

A PLEA FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF EDMUND
HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODS
INTO PARAPSYCHOLOGY

GERDA WALTHER (*Germany*)

This method was developed by the eminent German (born Austrian) philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in his *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (1913). It is essentially a gnoseological method, characterized by two fundamental steps: (1) the so-called eidetic reduction; (2) the phenomenological reduction properly speaking.

1. By the eidetic reduction everything is reduced to its essential, irreducible content, quite independent of its genesis in the outer world, its existence, etc. E.g., Tyrrell's classical analysis of apparitions, H. H. Price's investigation of the "Idea of Another World" would be such an eidetic investigation. According to Husserl, by this method we can establish many kinds of so-called regional ontologies, containing the fundamentals of all kinds of sciences.

2. In the phenomenological reduction every "object" in the widest sense of the word is reduced to a mere phenomenon, given-ness for consciousness. According to Husserl, each kind of object essentially demands a special kind of consciousness in which it presents itself in the most adequate and original manner. It is one of the aims of phenomenology to find this optimal kind of experience for each object according to the regional ontology to which it belongs. (Such objects are not only outer, sensual objects; they may be anything whatever: mathematical objects, sociological-psychological, parapsychological objects, etc.)

Also, consciousness for Husserl is not a specific human con-

sciousness, but consciousness as such, "pure" consciousness; its laws accordingly must be valid for any consciousness as far as the same object is concerned. Consciousness is characterized by what Husserl calls intentionality, the way in which any givenness is meant by, represented to, known by consciousness. (Husserl thinks it is fundamentally wrong to say anything is "imaged" by consciousness.) We have to distinguish in this intentionality the objective and the mental side of experience of any kind. The mental side Husserl calls *noesis* (e.g., the vivacity, sharpness, emotional value of an experience), the objective side *noema* (the same object e.g., may be given in original self-representation, as memory, merely meaning it in an "empty conception without fulfilment," etc.). In a reflexive perception (being an immanent internal perception) the *noesis* of the different kinds of experience of all sorts of objects must be investigated. (This is as important for the mental side of consciousness as is the development of regional ontologies for the constitution of the fundamentals of all sciences.) It is of paramount importance to establish the best way of original self-presentation for any kind of object.

This also is of the greatest importance for parapsychology and its phenomena. As an example a phenomenological analysis of telepathy was attempted. It was shown that telepathy is the most adequate and original experience of the "other mind," "giving" it as adequately as "own" experiences of the subject. This is important, as in gnoseology empathy was regarded as the only way of attaining cognition of the other mind. Telepathy is the original experience of the other subject, its moods, emotions, thoughts, etc. It must not be limited to the cognition of the contents of the sender's consciousness (i.e., to mere thought-transference). In telepathy the "atmosphere" of the sender permeates the experience transferred; that is how the "receiver" can know from whom it comes. This is an essential feature of telepathy. Such analyses must be carried on and also applied to other psychic phenomena. Combined with the other methods employed, it may prove very fertile in future parapsychological investigation.