

Phenomenology and Physics

AN article under this title by H. Margenau appears in the current issue of *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. It sets out to expound to the student of physics the main concepts of Husserl and his school; in addition, some consideration is given to the point of view which a physicist interested in methodology might take about the doctrines of phenomenology. At the outset the author is at pains to stress the special meaning attached to the word 'phenomenology'. Far from representing something superficial (that is, associated with 'mere' phenomena) this discipline is the most all-embracing matrix in which, so to say, all experience can be embedded. The paper is in three sections: (1) general thesis of phenomenology; (2) epistemology of physics; (3) the notion of certainty in phenomenology. It seems likely that, of the two types of facts recognized by Husserl, contingent and necessary, the latter are being gradually worn down by a process of attrition as scientific knowledge progresses. Thus a natural question to ask is whether or not the tendency will stop before all *eidetic* (that is, form-like) truth has become contingent. To Husserl, for example, Euclidean geometry appeared "immediately evident and therefore indubitably correct". Here indeed is an example of the rapid strides made by modern science since his day towards contingency. The caution towards ontological problems which phenomenology is forced to observe wrung from Husserl his famous "epoché" or abstinence, sometimes called bracketing. It implies, even if it does not absolutely require, the waiving of all existential judgments.

With this in mind, we are led to distinguish sense data from 'constructs', and to consider the rules of correspondence relating them. The inadequacy of ordinary language is the cause of much difficulty in making the necessary distinction between percept and correlate. Hallucinations cannot be dismissed too easily, for they are part of the 'given' in nature, but their spurious character is apparent by reference to constructs. Broadly, science is conceived as self-corrective, a property in which phenomenology is lacking. So long as the latter subject is without a discriminant between the infinite variety of forms which inner experience can take, it is likely to remain somewhat unproductive. It seems doubtful whether this disadvantage can be overcome without doing violence, to some part at least, of Husserl's thought.

Swiss Contributions to Western Civilization

UNDER the title "The Swiss Contribution to Western Civilization", Dr. Raphael E. C. Armattee has set forth an account of the cultural achievements of Switzerland which, as Dr. Julian Huxley suggests in his foreword, most people may well find surprising (Dundalk: W. Tempest Dundalgan Press. Pp. 91. 5s.). As the record shows, Switzerland has sent out many from its free institutions to play their part elsewhere, while its universities have attracted many notable men from abroad. It has provided asylum for a number of distinguished workers anxious to avoid tyranny or persecution in their own countries, and Switzerland was almost the only centre of science, learning and culture in Europe which was able to remain out of the War. Its part in the reconstruction of European civilization may well be out of all proportion to its size. Dr. Armattee seeks to distinguish from the outset a few sources of the Swiss contribution; but he makes no claim to be comprehensive,

especially in dealing with music and the physical sciences. Chemists will note, for example, that while D.D.T. is mentioned, there is no reference to Engi's work, and the reference to the work of P. Karrer and L. Ruzicka is very brief. Besides the sections dealing with the Swiss contribution to biological sciences, the mathematical and physical sciences, agriculture, research in climatology and meteorology, and such special fields as climatic treatment of lung complaints, and Jungfrauoch Alpine research, with its humanitarian contributions, there are notes on the Swiss educational system, vocational and industrial education, industry and commerce, Swiss cultural life and so forth.

Public Health and the Museum

IN 1942, authorities of the South Australian Museum, at the request of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, examined the River Murray billabongs and seepage areas for Mollusca which might act as secondary hosts for the trematode worm parasites known to be present in the internees of the Loveday Internment Camps. Crustacea and edible fish—together with Cephalopoda taken from the stomachs of the latter—were also examined. The result of this work was a report strongly recommending that the internees should not be allowed in the vicinity of the river, since there was danger of their excreta infecting local fauna, with the possible consequence that the parasites would be introduced into the Australian population (see Report of the South Australian Museum, Adelaide, for 1942). The report for 1944 shows further work of high social value and importance. During last year the research activities of the Museum were turned towards the microscopic study of insects, the Acarina (particularly the Trombiculinae), which are associated with the occurrence of scrub typhus in Australia and New Guinea. This work was carried out in collaboration with the Medical Section of the Australian Army, the Scrub Typhus Commission of the U.S.A., as well as with officers of the U.S. Navy. It has resulted in making the South Australian Museum the recognized centre for the identification of these mites; and the Museum's collection of these is now probably the largest in existence.

Consider the Calendar

BHOLA D. PANTH has produced a book with the above title, published by the Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1944 (pp. 138), which supplies an excellent account of the calendar, and also shows the great difficulties that beset the path of those who desire calendar reform. Details concerning the basic concepts of ancient calendars among the Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Mohammedans and others will prove helpful to many, more especially as such information is no longer supplied in every issue of the *Nautical Almanac*. Chapter 4 is devoted to a consideration of various proposals for calendar improvement. Reference to some of these proposals has been made in *Nature* (153, 229; 1944), and it is unnecessary to deal further with the different suggestions made to simplify our calendar. The Special Committee of Enquiry into the Reform of the Calendar of the League of Nations in 1926, in Geneva, received 185 plans from 33 different countries, and although this was evidence of keen interest in the subject, it also showed that a certain amount of opposition is inevitable whatever plan be adopted. It does