While philosophy in the English-speaking countries and in Scandinavia is largely analytic, phenomenology and existentialism prevail on the continent.

Phenomenologists and existentialists do not form sharply separated camps; one may find philosophers taking a variety of intermediate positions between phenomenology and existentialism, and both Heidegger and Sartre, to mention only two prominent existentialists, started out from phenomenology. Yet there appears to be a chasm between these philosophers and those of the analytic schools in England and the United States.

Phenomenology and existentialism have only very seldom managed to arouse the interest of analytic philosophers. And, conversely, analytic philosophy has been an almost closed world to phenomenologists and existentialists.

Though we should certainly not ignore the differences between the two camps, it would be a mistake to despair of communication altogether. Especially between analytic philosophy and phenomenology, mutual understandings, and perhaps even fruitful exchange, seems to be possible. And once this connection is established, phenomenology may in turn serve as a link of communication between analytic philosophy and existentialism.

In this paper, I shall try to present phenomenology in such a way as to clarify its connection with analytic philosophy on the one side and with existentialism on the other.

The very background of the man who created phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, leads one to suspect that phenomenology should demand some of the
qualities of precision and logical rigor that analytic philosophers tend to look for and relish.

Husserl, who was born in 1859 in Czechoslovakia and died in Freiburg, Germany, in 1938, began as a mathematician. He earned a Ph.D. in this subject and then worked for a short time as an assistant to his teacher Weierstrass, who was one of the foremost mathematicians of his time and a man whose discoveries in the foundations of mathematics led him to stress the importance of making one's terminology precise and one's presuppositions explicit. Even after Husserl turned to philosophy at the age of twenty-five, at the prompting of the scholastic-inspired Franz Brentano, it was by Bolzano and Frege, the two most important forerunners of analytic philosophy in the nineteenth century, that he was most decisively influenced.

Both Bolzano (1781–1848) and Frege (1848–1925) did their most important work in the foundations of logic and mathematics. Frege, probably the most important figure in logic since Aristotle, contributed much to the thought of Russell and Wittgenstein, who, together with G. E. Moore, are the founders of modern analytic philosophy in England. Husserl never met Frege, nor of course Bolzano, but he studied all that they published, and Frege wrote a critical review of Husserl’s first book, Philosophy of Arithmetic.

Franz Brentano (1838–1917), under whom Husserl studied philosophy in Vienna after he had left mathematics, is important for phenomenology mainly because of his theory of ‘intentionality.’

Characteristic of all mental activity, according to Brentano, is that it is directed toward something, intends something.

Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the scholastics in the Middle Ages called the intentional (and also mental) existence of an object, and what we could call, although in not entirely unambiguous terms, the reference to a content, a direction upon an object

Just as when we love, there is something that we love, so there is something that we sense when we sense, something we think of when we think, and so on. This may sound commonplace, but difficulties arise when we try to apply this principle to a person who has hallucinations, or a person who thinks of a centaur. Brentano held that even in these cases our mental activity, our thinking or our sensing, is directed towards some object. The directedness has nothing to do with the reality of the object, Brentano held. The object is itself contained in our mental activity, ‘intentionally’ contained in it. And Brentano defined mental phenomena as “phenomena which contain an object intentionally.”

Many of Brentano’s students, among them Husserl, felt that the problems of intentionality were important. But they were dissatisfied with Brentano’s proposed solution, which I have just sketched, namely, Brentano’s principle that for every act there is an object toward which it is directed. They found it unclear, partly because it leads to the following dilemma: Let us consider a man who sees a tree. If we say that the object toward which his act of seeing is directed is the real tree in front of him, we shall have difficulties in explaining hallucinations. And if we modify our concept of what the object of an act is in such a way that we can say that hallucinating is also directed toward an object, we risk having to say that what we see when we see a tree is not the real tree in front of us, but something else that we would also have seen if we had had an hallucination.

These difficulties led one of Brentano's students, Meinong, to his Gegenstandsformel, which, mainly through a series of reviews by Bertrand Russell, became influential for the so-called realist movement in England and the United States in the first twenty years of our century.

Husserl’s way out of the difficulties, which shortly after the turn of the century led him to phenomenology, was to deny Brentano’s principle that for every act there is an object toward which it is directed. But he nevertheless retained the basic intentionalist view that acts are directed.

In order to see how he did so, it will be helpful first to consider an idea that Frege set forth in his article “On Meaning and Reference” in 1892. In this article, Frege introduced a distinction between a linguistic expression’s meaning and its reference. Though this distinction is by no means the most important of Frege’s many ideas, it is quite helpful in explaining what phenomenology is all about.

We shall approach the distinction by making use of one of Frege’s own examples: The morning star is a bright star sometimes visible in the morning sky. The evening star sometimes appears in the evening sky. The astronomers of antiquity had already discovered that the morning star and the evening star are identical. “The morning star” and “the evening star,” then, are two different names for a single celestial body, the planet Venus. The ancients had discovered that the two names had the same reference, in Frege’s terminology. This was an astronomical discovery based on observation, not something that could be concluded from the two names “the morning star” and “the evening star,” for these two names evidently have different meanings, illuminating different aspects of their common reference. The name “the morning star” indicates that its reference is a star visible in the morning, the name “the evening star” indicates that


its reference is a star which can be seen in the evening. If we had complete knowledge of a reference, we could immediately decide whether a given meaning belonged to it. But, according to Frege, we shall never obtain such a complete knowledge of a reference, since we can never know an object in all its aspects.

Frege thus operated with a trichotomy of name, meaning, and reference. He found that this trichotomy shed light upon a difficulty which turns up in connection with the following central principle in logic, the so-called principle of substitutivity of identity:

(P) If two names are names of the same object, they can be substituted for each other in every sentence in which they occur without any change in the sentence's truth value (i.e. without the sentence's changing from a true expression to a false one, or vice versa).

An example which illustrates this principle is the sentence:

(1) The morning star is a planet.

Here the name “the morning star” can be replaced by the name “the evening star,” because the two names, as shown above, have the same reference. But there are apparent exceptions to this rule. If we substitute “the evening star” for “the morning star” in the sentence,

(2) Tom believes that the morning star is a planet.

we risk finding that the new sentence has truth value different from that of (2), because Tom may not know that the morning star and the evening star are identical, believing instead that one is a planet, the other a fixed star. Likewise, if Mr. Smith reads in the newspaper that a man in a gray hat is wanted for murder, but does not know this man to be his nearest neighbor, Mr. Smith may be afraid of the man in a gray hat yet not afraid of his neighbor.

In these and other contexts, where a name follows an expression like “believes that,” “knows that,” “thinks that,” “likes that,” “hopes that,” “fears that,” “is afraid that,” the name cannot be replaced by just any name having the same reference, but only by a name of the same meaning, Frege observed. Thus, in (2) although we could not replace “the morning star” with “the evening star,” we could replace it by something like “the bright star which sometimes can be seen in the morning sky to the east.” (Eager to preserve the principle of substitutivity, Frege maintained that names are used in two different ways. Ordinarily, as in (1), a name is used as a name of its reference, but in some contexts, as in (2), it is used as a name of its meaning. However, this part of his theory need not concern us here.)

Contexts which do not obey the principle of substitutivity, or, as Frege would have said, make a name function as a name of its meaning, we may call (referentially) “opaque,” because they blur the connection between the name and its reference. (This term was introduced by Whitehead and Russell. Frege did not have a special name for these contexts, but said that names in such contexts are used ‘obliquely’ and have ‘oblique reference.’)

Frege held that a name’s reference is a function of its meaning. Two names may have different meanings but the same reference, as we have just seen in the example above. But the converse does not hold true. If two names have the same meaning, they also have the same reference. And there are name-like expressions having a meaning but no reference: “Pegasus” is an example. It has a meaning: “winged horse,” etc., but it has no reference, since there is no object having an aspect that is illuminated by this meaning. Some philosophers have had difficulties in explaining how we can meaningfully use a name like “Pegasus,” that has no reference. They have tried to solve the problem by saying that we talk about our mental idea, or conception, of Pegasus. Frege did not approve of this solution. The name “Pegasus” has a meaning, he said, and we can use it in meaningful sentences. But it does not have a reference; there is nothing we talk about when we use it.

Frege extended his theory of meaning and reference to include much that is not mentioned here. For example, he simplified logical theory by conceiving whole sentences as names. What has already been said about the meaning-reference distinction is, however, all we need for our study of the structure of Husserl’s philosophy. Frege’s distinction is rather natural, and the same, or similar, distinctions have been clarified by other philosophers. There are indications of such distinctions even in Plato and Aristotle, and the Stoics made use of a distinction very similar to that of Frege. Husserl was aware of a related distinction from John Stuart Mill, and he had found similar ideas in Bolzano. The reason why I have chosen Frege’s presentation here is that it is simple and clear. Also, it—together with Brentano’s theory of intentionality, described above—is well suited to clarifying the main features of Husserl’s phenomenology.

Let us now see how a distinction similar to that between meaning and reference enabled Husserl to overcome Brentano’s difficulty.

Just as we solved the problems connected with the term “Pegasus” by introducing a trichotomy,

name-meaning-reference

instead of the dichotomy,

name-object

so Husserl attempted to overcome the problem of hallucinations and centaurs in Brentano’s theory of intentionality. Instead of Brentano’s dichotomy between the activity of the mind, or the human act, and its intentional object,
Husserl introduced a trichotomy, distinguishing an act\(^3\) from its 'meaning', which he called its noema, and from its object:

act-noema-object.

Each act has a noema. By this noema it is directed towards its object, if it has any. Not every act has an object; when we think of a centaur, our act of thinking has a noema, but it has no object; there exists no object of which we think. Because of its noema, however, even such an act is directed. To be directed simply is to have a noema.

What Husserl did, therefore, was, in effect, to combine the theory of intentionality with the theory of name-meaning-reference. About the distinction between

act-noema-object

he says that "The noema is nothing but a generalization of the idea of meaning to the field of all acts."\(^4\) On this simple and natural generalization, phenomenology is based. (Of course Husserl did not simply read Brentano and Frege and then put them together; the story of his contribution is far more complicated than that. But I have chosen this step-by-step procedure in order to facilitate our approach.)

**Act Contexts Are 'Opaque'**

Much of what Frege said about a name's meaning and its reference can be applied directly to the theory of an act's noema and its object: To every act there belongs a particular noema, and to the noema a particular object (if the act has an object; the noema of an act may be such that the act does not have an object). But to a particular object may belong several different noemata and acts. When we are to describe an act, therefore, it is not sufficient to indicate its object; we have to indicate its noema. If Mr. Smith became afraid of the man in the gray hat, it would have been wrong to describe this by saying that Mr. Smith became afraid of his neighbor. Likewise, if Tom believes that the morning star is a planet, we cannot describe this by saying that Tom believes that the evening star is a planet.

This holds for all acts. Frege had pointed out that a number of contexts are opaque—they do not obey the law of substitutivity of identity. All of the contexts of this type which Frege mentions are what we could call 'act contexts': "believes that," "knows that," "thinks that," "is pleased that," "hopes that," "is afraid that." If the phenomenologists are right we can add a series of contexts to this list, so that it will comprise all act contexts. Because, for example, to see is an act for Husserl, the sentence: "Tom sees the morning star," when regarded as a phenomenological description of an act, may happen to change its truth value if we replace the name "the morning star" with another name having the same reference. So we must demand that the new name have not only the same reference but also the same meaning as the original.

We should expect the same peculiarity in connection with expressions like 'hear,' 'feel,' etc.—in short, with all expressions relating to sense impressions—since to hear, feel, or sense something is, for Husserl, an act. The principle that act contexts possess this peculiarity of being 'opaque' is fundamental to the phenomenological theory of perception.

**The Noema and Its 'Filling'**

When we see a tree we do not see a collection of colored spots, for example, brown and green distributed in a certain way: we see a tree, a material object with top, back, sides, and so forth. Parts of it, for example, the back, we cannot presently see, but we see a thing which has a back. We may also keep our eyes directed toward the tree and see some spot of green color, but then it is the colored spots we see, not the tree. The impressions our senses receive when we see a tree are only a small portion of the sense impression we expect to receive from the tree if we move a little, walk around it, for example. A series of such expectations corresponds to the noema in our act. Some of them are already filled by the sense impressions we have received from the tree. These expectations, and some others which are intimately connected with them, are completely determined and correspond to a sort of 'noematical nucleus' in our act's noema. For example, we expect the tree to have a side presently hidden from view. If we go around the tree and find no such side, or if others of these completely determined expectations are not filled, we no longer say that we see a tree, but perhaps that we see a stage prop or have a hallucination. The noema then becomes a different one, with a different pattern of expectations. Husserl uses the following example. We may walk toward an object believing that it is a human being. When we draw nearer we may see that it neither moves nor breathes, but only stands there. Our pattern of expectations is destroyed, and we perhaps begin to believe that it is a doll. Our act's noema becomes a different one with new possibilities for sensing, mistakes, and so forth.

Other expectations are not completely determined, only their general tendency is given. We expect to receive color impressions when we look at the tree from the other side, but are perhaps not quite sure whether the color will be green or yellowish. Our act's noema also contains expectations to the effect that we will receive impressions of touch when we move closer to the tree and make contact with it; we also possibly expect impressions of smell, taste, or sound. We expect to see the tree again after we have turned away from it for a moment,

---

\(^3\)The notion of an act is notoriously obscure. What is an act? What is to count as one act and what as two? Rather than starting with an attempt to answer these questions, Husserl first seeks to clarify his notion of a noema. Then, with the help of it, he can illuminate what is meant by an act; for the noemata 'individualize' the acts, in the sense that each act has one and only one noema.

and so forth. Some of these expectations are determined, others are open. By moving around and using our senses, we may see to it that more and more of our expectations become fulfilled and determined. Our experience of the tree, which in the beginning was one-sided, in this way becomes richer. But we can never reach any end. There will always be infinitely many expectations left which are not fulfilled and not determined. The tree is a material object and therefore **transcends** our experience, Husserl maintains. That the thing transcends our experience does not mean that what we see, hear, smell, and so forth is something different from the thing itself. The object transcends the sense impressions—i.e., the act’s noema can never be completely filled—but the object is not therefore unrecognizable. It is, on the contrary, what is recognized in the act.

**Phenomenology Is a Science of Noemata**

An object, for Husserl, is anything toward which an act can be directed. Not all objects are material; there are also immaterial objects, for example, numbers and the other ideal objects of mathematics.

Mathematics and all natural sciences, including psychology, are sciences about the objects of our acts. But we have just noticed that in addition to possibly having an object, every act also has a **noema**. And what Husserl wanted to create with his phenomenology was a new science, a science of noemata.

Noemata are objects, too. In an act of reflection the noema of one act can be made the object of another act.

Mathematicians and scientists explore what we experience, the world of nature around us. In the phenomenological reduction we disregard this nature, this world of objects toward which our acts are directed. We do not deny that it is there, as if we were sophists, nor do we doubt that it is there, as if we were sceptics, but we, as it were, put it in brackets. We perform an **epoché**, Husserl said, borrowing a word which the sceptics of antiquity used to denote abstinence from any judgment.

The phenomenologist does not worry about what is or is not in the real world around him. He is not disturbed by the fact that some of our acts have objects, others not, but turns to the noemata of our acts. These are the **phenomena** he considers. The real world is reduced to a correlative of our acts, which constitute it, bring it forth. All that is transcendent is put in brackets together with the other objects of our acts. What is left, purified of all that is transcendent, Husserl called **transcendental**. The phenomenological reduction hence leads us from the transcendent to the transcendental.

**Phenomenological Analysis**

The phenomenologist analyzes the noemata of his acts in order to clarify how the world is 'constituted' by his consciousness. He observes that he expects a tree to have a back, to continue to be there if he turns away from it for a moment, and so forth. He studies the structure of the noemata of his acts. He elucidates how his expectations are arranged in patterns, how new sense impressions can change his expectations and sometimes lead to an 'explosion' of the noemata and make him reject his original supposition about the direction of his act. According to Husserl, phenomenology thereby becomes an analysis of something similar to what Kant called the *a priori*. If one were to describe phenomenology in brief, it would therefore be this: an investigation of the *a priori*, the necessary. Its **aim** is similar to that of many other philosophies from antiquity onward. But its methods, and the general framework of acts, noemata, and objects within which it tries to make sense of this aim, are different.

It is also not difficult to see the close connection between **analytic philosophy** and phenomenology here. For just as analytic philosophers, especially those of the so-called linguistic variety, analyze meaning, meanings of linguistic expressions, so the phenomenologist analyzes **noemata**, or meanings of acts in general.

**The Transcendental Ego**

All acts are directed. They are often directed toward something, and always directed *from* something. That toward which they are directed, their object, is put in brackets by the phenomenologist. But what they are directed from—his ego—remains within the phenomenological sphere. His body, everything which is in time and space, and all other real objects are put in brackets. But an ego remains, which gives his acts meaning and thereby 'constitutes' the world in which he lives. This remaining ego Husserl called 'the transcendental ego,' because it, like everything else within the phenomenological sphere, is transcendental, purified of all that is transcendent.

According to Husserl, the transcendental ego constitutes not only the objects around us—those which we 'bracket' during the phenomenological reduction—it also constitutes itself. In Husserl's own words, the transcendental ego "is continuously constituting itself as existing."\(^5\)

The question of how this can happen leads us to the **existentialist** aspect of phenomenology. We have noticed how phenomenology as **noematic** analysis has much in common with linguistic philosophy. Let us now observe how the phenomenological theory of the ego-constitution leads us into existentialism. To clarify the manner in which the transcendental ego constitutes itself, Husserl starts out with this example: If, in an act of judgment, I decide for the first time in favor of a being and a being-thus, the fleeting act passes; but from now on I am abidingly the ego who is thus and so decided; "I am of this conviction."

That, however, does not signify merely that I remember the act or can remember it later. This I can do, even if meanwhile I have "given up" my conviction. After cancellation it is no longer my conviction; but it has remained abidingly my conviction up to then. As long as it is accepted by me, I can "return" to it repeatedly, and repeatedly find it as mine, habitually my own opinion, or, correlatively, find myself as the Ego who is convinced, who as the persisting Ego, is determined by this abiding habitus or state.

There is thus a close correlation between the ego and the world in which it lives. As the ego constitutes the world, it thereby constitutes itself.

This point is followed by an important, though fairly obvious, step: The same holds for decisions of every other kind; Husserl mentions value decisions and volitional decisions. I decide; the act process vanishes, but the decision persists; whether I become passive and sink into heavy sleep or live in other acts, the decision continues to be accepted, and correlatively, I am so decided from now on, as long as I do not reject the decision. So not just the facts of the world, but also the values of the world are constituted by me.

If the decision aims at a terminating deed, it is not 'revoked' by the deed that fulfills it; in the mode characteristic of fulfilled decision, it continues to be accepted: "I continue to stand by my deed."

The next step is most important: "I myself, who am persisting in my abiding volition, become changed if I 'cancel' my decisions or repudiate my deeds."

This point deserves emphasis, for it is one of the clues to the relationship between phenomenology and existentialism. This same element recurs in all existentialists, for example in Kierkegaard, in Marcel, and in Sartre. They disagree as to the manner in which they think that our acts determine, or constitute, our ego: for Kierkegaard there are some important acts which determine it irrevocably, while for Sartre the determination almost passes away with the termination of the act itself. Thus, for Kierkegaard, the ego-determining effects of our acts appear to be more abiding than for Husserl; for Sartre, they appear to be less abiding. But they all agree that our acts determine, or constitute, our ego.

The 'Life-World'

Toward the end of his life Husserl became more and more concerned with the problems of intersubjectivity and objectivity. He tried to solve them by a theory of how we all live in a 'life-world' which is constituted by everyone in community. The term "life-world" ("Lebenswelt") first appeared in an unpublished article on Kant which he wrote in 1924, and the life-world became the main theme of his last major work, The Crisis of the European Sciences (1936).

The phenomenologist is surrounded by other human beings. These human beings have bodies and perform acts as does he himself. These men and their acts can be the objects of the phenomenologist's own acts. By a kind of empathy (Einfühlung) he acknowledges that these men also have egos which stand behind their acts and constitute the world in which they live. His own acts and constitution of the world in which he lives are colored by this. Even from his own isolated experience, he knows that the sense impressions he receives from, for example, a tree, depend upon his position and vary when he walks around it, moves toward it or away from it, and so forth. The tree, the object toward which his act is directed, remains identical during this incessant variation of sense impressions. In the same way, his life amidst other human beings, makes him aware of more points of view. His own ego becomes one among many others. The world in which he lives becomes an intersubjective world, a life-world, "constituted by harmonious interplay and reciprocal adjustments between the individuals who live in it." The I which constitutes this world becomes in a way no longer his personal, isolated ego, but an intersubjective ego. His acts are directed toward intersubjective objects through intersubjective noemata, and the I to which they refer back has the character of a neutral I. Husserl said that the difference between the personal pronouns disappears within the phenomenological sphere.

The natural sciences and all other sciences build on this life-world. Scientific expressions and sentences have meaning for us only insofar as they state something about the life-world. An investigation of the life-world is therefore important for all sciences and is the foremost task of phenomenology. Through phenomenological analysis we must try to uncover the structures of the life-world, Husserl held, and get a clear understanding of how our patterns of expectation are characterized by general laws that are products of reciprocal adjustment among all members in a society.

The analyses of such structures given by Husserl in the Crisis and in many of his earlier works resemble the analyses of many analytic philosophers. And no wonder, for remember that just as analytic philosophers analyze meaning, the meanings of linguistic expressions, so the phenomenologist analyzes noemata, or meanings of acts in general.

Continental and Anglo-American Philosophy

To conclude this paper, I would like to say something more about the relationship between continental and Anglo-American philosophy.

If there is ever to be communication and contact between these varieties of contemporary philosophy, I think it will be by way of phenomenology; for as I have tried to point out in this essay, phenomenology is unique in having—

6 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
7 Ibid., p. 101.
through the analysis of meaning, or noemata—much in common with analytic philosophy, and on the other hand—through its theory of the ego constitution—central ideas in common with existentialism.

Now, although both phenomenologists and analytic philosophers analyze meanings, the notion of meaning has turned out to be a difficult notion to clarify, and it has become a major concern of many analytic philosophers, some of whom even hold that meaning analysis as practiced by many analytic philosophers and as presupposed in many contemporary views on, for example, linguistic truth versus factual truth, is without a satisfactory philosophical foundation.

A few years ago, an analytic philosopher, W. V. Quine, in *Word and Object*, stated that he agrees with Brentano and, hence, as we have seen, also with Husserl, that there is something peculiar about opaque contexts, i.e., statements of the form “Tom believes that the morning star is a planet” or “Mr. Smith is afraid of the man in a gray hat,” which makes them irreducible to statements of a nonintentional kind, such as statements about physical objects or about people’s behavior. Quine finds evidence for this irreducibility of intentional idioms in the failure of the many attempts to perform such a reduction, and in several difficulties in the way of such a reduction which seem insuperable. But unlike Brentano, and, we may add, Husserl, who interpreted this irreducibility as showing the indisputability of the intentionalist idioms and the importance of an autonomous science of intention (in Husserl’s case, phenomenology), Quine accepts the irreducibility as showing the baselessness of intentional idioms and the emptiness of a science of intention.

Quine substantiates his position by working out a philosophy of language which from simple beginnings leads up to this view of intentionality and its baselessness. This view is fatal to phenomenology and also to much of modern and contemporary analytic philosophy, concerned as they have been with meaning in some irreducible sense.

Now, who is right, Quine or Husserl? In order to defend themselves against Quine’s criticism, phenomenologists would have to come up with a theory of meaning as good as or better than that of Quine.

They would probably have to do so without accepting Quine’s starting point that in exploring language (and, I think, implicitly, man in general, in all his acts) any realistic theory of evidence must be inseparable from the psychology of stimulus and response. For if one accepts this view of evidence, then Quine’s drastic conclusions seem to follow inevitably. But is there another basis for claiming that there are other ways of access to man, his acts, and his language? Phenomenology claims to open such a way, that of phenomenological analysis, through reflection on noemata. But is all this pure postulation, empty talk? Surely the vernacular of semantics and intention in which meanings and transla-

---