To an observer of the contemporary intellectual scene, it may appear that the years following the end of the war have witnessed a triumph of phenomenology on an international scale. Certainly, this impression is correct to some extent. Nonetheless, much of what passes for “phenomenology” can thus be taken only in a very broad, not to say extremely loose, sense. Some of the writings about Husserl’s phenomenology are too much colored and determined by views current in contemporary philosophical trends which, though they have undoubtedly developed in the wake of Husserl’s phenomenology, cannot however be considered as its continuations, that is, as continuations of Husserl’s work along the lines of his general orientation. Needless to say, thus to continue Husserl’s work is not only compatible with, but might even sometimes demand modifications of, particular theories.

As far as the situation in the United States is concerned, the unfortunate fact of the matter is that Husserl’s writings are hardly studied at all, and his theories and ideas remain largely unknown. So bypassed, phenomenology is not permitted to exert the invigorating influence it might have upon contemporary American philosophy, which thus deprives itself of the vitalization it might derive from the philosophical substance and radicalism of Husserl’s work. No less deplorable are the misconceptions

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1 “Nonetheless” has been substituted for “however” in order to avoid unnecessary repetition below.
2 “However” has been substituted for “yet” for lexical reasons.
current in what may be called philosophical public opinion: the mis-
understanding of Husserl’s concept of intuition for a kind of mystical insight or illumination; the misinterpretation of his descriptive analyses as a sort of introspectionism; and the like. To be sure, there are some American publications of more or less recent date which do not seem to bear out this pessimistic view. We gratefully acknowledge those encouraging signs, and we may even take them as a promise for the future. Yet, at the present phase, they can hardly be considered as more than exceptional and marginal phenomena. It still remains true that phenomenology plays no role in contemporary American philosophy.

Under these circumstances, reliable monographs either on Husserl’s phenomenology as a whole or on certain of its central aspects are highly desirable. It is most gratifying to us to welcome and to introduce Quentin Lauer’s book. Among the American publications just referred to as hopeful and promising symptoms of a serious interest in and genuine understanding of Husserl’s phenomenology, the present book will hold a prominent place.

Husserl’s phenomenology is presented by Father Lauer under a genetic perspective. He pursues its gradual unfolding and crystallization through four of Husserl’s major works which appeared during his lifetime: the first in 1900–1901, the last in 1931. For its internal unity and coherence, a presentation which lays bare the growth of phenomenological philosophy requires to be organized around a central theme. For that central theme, Father Lauer has chosen the concept of the intentionality of consciousness.

A more fortunate and appropriate choice could hardly have been made. Not only is the theory of intentionality of predominant importance for Husserl’s thought, but one might even go as far as maintaining that a completely developed phenomenological philosophy would coincide with a theory of intentionality consistently elaborated in all its ramifications. By this insistence on the presentational function of acts of consciousness (that is, upon their function of confronting the experiencing subject with objects as meant, intended, and appearing through those acts), Husserl has inaugurated a radical change in the current conceptions con-

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3 Here, as well as elsewhere in this piece, “concept” has been substituted for “notion” in order to preserve consistency of usage in this volume.