A HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE CHILD

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Phenomenologists have long been concerned with following Husserl's exhortation, "To the things themselves!" ("Zu den Sachen selbst!"). They have sought to let the phenomena, or "things," show themselves in such a way as to exhibit the characteristics that are proper to them, and they have endeavored to unfold the meaning of such phenomena in a fitting manner. And although such an undertaking has indeed been successful with respect to many areas, or regions, of phenomena, it has, with the exception of a few of Merleau-Ponty's writings, virtually neglected to investigate the phenomenon of the child.

The reason for this neglect may be said to lie in the fact that the phenomenon of the child is peculiarly resistant to being investigated in a phenomenological manner. This peculiar resistance is evidenced by the quite natural observation that, while on the one hand the child is certainly not a "small adult," on the other hand the child definitely does share in the human world, of which, of course, the adult forms an integral part. From this observation there arises a first and most difficult demand for any phenomenological investigation: namely, it must preserve and exhibit the world of the child as that of the child, without infringing on its integral characteristics. This requirement is inseparably bound up with a second one, which holds that such a study must also take care not to radically dissever the child from the human world, including the adult world in
whose structures the child also participates. The difficulty for the phenomenologist is, thus, grounded in the very phenomena of the child itself. The difficulty lies in that, despite the seemingly antithetical character of these two requirements, which are dictated by the very nature of the child itself, both of them must be observed if the phenomenologist is to follow Husserl's exhortation and uncover the much neglected phenomenon of the child.

And yet, such a difficulty need not be insurmountable, for phenomenology is fortunate in having at its disposal a recently published manuscript that may help it to investigate the phenomenon of the child in a manner that is in accord with these two requirements. The manuscript, which has been given the title, "Das Kind. Die Erste Einfühlung" ("The Child: The First Empathy"), forms "Beilage XLV" of Husserl's Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität: Texte aus dem Nachlass, Dritter Teil: 1929-1935, edited by Iso Kern (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973). This appendix to Husserl's writings on intersubjectivity is a working manuscript, containing numerous corrections and alterations made by Husserl himself. It was probably written in July, 1935, and thus is one of Husserl's later writings, for it pertains to the period of his work on the Krisis.

While the manuscript is indeed a working manuscript, written in a rather abrupt and choppy style, it offers invaluable assistance to phenomenologists who are working to elaborate a phenomenology of the child. The manuscript takes the phenomenologist back to the reflections of Husserl, who is often called the founder of phenomenology, and to his attempts to describe the life-world of the child. In so doing, it discloses the basic structures for an entire region of phenomena that have scarcely been touched upon by Husserl research on intersubjectivity. It also takes the phenomenologist back to the source of a type of reflection on the child that is later taken up, although in a slightly altered manner, by Merleau-Ponty, who never ceases to acknowledge his debt to Husserl for having provided much of the impetus for his own research on the topic. Moreover, the manuscript is also very suggestive for future work on a phenomenological psychology of the child.

Consequently, insofar as Husserl's manuscript offers new insights for research on both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, as well as for possible developments in phenomenological psychology, it is the intent of this paper to present the major claims that it