind, so to speak, to their subjective mode of appearance. (353)

Charles strikes a correlation between the human face and human personality. "The face is the gearbox of the personality" (224). A change in facial expression will bring

a corresponding change in personality i.e., a change in one's mental and emotional states. This shows that human being acts as a gestalt and as Merlau Ponty believes that corporeality is essential to fully understand the experiential dimensions of human consciousness. One takes the cognizance of the acts of consciousness in body movements, gestures and facial expressions. One day when Charles was going through the video tapes of one of the drama students, Duncan Baron, and it "dawned on him as he studied Baron's face that our facial expressions, gestures and tones of voice are all part of the some highly complex code. What he was trying to do was to crack the code" (239). He played again the Baron's tapes, "frame by frame, and tried to look below the surface of the face to the mind underneath" (239). Charles captures the moods in facial expressions and teaches his patients to learn self-discipline of bracketing off their states of depression and sustain the moods of optimism. With the help of digital paintbox Charles was transforming the living reality. He forges a new world for them by shifting their standpoint which brings a change in their perception and meaning constitution. Their universe is reorganized by the reduction into a coherent whole. What Husserl would call the "meaning of the being of the world has been constituted (again)"—that is, the ego actively contributes to organizing the experience into a meaningful whole—appear different to them, and they regain its depth and significance. Raval observes: -

We can remove ourselves from our natural standpoint view and shift the stance of the perceiving mind; the whole mode and manner of consciousness so shifted that it might enable one to perceive the objective world in a new light, a new perspective, as it were a new being, a new consciousness, a different person, another self-looking upon an already reduced or 'bracketed' world. (220)

Epoche enables humans to drop the natural standpoint to shift the stance of the perceiving mind and manner of consciousness, which in turn enables the experiencer to perceive the objective world in a new light and new perspective. A new consciousness with a new eye emerges to apprehend the world with a new perception.

Throughout the select novels, characters seek this new perception by engaging in different reductions to make and remake the meanings of their lives. They do so by ceasing to be preoccupied by the business of the outer objective world and that of the distractions of the subjective world. Bracketing turns out to be a potent tool for them to break the automatism of the robot and overcome the forgetfulness of existence,

which they have hitherto taken for granted. They succeed in suspending their different cognitive stances or 'position takings' by unplugging the belief in being 'normal' which saturates their everyday existence, allowing them to meditate, scrutinize, comprehend and eventually embrace or discard the prior commitments through a transparent, rational and deep understanding of the working of consciousness. They begin to learn how consciousness constitutes a certain experience through its different acts as now the arrow of intentionality which pointed outwards, moves inwards to analyze its own origins. This method is essentially meditative which brings them in direct confrontation to their own subjectivity. The novels also reveal that certain experiences like sex, alcohol, a piece of music, a poem and any crisis situation instantly suspend one's naivete and momentarily, man turns fully conscious towards the experience at hand.

The novel *The Mind Parasites* allegorizes the exploration of human consciousness in the form of archeological digging, laying bare the layer upon layer to recognise the parasites which symbolise habituality. In the novel, Austin and his team, explore human psychoscape and consciousness and succeed in bringing a cessation to the effects of parasites. This freedom from automatism releases their powers of will and imagination and make their experiences meaningful. The novel *The Philosopher's Stone* achieves this by apparently lodging Neumann alloy into the pre-frontal cortex of the brain which is symbolic of creating a wakeful state of consciousness and cease to get steeped in the sleep of the natural attitude. Lester and Littleway by experimenting with Neumann metal and other means attain the states of 'contemplative detachment' which as the equivalents of epoche enable them to reflect back on their conscious acts. The novel *The Glass Cage* makes it clear that the scientific approaches of logic and reason cannot transcend the barriers of the natural attitude but it is only through intuition one can reach the essence and cast off the inessential. Wilson weaves this idea into a detective story wherein the protagonist employs his intuitive powers to cast off his natural attitude symbolised by George Sundheim and finally the snake casting off its slough to emerge into a new consciousness. The novel *Necessary Doubt* has a basic philosophical premise that doubt is essential before establishing the certainty of a truth. Karl Zweig, the protagonist of the novel executes the necessary doubt prior to understand the essence of his experiences. In *Sorme trilogy*, Sorme undergoes through different experiences which finally lead to his purgation. Wilson primarily makes an objective study of

sexual experience, which he believes rids one of personality and turns an individual into an intuitive gestalt. It suggests that the secret is in the power of imagination that sexual freedom allows for a brief period of time. Essentially, the key component of the sexual experience is the power of imagination. And man can reach the inner worlds for more freedom and escape the trivial through imagination. In the *Ritual*, Sorme finally detaches himself from Austin Nunne who represents illusion and unreality of existence. *Shadow* as well as *The God of the Labyrinth* convey that in sexual experience lies the key to bring a cessation to the distractions and achieve a higher form of being. The novel *The Black Room* is all about discipline. The black room device cuts all the external stimuli and subjects the individual to his inner world. This leads to a crisis situation, pushing one to pay attention to what is immanent to consciousness. The device awakens the subconscious forces and makes human beings more conscious which has implications for the purpose and meaning they imbue to their experiences. Epoeche constitutes an important method in psychotherapy and this is what Charles Peruzzi, the protagonist in *The Personality Surgeon* engages in. Working on different people, Charles concludes that human beings accumulate different dispositions, habit patterns and tendencies which constitute their personality. This personality more often conflicts with the real self. So, it is essential to suspend one's personality to realise the true self. This creates a sense of identity and agency. Charles brings a shift in the standpoint of his patients who restructure their experiences to create new meanings in their lives.

CHAPTER 4

INTENTIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Phenomenological *epoche* reveals that consciousness is intentional. Intentionality is one of the significant principles of Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl calls it as “the fundamental property of consciousness.” (*Ideas I* 380) Intentionality gives an account of all those possible ways in which things can appear to one’s consciousness. The necessity of consciousness to exist as consciousness of something other than itself is what Husserl calls “intentionality”. Every experience has meaning, ‘aboutness,’ so, every experience is intentional. ‘Intending’ is a conscious relationship between subject and an object – the knower and the known. Every intentional act has meaning and with it a sense of being in an individual’s consciousness that forms understanding and experience within their own unique life-world. It uncovers the relationship between an individual and the objective world in which he lives. Intentionality is the mental structure of this relationship that constructs experience. Meaning which is the noema gives the act its intentional character. A mental state or experience is intrinsically intentional because as an experience it is meaningful and meaning-giving. Meaning means the sense of the object perceived by the subject. The intention is a complex of intentional act and intentional object which yields meaning. According to Husserl, “Meaning is an intention of the mind.” (May 204) Intentionality is the activity of a knowing subject who minds something, attentively pays attention to it, and cares about it. Ego can transform, by its attentional act, any experience, by adjusting its ‘ray of regard’ i.e., intentionality, towards a given object of experience. Intentionality that characterises consciousness, brings a unification of stream of consciousness and reveals that a concrete ego bestows meaning to one’s perceptions. Husserl conceived consciousness not only as its property to be the consciousness of something, but it also refers to the “comportment” of the subject toward his/her own awareness and the objects of that awareness. (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 33,52), This aspect is referred to by Husserl as the “position-taking” (68) capacity of consciousness, and is captured in the fact that consciousness is not only an awareness of objects but is also a process of willing, of making plans, and of acting on them (Davidson 43). Intentional constitution is not a

neutral process of being simply aware of the world but is rather a process of taking various positions toward aspects of the world of which one is aware. It is a process of valuing certain aspects over others and of choosing and pursuing goals, of being engaged in the world in a practical and invested fashion. Thus, intentionality is a state of being that involves the totality of the person's orientation towards a certain experience. Howard Dossor observes that "the mind is an instrument of intention. It is essentially designed to project the human species forward into a future which it has itself fashioned. The essence of Wilson's philosophy is the notion that we are our own creator as well as designer of our own destiny." (7)

The concept or idea of Edmund Husserl which majorly influenced Colin Wilson was 'intentionality'. Wilson conceives 'intentionality' as a tool to achieve evolutionary consciousness. In fact, Wilson considers his writing as a product of intentionality. "His prose often has the power to elicit that inner force of intentionality that is the subject of everything he writes," (12) remarks Lachman in his introduction to the novel. Wilson firmly believes that intentionality is the tool to change consciousness. According to Clifford P. Bendau:

All perception, claims Wilson, is intentional. Man increases his control over existence by understanding that consciousness is not passive, but intentional. It is through an intentional act of will that man refuses to accept limited states of consciousness... He must make the discovery that perception itself can be changed. He must learn that the perceiving consciousness itself plays an active role in perception (9)

Wilson conceives 'intentionality' as a possible antidote to the malady of 'passive fallacy'. Human consciousness is not passive which works through impressions but an active participant in constituting what it knows. He connects intentionality to human will and purpose and points out that the latter activates the former and which in turn brings change in human perception and consciousness. Like Husserl, Wilson recognises the passivity of empiricist cogito which exists on impressions and the potentiality of intentional cogito which holds the key to change consciousness. Vaughan Rapatahana points out that "Wilson's interpretation of intentionality held that man could delineate his own state of consciousness ... If all perception is intentional, then for Wilson, the only way forward is inward." (4) In a sense, Wilson seeks unity of being through will and intentionality. The ideas of purpose, will and

value are implicit in Husserlian phenomenology where the conscious ego holds supreme significance and Wilson's use of these ideas can be understood in these Husserlian notions of intentionality. And in both cases, it focuses on evolution of consciousness. Gary Lachman points out that "in one sense we can say that our evolutionary purpose is to uncover our hidden, unconscious intentionality, which is itself a drive to greater meaning, greater freedom." (181) Wilson believes that the moment human beings *detach* themselves from the habitus and narrower states of consciousness, the powers of intentionality are released and they are able to enter into the wider horizons of their consciousness. Wilson relates intentionality to "meaning perception" which he believes gives rise to intensity consciousness. In his seminal work, *The Outsider*, Wilson points out that "freedom is not simply being allowed to do what you like; *it is intensity of will*, and it appears under any circumstances that limit man and arouse his will to more life." (31) This quest for freedom is projected by Wilson in the form of 'outsider consciousness' which perceives intentionality as a possible way to transformation. The outsider as a spiritual rebel, through his imagination and will could transcend the banality of everyday consciousness and create a vision of living. Howard Dossor observes that "the outsider is the product of an inadequate perception of what the world *is* and his salvation lies in the development of an intentional consciousness that grasps more and yet more meaning for itself." (293) Wilson sees intentionality as a force which imposes order on the chaotic world that surround human beings and infuses meaning to the experiences. In his paper *Phenomenology as a Mystical Discipline*, Wilson interprets the Husserlian idea of intentionality in the following words:

Husserl could see that intentionality is far more significant than mere 'about-ness. He saw that *all perception is intentional*. If I do not fire my attention at something, I don't see it – or rather, I see it 'mechanically', hardly *noticing* it. If I look at my watch absent-mindedly, I do not notice the time and have to look again, this time 'intending' it. And if I can choose what I pay attention to, intentionality is an act of freedom. And if we can change our thoughts, we can change our lives, change the world. More to the point, we can change our *inner* worlds. (16)

Wilson's novel, *The Philosopher's Stone*, is the first major work where the Husserlian idea of intentionality can be contextualized. Human experiences are situated in a given horizon which is a fundamental trait of intentionality. The intentionality of an experience means what possible horizons it holds and what are the potentialities of conscious life at a particular time. Novel's protagonist, Howard Lester is in search of some wider horizons, which will be realised by an intensification of consciousness – "a curiously optimistic impulse that drives us to transcend our imprisonment in times" (Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone* 41). Howard's and Littleway's experiments (on inducing longevity) on Dick reveal that man's "ability to focus, to concentrate the attention" (76) is an evolutionary impulse. "Consciousness is intentional - that you have to *focus* it or you don't see anything." (76). And this holds good for one's perceptions and other mental acts too. Intentionality plays a vital role in grasping the meaning and making the sense of phenomenon. It works within the noesis to create the noema. Wilson adds one more dimension to the concept of intentionality by saying that consciousness is 'relational'. When it is working properly, it keeps relating new meanings, which it picks up with the right hand, to the old meanings, which are held in a bunch in the left hand. Wilson uses an analogy to convey it. He compares a healthy consciousness to a spider's web, with spider in the centre. The present moment is the hub of the web. However, the significance of one's existence relies on those delicate strands that extend to distant times and locations, as well as the vibrations that reach you via the network. Wilson understands relationality as a dimension of intentionality by virtue of which one's experiences become meaningful and gain value.

It is to understand the individual units in the background of the total. The different experiences with a certain horizon of an act are connected to each other in meaning constitution. Husserl says that an object is constituted in certain "connections of consciousness" or "synthesis of experiences", in which the same object is represented in all the different ways compatible with its remaining "self-identical" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 101). In a metaphysical sense, Wilson believes that an increase in the relational quality of consciousness can increase the human longevity. Howard Lester and Henry Littleway explore the possibilities of prolonging human life which the later thinks lie in the intensification of human consciousness. Apparently, they work on this intensification in terms of physiology which actually is an extended metaphor for changing human perception and consciousness in terms of intentionality. Wilson is not interested in hard problems of consciousness but explores

it to phenomenological ends. He is interested in “curing the failure of the creative urge, which actually is not to be restored by any surgery but by recourse to an intentional phenomenology.” (Dossor 109) So, Wilson’s ‘relationality’ and Husserl’s “synthetic consciousness” (Husserl, *Paris Lectures* xxxiii) are one and the same thing. Both work towards the construction of the ‘intended object’ with all its retentions and protentions and horizons.

Lester puts forth the instance of a hypnotist who cures his patient by changing his perception about the things which frustrate him. “The hypnotist can often evoke a response of self-sacrifice and endurance that the subject would be quite unable to evoke in himself” (87). How does he do so? The subject, surrenders his subjectivity to the hypnotist - “submit [his] will completely to him”, (87) who in turn works on his intentionality to bring the change. Under ordinary circumstances man’s energy levels remain low and he holds an infirm subjectivity which hardly has any spare energy to focus or ‘intend’. His beam of attention flags. Consciousness is energy and if energy is available, it can become intentional. Any purpose or interest summons the energies and the hand of intentionality grabs the object of its purpose. Wilson uses an image, to understand this phenomenon, “when you are deeply interested, your consciousness is like a searchlight focused on quite a large area of the spider’s web, or fishing net. You see a lot of ‘relations’” (103). Wilson argues that “*life is sustained by will*” (103). The moment man’s will slackens, he becomes unfocussed, his energies dissipate and meaninglessness creeps in and eventually he lands in ‘life-failure’. Intentionality is the antidote to this life-failure, which can defeat the passivity and give rise to a new consciousness. Lester points out that “For several hundreds of years now, evolution has been aiming at creating a new type of human being, who sees the world with new eyes *all the time*, who can readjust his mind a hundred times a day to *see the familiar as strange*” (106) To see *the familiar as strange* is an act of ‘intentionality’, An individual has to actively shift his perspective to see it from an angle he may have missed due to the habituation of his own thought. It is to create a new perception, to see with the new eyes. Lester means to say that the moment one gains control over the powers of the pre frontal cortex one becomes able to widen the beam of attention at will and see as much of the ‘fishing net’ as one likes, thus defeating the growing automatism. Wilson explains thus:

Think a moment; as I look out of this open doorway at my lawn, with the trees just putting out green leaves and a thrush singing noisily, I am not really 'seeing' my garden; I am receiving light of a certain wave length and sound of a certain pitch, and I have learned to distinguish the light green of the lime trees from the darker green of the fuchsias in the way that a good musician can immediately tell the difference between an alto and tenor saxophone, or a piccolo and a flute. What my senses receive is mere energy; *I* clothe it with colour and sound and warmth. This is a miracle; that is to say, it cannot be 'broken down' into simpler terms. Obviously, our powers of synthesising 'reality' out of dead energy are incredible. (118)

Wilson also understands it in the idea of *preparedness* – when energy builds to be directed on a certain action. Dossor remarks that, "intentionality is, of course, preparedness. It is a dynamic openness to intensified meaning." (107) After the Neuman alloy is inserted in Lester's brain, he gains great powers of concentration, intuition and time vision, which is symbolic of the intentionality of consciousness. He realises that when life progressively surpasses the automatism of the territory it has invaded, it transforms from a beleaguered garrison into an army determined to conquer. And with a consistent willpower effort, humans can consciously boost the brain's ability for concentration. Unlike Husserl, Wilson turns metaphysical and considers this 'beam of intentionality' as a force that can sometimes become malevolent and the cause of 'evil eye' cast on somebody. Lester adds that all his study and experimentation has made him to conclude that he could now explain the intentionality of consciousness in terms of a large deal of psychical occurrences. The deeper parts of the mind are capable of conjuring up all kinds of foreign bogies, and humans are more capable of self-hypnosis than is commonly realized.

Intentionality feeds on intuition. Intentionality reveals the mental states and affairs of intuition which in turn work for intentionality. Through intuition human beings comprehend the object in its wholeness, which makes the consciousness intentional. Lester proves it, when after his operation, he discovers that sometimes all he needed to do was to gaze at an object in order for his mind to almost literally reach out and grasp it. Lester recognises a sharpness and intensity in his senses. He suddenly

realises as if he had awoken from some sleep and can experience the things with a renewed perception. Every perception became a symphony with an orchestra at this moment of insight. Lester witnesses an increase in his powers of concentration and “as if consciousness could clench itself like a fist.” (238) According to Husserl, it is these intuitive acts which makes one’s subjective consciousness intentional and enables one to grasp the essence of things. It is the most reliable faculty of mind to access and gather facts without subjective intervention. Moran while interpreting Husserlian notions of intentionality, remarks that “as different modalities of intentionality, phenomenology engages in certain ideal processes of grasping the objects and the truths about them.” (82)

In his novel, *The Mind Parasites*, Wilson explicitly declares that when he began practicing Husserlian methods, the first thing he discovered was that, although being readily apparent to all, humans have been ignoring a very basic truth about existence, that the weak beam of attention they focus on the outside world is the real reason behind the low quality of human life and consciousness. *The Mind Parasites* symbolizes the human consciousness in the ‘natural attitude’ wherein humans are in the hold of automatism and habituality. A phenomenological analysis of the novel reveals that these states are a consequence of man’s naivety and taken for granted attitude with which he lives his everyday life. In such states he loses the freshness of his perceptions which can be regained only after releasing the powers of intentionality. Wilson contends that consciousness can be changed by intentionality. Austin’s fight against the parasites is to bracket off one’s habit bound existence and release the powers of intentionality. Wilson compares intentionality to the inner focusing muscle which is primary in apprehending the phenomenal world. Man’s ability to grasp meaning is due to his ‘intentionality’, his ability to fire his attention outwards, and simultaneously to maintain a strength *inside*; for it is this contraction of inner and outer pressures by which he ‘feedbacks’ meaning. Familiarity weakens one’s muscle of intentionality and makes the perceptions shadowy. Earlier in the novel Austin has a contrary experience when he glances at a muddy pool. He states thus:

As I was taking the clothes from the line, my mind still in Nineveh, I happened to notice this pool, and forgot, for a moment, where I was or what I was doing there. As I looked at it, the puddle lost all familiarity

and became as alien as a sea on Mars. I stood staring at it, and the first drops of rain fell from the sky, and wrinkled its surface. At that moment I experienced a sensation of happiness and of insight such as I had never known before. (37)

One of the important ideas in the novel that is deeply connected to intentionality is self-renewal. In the natural attitude, a person loses the power of self-renewal and the accumulated tensions make him slave to the world around. This deprives him of the 'meaning perception.' and gives rise to passive consciousness in which intentionality works unconsciously. The cogito of the noesis is almost absent to create the noema which could have infused meaning to the experience at hand. It operates through a non-egoic intentionality which Husserl refers as 'sleep.' Wilson wants to say that man must learn to contact his own deepest levels in order to re-energize his consciousness. In Husserlian sense it is to bring the processes of intentionality to awareness. In his Kaizo article titled *Renewal*, Husserl says that self-knowledge enables humans to free themselves from the prejudices of daily living and allows them to be motivated by grounded rational motives realizing the idea of what Husserl calls 'genuine humanity.' (Chi Yu 147.152) Wilson, in fact, makes it explicit that "Husserl renewed his courage and phenomenology is the best way to uncover the structure of consciousness." (73)

Whenever Austin finds himself out of the parasites' hold, he feels these powers and witnesses a vitality and meaningfulness in his experiences. He gains the ability to control his consciousness at will. Wilson experiences that there would be undoubtedly a profound sensation of mental comfort, an end to oppression, and an increase in vigor and optimism. There would be a dozen artistic marvels produced in this initial burst of enthusiasm. Humanity would respond as if it were a group of kids on the last day of school. Man's energies would then shift inward.

Austin comes to know that parasites have less power over the fully conscious mind which means that intentionality makes human beings more attentive to their experiences and imparts meaning to them. "Every intention is attention" says Merleau Ponty and attention is "I can" (Moran 173) Austin learns that man must get the knack of using the mind properly which involves a close examination of his perceptions and feelings. Wilson says that it is akin to adjust a pair of binoculars. You turn the wheel and everything is a blur. Suddenly, a single extra turn makes everything become clear and sharp. Wilson clarifies it thus:

The conscious human mind ‘scans’ the universe all the time. ‘The wakeful life of the ego is a perceiving’. It is like an astronomer scanning the skies for new planets. Now an astronomer discovers new planets by comparing old star photographs with new ones. If a star has moved, then it isn’t a star, but a planet. And our minds and feelings are also constantly engaged in this process of scanning the universe for ‘meanings’. A ‘meaning’ happens when we compare two lots of experience, and suddenly understand something about them both. (91)

This understanding is created by what Husserl calls as the ‘synthetic consciousness’. Intentionality brings change in one’s perceptions which in turn changes the meanings of the experiences. Wilson concludes that whether an individual is a statesman, scientist, or poet, when he views life in this way, he gains a great sense of courage and strength as well as an understanding of the purpose of human evolution and what life is all about.

Human beings are the victims of their own moods and feelings and they get used to what happen to them, but these things stop happening once they focus on their own minds. Attention infuses intensity in one’s perceptions that leads to greater comprehension of the situation. The words like ‘probe’ and ‘mole,’ which Austin and Reich employ in archaeological digging has a metaphorical significance – something that an individual uses to unravel the innerscapes. They symbolise the human will which does the miracle or what Husserl calls the ‘archer behind the arrow’. Austin states that, “Reich’s mind soared like a hawk released from its lead. He predicted the day when we would be able to raise the ruins of Kadath to the surface with no machinery of any sort, and when man would be able to travel to Mars by a spontaneous act of will” (97). Through the medium of science fiction device, Wilson is establishing the intentional powers of human consciousness.

Wilson in dealing with human sexuality understands it in terms of emotional intentionality. He describes it as “a matter of ‘focusing’ emotion” (100). Fleishman who becomes the disciple of Austin and Reich states that sexual impulse in man is basically a romantic impulse. The sheer power of the sexual impulse is the power of the god-like in man, and a sexual stimulus can arouse this power as a mountain can

arouse his perception of beauty. It is the human mind that imparts intensity to the perceptions. Fleishman further adds that “the sexual orgasm is actually a focusing and concentrating of the ‘beam’ of consciousness (or attention). The beam of attention suddenly carries more power, and the result is a feeling of intense pleasure.” (107) Wilson wants man to take control of the territory of mind and know how it works and once he understands, he comes to know how meaning is constituted by mind. Sexual drive reveals the secret of the intentional powers of mind which ordinarily remains concealed in the natural attitude. “Sexual life arises as an egoless hyletic life that is put in motion by passive intentionality, coitus intentionality, and is transformed into active intentionality, namely a meaning-giving activity.” (Ferrarello 42)

Fleishman develops a searchlight reflector to eradicate the vagueness and diffuseness in his beam of attention. And it is only after Austin intensifies his beam of attention that he succeeds in defeating the parasites. “I gathered all the force of my mind, and lashed out at them, as if firing a cannon right into the midst of them.” (112). Man has the potential to concentrate his energies and stop becoming the victim of circumstances which in turn can open new horizons of existence. Wilson contends that men like poets know these powers which enable them to bring some freedom and meaning to life. But ordinarily it is only a crisis or emergency situation which suddenly releases these powers. The setbacks of life shocks man out of his laziness and through disciplined effort, allows him, to reshape and strengthen his inner self. An active will is the key to one’s psychological health. Intentionality entails an awakening to one’s own possibility. Wilson’s method of self-analysis attempts to rid man of his unconsciousness as symbolised by parasites and through intentionality steer towards the horizons of intensity consciousness. Unlike Husserl, Wilson believes that a properly employed intentionality can engender powers of psychokinesis. Austin remarks that, “I had been practicing phenomenological disciplines simply meant that I was able to direct a more powerful stream of mental energy into psychokinesis.” (97) Intentionality creates more possibilities to apprehend a particular experience in a more meaningful and purposeful way.

This possibility, to a good extent, is realised by Damon Reade, the protagonist of the novel *The Glass Cage*. In his *Voyage to a Beginning*, Wilson states the purpose of sketching the character of Damon Reade thus:

I wanted to show a man who has developed his 'radar' by simply concentrating upon what he considers to be the underlying reality of experience, and working upon the assumption that the universe means well by him. Reade knows intuitively that the human will is something deeper than personal self-assertion or calculated effort. It is the invisible part of our total being, like the part of the iceberg below water, and is inaccessible to ordinary conscious demands (Wilson 108)

Emphasising the role intuition plays in knowing the truth, Husserl says that it (intuition) is a kind of pure 'seeing' bereft of any kind of thinking and has a mystical character. He specifically referred to it in a mystical context when he suggested that "we hark back to the speech of the mystics when they describe the intellectual seeing which is supposed not to be a discursive knowledge" (Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology* 50). Husserl also said that certainty is only possible through intuition, which leads to absolute truth. "Our cognitive acts and 'lived experiences' or 'thought processes' can become knowledge only when they are confirmed or illuminated by fulfilling intuitions" (Moran 96). The intuitional component in an act of knowing brings the awareness about the object or state of affairs which satisfies the intentional content of the act of meaning i.e., the awareness of the object. Intuition is thus the traditional way of perceiving the invisible? Reade 'intends' the underlying reality which he detects through intuition. Reade's pursuit of George Sundheim is a gradual growth of his intentionality which brings intuitive certainty in his actions. Though Husserl thinks it to be the part of the structure of consciousness, Wilson believes it to be a move towards evolutionary consciousness. Contrary to this, in case of George Sundheim, the arrow of intentionality backfires, it works in a negative direction – towards crime and destruction, rather like some disastrous machine that becomes recklessly out of control and destroys an entire city. Or, as Wilson would have perhaps put it, 'poisoned an entire culture'. Thus, human beings change their lives by phenomenological investigation of intentional acts. By changing intentionality which Wilson too advocates, they change their consciousness.

The central message of the novel *Necessary Doubt* is that man is on the edge of a new development. This belief is embodied in the self-renewal of its protagonist Karl Zweig which Wilson believes lies in the intentionality of consciousness. Gustav Neumman, the pupil turned master of Zweig, acts as a goad to bring this renewal in

the latter, as Zweig gradually recognizes that “as I understand something about Neumman, I also understand something about myself” (198) Zweig who has suspended his old self through the mental discipline succeeds in releasing his intentional powers and attain a new state of consciousness. Wilson uses the symbol of nueromysin drug to convey these powers, which proves instrumental in changing the perception and consciousness of Zweig. Nicholas Tredell implicitly connects this to intentionality when he remarks, “Wilson uses the motif of nueromysin not to recommend drug taking but to symbolize the enlargement of consciousness that he believed should be one day attainable by mental discipline and will-power.” (Tredell, ch. 6) Neumman has developed it into a philosophical principle as Zweig reads it from his article that man needs to “isolate the will from the reflexes” (177) and this is the possible antidote to the ‘limitation’ that fetters human consciousness. Zweig’s pursuit of Neumman is a phenomenological analysis of his own consciousness. His quest is to come back to himself which Wilson makes explicit through the quest itself. Husserl says that intentionality brings more meaning to one’s perceptions and Wilson believes that it expands the consciousness and enables the person to perceive the objects of experience in a new way, which is quite different from the perceptions of the natural attitude. According to Dossor, “Wilson insists that if we are to extend consciousness, we need to know something about how consciousness works ... consciousness has a grasping function – that it reaches out with octopus-like tentacles and attempts to clutch at and devour large pieces of reality.” (60) Wilson urges his readers to fully understand the discipline of controlling the perspective and being conscious of the selective acts one undertakes, in order to regain the freedom to perceive things from any angle. This way every individual chooses his perceptions and creates his own life-world. Intentionality, which ordinarily remains underutilised, is a key to open the doors to a wider reality. It is a living, vital tool which can transform man’s experience of the reality. Weigel describes Zweig’s journey as a “pursuit of meaning” (Weigel 83) This meaning is concealed in the powers of intentionality, which leads an individual to an evolutionary consciousness.

Wilson in his *Sorme trilogy*, depicts these evolutionary intimations through the journey of its protagonist Gerard Sorme, whose varied experiences reveal that man’s perceptions of the reality depend on the intentionality of his consciousness. Intentionality can change one’s perceptions and give a glimpse of the underlying reality. The *trilogy* more specifically depicts different dimensions of crime and human

sexuality and follows Sorme's psychological odysseys, who deeply observes and analyses his experiences and gradually reveals the intentionality of such experiences. Sorme is actively seeking a deeper comprehension of the human condition. This condition has been majorly explored in the treatment of murder and sexuality, which Wilson time and again treats as modes for intenser consciousness. One of the Wilson's major contributions, which must be recognised, is his phenomenological understanding of sexual impulse. He finds the source and secret of man's life and consciousness in the sexual impulse. According to Wilson, "sex is a projection of the evolutionary intentionality" (Wilson, *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* 262) A proper use of this intentionality directs the energies in the positive direction which results in the evolution of consciousness.

In first novel of the trilogy, *Ritual in the Dark*, Sorme tells Austin Nunne that "I am convinced that life can be lived at twenty times its present intensity. . . somehow. I spend all I my life looking for the way to it." (8) Sorme's search is how to make consciousness more intentional which he believes would create "a vision of the total meaning of life." He anticipates that freedom is inherent in this intensity. Sidney Champion hints upon the same fact when he comments on the theme of *Ritual*: "a man who is completely inactive can have no identity; his 'identity' can be discovered by himself only in action." (178). Sorme hopes "a 'definitive act' would lift his life permanently - for better or worse - above this sense of *not having started*." (178) Wilson's portraiture of the three main characters in the novel, Gerard Sorme, Austin Nunne and Oliver Glasp represent the intellectual, emotional and physical dimensions of existence. Wilson contends that when body, intellect and heart act in unison, they enhance intentionality and change the perception of reality which in turn change the quality of consciousness. Sorme in his conversation with Nunne, emphasises that being your own boss and having a purpose are among the greatest things that can happen to you, as it gives "some moments of insights into yourself" (80) Nunne stimulates Sorme to recognise these powers within him which will free him from immediacy and triviality. Later in the novel, Sorme admits the same feeling to Nunne when he points out that "since I've met you, I've begun to recover the old sense of purpose like being at the point of discovering something" (105). Sorme gradually realises that this sense of purpose is inherent in the powers of intentionality.

One of the Wilson's important contentions has been that man's sexual experience gives him a glimpse into the intentional consciousness wherein his attention is so focused and energies concentrated that it gives him some insights into freedom. Sorme's conversation with Oliver Glasp reveals that man's slavery to sex is just a need to regain something that naturally belongs to him. It would be an internal condition of tremendous intensity. There wouldn't be any more sex crime then. It'd be a state of such inner power that other people would be superfluous. The need for a woman is only the need to regain that intensity for a moment.

Husserl says that it is through intentionality that reality can be apprehended in its essence. "It is intentionality which characterizes *consciousness* in the pregnant sense of the term, and justifies us in describing the whole stream of experience as at once a stream of consciousness and unity of *one* consciousness." (*Ideas* 235) The old man conveys the same thing to Sorme through an image when he points out that "A tree can be itself by standing still. A man becomes himself only by making a bonfire of his potentialities. In the light of action, he sees his reality as it disappears in a new persona." (Wilson, *Ritual in the Dark* 178) This implies that intentionality can change perception and enable one to see the world as one would like to see it. Man's experiential constructs can be manipulated and organised through intentionality. Sorme tells Glasp that, "I stopped wondering whether the world's ultimately good or evil. I felt that the world didn't matter a damn. What mattered was me, whether I saw it as good or evil." (196) In this way human beings impart meaning to their lives. Sorme's *Bildung*, in fact, lies in this change of perception which he gradually comes to know through his experiences, and which he confirms, can be initiated by intentionality. Tredell remarks that "Through his experiences, Sorme gains insight into himself and his own possibilities" (Tredell, ch. 4). Sorme describes this feeling as a sudden longing for far more freedom than an individual possesses, an insight into freedom. Sorme ultimately realizes that man's perception of the world is all that matters and this perception has its controls in the power of intentionality. This reveals Wilsons lifelong belief in the phenomenological exploration of human consciousness and experience. In his *Access to Inner worlds*, he avers:

Perception is a sculptor, a moulder of reality ... I fire it like an arrow.
If I am feeling bored and passive, then I can scarcely muster the energy

to pull back the string, and arrow falls a few feet away. But if my expected reward fills me with desire, I draw the bowstring back as far as it will go, and the arrow thuds into its target. (107)

In the course of his novel, *Man Without a Shadow*, one learns that humanity needs to create a kind of man who will carry a deep analysis of consciousness to triumph over the greatest barrier of original sin and the threshold of indifference. Wilson believes these powers to be hidden in man's sexual impulse and the novel, *Man Without a Shadow* takes this exploration further by laying bare the intentional structures of consciousness. Colin Wilson contends that human sexuality is essentially ninety percent imagination, with reality playing a very minor role. Dossor makes it clear that, "imagination is a powerful form of applied intentionality and the most dramatic and powerful form of imagination in modern man seemed to be demonstrated in his sexuality" (118) Wilson shows that sex has a bearing on the way a person perceives the world. In the beginning, Sorme declares that, "the value of sex is in its *life-enhancing* value not in sex itself." (23) the intensity of man's sexual impulse is a part of the total intensity that makes him what he is—an intelligent being, responding with unusual directness to the problems of modern civilization. Sorme demystifies this impulse and the powers hidden in it. He states thus:

Sex is the only power I know that can defeat the awful pressure of the present. The world looks blank and meaningless, gray, pointless, mocking my brevity and hunger with its permanence and serenity. Only when sexual desire blazes in me can I overcome its indifference; the desire turns on it like a flame thrower; my body suddenly carries a current of thousands of volts, surging from some main down in my subconscious; I become realer than the world; harder, intenser, more lasting. (26)

Wilson calls these experiences as *vital* which constitute only ten percent; ninety percent is just a *ritual*. He expresses his astonishment on the way sex infuses this vitality in an instant. "Only sex surprises me all the time by filling the act with a vitality that seems to rise of its own accord." (31) Sorme minutely analyses his sexual

experiences and tries to unmask this confidence trickster. Wilson believes that sex momentarily connects human beings to some powerhouse, wherein, with greater concentration they achieve intenser consciousness. This intensity, however, can be achieved through music, poetry and painting as well. They act as stimuli to release the powers of mind, otherwise, Wilson believes, they are always at man's disposal. Husserl names these stimuli as the 'affective forces' that makes awareness lively. As these forces fade man slips back to his ordinary states of consciousness. They, however, provide the cue to understand and manage one's energies. In fact, mankind is still unable to understand the strange powers of mind. But one day, someone will discover how to use that power to live twice as long as at present, and how to avoid the present dreariness and lack of direction. Human beings will learn how these powers impart meaning to one's experiences. In Husserlian phenomenology, *intentionality*, metaphorized as the "intentional arrow of consciousness" characterizes the human meaning making activity. (Eckartsberg 147) and how human beings are directed towards the objects of meaning in the world. Husserl introduced the fruitful metaphor of the horizon to characterize the pathways of meaning that contribute to the formation of the meaning of the object attended to, but originate from other domains of the world of consciousness that are present but invisible or not yet visible. Wilson holds that this meaning is imposed from within, when something catches a person's attention and the experience becomes meaningful for him. And it is always the "I" which imposes meaning on the experiences. So, several life experiences provide man a glimpse into the intentional nature of consciousness which opens up new horizons of meaning. Wilson contends that these experiences provide a clue to perceive the ordinary experiences with the same intensity. Such experiences are not illusions; rather, they are peeks into a future that could materialize at any time. Surely, sex is the same case.

Wilson believes that the antidote to 'indifference threshold' is to create highest degrees of concentration which is the only way to overcome one's 'natural life'. It is Wilson's own contention that consciousness can be changed through intentionality. Wilson wants to convey that it is the inner focusing which makes the things happen. This focusing also occurs during an orgasm which tightens the inner self. Everyday consciousness is like a big, diffused pool of light, and the orgasm concentrates it into a single, tiny scorching point like a magnifying glass. Wilson conceives these

possibilities in human will which can catapult man into another form of consciousness. “The will is the compeller of destiny. Merely for the will to spring erect and *want something* is enough to set the wheels into motion.” Wilson is interested in human engineering – *evolution made conscious* (68) He believes that human mind as a spring, is capable of propelling one back towards the things people cherish, ensuring that their impact remains profoundly fulfilling. Man’s passion of life could be multiplied tenfold if the mind is properly employed. Sexual experience provides a glimpse into the proper use of mind, it points to some mechanism which needs to be understood to bring intensity in one’s consciousness. From Wilson’s ideas, it can be inferred that the ability of a sexual orgasm to focus and narrow the beam of awareness seems to be mediated by some sort of trigger mechanism. There must be a switch in the human mind that can increase consciousness; this is evident to anyone who has had an orgasm and then tries to focus with the same intensity with regular willpower.

The conversation between Sorme and Cunningham in the novel throws further light on Wilson’s ideas regarding how mind works and comprehends its objects. His interest is in intensification of consciousness which he understands, lies in human will, purpose and imagination. Husserlian concept of intentionality too focuses on the mechanism of consciousness and the way it comprehends the objects. Wilson interprets this mechanism aptly thus:

Consider what happens if you go into a bookshop and find a book you’ve always wanted to own. Your consciousness puts out a kind of arm, a pseudopodium, and envelops the book. For a few hours—or perhaps days—you are intensely aware of the book. You keep saying to yourself: ‘I’ve got it at last.’ Then your consciousness relaxes; the arm is withdrawn. You get used to the book and no longer feel grateful that you possess it. (120)

Cunningham employs the techniques of magic and orgies to discover the ‘true will’ which is another manifestation of the intentional powers of consciousness. But Wilson rejects his ways as negative and advocates a phenomenological analysis to discover it. Wilson firmly believes that intentionality improves human life existentially. It has implications for the values and purpose of life. A person’s actions assume meaning when the beam of his attention is strong and focused. Wilson puts across an important

understanding that the only way out is an internal strength so great that some values would stand the test of time. A man of that strength would have an unfathomable passion for life, and that passion would inspire him to pursue ever greater strength.

Both Wilson and Husserl, who have set out to lay bare the nature of consciousness, actually deal with the life forces – the energies. The way these forces are channelised affect the consciousness they give rise to. Intentionality is a concentration and focusing of these energies which are bound to create meaning perception. *Shadow* tries to recognise these powers in sexual impulse which Wilson believes could pave the way for some higher state of being.

Like *Shadow*, *The God of the Labyrinth* is considered as an erotica which tries to understand the human sexual impulse and the mystery it holds. In his introduction to the novel, Gary Lachman remarks:

This inner force—what Wilson, borrowing from Husserl, calls ‘intentionality’—can be elicited by crisis or threat, or even by a determined act of concentration. It can also arrive unbidden, of its own volition, in what G.K. Chesterton called a sense of ‘absurd good news’. But it is most pleasantly, immediately, and effectively awakened by sex. (10)

Sorme’s obsession with sex is to discover these intentional powers in sexual drive and to find out some other ways of raising these powers that would change his state of consciousness to a higher form. It is a recognition that sex triggers some inner concentration which has a separate mechanism than sex itself. Wilson’s whole endeavour is to understand this mechanism which is important to change the quality of consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology, however, does not engage explicitly in any qualitative change of consciousness, nevertheless, reveals different layers of consciousness.

In the very beginning of the novel, Wilson says that “the mind is like a small engine that can carry the boat upstream – or at least enable it to stay in the same place.” (Wilson, *The God of the Labyrinth* 18) Wilson sees the glimpse of this power in the sexual impulse which conveys the truth that when an individual re-connects all his faculties, he grasps the meaning of any experience. Sorme’s pursuit of Esmond Donlley, gives the latter, several such insights into nature of consciousness. According

to him, sex is the philosopher's stone that could transform the everyday consciousness' base metals into vision, and the alchemist is a transmuter of consciousness rather than a transmuter of metals. Human beings witness this sort of recognition in their other experiences when they perceive the things with their full being without any distortions of the mind. Sorme avers:

I would argue that our certainties are not seen, but felt, as I now feel the warmth of the sun upon my hand as I write. I would argue that our habit of attempting to get at truth by the method of seeing or reasoning has blinded us to its true nature, like a man who tries to tell the difference between Canary sack and cold tea by sight alone. The mystery of the world becomes apparent to us in moments when our spirits are profoundly moved or disturb'd, if the disturbance be harmonious. (100)

With a harmonious being i.e. intentional consciousness, an individual's spirits always apprehend the objects of experience in their essence, leading to meaning perception, and this ordinarily can be realised in sexual experience. Sorme now and then slips into the consciousness of Donnelly and reaches to the same conclusions that "sex holds key to the secrets of more intense consciousness" (119). He wants to learn the trick of achieving this intensity consciousness, which he thinks imbues meaning to his experiences. After some moments of intense concentration, Sorme realises and states that, "I can almost watch the pressure of my consciousness rising, until things no longer seem dull and neutral. It is exactly like having your first drink of the evening—that warm glow that is not situated in the stomach, but in consciousness." (155). Husserl says that intentionality works like an arrow towards its object. In fact, the word is derived from 'intend' which means 'point to'. In his, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, Husserl says that every act of attention is characterized by "a glancing ray" (236) that emanates from the ego and is directed to the focus of attention. It is a matter of total attention which is bound to create meaning. Esmond Donnelly as well as Sorme notice that every time they are sexually stimulated, meaning returns.... So, he (Donnelly) "pursued sex as a way of recovering meaning" (206)

The sect of phoenix that appears in the novel engages in the same quest of exploring human sexuality and seek this meaning. Esmond expresses this meaning when he says that "Our purpose is not to degrade and pollute religious feelings with vengery, but to raise vengery to the level of a religious feeling.' But how was this to be done?" (221) The sexual forces that run in human body (what Reich calls as the orgone energy) need to be channelised in a focused way to bring the qualitative change in consciousness. Wilson, however, sees sexuality as a way to understand how one can bring intensity in consciousness in other spheres of life. Here Wilson draws out his phenomenological explanation of all human contact with the outside world, including how the sexual desire exemplifies intentionality. As a feeling intentionality sex leads to "the awakening of the ego as a meaningful and aware unit which is the first form of objectivation through which undifferentiated matter is given to the just-born subject as a whole." (Ferrarello 25) Wilson perceives sexual drive as a "key to the keepers of the keys of being" and establishes a connection between sex and mystical experience. He explains that if human beings maintain the discipline, sex would allow them to see a level of mental focus that would elevate them to godlike status; that the body is too hefty for the little spring of willpower, and that people are like grandfather clocks powered by watchsprings. Human beings only seem to create a spring strong enough for a grandfather clock during sex. Wilson's prime concern is to learn to access that boundless reservoir of will which holds the secret to the meaning of existence.

This power of intentionality in sex brings new awakening in consciousness and opens new horizons of possibility – the new vistas of will and consciousness. Dossor remarks that "sex is impersonal, not in a sense of being 'indifferent' to others but in a sense of seeking to subject to a will to power." (120) Wilson uses several images to convey it. At a place he states that, "In the sexual orgasm, the voltage power of their minds surges, and they become momentarily aware that they are not forty-watt bulbs, but two hundred and fifty, five hundred, a thousand." (268). Wilson connects these hidden powers of will and imagination to man's optimism for life. In another image he states that, "I have a sense of being used for a purpose that goes beyond my own, and seems to endow me with new powers. There is a sense of inevitability and ease, and I feel mildly surprised, like a sparrow that suddenly finds itself flying at the speed of a jet aeroplane." (278) In intentionality is hidden freedom and possibilities of transforming man's existential reality. Wilson believes that intentionality opens the new horizons of one's being. It is a way to self-discovery

which leads to the evolution of consciousness. Sorme's and Esmond's explorations into sex and self, convey the same evolutionary intimations. Esmond shows Sorme that the only thing that determines sexual desire is one's imagination or intentionality.

Sorme later admits that “across two centuries our minds reached like outstretched hands, and clasped” (279). Both set out to break the habit of losing themselves in habit of seductions but to redeem the powers hidden in the sexual drive. Wilson tries to convey that the ordinary sexual experience can lead human beings to an extra-ordinary vision that relies on the emergence of fresh faculties and willpower. Sorme wants to cease the experience and lay bare these powers which he later finds developing a remarkable power of concentration in him. This Wilson believes, will give access to what he calls as the “hidden springs of purpose” (304). Sorme makes it clear to Nuri that it is a psychological ploy akin to leaping onto a charging horse. Wilson employs striking images to create an understanding of these intentional powers of mind. Sorme concludes that more active and alive a person becomes, the more he feels that he can command his body remotely, just like a falconer commands his bird. And at a particular moment in the ‘mental cycle’, he can attain a level of power over this body that he could never have imagined. This allows him to do a whole range of bizarre things, like project his so-called astral body far enough to see. Sorme's pursuit of the Esmond was to understand this ‘mental cycle’ – how to enrich one's mental powers and change the quality of the experience. He is in search of some meaning in human existence, the meaning that he finds accessible to human mind. What is needed is the right way of going to find it and one of the commonest ‘meaning experiences’ comes through sex, and therefore sex makes a valuable starting point for this search of meaning. In his *New Pathways in Psychology*, Wilson avers:

Man controls his physical environment by means of his physical powers. He controls his inner world by means of his mental powers – ‘intentions’. His future evolution depends upon increased ability to use ‘intentions’, these mental pseudopodia that determine his thoughts, moods, ideas, emotions, insights. The intentions do not create ideas or insights; they only *uncover* meaning. (207)

Thus, the whole *trilogy* could be read as a sustained effort to understand the intentionality of consciousness which the experiences like sex bring into full light. It can also be inferred that how will and imagination as intrinsic parts of intentionality make a person's experiences meaningful and ordinarily it is the sexual drive which fetches one these insights.

Wilson's novel *The Black Room* is an analysis of human subjectivity and more so about how to create a disciplined subjectivity which will exist with an identity, independent of any external stimuli. Howard Dossor understands that "the black room is an instrument that can be used for the development of intentionality" (271) This Wilson believes, will impart some degree of control, and release the powers of will. Regarding the person, who subjects himself to the black room, David Moore in his essay *A Reflection on The Black Room* notes:

His mind would very much become *his own*, independent, to a degree, of the body, and strongly dictated or directed by an intensely active and powerful consciousness; a higher, more fully integrated 'I'. Moreover, this would be an ultimate triumph for the human imagination, in which it would become an invaluable tool for defeating pessimism, and our tendency to a sense of diminishing returns as a result of our over-reliance on the robot. (Moore 4)

Kit Butler's experiments with the black room leads him to one of the important conclusions that only a "tremendous sense of purpose" (76) can sustain the inner strength. One's intentionality is inextricably linked with this sense of purpose. Without this sense man's subjectivity becomes fragmented accompanied with a dissipation of the attention. Kit asserts that "life is only worth living when the will is concentrated" (77). And it is in intentionality and will that the human being experiences his identity. The horizon of this potentiality always remains open and intentionality with its power of "I can" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 45) can change the perception and sense of any experience. In his *Novels to Some Purpose: The Fiction of Colin Wilson*, Nicolas Tredell remarks that *The Black Room* demonstrates the power of 'intentionality', as Wilson interpreted the term, and it is a matter of using this power in the right way. (Tredell). Wilson employs an apt image to convey that mostly human beings from inside are "full of disconnected crystals,

different feelings, thoughts, impulses,” what is needed is a “kind of inner heat that fuses many crystals into a block” (80) i.e. creation of a unified and integrated subjectivity. Essentially, intentionality, as Husserl puts it, is not a psychological state but a state of being which involves, to a greater or lesser degree, the totality of the person’s orientation to a given experience. Intentionality engenders a unified stream of consciousness. Intentionality means to be more conscious, more self-disciplined and this is what black room pushes one to. It pulls the consciousness out of its state of slumber and unites individual’s whole being. It rids the mind of its passivity and gives rise to what Wilson calls as the ‘bird’s eye view’. It is a shift to phenomenological stance as while attempting this ‘bird’s eye view’ it recognises the difference between passivity and intentionality. The experiences like black room pushes one to a certain inner pressure which, to use a Wilsonian phrase, *clenches* one’s will and pushes it upwards into a higher tier of self-control. Husserl too spoke of this necessity of subjective control over the things, the key to which lies in the intentionality of inner perception. He refers intentionality as ‘egological constitution’ in which the subjective consciousness synthesizes its perceptions and bestows sense and meaning upon them. This property of consciousness as being intentional tantamounts to its being aware or conscious of its inner and outer world. Wilson also understands it in terms of *vitality* which has its source in the subconscious. More intentional means more vitality as intentionality is about the subconscious drive of being more conscious and aware. In the novel, people at station K work towards this awareness by attempting to restore the intentional powers, the loss of which has been well recognised in the black room. It is an experiment that teaches “self-discipline that really shakes up the subconscious” (155). Kit while conversing with Gomolyaka points out that “the basic idea is that the will is a kind of muscle – a muscle of concentration. In periods of crisis or intense pleasure, the muscle becomes completely tense and you focus all your attention In these moments the will becomes really active.” (170) Kit believes that freedom lies in the strengthening of this will – the intensity consciousness - and not in pursuing the ideologies like communism and materialism as advocated by the different characters in the novel. Man’s indulgence in these types of -isms leads to the forfeiture of his subjectivity which not only remains subordinate to its concerns but is gradually is destroyed by it and rendered as an empty shell, an automaton.

Over the course of this novel, Butler compares his experiences of sexual encounter with Ruzena and those of the black room, that gives him further insights into

the nature of consciousness. He concludes that “consciousness sees its face in a mirror and realizes that it is active, not passive; that it has an inside that reaches out towards objects...” (219) Wilson believes that intensity of consciousness lies in the activeness of consciousness which gives one a feeling of strength. Echoing Husserl, he states that “consciousness is like a hand that is supposed to grasp things” (289) Normally this grasp is feeble which Wilson through his famous image parallels with ‘grandfather clocks driven by watchsprings.’ Intentionality is the key to strengthen this spring and induce the intensity-moment at will or the grasping power of the consciousness. And it is this intensity that will give rise to the consciousness in its real sense of word which otherwise is false, dependent on external stimuli. Wilson contends that this understanding has evolutionary implications for human beings, which would lead them to strength and ecstasy. Butler states thus:

Now here is my central point, which is the core of the whole matter. The whole process is subject to what you might call a law of increasing returns. When you pass a certain point. There is no longer a question of slipping backwards. It is simply a matter of suddenly grasping what consciousness is intended for, and realizing that the human race has been chasing shadows for two million years. They have assumed that consciousness is merely intended to reflect reality, when, in fact, it is intended to grasp it, to digest it. And their moments of ecstasy are merely the accidental result of good digestion. (291)

Wilson believes that man misses the meanings of his experiences because he truly hasn't yet developed an intentional consciousness. He fails to unify his being to attend a certain act and grasp the meanings. Butler tells Stauffmann that, “meanings are still there, whether he grasps them or not. And if you once discover that you can grasp them by making a tremendous effort of will.” (317)

One of the basic premises of the theory of phenomenology is that “what is real . . . is what is in the person's internal frame of reference, or subjective world”. (Davidson 40). According to Husserl, consciousness is a stream of lived experiences which constitute one's subjective life. A person actively creates a personal reality based upon different acts comprising beliefs, thoughts and desires. And all these acts, Husserl says, are ‘intentional’ which arise from a subjective self; thus, intentionality

imparts a sense of identity and agency to the acting subject or constitutes the self. It is an awareness of the subject's own self and the world surrounding him. There is a range of states of consciousness given to the degree of this awareness of the self. In this regard, Husserl contends that the subject can vary in terms of level of activity, from having "stepped back" from awareness into almost total dullness and complete passivity to "stepping forth" in an alertly active fashion. This level of activity or intentionality has implications for one's sense of self. Besides this, affectivity can also alter the intentionality of an individual. As intentionality comprises both active and passive components. Being conscious is not only a process of active willing, it also is a process of finding oneself attracted to certain options rather than others, of being moved in certain directions without having made a conscious choice. Thus, a person's sense of identity or constitution of personal identity involves both the active and passive modes of intentional constitution. Towards the end of the novel, Wilson uses a powerful image that urges the reader to pay attention, to make sure that his own 'intentionality' does not become flat and passive. And in moments of crisis, or imaginative insight, or sharpened intentionality the objective world rushes both inwards and outward to generate a dynamic, experienced as a fervent evolutionary lifeforce:

. . . the weight of cold metal in his hand brought a sudden hallucinatory memory of a perfume; it was so distinct that it might have been sprinkled on the furry lining of the collar that was now damp with his breath. It was the perfume that Jane had been wearing when she had said goodbye on Victoria Station; he had intended to ask her its name. This clear sense of another time and place brought with it a feeling of affirmation and detachment. He was intensely aware of the night, of the trees, of the flowing water and the snow-covered stones at the edge of the stream, and also of his own identity suspended amongst these things. But it seemed unimportant whether he was there or elsewhere. It was as if he could make time standstill by an act of concentration. (Wilson, *The Black Room* 347-48).

This is a sort of instinctive intentionality that emerges suddenly by smell, sight or sound of such objects. Kit was able to recognise his powers and experience the things with a sharpened intentionality which imbues him a stronger grip over his existence.

As a research method, phenomenology analyzes many aspects of self and identity. Wilson's novel *The Personality Surgeon* deals with these dimensions of consciousness, wherein these active and passive modes of intentionality affect the constitution of the self and identity. Charles Peruzzi, the protagonist of the novel confronts different personality types and analyzes how they constitute their sense of self while grappling with the complexities of their identity. Referring to a patient in the beginning of the novel, Dr Charles Peruzzi tells Topelius that the latter's patient has lost his sense of identity because he is unable to direct his intentionalities. He can be cured by "giving him a sense of purpose, a sense of identity" (7). This is how Wilson interprets Husserlian intentionality – in the form of sense of purpose, energy, will and imagination. In this case also, Wilson connects the patient's sense of identity with his will. Topelius loses his sense of direction once he leaves the company. Consequently, he ceases to exercise his free will and eventually loses all energy to sustain his intentionality. It seems as though will acts as a sort of pump, sustaining his vitality and energy levels. It appears as he has a cistern that held the energy, and it fills all the way to the top when he is optimistic and purposeful.

Charles applies Topelius' self-image theory on different individuals and works around their self-identity to cure them of their different inadequacies. Wilson owes these inadequacies to one's slackened will which he believes could be revived by creating a sense of identity – a unification in the flow of experience which marks the intentional character of human consciousness. Sharon Engstrom's facial tic has disturbed her sense of identity which has in turn affected her experiences of intentionality and sense of agency. A mere suggestion that her tic can be cured, restores her sense of self and a unification in her experiences of the things around her. Charles points out that, "we are always unsure of ourselves when we are unsure of the image we are presenting to the world." (45) In this regard, Husserl states that "I am only able to be aware of the world because it provides the very stuff of my awareness, an arena of the "pre-given" that I receive and take up in a more or less active fashion" (Davidson 4). Wilson gives intentionality its rightful place as an arrow towards conceptual widening, and, when aided by the intellect, actualities and creativity, expands exponentially, as it is only man's intuitively-driven insights – usually seeping

in from the transcendental ego, or hidden 'I' – that equips him with the key to that secret of Being, or, to say, as a part of his intentional quest for the meaning perception. Through intentionality, the characters in the novel make a conscious evolution towards a higher form of being. It is a constructive use of the energies that are constantly available to us. Human beings may change, depending how strongly they grasp things and perceive them, or they can lose control of their experiences if they are unable to maintain their intentionality.

Contemporary man acutely suffers from this fallacy. He easily slips to a quick fix culture. It is easier to watch TV or a movie or get busy with the social media sites than to engage oneself in the act of perception with an aim. A person becomes unable to work through his varying selves with a mind to self-development. Contemporary world has failed to create an environment to enhance the intentional powers in the right direction. Instead, it has given birth to a false crisis in the form of entertainment like sports and games which in their real and virtual forms lead to an uncaring existence. Such an existence subsequently cloy and pushes the individual to pessimism and depression, which to the most is stoically accepted. This is the modern man's existential choice where things just happen. Wilson draws attention to Husserl and notes that prejudices in humans extend beyond their intellect and feelings. It is purposeful for consciousness to be biased in the first place. Man, then, is accountable for his existence. One's intentional powers, when exercised appropriately, can lead to salvation, and this is the essential to laying a solid existential foundation. In order to do this, one must consistently work toward a level of consciousness, willpower, and focus in order to act from one's soul and find joy and freedom. "Tendency, attention, and interest are the three movements of the soul that explicate the transition from a not-operating to an operating will, from a lower spiritual level to a higher one." (Ferrarello 34) Wilson vehemently pronounces that intentionality is the tool to change consciousness. He perceives the potentiality of intentionality in human will and imagination. He considers intentionality as a possible way to transformation which would pave the way for the evolution of consciousness.

The novel *The Philosopher's Stone* demonstrates that consciousness is intentional and requires concentration in order to perceive anything. Lester and Littleway, the protagonists of the novel, envisage different possibilities inherent in intentionality which as a creative urge changes perception and consciousness. The

novel in terms of physiology conveys the powers of intentionality which have been described in the form of concentration, Intuition, will and imagination. Wilson views relationality as an aspect of intentionality that gives human experiences significance and meaning. In *The Mind Parasites*, Wilson connects intentionality with self-renewal, re-energizing consciousness for renewed perception. Intentionality acts as a focusing muscle which draws meaning out of the objects of experience. It is with will and attention that Austin and his associates, in their archaeological explorations, succeed in unravelling the mysteries of consciousness. This idea of self-renewal as the symbol of regeneration of intentional powers recurs in the novel *Necessary Doubt*. Karl Zweig the protagonist of the novel brings self-renewal through intentionality. He succeeds in breaking the reflexes, unleashing the powers of will which lead him to the next step of the evolutionary ladder. The novel *The Glass Cage* demonstrates that intuition as the essence of intentionality brings certainty in knowing the truth. Damon Reade the protagonist of the novel apprehends the underlying reality through intuition. Reade's search for George Sundheim represents a progressive development of his intentionality, which gives his acts an intuitive certainty.

Wilson's *Sorme trilogy* traces the journey of Gerard Sorme, who explores sexuality and crime to understand the intentional powers of consciousness. It conveys the idea that sexual impulse is a projection of evolutionary intentionality and Sorme's *building* lies in intentionality. *Ritual in the Dark* explores intentionality in romantic and sexual impulse. Sorme through intentionality changes his perceptions about the romantic impulse, symbolised by Austin Nunne, and sexuality and realises that perception is a sculptor, a moulder of reality, the keys of which lie in powers of intentionality. The novel *Man Without a Shadow* highlight that imagination is the nine-tenths of sexual impulse and imagination is applied intentionality which is a way to understand how to use mind properly. *The God of the Labyrinth* shows that Intentionality is most pleasantly, immediately, and effectively awakened by sex. Intentionality imbues meaning to experiences and Sorme's pursuit of sex was to recover this meaning. Kit Butler, the protagonist of the novel *The Black Room* is forced to awaken his powers of intentionality when after cutting all the external stimuli he confronts his inner chaos, and in order to overcome it, he summons his subconscious forces to create a stable subjectivity. Intentionality is another name to awaken the life-force which usually remains dormant in the routine of natural attitude.

In *The Personality Surgeon*, Charles gives his patients a sense of purpose and identity which engender positive intentionalities and sense of agency. This is how Wilson interprets Husserlian intentionality – in the form of sense of purpose, energy, will and imagination. In fact, Husserlian approach to intentionality is cognitivist – mental activity alone. For Heidegger it is Dasein's entire way of being in the world; a comportment or position-taking. Though comportment is very much Husserlian, Heidegger understands it in man's involvement in the life-world. Merleau Ponty foregrounds the bodily dimension of intentionality, emphasizing pre-conscious operative intentionality – the ability of the living body in and through motility. The meaning of intentionality, for Wilson is that it is a tool to change consciousness which in turn changes the very quality of life.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSCENDENTAL EGO AND EVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS

Intentionality of consciousness reveals that beings in the world, as objects of consciousness are relative to consciousness. Therefore, consciousness cannot be the part of world or nature but must be transcendental. As a science of sciences, phenomenology endeavours to discover the basis of consciousness and as a Transcendental Idealism, phenomenology contends that all meaning had its source in the transcendental ego. Archana Barua in her paper, *Husserl, Heidegger and the Transcendental Dimension of Phenomenology*, observes that “for Husserl, the transcendental ego functions as the philosophically necessary anchor of his phenomenology. The study of the “constitution of the world” involves tracing the genesis of meanings to their last origin, which is transcendental consciousness.” (6)

One of the significant achievements of the Husserlian phenomenology is the discovery of transcendental ego. In fact, phenomenological method is meant to unravel the mysteries of consciousness beyond the spheres of mental and psychological. It yields an ego which is immaterial, pure, perfect, absolute, clear and distinct. Husserl in his writings also uses the term monad for this ego which he describes as an absolute consciousness, independent of body and eternal. It is beyond the encumbrances of sensory illusions and the empirical prejudices of the life-world. This state of consciousness, at last, is freed from all psychophysiological structures and temporal conditionings. In its purity, it is atemporal. It is not a consciousness conceived of logically but an actual consciousness.” (Lyotard 51) Husserl recognises it as separate from the acts and contents i.e. noetic-noematic framework of ego which carries all of its acts, but never becomes its contents but always remains behind each of such acts. It is an existential awareness of “I”, of the ipseity which is the Latin term for a ‘self-aware cogito’. With its unbiased pure regard, phenomenology engages in the conscientization of unknown in the human being which results in the emergence of an authentic and true self. It is the crux of phenomenological inquiry. The essence of this transcendence, according to Husserl is “the winning of a new region of Being,

the distinctive character of which has not been defined, a region of individual being like every genuine region.” (Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 119) Husserl, Heidegger and Maurice Merleau Ponty, in particular, knew it well that there is a prereflective oneness between man and the world, within man and the world. This prereflective oneness is the oneness of pure consciousness. In the structure of human consciousness, transcendental ego is considered as a primordial entity. It is the essence of the human being. Husserl’s investigation of consciousness led him to the discovery of “true self” (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* 10). This investigation was no longer a descriptive psychology of individual mental episodes as in Brentano school, but involves a specific, sustained methodological reflection on the unified stream of conscious life, a radical sense application of self-experience which yielded the transcendental ego as the only true source of all meaning and being. Husserl held that the transcendental – that radical subjectivity of pure consciousness and the ultimate source of all knowledge both subjective and objective - is the core entity of phenomenology itself. Bereft of all the contingent features of consciousness, the transcendental ego is pure consciousness, without personality and identity. Dermot Moran observes that “For the mature Husserl, however, knowing what subjectivity is yields not just knowledge but *self*- knowledge in a very special sense. Self- knowledge, thus, is the central goal of Husserl’s phenomenology, although interpreted in his own peculiar way.” Husserl’s entire philosophical focus, in fact, is on the practice of “self-awareness”, “self-apperception” or “self-knowledge” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 99,156) What is noteworthy about Husserl is that by making philosophy a rigorous science i.e. a rational endeavour to know the truth has brought him to the territory of transcendental subjectivity which otherwise remains incomprehensible to reason. Husserl in different ways has thrown light on this transcendental consciousness and termed it as something eternal and immortal.

Broadly speaking, this entity has been interpreted in two ways, first as something mysterious and esoteric and second a critical structural component of the empirical ego. Initially, Husserl discovered it through a systematic and scientific way as a structural component of consciousness. But he does finally shift to the transcendental standpoint which is momentous as he refers it as a “Copernican reversal” ((Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* 55)) and as “the greatest existential conversion that is expected of mankind” (Husserl, *The crisis* 137). According to Husserl, the phenomenological exploration of self and

consciousness yields “a complete self-transformation”. (Moran 161) Andrea Staiti observes that, “Husserl sees a transformative power in the phenomenological attitude,” and that practicing phenomenology, for him, “is a way for the individual to achieve a dignified sense of self, enabled by the discovery of the transcendental, non-naturalistic dimension of her subjectivity” (17)

The term transcendence originates from the Latin *transcendere* which means to go beyond. Transcendence means that the being is potentially changeable and can actually change. It is a transformation from being to becoming. Both Husserl and Wilson engage in this transformation to yield an objective, apodictic and self-evident state of consciousness. Colin Wilson understands the transcendental ego as an arcane and mysterious powerhouse of consciousness. Weigel points out that “Wilson’s quest is a search for a new self which must be radically discovered and perfected”. (104) Wilson like Husserl seeks an apodictic objective dimension of human consciousness - a state of certainty when one recovers the transcendental subjectivity and a sense of reality. Wilson remarks that “phenomenology is a prosaic way of developing the mystical faculty.” (Wilson, *Phenomenology as a Mystical Discipline* 18) Wilson in most of his fictional works talks about some objective reality – a reality beyond the reducing value (i.e., natural attitude) of ordinary consciousness, which he believes gives a sense of other places and other times. Wilson names it as faculty X. Wilson contends that his life has been dominated by a single obsession: a search for what he calls as ‘the other mode of consciousness. This mode of consciousness gives a new kind of perception in which distant realities are as real as present moment. It creates affirmation and optimism in the individual. Wilson points out that faculty X “is a key to all poetic and mystical experience; when it awakens, life suddenly takes on a new, poignant quality.” (Wilson, *The Occult*, 48) Wilson envisages evolution of human consciousness in terms of the recognition of the other mode of consciousness or what Husserl calls as the transcendental ego and characterises it with the essence of human existence where from all the meaning and power gushes forth into human life-world. Husserl’s shift from mundane consciousness (natural attitude) to transcendental subjectivity is evolutionary. Wilson expresses this evolution in different terms, from ordinary consciousness to intensity consciousness. And Wilson says that intensity of consciousness equals objectivity.

There is an implicit similarity between the Husserlian transcendality and Wilson’s vision of evolution. Both, in their own way, attempt a phenomenological

answer to the universal question of who am I? Both engage in how consciousness strives to be aware of its own awareness, and both essentially teach the science of living. Besides Husserl, other phenomenologists like Kant, Karl Jaspers and Henri Bergson talk about a ‘higher self’ which exists beyond the everyday cogito. Kant posits a ‘pure original unchangeable consciousness’ or ‘transcendental unity of apperception’ (Moran 169-70) which align with the Husserl’s transcendental condition of consciousness which is a separate from the natural features of consciousness. Likewise, Jaspers talks about the ‘true self’ which according to him is beyond any empirical measurement and psychological research. It allows one to make crucial choices and preserve inner autonomy amid challenging existential circumstances. Henri Bergson by using the term ‘deep self’ comes to the same conclusion. He notes that a great deal of thought and investigation are needed to discover it. This kind of philosophy acknowledges unequivocally that humans have some mystery when it comes to experiencing our own subjects. At the heart of the Wilson’s select works, one can recognise something lurking at the threshold of everyday consciousness and that is the higher ‘I’ – a superordinate identity, or, in more esoteric language, a person’s *daemon*. Husserl calls this identity as the transcendental ego which Wilson believes is the source of one’s joy and power and which in turn gives rise to what he terms as the faculty X – an epiphenomenon to the transcendental ego. Vaughan Rapatahana points out that “for Colin Wilson there is very definitely a Transcendental Ego, or Higher Self” (5) which he describes in his own way. Although Husserl never seems to refer himself in a mystical context, two mystics Buddha and Meister Eckhart influenced him to a good extent. Moreover, several Husserl scholars have recognised the spiritual dimensions of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Fred J. Hanna observes that Husserlian phenomenology was to experientially investigate the essence of any and all phenomena and to disclose the mysteries of consciousness and being. Husserl stands spontaneously delivered into realms that are clearly transpersonal. (181) Husserl in his analysis and description of the consciousness, which he carries out with great scientific rigor, simultaneously fetches some metaphysical features of the transcendental ego. Koestenbaum points out that Husserl’s transcendental idealism is perhaps his only quasi-metaphysical commitment and his doctrine of the transcendental ego is indeed a close approximation to a metaphysical theory. (xi)

Wilson's use of science fiction is to open some new dimensions of human consciousness, the nature of which is quite different from one's everyday state of being. In his *Strength to Dream*, Wilson points out that science fiction can evoke Pascal's 'eternal silences of these infinite spaces'; his belief that science fiction can achieve an "almost theological note" – that, so to speak: science fiction does not need to rely on technological marvels to merely impress materialists, but that it can in fact emerge out of a deeper, more mystical – and thus evolutionary – impulse in man's relation to the universe (120). In that regard Wilson's science fiction assumes a new significance.

In the novel, *The Mind Parasites*, Wilson digs down the different layers of human consciousness and lays bare its foundations in different ways. These foundations are what Husserl calls as the transcendental ego. As a piece of science fiction, *The Mind Parasites* has the potential to generate a new kind of perception and explore the transcendental realms of consciousness. Howard Dossor points out that science fiction "seems to touch one of our deepest needs; some mythic, Jungian, deeply human requirement for a voyage beyond ourselves" (68) This is what phenomenology intends to do – to access the transcendental sphere, which Husserl believes "is not the piece of the world" (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* 25) For the subject who experiences, and by this experience constitutes the world, cannot itself be a worldly entity.

In the beginning of the novel, Gilbert Austin expresses it by stating that "I have said that man draws his power from a secret life source in the depths of his being. This source is man's inviolable centre of gravity, his real being. It is completely indestructible" (Wilson, *Mind Parasites* 19) Husserl too says that "transcendental ego is an entity that survives even death.... Alfred Schutz recalls that Husserl, in their last conversations together as Husserl lay dying, talked about the fact that he would die but his transcendental ego would live on." (Moran, 190) Wilson believes that man must recognise this source which Husserl believes imparts meaning to all his experiences. It is the "source of our being, of objectivity, of reality and of truth." (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* xlv) Weissman testifies to it when he feels more authentic after connecting to his own inner sources. He is pushed to a different mode of being which turns him more conscious and awake. "He must learn to contact his own deepest levels in order to re-energise his consciousness" (Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* 71) Wilson contends that, this way, man evolves from the lower states of

his consciousness to the higher states. He would discover some “higher selves, which his ancestors would have called gods” (78) Wilson’s use of the word ‘god/s’ connotes that state of human consciousness which is pure, powerful and free. Wilson conveys the same idea when he compares the human mind to a vast electronic brain. Austin realizes that in order to find the secret of this electronic brain and become a superman, one must comprehend it in order to contact one’s higher self. Studying the principles of consciousness is hence the ideal use for it. And this is the main focus of phenomenology.

Wilson through his phenomenological investigations envisages the foundations of human consciousness in the form of pure consciousness. While fighting with the parasites, Austin talks about this foundation when he states that “I was trying to fight my way down to some solid bedrock on which I could take my stand against them.” (114) He also recognizes it in the form of ‘the god of archaeology Some benevolent force That a religious man would have identified with God” (117) Wilson contends that ordinarily human beings remain oblivious of this force and only have a glimpse of it when they are confronted with some crisis or emergency. Austin after defeating the parasites completely recognizes this centre of power – the real being of man. He describes it thus:

But now I was aware that it was far from being a ‘nothingness’. It certainly had some of the attributes of empty space—stillness, lack all tension. But it was like the stillness at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, where the pressure is so enormous that no creatures can live. The ‘nothingness’ was pure life energy—although words are now becoming so inaccurate that they are almost meaningless..... But stillness is natural to man: stillness and utter calm. Every own inner powers—or ‘soul’ (165)

Wilson believes that this centre is the core of human consciousness which by the distractions of the ‘natural attitude’ remains concealed under different layers. Otherwise, it is characterised by peace and power. In this novel, Wilson’s phenomenology navigates the different negative biases towards the hidden ‘I’ of the transcendental ego, the self, that provides the very perceptual energy that fires a person’s zest and sense of meaning. Wilson associates the sense of timelessness with

this state. After defeating the parasites, Austin says that, “my consciousness was like a bubble that wanted to rise. I had become absolutely weightless at that depth There is almost no sense of time in these regions of the mind” (147) The treatment of time is different in Wilson’s work. It has been expressed in the idea of ‘Faculty X’, a sense of ‘other times and places.’ Wilson, however is not oblivious of the power of ‘here and now’ but discourages the habit of sticking to the horizontal axis of time. Faculty X is vertical transcendence of the time which imbues certain powers to the consciousness enabling it to grasp other times and places. Indeed, Faculty X, also later termed by Wilson in *The Occult*, is this ability to see the world, in a sense, *synchronistically* – that is, where vistas of meaning are perceived in a state of consciousness that is *above space and time*. (5) Husserl in *Ideas* talks about this dimension of time. He calls it as the “absolute subjectivity” (Moran 190) It is the awareness of self-awareness. It is not the passing stream of an individual consciousness, but the observer behind this stream. This state of consciousness is atemporal which is not an eidolon but an objective truth accessed through phenomenological discipline.

Wilson’s novel *Necessary Doubt* is a search of new consciousness. Karl Zweig, the protagonist of the novel actually engages in an inner journey to attain some higher state of being, which Wilson depicts through an outer search for Gustav Neumann. In this connection, Nicholas Tredell remarks that “It is no mere detective hunt that Zweig is engaged on, but a quest for spiritual revival; his hunt for Neumann is a hunt for the ‘New Man’ It is the story of a conversion, like Dickens’ tale, but in reverse; not to Christianity, but from Christianity to evolutionary existentialism.” (Tredell 82) This evolution fetches one the transcendental sphere of being.

This sort of conversion is witnessed in Husserl too, as Archana Barua points out that in his latter works like *Crisis* and *Viena Lectures*, Husserl turned from formal structure of consciousness as noesis/noema to the idea of spiritual becoming of the European humanity. (6) Evolution was inherent in this ‘becoming’ and Wilson explores different ways to make this evolution possible. Neumann foresees the possibility of this evolution in the norcocaine drug which he believes would give access to the hidden powers of consciousness. The novel however does not advocate the use of any drug, but emphasises that in order to create a god-like state of consciousness man needs a discipline of will to bring meaning and purpose to life. For Wilson, imagination plus will give birth to power consciousness. In these states one’s

attention is focused and one catches a glimpse of some higher state which is sustained by the sheer perception of meaning, a state which Wilson equates with those of gods.

Wilson's another science fiction novel; *The Philosopher's Stone* is a study in nature of consciousness which strikes a resemblance between Maslovian peak experiences and Wilsonian faculty X. In this novel, Wilson's main preoccupation is evolution of consciousness which he thinks culminates in the achievement of faculty X. He defines it as "a sense of reality, the reality of other places and other times, ... it is the power to grasp reality, and it unites the two halves of man's mind, conscious and subconscious." (Wilson, *The Occult* 74) It is a remedy to the psychic entropy that attends natural attitude and which contrarily gives rise to negentropy – a tendency to increasing meaning. The first part of the novel is aptly titled as 'The Quest of the Absolute.' Wilson envisages this quest as a shift in attitude, in a method "for achieving this wider consciousness, for obtaining those breathing spaces' when you feel like a bird, contemplating your existence from above, instead of from the gutter?" (Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone* 30) Wilson believes that this shift "suddenly replaces our usual worm's view with 'bird's eye consciousness' and that poets and mystics are well aware of such states of consciousness. (30) For Husserl, this shift institutes a qualitatively different form of ego which reflects on consciousness in an entirely new way. In his *Ideas I*, he states:

'I' the constituting Ego, am not identical with the ego who is already worldly, not identical with myself as a physical being and my psychic life, the psycho-physical and worldly life of consciousness is not identical with my transcendental Ego, in which the world with everything physical and psychic that belongs to it is constituted for me. That means the essential Ego is the transcendental or pure Ego and the psychological 'ego' is limitation put on it and falsely regarded as the real nature of the ego in the natural attitude of mind. (233)

The transcendental ego cannot be identified with any particular embodied state of consciousness. It has a unifying power which gives direction to one's experiences by converting them into meaningful wholes. For Wilson, it implies the states of more increased consciousness, being more alive, more conscious and more ecstatic. Wilson believes that man's capacity for otherness gives him access to such states. This otherness leaps one away from the present and permits one to draw on reserves of

strength that are normally not available to us. He points out that pursuit of this 'otherness' connects human beings to some obscure source of power inside themselves, which as a "curiously optimistic impulse drives us to transcend our imprisonment in times" (41). The human mind, in tapping hidden energy reserves, can attain a "bird's eye view" and, in this way, glimpse truth in a way that justifies optimism (Wilson, *Super Consciousness: The Quest for the Peak Experience* 3). Connecting it to the Maslovian (referred as Marks in the novel) idea of peak experiences, Wilson contends that in certain moments of awareness, man perceives "meanings and patterns beyond the present horizon. We see the wood instead of half a dozen trees" Wilson terms these experiences as the moments of "contemplative objectivity" (43) It is interesting to relate to it the Husserlian idea of transcendental ego which is described by him as an entity that one could actually and intuitively grasp as a pure ego, as distinct from the empirical, natural ego. Man's recognition of this 'contemplative objectivity' and a gradual sustenance of it leads to, what Wilson thinks, an achievement of a "permanent state of objectivity" which would bring a qualitative change in consciousness and "the evolutionary impulse would become self-sustaining, self-amplifying." (Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone* 47) Wilson basically wants an evolutionary leap which would establish a man in an apodictic transcendental reality. Wilson, in fact, echoes Husserl when he says that "While man climbs the evolutionary stairway, he is immune from death." Husserl contends that "every human-ego harbors its transcendental ego, and this does not die and does not arise; it is an eternal being in the process of becoming." (Husserl, *Analysis Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis* 471) Howard Lester and Henry Littleway are in the pursuit of this state of consciousness which they believe would increase vitality and give rise to greater health. They infer that man needs to evolve into a state which would defy time and space and connect him to the source of power and meaning that exists within him. Wilson "wants to know exactly how he could cross the threshold into the 'promised land'." (Wilson, *The Philosopher's Stone* 79) Husserl too set out to this 'promised land' through his phenomenological investigations to uncover the secrets of transcendental consciousness. (Moran 62) Wilson further connects this state of consciousness with Mark's 'value experiences' (an implicit reference to Abraham Maslow's 'peak experiences') and considers it as sudden wakefulness to one's true self. Biagio Gerard Tassone points out that "A structural analysis of the peak experience, in other words, would establish that consciousness provides a foothold

into deeper levels of reality.” (62) Lester points out that, “I could see clearly that ‘value experiences’ are merely moments in which man becomes fully conscious of what he already possesses.” (Wilson, *The Philosopher’s Stone* 83) Littleway uses the term ‘newness’ to describe it – “a fully awake mind.” (84) He describes it “as the principle of life and a solution to the problem of immortality.” (84) Children reflect this state more clearly who live in the state of pure consciousness. Thus, according to Wilson value experience, contemplative objectivity and otherness gives rise to a ‘new faculty’ in man. Lester concludes that evolution has been aiming at creating a new type of human being, who sees the world with new eyes *all the time*, who can readjust his mind a hundred times a day to see the *familiar* as strange. Lester describes it further thus:

It dawned on me with a kind of shock. Here am I, Howard Lester, lying awake in bed, apparently sure of my own identity. And down below the surface of my consciousness – even below the realm of intuitions that were now accessible to me – there lay another Howard Lester, who had more right to bear my name. I was an impostor; he was the ‘real me’. (108)

Wilson points out that this ‘real me’ lies deep down man’s everyday consciousness, which is more manifest in the moments of relaxation; when a person has greater vitality and the consciousness becomes web-like. In an explicit reference he remarks that, “Then theoretically, web-like consciousness should gradually reveal the deepest levels of the mind, Husserl’s ‘transcendental ego’, the hidden self.” (111). Wilson considers this hidden self as the ultimate possibility of human consciousness. He implores mankind to adopt a phenomenological attitude in life and connect with the deeper sources which remain hidden under different layers of consciousness. These layers gradually accumulate while living from the natural standpoint. Towards the end of the novel, Lester states:

It is man’s destiny to be immortal. For five million years, he has managed to side-step the issue. Now the choice has to be made. And to me, it seems absurd. Who could possibly prefer being asleep to being awake. ... He has become so top heavy with civilisation that he cannot

contact his springs of pure vitality. Man is a creature of life and the daylight; his destiny lies in total objectivity. (268)

Howard Dossor observes that, “sexuality, in itself, is best understood as an indication that man may project himself forward into a fuller state of being.” (130) Wilson’s *Sorme trilogy* which is phenomenological investigation of sex and crime is basically a search for such states of being. At a deeper level, it is the recovery of one’s subjectivity that man has lost in the natural attitude. Sorme’s search is a search for meaning and freedom which he tries to dig down in his own consciousness. In the beginning of the novel, *Ritual in the Dark*, Sorme makes the point that humanity must operate with the presumption that a vision of the ultimate meaning of existence may exist. And everyone should live as though that is the goal. Wilson connects this vision with man’s perennial search of who am I? He contends that man’s dignity lies, in the end, to this search. In his earlier interaction in the novel, Sorme makes Austin to understand that the times when you have self-awareness make up for everything. In a way, man is a god in exile. An eternal soul caught in the middle of hell and paradise. He is only a contributing member of society now, with obligations to all. And it is his duty to restore his dignity and standing. These moments of insight give Sorme a further realization when he equates this state with “The independence, a sort of pure vitality” (100) Wilson says that human beings momentarily access this vitality in sexual experience. This experience brings an intensity in their consciousness and a promise for freedom.

Sorme’s affairs with different women in the novel brings him the realization that desire to achieve a higher state of consciousness manifests in the sexual impulse and it is the experience of sexual orgasm that gives a glimpse into that unifying vision of the existence which is transcendental. Howard Dossor conveys the same thing when he says that “in sexual experience, our everyday self, encounters a higher self which is instantly recognised as a being somehow more authentic than itself.” (120) After his interaction with Austin, Oliver and Stein, Sorme gathers and deeply analyses his experiences which gives him more insights into his existence. He notes that while he did reach a "state of creativity," it was really a return to subjectivity rather than an assurance of his own existence and everything is in the hands of the individual who has his subjectivity. The realization gave him a feeling of validation and acceptance

and this sort of conviction holds all poetry and philosophy. In his *Access to Inner Worlds*, Wilson points out that this ‘creative self’ is what Husserl refers to as the transcendental ego. (60) Husserlian phenomenology culminates at this stage of Apodicticity – a state of certainty when an individual recovers the transcendental subjectivity and a sense of reality.

More than Husserl, Wilson conceives this subjectivity as the source of one’s energy, the recognition of which can change man’s existential status. It enables him to create his own self afresh. Sorme hints upon this status when he says that “In the man was an obsession with the superhuman, a desire to rise cleanly and naturally beyond human pettiness, maintaining the flight without uncertainty. ... He looked out at the grey sky, holding the knowledge firmly, thinking: Nothing matters but this power.” (179) Sorme firmly believed that this power will lead to his rebirth into a new self and enable him to transcend the trivialities of everydayness.

Man Without a Shadow, the second novel of the trilogy is also a search for this power, an exploration into spiritual potential of human beings which they contain within. In the beginning Sorme declares that “he wishes to understand himself and know the other depths and dimensions of his self and penetrate through his ordinary existence of ‘shadows’ and ‘abstractions’ (17) to access his real being. It is the restoration of what Tredell terms as the “existential substance” (Tredell Ch. 5) which a human being lacks in its everyday states of consciousness. Wilson envisages the vision of achieving this real being which he believes would turn a man into a god. Ordinarily, man gets the glimpses of this real being in sexual experience. Such experiences are imbued with what Wilson calls vitality. Sorme points out that “Only sex surprises me all the time by filling the act with a vitality that seems to rise of its own accord.” (31). It offers a peek into the prospect of a more intense kind of life—one in which all desires are fully realized. Wilson, however, contends that this higher self gets revealed to him in other moments when strength seemed to emanate from every part of him and he could see new sides of his self. That day when rain pushes both Mary and Sorme to get back to the hostel, the latter describes such an experience more vividly:

I looked at the line of hills on the other side of the Severn, and felt an almost mystical satisfaction and certainty. The life in me seemed to swell and rise to the surface—more than it ever has in sexual excitement. I felt as if I were close to Captain Shotover's seventh degree of concentration. I felt with certainty that man is on the brink of a new phase in his evolution, that life is about to make another important concession, and give man one more degree of freedom from the perpetual imprisonment in half-consciousness. It seemed to me that I was very close to discovering a secret—another small piece of knowledge about the controls of the machine. It may be only a tiny concession—how to release the hand brake, how to turn on the headlights—but it will be a step closer to god-hood. (37)

Sorme's rise of the life from 'half-consciousness' is an evolution of consciousness to the transcendental realm. This realm is the source of man's meaning and freedom. It is the recognition of the fact that it is the 'I' or what Husserl calls transcendental ego that imposes meaning on the objects of experiences.

Wilson contends that the recognition of this 'I' occurs in several ways. "Certain ideas, certain works of art, evoke for me the absurd, ecstatic, metaphysical mystery of life." (53) suddenly the mystery is revealed and the sense of reality is established. Sorme acutely realises that man could experience a "breakthrough" in consciousness at any time, wherein consciousness abruptly rises to a new level and transforms an individual into beings of higher stature. Far more energy would accompany this deeper consciousness, or more accurately, the mankind would discover the source of its energy. Wilson contends that the whole business of his diary and of all his work is to understand the mechanism of this energy. How to capture and understand those moments when energy rises up to meet the emergency. For Wilson this immense flow of energy is vision. (67) And in this vision, lies the secret of how consciousness can evolve into higher forms. And the purpose of it is to develop quite a new faculty – a new way of grasping life. In his *Access to the New Worlds*, Wilson names it as the visionary consciousness and describes it as "simply a feeling of excitement, of happiness and affirmation. This is accompanied by an insight that seems to be purely objective: that reality is infinitely deeper and richer than it appears to ordinary consciousness." (Wilson 96)

Several experiences, momentarily though, gives access to this deeper reality. It brings a revelation that the recognition and sustenance of this source or foundation can give birth to a new kind of man. This would reveal the truth that consciousness can be taken to some other levels which can change the very being of a person. Man's strength lies in this state of consciousness which brings value and meaning to life. Sorme feels that he knew this all the time, that the only way out is an internal strength so great that some values would stand the test of time. A man of that strength would have an unfathomable passion for life, and that passion would inspire him to pursue ever greater strength. The only thing that prevents man from marching toward Superman is the paralysis of awareness. Wilson contends that sometimes man glimpses something that's just a little bit higher than his current state of consciousness, but he fails to hold to it.

Towards the end of the novel, Sorme says that he has developed a vision of such a state of consciousness. He experiences that his own definition of success is quite different; it is a subjective state of sudden illumination that is more like to Wordsworth's description of the gloomy hill above the lake and the "unknown modes of being." The first person to realize such a vision would be unlike any other man. His skull would glow, and his entire being would exude a force that the entire neighbourhood would feel and the man would exist on a different level of existence forever.

In the third and final novel of the Sorme trilogy, *The God of the Labyrinth*, Wilson again explores the labyrinths of sexual experience to know the hidden god of consciousness which he believes could be revealed by pursuing the experience to its source. Gary Lachman in his introduction to the novel points out that "for Wilson sex is the closest that most of us get to a mystical experience. It reveals a powerhouse of energy and purpose that, for the most part, remains hidden from us." (10) Husserl names this powerhouse as transcendental ego which is the source of all intentionalities and which imparts meaning to all human experiences. Quoting Husserl, Moran states:

The transcendental ego is at work constituting the world for me, in consciousness, though not in a manner graspable by naive reflection. For Husserl, one must put the thumbscrews not on *nature*, as Francis Bacon had said, but on transcendental *consciousness* itself, to get it to

yield up its secrets as to how the world and its meanings are constituted.” (148)

According to Wilson, in a way, the force of this inner magician creates the outside world. Man is scarcely more advanced than a worm because he is oblivious to the startling mysteries of the transcendental ego and does not recognize his own power.

Wilson equates Husserlian transcendental ego with the basic reality of human consciousness. Like Husserl, he recognises a gap between empirical ego and this reality. In ‘natural attitude’ this gap is too wide but this gap may be so little that it seems as though a person is in direct contact with reality. Sorme gets different insights while reading through the letters and journal entries of Esmond Donnelly one of which, concludes Sorme, is that a glimpse of reality can be caught in the sexual experience. Sorme experiences several of such insights and describes them vividly. He states that “what human beings want, is to achieve these moments of freshness and intensity and not to lose them every time their attention wanders. They want *continuity of consciousness*.” (134) The other day when Sorme had a feeling of being Esmond, he experiences a vision in which he realizes that time is an illusion and there is some reality which fills him with delight and makes his consciousness intense. He states thus:

The sky was a rather cool blue, and I felt as though it were an immense sheet of cool water. It struck me with sudden total certainty: time is an illusion. It is not an absolute state. If you are an insect sitting on a leaf that is swept down a river, you might think that it is inevitable that trees keep passing you and receding behind you, that by their very nature trees only last a few moments, and the only unchanging reality is the ripple and splash of the water. But the bank is real, and if you could get off your leaf on to the bank, you would find that it is quite solid and permanent. (135)

Wilson talks about some ‘solid and permanent’ reality. Husserl too talks about this reality which he describes as the condition for the possibility of understanding the

world at all. He terms it as the transcendental ego that is responsible, not just for meaning or sense, but for the being of the world.

In the novel, Sorme concludes that “sometimes life is intensely interesting and meaningful and this meaning seems to be an objective fact, Esmond’s search was basically a search for meaning and “he pursued sex as a way of recovering meaning” (Wilson, *The God of the Labyrinth* 180-81) Sex, according to Wilson gives access to objective meaning. The sect of phoenix that appears in the novel develop certain methods to tap this meaning. They believe that as an everyday experience, sex can bring a person to the threshold of this objective meaning. Sorme later understands that the sect of phoenix held that sexuality, rather than religion or art, is the primary means by which man approaches the sense of the universe as a magical mystery. Nobody ever refuted the possibility that mystics' ecstasies could surpass anything experienced through sexual relations in terms of intensity. However, they are not common but man can tackle the secrets of sexuality on a daily basis.

Sorme’s sexual experience with the school girl at Dublin gives him such insights. His mind reaches a new level of strength with a renewed intuition. His memory worked better than normal and his vitality has a deeper, stronger heartbeat. Wilson avers that this way man can get close to mystics' visions. Esmond’s sexual explorations were not for any fun but an endeavour to lay bare the foundations of sexual impulse. Sorme points out that in order for sexual intensity to be effective, it needs to be disciplined like a yogi or ascetic. This is what Esmond aimed to show: sexual intensity delivers an insight as valid as mystical vision, and it's considerably easier to induce. The feeling of double consciousness by Sorme in *God* as a supernatural device becomes the symbols of the evolutionary leap, as a science fiction device did in the *Doubt* and *Stone*. It helps to promote *God* to the level of evolutionary parable.

The transcendental ego envisaged as a structural component as well as an esoteric dimension of consciousness by Husserl, is interpreted by many of the Husserlian scholars in terms of what in eastern mystical traditions has been called as the soul or *atman* – some higher form of consciousness which has been disclosed by mystical techniques for centuries. This constitutes the ontological foundation of humans which stands as pure and beyond. More specifically it can be termed as

“witness consciousness – *Saksi Caitanya*, which Husserl himself admits as a spectator ego or consciousness.” (Maharana 212) In this regard, Koestenbaum observes:

It is doubtful that Oriental philosophy influenced Husserl directly - or even indirectly through Schopenhauer. Nonetheless, acquaintance with Oriental philosophy- a topic that is of increasing interest to Western philosophy- is a good introduction to the understanding of the transcendental Ego. (The *Paris Lectures* xlv)

Though both Husserl and Wilson characterise this transcendental ego in their own way, the idea of it as an existential substratum, irreducible and ever-present is always there. In *Ideas I*, Husserl points out that because of its absolute uniqueness, consciousness has a being of its own that is unaffected by phenomenological disconnexion. Thus, it continues to exist as a "phenomenological residuum," (120,21), a part of Being that is distinct in theory and has the potential to become the subject of a brand-new science called phenomenology.

The ‘phenomenological residuum’ has been regarded by both, as a state of pure consciousness and complete wakefulness. Koestenbaum makes a similar contention regarding the transcendental I, wherein he suggests one of its possibilities as “the ultimate structure of being, which has strong overtones of objective or absolute idealism, mysticism, and the notions of Atman in Vedanta and Purusha in Sankhya.” (LV) Furthermore, *Nyaya-vaishesikas* and *Mimamsa* philosophies adopt the stance that the "transcendental self," or oneness of the subjective experience, is necessary as a precondition and a fundamental foundation which is in line with Husserl's theory of the self. Several of the Husserl scholars believe that phenomenology is a lodestar to mysticism. Its methods take a person to those areas of consciousness which are inaccessible to the investigations of natural science.

Sorme experiences such moments and realises that human beings only reach such a state when they are simultaneously and completely alert and unfocused at moments of relaxation, or during the holidays. Overcoming the old habit of letting consciousness relax when it is not concentrated is a trick. When the mind is fully aware but not focused on anything specific, it brims with a curious potentiality. As a

result, an individual becomes excited about practically anything he looks at or thinks about and gets a real insight.

Wilson says that these god-like states represent the truth of man's inner being. Towards the end of the novel when Esmond speaks through Sorme, he echoes Husserl by saying that the importance of this truth, this power cannot be overestimated. It gives a new control over the body. For once this is established, it is almost impossible to die (305) Time and again Husserl talks about the immortality of what remains after peeling off all the layers of human consciousness.

Wilson's novel *The Glass Cage* brings in contrast the two extreme states of human consciousness and throws light on those dimensions along which life can be lived positively and more intensely. It is an investigation into mysticism and criminology, the two extreme poles of human experience, which come to a head in *The Glass Cage*, where the former emerges from a rejection of values, moral, philosophical, even cosmological and religious, and the latter from a recognition of affirmation, cosmic consciousness, and universal yea-saying.

Wilson wanted to include the most repulsive aspects of existence in his writings. While dealing with the theme of crime shows that a huge life force takes a negative direction which as a pure potential can be transformed into the realisation of some ultimate reality – a state which imbues stability and affirmation and enables one to act meaningfully. In this connection, Julia Jansen observes:

Staiti correctly identifies Husserl's notion of a *living transcendental ego* as an alternative to both the formal ego of Neo-Kantianism and the ultimately obscure life-force of life-philosophy. The transcendental ego is both "living" and constitutive, both concrete and transcendental, and neither natural nor psychic. (203-4)

True crime can, Wilson says, "throw light upon its opposite: the passion for order, creativity, sainthood." (Moore, *Beyond Murder: Colin Wilson, Criminology and the Evolution of consciousness* 14) Wilson calls it as a state of duo consciousness where one can contemplate the positive and higher dimensions of consciousness and improve one's own life and those of the others.

Wilson's novel *The Personality Surgeon* primarily deals with the explorations of its protagonist, Charlie Peruzzi – a psychological detective, into human personality. Peruzzi literally breaks patient's personality into component parts and restructures

them. The novel quite engages in the phenomenological unravelling of the foundational structures of consciousness by focusing on the self and realisation of self, while Peruzzi engages in analyzing the actions of his patients in different psychotherapeutic sessions. Phenomenology starts with the grasping and acknowledging one's proper actions i.e., 'acts.' It is these acts which first reveal the phenomenal self and subsequently the true self. Phenomenal self or consciousness means the subjective and experiential character of one's mental state which includes the sensational properties and qualia. Personality as a product of this phenomenal self develops through experience. But personality as a bundle of impressions does not give a unified view of self which gives rise to the problem of personal identity. Husserl traces the personal identity in the transcendental ego which beyond its impressions (noetic-noematic framework) as empirical ego carries through its acts but always remains behind the acts.

The novel follows Dr. Peruzzi and his associate, Dr. Erik Topelius in their uncharted journey of personality analysis. It emphasises the need to have a solid sense of self, a fully realised objective self-image. The novel brings home the point that personality is an appearance the nature of which is social and utilitarian but beneath it lies a reality which is primal and essential – the deepest element in the individual. In this regard Koestenbaum observes:

I tend to identify my "true, inner self or ego" with either my body or my passing psychological states. A common term for the totality of my psychological states, dispositions, feelings, anticipations, and attitudes is that of "person." It is fundamental to an understanding of the transcendental Ego to realize that what we ordinarily mean by "me," by "I," by "myself," by "my ego," is really merely one of many *objects* within the totality of experience here termed "transcendental consciousness'." (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures XLIX-L*)

The novel focuses on the need to make the self to drop all the false states and take a new form. The novel reflects a dichotomy of personality and individuality and go beyond all the deceptions created by the former. In fact, the task of phenomenology is to minimise deception and see things as they really are. It penetrates the idiosyncrasies of empirical self to reveal the transcendental self. Peruzzi leads his patients to realise their individuality and potential so that they can come to their essence, and he achieves this by offering most of the characters an impersonal development opportunity,

through either the arts, self-expression or some naturally evolving counterpart to their being. Wilson contends that this realisation is evolutionary which takes one to the higher states of being. In his *Access to Inner Worlds*, he avers that “the crucial step in individual evolution is quite simply to recognize the existence of that ‘other self’.” When this happens, we are ready to embark upon the most interesting experiment of all: to discover what our two selves can do when they enter into active collaboration.” (115) Peruzzi analyzes the actions of his patients which gives him access to the deeper layers of their consciousness. Peruzzi after making his patients to transcend the multiple selves, jostling in the unconscious, succeeds in creating a unified ‘I’, which becomes a solid foundation of their identity. Peruzzi in his therapeutic sessions provides a framework to his clients to access an authentic human existence which brings meaning and purpose to their lives. He helps them to regain the basic existential status of being ‘I am’ which gives them the sense of agency and identity. Ioana A. Geomolean observes that “Husserl’s phenomenology, with its emphasis on the first-person perspective and the structures of experience, offers a unique lens through which to examine questions of free will. It invites a reconsideration of autonomy and agency that is grounded in the immediacy of lived experience and the constitutive powers of the transcendental ego, rather than in external causal determinants.” (61)

In the novel, *The Black Room*, Wilson both describes intentionality as a means to achieve higher form of consciousness and what characterises such modes of being. It endeavours to address the question of: Who am I? The black room device pushes a person inward which opens the possibility of a breakthrough to higher consciousness. It concerns with an awakening of one’s existential reality – a phenomenological analysis of the depths of consciousness which imbues a sense and purpose to life. Husserl emphasises that to become a true philosopher one must ‘withdraw into himself.’ He invokes St. Augustine who once said that, “Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man.” (Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations 2*, 158)

Kit Butler, the protagonist of the novel experiences these things in the black room. He equates it with some semi-mystical states, state of being more awakened, a state of total relaxation and intense optimism. He clarifies that he has, experienced these emotions throughout his life. Kit characterizes it and refers to it as "holiday consciousness." (69) He frequently felt this feeling of excitement and alertness before

embarking on a trip or vacation. He concludes that man's failure and ennui are silly because life is so obviously nice and the world is so obviously complex and lovely.

The whole idea behind black room technique is to transcend all external stimuli and psychological supports and snatch all man's assumed identities to access those structures of consciousness which constitute his reality. It lets the mind to gain a degree of independence backed by a powerful consciousness, a higher and fully integrated 'I'. Robert Assagioli calls it as 'psychosynthesis' – an integration of human energies which gives birth to an integrated self. Butler states that "the solution to the black room – the ultimate solution – is total self-consciousness, knowledge of your real identity. So, it stands to reason that the only person capable of really solving it would be a saint or a god." (112) Wilson believes that the real freedom lies in this state of being which is an objective reality. Throughout the novel, Wilson uses different terms like affirmation consciousness, holiday consciousness, and faculty X to describe this objective reality. Such states of consciousness are characterized by a constant freshness of perception and greater degree of wakefulness which effects an evolutionary leap into the transcendental sphere. In the novel, Kit Butler's journey through the black room aids him to attain a higher state of being.

Wilson's whole business is to create a path for the contemporary man to develop the ability to cast off his 'natural attitude' where the 'world is too much with him' and cultivate a higher form of consciousness, which otherwise remains dormant. This new state of consciousness is qualitatively different from the self of natural attitude which brings a qualitative change in one's perception. "It occurs only when the insights attained at the transcendental level become a habitual part of the phenomenologist's empirical life and make themselves available for the task of broadening his understanding of the everyday world." (Hobbs 165) His notion of the levels of consciousness are akin to Husserl's description of the different states of consciousness which starts with the 'natural attitude' and culminates in the recognition of transcendental self. Both Wilson and Husserl talk about the passivity of the lower states of consciousness and the way to achieve more intentional states of being and the substratum of transcendental subjectivity which constitutes the foundational structure of human consciousness. Wilson finally wants a realization of what he calls as a hidden faculty of consciousness. He wants a transformation of man's material life into a higher self – an objective reality imbued with increased consciousness. He believes that in such states one gets a truer view of reality which is free from the

distortions of subjective consciousness. It is a state which assumes a position of a *tabula rasa*, which is not Lockian but attained after systematic analysis of the structure of consciousness. These are the states of what Heidegger calls as the 'authentic existence'. The moments when a person overcomes the 'forgetfulness' and knows who he is. Husserl's transcendental idealism, however, does not focus only on this egological constitution but affects the being in its encounters within the life-world. Todariya observes:

For Husserl, transcendental ego is not only the formal condition for constituting the sense of the object but also the embodied subject in the lived time which enables it to possess the capabilities in the form of, 'I can' and see the world as possibility. Therefore, transcendental ego acquires decidedly an ontological status in Husserl's phenomenology. (276)

The prevailing zeitgeist is acutely decentred and certainly there is a pressing need to recognise and renew the centre which makes one human in the true sense of the word. Both Wilson and Husserl see the prospects of this humanity in the transcendental subjectivity which as the foundational powerhouse will infuse a new energy into man's life and give birth to an authentic and holistic modality of being. People from all walks of life will benefit from being in contact with this centre of being which constitutes the soul of all human beings. Wilson goads one to identify all the polarities of human being and recognise the importance of transcendental subjectivity. This dimension of consciousness will give birth to a new man who will no longer drift in the 'natural attitude' but will infuse optimism in human life and elevate the stature of man. This new life, Wilson believes, will generate new set of values which will guide the evolution of human consciousness. Wilson considers this evolution as a journey up the ladder of selves in which a person ascends towards sophistication and maturity. Both Wilson and Husserl believe that 'I' is the sole source which is fully accountable for the rational justification of every belief. This indicates that the transcendental Ego, which is the ultimate source or nature of subjectivity, is the metaphysical foundation of all being, the epistemological foundation of all truth and knowledge, and - this is where both contribute existential philosophy - the axiological foundation for all morally right choices. The recognition of the transcendental ego is a discovery of a new region of being which constitutes the foundational structure of consciousness.

The select novels reflect the striving of the characters towards this region of being, which they realise, constitute the very source of all meaning, purpose and value. It transforms them into a higher state of being and brings a qualitative change in their consciousness and hence existence. Austin's metaphorical journey to human psychoscape in *The Mind Parasites* leads him to this state of consciousness which he describes as the 'solid bedrock,' 'god of archaeology' beyond the mundane, centre of gravity, indestructible, 'a timeless region of being.' The novel talks about self-renewal, and discovery of some 'higher selves' – the soul. In the *Necessary Doubt*, Wilson equates it with a spiritual becoming wherein Karl Zweig's external search for Gustav Neumann culminates in his attaining a new state of consciousness. Howard Lester and Henry Littleway, the protagonists of *The Philosopher's Stone* embark on the 'quest for absolute' which takes them to deeper levels of reality; permanent state of objectivity. Wilson equates it with peak experiences which gives birth to epiphenomenon like faculty X - a sense of other places and other times. Such things including psychokinesis, telepathy etc. are what Husserl once called as the 'hidden achievements of transcendental ego'. Wilson's *Sorme trilogy* is a journey to recover subjectivity in its purified and intense state. The trilogy which predominantly discusses human sexuality gives a glimpse into a higher state of consciousness, into freedom and dignity of human beings, a unifying transcendental vision of existence. It is about regaining 'existential substance,' which human beings have lost in the everyday routine of the natural attitude. Epoche paves the way for energy to transforms into a higher state of consciousness which is the transcendental ego. The trilogy makes an important point that sexual experience embodies an objective meaning which needs to be tapped. It gives a glimpse of that intensified state of consciousness which can be permanently achieved by phenomenological disciplines. *The Glass Cage* is an exploration into the life-force which if used properly can lead man to ultimate reality – the living transcendental ego. Direction of life-force and dimensions of consciousness are related, the best dimension is chosen in the state of duo-consciousness. The novel contrasts the two extremes of human consciousness and illuminates the qualities that allow for a more fulfilling and meaningful life, the source of which can be traced back to the transcendental ego. Wilson's novel, *The Personality Surgeon* is a phenomenological unravelling of the foundational structures of consciousness which focusses on the self and realisation of self. By analysing the varied 'acts' of consciousness of the phenomenal self, the characters gradually gain a

subsequent access to the 'true self'. The novel traces the journey of these characters from personality to individuality. It is the attainment of an objective self-image towards the unified 'I'. *The Black Room* is a device to transcend all external stimuli, psychological supports and assumed identities to achieve self-consciousness.

CONCLUSION

The English existentialist Colin Wilson, explores different dimensions of human consciousness in the select fictional works to understand and know the nature of consciousness. His writings are important in understanding the phenomenology of diverse human experiences and the life-worlds in which individuals exist. Phenomenology explores and comprehends human subjectivity and consciousness by unveiling its structure and functioning.

Consciousness acts as a pivot that allows individuals to comprehend and make sense of their subjective experiences as well as the objective reality they inhabit. Edmund Husserl, the main proponent of phenomenology studies consciousness in its natural, intentional and transcendental dimensions. He lays bare the archeology of human consciousness and exposes it in epistemological, axiological and ontological terms. Literature being one of the most direct voices of human experiences can well be subjected to a phenomenological investigation so as to analyze and describe the experiences and feelings of the characters that are present within the narrative. Fiction delves into the intricate realm of lived experiences through the perspectives of those who experience it, facilitating a greater understanding of phenomena and ultimately enabling an individual to analyse their own nature. Colin Wilson's select works are replete with the phenomenological discourse that explores the consciousness in its natural, intentional and transcendental dimensions. Wilson wrote his novels in a variety of genres that reflect his lifelong quest for meaning and purpose. Wilson's fictional life-world traces the evolution of a new consciousness, and in this journey, he understands mankind's inner evolution, thus paving the way for identifying a holistic underlying reality of existence. Wilson's fiction reflects his philosophy of how to overcome the 'life-failure' and transcend the 'natural lives' to realize the objective truth.

Colin Wilson professes the doctrine of 'affirmation' and contends that beneath the surface of everyday triviality, which generates pessimistic nihilism and ennui, there is an ever-refreshing reality, to which every individual must get access, so as to bring value and purpose to life. Wilson believes that this triviality is a result of narrowness of consciousness. In this state a person takes his life for granted and

instead of living, he drifts. This state quite resembles with how Husserl describes consciousness in its 'natural attitude' – a state which is characterized by inattention and unreflectiveness. In this state one fails to apprehend the experience at hand, thereby losing the meaning and essence of the experience. The recognition of this naïve attitude is one of the basic contentions of Wilson's philosophy. As a neo-existentialist, Wilson acknowledges that man's feeling of inner freedom is fundamental and irreducible and his philosophy focuses the entire panoply of phenomenological analysis on the common sense of contingency. It reveals all the intricacies and safeguards that allow freedom to fade away. And therein lies the first step towards understanding the nature of consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology, with its implicit existentialist overtones, too begins with this recognition of the prejudiced consciousness which flattened under the triviality of everyday life characterizes man's 'natural attitude'. Husserl and Wilson agree that 'normal' consciousness is limited and that existence cannot be understood in its entirety from this limited perspective. The way things seem to someone from their 'natural standpoint' is simply accepted with a banality. According to Wilson, this condition is caused by the 'robot', which results in a life that is mechanical, meaningless, and hollow; a person behaves with passive intentionality in this situation, and there are fewer and fewer opportunities of transition to other modes of existence. Both Husserl and Wilson show a deep concern with the perception and the perceiver and their fate in all modes of consciousness which are inextricably linked to human will and imagination and crucial to evolution of consciousness. Wilson like Husserl raised against cultural pessimism engendered by earlier philosophies and envisaged phenomenology as a potent tool to overcome this failure and crisis. Both believe in the spiritual power of phenomenology which would provide new insights into human subjectivity and its sense bestowing achievements. Wilson's phenomenological pursuit is an endeavour to solve the existential meaninglessness of life. With a focus on the question of what makes up human values, Wilson's new existentialism entails a phenomenological analysis of consciousness. His phenomenology of life-devaluation is the most relevant area of study because moods of insight and optimism are less accessible than moods of everyday consciousness.

The novel *The Mind Parasites* recognizes man's predicament as a 'natural' being and makes a phenomenological investigation of an essential wrong-headedness that saps his vitalities and renders his consciousness passive. Like *The Mind Parasites*,

Wilson's novel, *The Philosopher's Stone* explores what Wilson calls as the 'Upside-Downness,' a quality that life assumes in its natural attitude. In this novel, Wilson employs several images and symbols to show different dimensions of everyday consciousness or the so called 'normal' states of perception – the naïve or natural attitude. The world appears to be static and unchanging to the 'naïve man,' who is at ease in his naïve attitude. Howard Lester and Henry Littleway in their explorations of the self, reveal that everyday consciousness is not enough to make any evolutionary leap. Wilson's novel *The Glass Cage* underscores the rational and empirical aspects of human consciousness, the restrictiveness and boundaries of which are comprehended in juxtaposition to the instinctive and spiritual sensitivity of its central character, Damon Reade. The theme of the book *The Glass Cage* is how people get caught in their own traps. A scholar of William Blake uses a blend of intuitive reasoning and psychic sensitivity to track down the culprit. The book sheds light on both the more normal and deviant facets of human nature. It describes how the boredom and meaninglessness that permeate a murderer's existence cause his mental phenomenology to develop into perilous and extreme circumstances. The 'glass cage' itself is a symbol of man's imprisonment in the natural attitude which fetters human consciousness. Metaphorically speaking, Reade's whole endeavour was to recognize or 'detect' Sundheim, who symbolizes man's passive state of consciousness which is fraught with one's indulgence in food and sex. The novel *Necessary Doubt* talks about the 'limitation' of consciousness, that one experiences in the world – the natural standpoint. It lays bare man's lingering in the habitualities, what Wilson calls as the original sin – to drift unreflectively and purposelessly in the naivety.

Wilson's *Sorme trilogy* explores the experiences of crime and sexuality and its phenomenological analysis within the natural, intentional, and transcendental possibilities of consciousness. It addresses the psychological and philosophical ramifications of the phenomena of sexuality and murder. There is a discussion regarding how a murderer's 'indifference threshold' rises to the point where the crime is forced upon him. The novel's central theme, the complexity of sexual desire, is tremendously significant, especially considering how pervasive it is in the contemporary period. Sorme the protagonist of the trilogy, highlights the unreality of the life man ordinarily lives, the unconnectedness to his own centre or the self and the uncertainty of his mundane existence. People live in a world of distractions and partake in countless activities to keep themselves from reflecting on who they are.

They don't appreciate who they are. Because it's safe and cozy, people continue to be unaware of the truth of the unreality in which they live. Wilson through his character of Gertrude Quincy throws light on the fact that dogmatic religion is very much a part of the natural standpoint which is unable to access the reality. *Ritual* recognises the gap between the life which is lived unexamined – at the mercy of creative forces, which are at the disposal of every human being – and the one which can be lived reflectively to find the meaning in human existence. The novel, *Man Without a Shadow* draws the conclusion that like other experiences, sexuality is also taken for granted by human beings. Man's understanding of it is also an understanding from a natural standpoint which has implications for the quality of his consciousness. In ordinary states of consciousness, human beings take their sexual urge for granted. They flow with its current unquestionably. Man has a tendency to live superficially at surface. He doesn't delve into his experiences and try to capture their essence. Sex is a significant human experience that has equally met the same fate. Some believes that solution to the narrower states of consciousness lies in the mystery of sexual orgasm, which provides a glimpse into a higher order of being. But with a normal unreflective attitude, man fails to avail this chance. *God of the Labyrinth* again makes the point that in everyday states of consciousness human beings are bereft of any sense of reality. The purpose of consciousness is to see objects, not meaning. Meaning is created by the power of will or effort or what Husserl calls the intentionality and sex energy inflates human will, makes consciousness intentional and momentarily gives a glimpse into that reality and meaning. Otherwise with a passive intentionality, which is ingrained in the mode of perception of natural attitude, human beings fail to draw meaning out of their experiences and any sense of reality. *God* demystifies sexuality as the supreme confidence trickster which keeps human beings wandering in its labyrinth. Wilson's *The Black Room*, is an experiment to bring oneself in direct confrontation to the everyday states of consciousness which human beings otherwise take for granted. It erodes their identity and they become demoralized and passive. Wilson uses the novel as a device to bring the realization that there is something fundamentally wrong with human consciousness. Man is stuck in the big black room of this world, where his consciousness acts mechanically at the mercy of external stimuli. If this stimulus disappears, he becomes blank and possesses nothing substantial, what one may call as consciousness. Man, mostly lives in what Heidegger calls as the 'forgetfulness of existence' and takes his consciousness for granted. People

lose touch with the joy of simply existing in this world because they are too preoccupied with the day-to-day grind of survival.

In today's society, personality development is becoming increasingly important as people strive to turn it into a marketable product. It focuses more on its utilitarian dimension, but all this happens at the cost of the forfeiture of one's essential being. Wilson's *The Personality Surgeon* offers a phenomenological examination of the cult of personality, which is rife with ills and serves as one of the main obstacles to man's quest for self-actualization. The novel unmask the different appearances with which human beings live their lives and analyses them in their different manifestations. Ordinarily, they forget the reality of their true self and get lost in the appearances which are endless, arbitrary and ephemeral. In ordinary states of the 'natural attitude', human beings remain the victims of the different emotions like anger, envy, timidity and other passive states. Sometimes, this passivity might drive a person into certain states of disorder where their mind is unable to interpret things correctly. Thus, losing the integrity of the self and subsequently the sense of experience.

Unlike mystics, people never reflect back to maintain the vitality in their consciousness. According to Husserl, human beings are perpetually held in the thrall of natural attitude. And in the present times, entrenchment of this attitude is reinforced by the advents of post human era like internet, social media and artificial intelligence. It has resulted in an unprecedented automatization of human beings – a terminal state of Husserlian natural attitude. Colin Wilson seems right in equating this state of consciousness to the Christian concept of original sin.

Husserl contends that in order to get to the meaning and essence, consciousness needs to be cut off from all presuppositions and distortions which he terms as the epoche or bracketing or reduction. Epoche is one of those fundamental manners in which man loses, makes and remakes the meanings of his life, by which he forges a new world or at least experiences it in a new way. Reduction tantamounts to the overcoming of the 'forgetfulness of existence' and a lowering of what Wilson calls as the 'indifference threshold.' It enables an individual to perceive the things without any psychic interference. Epoche is a step toward attaining the 'epistemic modesty' that will provide human life new significance. Wilson's recognition of outsider consciousness is the recognition of the need to come out of the 'natural attitude' and with the help of 'intentionality' evolve into a higher form of

consciousness. The outsider as a spiritual rebel, through his imagination and will, could transcend the banality of everyday consciousness and create a vision of living. To achieve this, it is necessary to keep out of play, all the elements of contingency, facticity and other false superimpositions of consciousness. For Wilsonian characters, phenomenological discipline of *epoche* proves out to be the first principle of scrutiny to get a fresh feel of reality.

The protagonist of the novel *The Mind Parasites*, Austin, learns about the nature of parasites and their implications for evolution of consciousness only by bracketing off the 'interferences of doubt, fatigue, depression, delays and accidents which confront him on his voyage to freedom. Wilson advocates the phenomenological exploration of one's inner spaces aided by the *epoche*, that Austin and his team employs. By incorporating the elements of death, danger and risk in the story, Wilson has shown the need of urgency in man's efforts to escape the hold of automatism and access to freedom and meaning. And this he believes is possible by bracketing the automatism and pave the way for analysing and understanding the structures of consciousness. The two main characters of the novel, *The Philosopher's Stone*, Howard Lester and Henry Littleway, also engage in fighting this automatism, typically referred to as 'robot' by Wilson. Both, with their experimenting of lodging the Neumann alloy in the prefrontal cortex, which is symbolic of the man's use of mind to bracket off the material consciousness, led them to the first stage of their development of a new evolutionary faculty that enables them to suspend the distortions of world and mind and see the 'things as they are in themselves'. Wilson's novel, *The Glass Cage* conveys that rationality is not enough to elucidate and transcend the natural attitude. Damon Reade, the protagonist of the novel has developed some powers beyond ordinary logic and calculation to suspend the overwhelming grip of the immediate and the conventional. His intuitive capacity enables him to see through his experiences, after casting off his 'natural' way of understanding the things. Reade's method is phenomenological, as he analyses his own experiences, and after executing the reductions understands the essence of those experiences. By and large, Wilson's *Sorme Trilogy*, is an objective study of sexuality. On one hand it insists on analysing the sexual experience with a sense of detachment to uncover the evolutionary intimations hidden in human sexuality and on the other hand, it brings home the point that sexual freedom facilitates a momentary freedom, but it indicates that key lies in the power of imagination. Essentially, the key

component of the sexual experience is the power of imagination. And man can reach his inner worlds for more freedom and escape the trivial through imagination. Some came to that insight as a result of his sex experiences with Caroline, Gertrude, Carlotta, and other women. And when man sees a glimpse of new horizons or possibilities, he feels inclined to set aside all of his assumptions in order to open up and discover these new depths of consciousness. By systematically cutting off all external inputs and stimuli, the novel *The Black Room* deals with an experiment in sensory deprivation which allows participants to concentrate on internal phenomena, or what is given to the consciousness. In this sense, it examines human subjectivity and reflects the various responses of individuals. Its purpose is to suspend the objective world and make one attentive to its own consciousness. It all comes down to discipline, which can be consciously applied through an experiment like the black room or, more commonly, is caused by a crisis situation. *The Personality Surgeon*, like most of Wilson's earlier novels, incorporates some phenomenological concepts that provide insight into human consciousness and experience. It is about self-image – an image that a person aspires for and the one he has assumed in the complex web of relations that exist in life – the life-world. In *The personality surgeon*, Charles Peruzzi, analyzes human personality in its many facets by working with a variety of case studies. He facilitates the release of self-limiting identities, allowing individuals to transcend limitations and live more authentically. These identities mirror the personal perspectives and predispositions that shape an individual's perception of reality. Wilson thinks that different distortions imposed by the human mind have an impact on how well consciousness perceives the objects of experience. By altering their perception, Charles assists his patients in eliminating the distortions that have gathered over time and forming a positive self-image. Charles forges a new world for them by shifting their standpoint which brings a change in their perception and meaning constitution. The reduction restructures their world into a meaningful whole. It appears differently to them and they regain its depth and significance or what Husserl would say the meaning of the being of the world has been constituted (again).

In contrast to Husserl, Wilson analyzes the contents of consciousness—its emotions, ideas, and perceptions—in order to grasp consciousness in its purity and intensity rather than following a methodical process of reductions to determine the essence of consciousness. Wilson suggests that crisis situations prompt people to transcend naive attitude, concentrate, and tap into hidden resources of mental clarity

and vitality. Wilson's advocacy for 'contemplative detachment' resonates with Husserl's epoche, sharing a common goal of probing the depths of human consciousness and unravelling transcendental subjectivity.

Wilson contends that ordinarily it is only the sexual impulse that, momentarily though, jerks a person out of the naiveté of 'natural attitude' and effects a total reduction or epoche that acquaints him with the intentional powers of his consciousness.

The concept of epoche reveals the intentional nature of consciousness, where intentionality mediates and influences our understanding of reality. Wilson understands intentionality in terms of imagination and will and firmly believes that intentionality is a potent tool to change perception which in turn will change consciousness. Wilson believes that it is only through intentionality that human beings can come out from their narrower states of consciousness and defeat the nihilistic and pessimistic tendencies which push them down to passivity. Wilson is an evolutionary existentialist and he is interested in evolution and regeneration of man's inner life. Wilson proposes that phenomenological self-exploration is key to existential growth, enabling individuals to focus their energies on becoming their authentic selves. Wilson's existentialism is positive which recognizes that consciousness has a far greater range than one normally believes. It is intentional, active rather than passive. Wilson through the portrayal of his characters shows that intentionality renews perception, brings intensity in the very act of perceiving. It refreshes experience that modifies its meaning. It can turn boredom into interest.

Howard Lester and Henry Littleway, two main characters in *The Philosopher's Stone*, explore the possibilities of prolonging human life which the later thinks lie in the intensification of human consciousness. They seem to be working on this intensification in terms of physiology, which is essentially a more elaborate metaphor for altering human consciousness and experience in terms of intentionality. In *The Mind Parasites*, Austin's fight against the parasites is to bracket off one's habit bound existence and release the powers of intentionality. The archaeological diggings, which is a symbol of digging man's own inner landscapes in the novel, reveal that the nature of human consciousness is intentional which gives meaning to one's subjective and objective worlds. Likewise, the protagonist of the novel *The Glass Cage*, Damon Reade 'intends' the underlying reality which he detects through intuition. Reade's

search for George Sundheim represents a progressive development of his intentionality, which gives his acts an intuitive certainty. Karl Zweig, the protagonist of *Necessary Doubt* achieves his self-renewal through the powers of intentionality. He analyzes his own consciousness phenomenologically through his search of Neumann. His quest is to come back to himself which Wilson makes explicit through this quest. Wilson's *Sorme Trilogy* primarily makes a phenomenological analysis of crime and human sexuality. Wilson finds the key to evolutionary consciousness hidden in the sexual impulse and terms it as the 'evolutionary intentionality.' Wilson's portraiture of the three main characters in the *Ritual in the Dark*, Gerard Sorme, Austin Nunne and Oliver Glasp represent the intellectual, emotional and physical dimensions of existence. Wilson proposes that integrating heart, intellect, and body fosters heightened intentionality, transforming reality perception and reshaping the nature of consciousness. The true essence of Sorme's *Bildung* is this shift in perspective, which he progressively learns from his experiences and which he affirms can be brought about by intentionality. In *Man Without a Shadow*, Wilson continues exploring human sexuality and unravels its secrets which has a bearing for other experiences. Like sex, several human experiences provide a glimpse into the intentional nature of consciousness which would open up new horizons of meaning. Wilson contends that these experiences provide a clue to perceive one's ordinary experiences with the same intensity. This, Wilson believes, would act as an antidote to the 'indifference threshold' and would bring freedom from the 'natural life.' Significantly, Wilson concludes that sexual experience provides a glimpse into the proper use of human mind, it points to some mechanism which needs to be understood to bring intensity in one's consciousness. Wilson's philosophy emphasizes that intentionality empowers individuals to live more purposefully, cultivating significance in their experiences and bring value to their actions.

Wilson and Husserl's philosophical inquiry focuses on the vital energies or life forces that underlie the nature of consciousness. The quality of consciousness is determined by the intentional direction of these life forces as focusing and concentrating this energy is intentionality, and it inevitably results in the perception of meaning. *Shadow* tries to recognise these powers in sexual impulse which Wilson believes could pave the way for some higher state of being. Similar to *Shadow*, *The God of the Labyrinth* is regarded as an erotica that explores the mysteries of the human sexual impulse. Sorme's obsession with sex is to discover these intentional powers in

sexual drive and to find out some other ways of raising these powers and change his state of consciousness to a higher form. It is a recognition that sexual conduct sets off an internal focus that's triggered by something other than sexual activity per se. Wilson's primary goal is to comprehend this mechanism, which is crucial for changing the quality of consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology, on the other hand, discloses different levels of consciousness while without directly involving any qualitative shift in consciousness. This qualitative change in consciousness, Wilson believes, needs a proper channelization of energies which will bring new awakening in consciousness and open new horizons of possibility – the new vistas of will and consciousness. This will eventually give rise to optimism and affirmation. Therefore, the entire trilogy could be interpreted as a concerted attempt to comprehend the intentionality of consciousness, which is fully revealed by experiences like sex. It can also be inferred that how will and imagination as intrinsic parts of intentionality makes human experiences meaningful, and ordinarily it is the sexual experience which fetches one these insights.

Wilson's novel *The Black Room* examines human subjectivity, specifically how to develop a disciplined subjectivity that can exist with an identity and be unaffected by any external stimuli. Experiences such as the 'black room' raise one to an inner pressure that, in Wilsonian terms, clenches the will and propels it upward into a higher plane of self-control. Husserl also discussed the need of having subjective control over reality, which can be achieved by intentionality in inner perception. Intentionality, according to him, is the 'egological constitution' by which the subjective consciousness combines its senses and gives them meaning. The intentionality of consciousness equates to its awareness of both its internal and external world. Wilson interprets it in terms of vitality as well, which originates in the subconscious. Since intentionality is the subconscious desire to be more aware and conscious, being more intentional means having greater vitality. Wilson's novel *The Personality Surgeon* deals with those dimensions of consciousness in which active and passive modes of intentional constitution affect the constitution of the sense of self and identity. Through intentionality, the characters in the novel bring change in their perception and consciousness. They succeed in channelizing their energies in the right direction the keys of which lie in the powers of intentionality. Wilson goads man to realise his innate potential and stop lingering in the triviality of everydayness. His protagonists

which he calls as the *outsiders* take this challenge honestly and in a heroic fashion chart their own destinies.

Wilson like Husserl seeks an apodictic objective dimension of human consciousness - a state of certainty when an individual recovers the transcendental subjectivity and a sense of reality. Much of Wilson's fiction discusses an objective reality that, in his opinion, provides a sense of other places and other times and exists outside of the reducing value (i.e., natural attitude) of ordinary consciousness. It is named by Wilson as faculty X. Wilson envisages an evolutionary leap in human consciousness, revealing the Husserlian transcendental ego - the centre from which all meaning, purpose, and vitality emanate.

Husserl's philosophy traces a transformative journey from mundane awareness (natural attitude) to transcendental subjectivity, mirroring Wilson's concept of evolution from ordinary to intensity consciousness. Wilson's theory of evolution and Husserlian transcendality share some latent similarities. Each makes an effort to provide a phenomenological response to the universal question, 'Who am I?' They both basically impart the science of existence by discussing how consciousness aims to be aware of its own awareness. Wilson's works explore the concept of a higher self, or 'faculty X,' akin to the transcendental ego in Husserl's philosophy, representing an individual's deeper, superordinate identity and source of joy and empowerment. Knowledge of 'self' holds great significance in human life. Understanding of 'self' is crucial to all individuals. The individuals with self-knowledge constitute an intersubjective community which gives rise to a deeper and richer collective consciousness and in which the possibilities of growth for the self and the other increases.

Wilson's *The Mind Parasites* offers a nuanced exploration of human consciousness, shedding light on its different dimensions and underlying structures. Husserl refers its basic structure as the transcendental ego. *The Mind Parasites* defies genre conventions and emerges as a visionary exploration of consciousness, perception, and the transcendental, redefining the science fiction landscape. Wilson's work employs phenomenology to overcome limiting biases, illuminating the hidden 'I' of the transcendental ego, which serves as the source of authentic purpose, value, and self-consciousness. Wilson associates a sense of timelessness with this state. A

state where man has a vertical sense of time which gives birth to what Wilson calls as the faculty X – a sense of other places and other times. Wilson explores the idea of a new consciousness in his novel *Necessary Doubt*. In this novel, Wilson by employing a different narrative strategy makes Karl Zweig, to search outward for Neumann which is actually an inward odyssey of self-exploration, culminating in attaining to a new consciousness. Wilson's second science fiction novel, *The Philosopher's Stone*, is a study of consciousness that draws parallels between faculty X in Wilsonian thought and Maslovian peak experiences, which can be well equated with Husserl's idea of transcendental subjectivity. According to Husserl the moment an individual assumes the transcendental attitude, a qualitatively different form of ego emerges which reflects on consciousness in an entirely new way. According to Wilson, this idea suggests transcendent states of consciousness, marked by intensified awareness, aliveness, and ecstatic experiences. Wilson believes that man's capacity for 'otherness' gives him access to such states. Wilson basically wants an evolutionary leap which would establish a man in an apodictic transcendental reality and he terms it as 'permanent state of objectivity.' The goal of this state of consciousness, as held by Howard Lester and Henry Littleway, is to boost vitality and promote better health. They suggest that in order for man to connect to the source of power and purpose that resides within him, he must evolve into a state that defies time and space. Wilson views this state of consciousness as a sudden alertness to one's actual self and further links it to Mark's 'value experiences' (an implicit allusion to Abraham Maslow's 'peak experiences'). Wilson identifies the birth of a "new faculty" in humans as resulting from the synergy of 'value experiences', 'contemplative objectivity,' and encounters with 'otherness'. Wilson points out that man's 'real self' lies deep down his everyday consciousness, which is more manifest in the moments of relaxation; when human beings have greater vitality and their consciousness becomes web-like. Wilson believes that the ultimate potential for human consciousness is this hidden self. Wilson implores human beings to adopt a phenomenological attitude in life and connect with their deeper sources which remains hidden under different layers of consciousness, while living from a natural standpoint. Wilson's *Sorme trilogy* is a deeply philosophical exploration of crime and sexuality, aimed at revealing the contours of exceptional human experiences and states of being. At a deeper level, it explores the recovery of subjectivity that human beings have lost in the natural attitude. Unlike Husserl, Wilson conceives this subjectivity as the source of man's energy, the

recognition of which can change his existential status. The trilogy's second book, *Man Without a Shadow*, delves into the spiritual potential that exists within every human being in an effort to uncover this power itself. It is regaining of one's real 'existential substance' that human beings forfeit in the natural attitude. Wilson maintains that the realization of this true being would elevate a man to the status of a god. Ordinarily, a person gets the glimpses of this real being in sexual experience. Wilson describes this transformative experience as 'vitality,' exemplified by Sorme's journey from 'half-consciousness' to transcendental consciousness, unlocking the wellspring of meaning and freedom. It is the recognition of the fact that it is the 'I' or what Husserl calls 'transcendental ego' that imposes meaning on the objects of one's experiences. Wilson delves into the labyrinth of sexual experiences once again in *The God of the Labyrinth*, the third and final novel of the *Sorme trilogy*. He seeks to uncover the hidden god of consciousness, which he believes may be unveiled by following the experience all the way to its origins. Wilson equates these origins of human consciousness with the Husserlian 'transcendental ego.' He recognizes, as does Husserl, a distinction between this reality and the empirical ego. In the novel, Sorme realises that sometimes life is intensely interesting and meaningful and this meaning seems to be an objective fact, Esmond's search was basically a search for meaning, which he gradually understands to be bestowed by the hidden 'I.'

The transcendental ego envisaged as a structural component as well as an esoteric dimension of consciousness by Husserl is interpreted by many of the Husserlian scholars in terms of what in eastern mystical traditions has been called as the soul or atman – some higher forms of consciousness which has been disclosed by mystical techniques for centuries. This makes up the ontological basis of mankind, which is pure and transcendent. In Vedic and Shaivic philosophy, it is termed as *Saksi Caitanya* – the witness consciousness, which Husserl himself admits as a spectator ego or consciousness. After peeling off all the layers of consciousness, the remaining 'phenomenological residuum' has been regarded by both, as a state of pure consciousness and complete wakefulness. In *The Glass Cage*, Wilson, while dealing with the theme of crime shows that a huge life force takes a negative direction which as a pure potential can be transformed into the realisation of some ultimate reality – a state which imbues stability and affirmation and enables humans to act meaningfully. Though there is quite less of what one may refer to as phenomenological unravelling

of the foundational structures of consciousness in *The Personality Surgeon*, nevertheless, Wilson does talk about the self and realisation of self while making Peruzzi to engage with patients in his psycho-therapeutic sessions. The novel highlights Dr. Peruzzi's and Dr. Erik Topelius's pioneering work in personality analysis. It emphasizes how important it is to have a strong sense of self and an objective, fully realized self-image. The novel emphasizes the idea that while personality is a socially constructed utilitarian entity, but on a deepest level, there is a self which constitutes an individual's fundamental aspect of who he is. The novel portrays a conflict between personality and individuality. Personality is intrinsically arbitrary and a unification of life force, which otherwise remains divided, leads to the birth of individuality. Peruzzi leads his patients to realise their individuality and potential so that they can come to their essence. Wilson asserts that this realization, which leads to higher states of existence, is evolutionary. Peruzzi's therapeutic breakthrough enables patients to overcome inner fragmentation, cultivating a singular, cohesive 'I' that forms the bedrock of their personal identity. Wilson's *The Black Room* probes intentionality as a pathway to higher consciousness. It aims to answer the question, who am I? The black room device pushes a person inward which opens a possibility of a breakthrough to higher consciousness. It deals with the phenomenological examination of the depths of consciousness that give life meaning and purpose—an awakening to one's existential reality. *The Black Room's* protagonist, Kit Butler, embarks on a journey of self-discovery, marked by pivotal experiences that challenge and transform him. He equates it to some semi-mystical states, a more awakened state, complete relaxation, and a strong sense of optimism. Throughout the novel, Wilson utilizes a range of concepts, such as Faculty X, affirmation consciousness, and holiday consciousness, to describe the transcendent reality that underlies human experience. These types of states of consciousness cause an evolutionary leap into the transcendental realm since they are marked by a persistent freshness of awareness and a higher degree of wakefulness.

Wilson's entire goal is to give modern man a way to shed his 'natural attitude,' in which 'the world is too much with him,' and awaken a higher type of consciousness that would otherwise remain dormant. His idea of the several states of consciousness, which begin with the 'natural attitude' and finish with the realization of one's

transcendental self, is similar to Husserl's account of the various states of consciousness.

What Wilson has searched for, in his wide-ranging study and literary output (he has published well over 20 books since *The Outsider*, both fiction and nonfiction) is a path to the human energy centres, the springs of evolution that drive all life, and especially humanity, up to higher levels of consciousness and achievement. Through intentionality, the characters in the novel make a conscious evolution towards a higher state of consciousness. It is a positive use of energies that are always at man's disposal. Human beings can vary their energies to grasp the things and bring intensity in the action of perceiving or lose the grip over their experiences by failing to sustain intentionality. Man in the modern era suffers greatly from this misconception. He is susceptible to a culture of hasty fixes. It is simpler to lose yourself in a television show, a movie, or social networking site than it is to actively participate in the act of perceiving. People eventually lose the ability to explore their diverse identities in order to grow as individuals. The contemporary world has failed to create conditions that would strengthen intentional powers in the proper way. Rather, it has spawned a false crisis in the form of games and sports entertainment, which lead to an uncaring existence. Following this, such a life cloyes and drives the person toward pessimism and sadness, which are, for the most part, stoically accepted. This is the existential choice of the modern man, where things just happen. Recalling Husserl, Wilson points out that man's prejudices go a deeper than his intellect and emotions. Consciousness is itself prejudiced – that is to say intentional. Thus, human beings are responsible for what they are. The key to build an existential foundation lies in their intentional powers which if used properly can lead to the salvation of the individual. For this, one needs to strive for a constant state of awareness, power of will and attention so that the individual can act with its truest self and attain to freedom and joy. And it is only in states of joy and freedom that consciousness evolves and becomes sharp and mature.

Wilson turns out to be a philosophic tour-de-force, who from the outside, may sometimes appear random, digressive and eclectic but gives profound phenomenological insights into the nature of consciousness. Iris Murdoch prefers Wilson's philosophy which she considers far better than the pedantic dryness of the most of his contemporary philosophers as she sees him providing a method and way to live a meaningful life within the complex maze of the life-world. (Bakewell 287)

He labels his philosophy as the 'new existentialism' and gives it a full expression in his fictional works. Much in the Husserlian fashion, Wilson's existentialism advocates a phenomenological examination of an individual's own consciousness wherein he makes a detached study of consciousness and a subsequent description of it. Wilson envisages that an attitudinal change in man's everyday thinking could be brought about by philosophical innovations as put forth by Whitehead and Husserl. Wilson, like Husserl, views philosophy as an essential, live tool that has the power to alter human perception of reality rather than as an abstract discipline. This tool quite well gave some valuable insights into his novel's philosophical obsession and our own underutilized capacities.

Both Wilson and Husserl have set out to know the nature of consciousness. When on one hand Husserl's endeavors to this end are scientific, Wilson makes his explorations more existential which has greater implications for the evolution of human consciousness. Both Wilson and Husserl describe subjectivity in all dimensions of human experience which ranges from passive dimension of habituality to active dimension of intentionality with a recognition and characterization of a transcendental realm that constitutes the foundation and source of life and meaning.

One of the significant contributions of Wilson is his phenomenological analysis of human sexuality which he discusses in his nonfiction work *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* and gives it a fuller expression in his fictional works, especially *Sorme Trilogy*. Wilson thinks there's a direct connection between a desire for sex and the urge to evolve, but that the former prevents the latter from happening since it's growing increasingly aberrant and 'unnatural,' even if it's perfectly acceptable in the 'natural attitude.' Wilson contends that sexual impulse reveals the intentional powers of human consciousness. He regards it as a way to attain intensity consciousness. Wilson says sexual impulse shows consciousness can be made more intentional which is directly connected to will and imagination which has bearing on the access to higher modes of being. According to Wilson, there is a gap between mind and reality; any crisis, unusual effort of concentration and sex bridges this gap and one accesses the reality beyond distortions of mind. This is the difference between being alive and simply living and this reality is what Husserl calls as the transcendental ego. Wilson, like Husserl, lays bare the transcendental realms of human being which constitute the ontological foundation of his existence. He equates his idea of Faculty X with the

Maslovian peak experiences which in many ways resembles the transcendental ego of Husserl – the immortal powerhouse of one's embodied consciousness. Both Husserl and Wilson recognize the transcendental sphere of this reality as the source of meaning and freedom. For Wilson this is the only way to transcend the 'everyday' and become aware of oneself as the transcendental ego.

This phenomenological study of Wilson's fictional world yielded some significant results which are crucial for enriching human life at both individual and social level. It gave a deep understanding of the structure and functioning of conscious experiences of the fictional characters. It fetched important knowledge about how human beings act through different modes of being which affect their perception and consciousness. It provided a better understanding about the ways and methods of evolving into a new consciousness. The study gave a new perspective to understand Colin Wilson's vision that emerges out of his work. Wilson's fictional works can be further explored especially in the fields of human value studies, consciousness studies and phenomenological psychology.

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