

Jeffrey Bloechl • Nicolas de Warren
Editors

Phenomenology in a New Key: Between Analysis and History

Essays in Honor of Richard Cobb-Stevens



Editors' Introduction

The close relationship between friendship and elevated conversation is known to us from the ninth book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. With a good friend, one is comfortably oneself, enjoys kinship in love of what is best, and feels called to an improvement of all the virtues.¹ Those who know Richard Cobb-Stevens are likely to think first of his manner of befriending others much in this spirit. Of course, he is a natural story-teller who digs deeply into a delightful wealth of experiences. But the stories never stray far or long from a point in need of a flourish, and so the conversation advances, even if the work of a philosophy department, this or that committee meeting, or even a town assembly require that good friends suspend it until a later date. We sometimes have the impression that this is also Richard's relation to the many great figures of the tradition who are his friends and conversation partners, fellows in the love of what is best. Among them are to be found Aristotle, as we have already noted, as well as Machiavelli, Descartes and Hobbes, but it has been the most recent century that has held his attention most consistently: there is an early and steady interest in William James, a respectful dialogue with some of the Analytic philosophers, and above all, as the present volume testifies, long and important work on Husserl and some of his interpreters. Indeed, we note that this work on Husserl has included not only a profound dialogue with a single great master, but also the promotion of another sort of dialogue between the master's work and the Anglophone work that it sometimes meets in a striking and fruitful manner.

Richard Cobb-Stevens joined the philosophy department at Boston College in 1971. He arrived as a member of the Society of Jesus, and with the rich and varied education for which the Jesuits are well known. After study of Greek, Latin and German he had spent 3 years teaching at the College of the Holy Cross, and

¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1169b 5–1170b 20. Richard knows the passage well. His commentary can be found in the second chapter of G. Mansini and J. Hart (eds.), *Ethics and Theological Disclosures: The Thought of Robert Sokolowski* (see the bibliography at the end of this volume).

undertaken summer courses in philosophy first at Georgetown University—where he encountered Husserl for the first time, in lectures by Louis Dupre—and later at Columbia University. From 1962 through 1967, he studied theology in Belgium at the almost legendary College St. Albert, otherwise known simply as “Egenhoven,” after the village where it was situated. At Egenhoven, Richard’s thesis concentrated on Paul Ricoeur’s *Symbolism of Evil*, though he would not meet Ricoeur himself until late 1967. It was Ricoeur who directed Richard’s doctoral dissertation on Husserl and James, which he defended at the Sorbonne in 1971, before a jury that also included Suzanne Bachelard, Mikkel Dufrenne, and Emmanuel Levinas.

Richard’s career at Boston College spans nearly four decades. His impact on the department of philosophy has been powerful and enduring. In 1975, he was promoted to associate professor after only 4 years on the faculty; in 1988 he became full professor. He was chair of the philosophy department for 9 years of active development and expansion. For 31 years, he also led the department’s seminar in college teaching, in the process forming and inspiring many dozens of people on their way to careers in which they in turn taught hundreds of their own students. Richard’s own teaching was pursued at every level available to him, and includes supervision of a remarkable 29 doctoral dissertations by students from around the world.

The same warmth, great steadiness and enthusiasm that marked his teaching were also evident in his commitment to a wide range of tasks that many might consider above and beyond the duties of the university educator – though Richard himself never seemed to share that view. His deep commitment to reflection and writing thus never stood in the way of the long hours required for committee work, and for him a personal interest in the more specialized philosophy of the twentieth century was of a single piece with gladly teaching in the university’s core curriculum for many years. And in fact, the matter of undergraduate education is a hallmark concern of his career. In 1992, Richard was appointed the first Director of the University Core Curriculum at Boston College, and when he retired 18 years later he was at the time the only person to have held that post. His approach to this kind of work, and to work on many other committees, focus groups and teams, had led many of us to think of him as the very model of true citizenship at the university.

By Richard’s own estimation, he has been strongly influenced especially by three people in particular. We have noted that he met Paul Ricoeur as he neared the end of his theological studies in Egenhoven. Ricoeur was at once an early mentor and later a respected friend with a wide range of common interests. The circumstances of Richard’s decision to undertake doctoral studies under Ricoeur are well known to his friends and colleagues. Finding Richard somewhat undecided about where to seek the Ph.D., Ricoeur invited him to consider the Sorbonne. After Richard expressed an interest in bringing the thought of Husserl into contact with that of William James, Ricoeur offered him something of a received promissory note of admission, jotted on a napkin pressed into service poste haste. This was the beginning of what became Richard’s book on James and Husserl, and more generally his lifelong attempt to build bridges between phenomenology and Anglo-American philosophy. Ricoeur, of course, contributed to this same work,

and over the years mentor and student became friends and colleagues. For over three decades, Ricoeur was a frequent visitor to Boston College, generally at the invitation of Richard, often joined by David Rasmussen and Richard Kearney.

Richard left the Society of Jesus, very amicably, in the early 1970s. In 1979, he married Veda Cobb, whereupon both of them took on the last name Cobb-Stevens. Veda was an accomplished philosopher in her own right, becoming tenured professor at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell, not far from their home in Carlisle. Their time together was short, as Veda succumbed to cancer barely a decade later, but Richard has always spoken of her as important influence on his mind no less than on his heart and soul. Among other things, Veda shared Richard's interest in the philosophy of language, and her intellectual culture was as rich and varied as his own.

In 1989, Jacques Taminiaux became full professor and member of the Boston College department of philosophy (he had visited annually since the late 1960s). By special arrangement, he thenceforth undertook his teaching on blocks of several weeks each year. During those visits, he lived with Richard in Carlisle. In Taminiaux, Richard thus had a houseguest with not only a similar philosophical background and orientation, but also native experience with the European culture that has remained a part of him even after returning home from his long years of study in Belgium and France. Like Richard, Taminiaux is a phenomenologist with a deep understanding of the history of philosophy, a love of art and literature, and a keen sense of the political dimension of intellectual life.

Taminiaux retired from Boston College a few years before Richard, but this hardly left Richard without close friends among his colleagues. But this returns us to the matter with which we began. And perhaps that is a fitting way to underline Richard's legacy at Boston College. The life of the mind and the pursuit of truth and goodness require companionship, a willingness to pause long over profound questions, and a capacity to avoid distraction from the things themselves as they call for proper understanding. It is our pleasure, then, to have assembled essays very much on this spirit, and to have been able to offer them to Richard Cobb-Stevens as a collective expression of the gratitude his friends in the Husserl world feel for him and his work.

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We would like to express our gratitude to Stephanie Rumpza for her assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and to the Department of Philosophy at Boston College for their support of this project.

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Chapter 1

Vindicating Husserl's Primal I

Dan Zahavi

On Husserl's account, is self prior to the other, is the other prior to self, or are self and other equiprimordial? At first glance, this question might appear somewhat silly. After all, how could anyone doubt what Husserl's answer would be. Even if the standard criticism regarding Husserl's solipsism has long been rebutted, Husserl's declaration in § 41 of *Cartesianische Meditationen*, where he equates phenomenology with the systematic self-explication of the ego (1991a, p. 118), should make the issue foregone. As we will soon see, however, the fact of the matter is somewhat more complex.

Self and Other in Merleau-Ponty

My point of departure will not be Husserl, however, but Merleau-Ponty. I wish to start out by considering the account defended by Merleau-Ponty in *Les relations avec autrui chez l'enfant*. This text is based on a lecture course on child psychology given by Merleau-Ponty at the *Sorbonne*, but contrary to what the title might indicate, Merleau-Ponty isn't primarily interested in various empirical findings pertaining to early forms of social interaction. Rather, he is raising and attempting to answer substantial philosophical questions concerning the relation between self and other. Indeed, his point of departure is precisely the alleged incapacity of classical psychology to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of how we relate to others; an incapacity that according to Merleau-Ponty is due to the fact that classical psychology bases its entire approach on certain unquestioned and unwarranted philosophical prejudices. First and foremost among these is the

D. Zahavi (✉)

Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen, Njalsgade 140-142,
5th floor, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark
e-mail: dza@hum.ku.dk

Chapter 2

Intersections Between Four Phenomenological Approaches to the Work of Art

Jacques Taminiaux

Husserl

At the beginning of my essay, let me recall briefly the teaching of Husserl on the work of art. As a matter of fact the problematic of the founder of the phenomenological movement on the topic is narrowly circumscribed. There is no place within his approach for the questions which in the history of German philosophy had worried thinkers like Schiller, Schelling, Hölderlin, Hegel, and later on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, i.e., issues such as: why do human beings produce works of art?; how does their relation to artworks operate among their activities?; did that relation undergo metamorphoses throughout history? etc. Those questions have no place whatsoever in Husserl's investigation which is focused exclusively on the only basic phenomenon taken by him to deserve examination, i.e., *intentionality*.

Intentionality according to Husserl is a fundamental relationship between two poles whose essence can appear to the phenomenologist: an *intentio* and an *intentum*, or a *noesis* and a *noema*. The Husserlian examination of that relationship claims to avoid explanation and genealogy. Its aim is strictly descriptive, but the description at stake is eidetic for it bears upon essences and not upon facts offered to an empirical observation. In its initial purpose it takes as a primordial axis the *Erkenntnislehre*, the theory of knowledge considered not a psychological investigation but as a *transcendental* one because like Kant's criticism it searches for universal and necessary conditions of possibility.

Precisely because it is concerned with essences instead of facts the phenomenological investigation requires a suspending, the famous *epochè*, of the natural attitude as a whole, which means abstaining from the manifold positing of existence

J. Taminiaux (✉)

Emeritus, Philosophy Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA

Emeritus, Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

e-mail: jacques.taminiaux@uclouvain.be

Chapter 3

The Curious Image: Husserlian Thoughts on Photography

John B. Brough

Let me begin with a disclaimer. I will look at photography through a phenomenological lens in this essay, but I will take it in a narrow sense, at least by today's standards. I will not be concerned with photographs that have been manipulated, either digitally or by any other means, in ways that radically alter the appearance of their subjects. Photographers have tinkered with their images since the birth of the medium, and the ease with which photographs can be transformed by the computer has made manipulation a common practice today. My focus will be on "straight" photography, which characterizes ordinary snap shots and many photographs that count as works of art, such as those by Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Thomas Struth. It was this kind of photography with which Husserl was familiar and that furnished him with examples in his phenomenology of imaging.

Husserl's understanding of photography is informed by the moments he takes to be essential to "image consciousness," the kind of awareness I have when I look at a painting, film, or photograph. Image consciousness is a unique and complex form of intentionality. Unlike ordinary perception, which has a single object, image consciousness has three objects. The first of these, which Husserl often calls the "physical image," plays a foundational role, serving as the material substrate or support of the image I actually see. In the case of a photograph, this would be a piece of paper or some other physical thing covered with lines and shaded areas of black and white or other colors. The physical substrate, since it is part of the world, can fade with time or be damaged in its causal interactions with other physical things, including light and heat. The photograph's support ordinarily does not appear itself. My perceptual awareness of it is suppressed, and it takes a special effort to bring it to presence. The photograph also has an "image object." This is what actually appears when I look at the photograph: a grey, rectangular form, for example, in which I see two men standing on a bridge talking to one another.

J.B. Brough (✉)
Emeritus, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA
e-mail: broughj@georgetown.edu

Chapter 4

Hobbes and Husserl

Robert Sokolowski

I have a personal reason to discuss Hobbes and phenomenology in a paper honoring Richard Cobb-Stevens. He once told me about an incident that occurred while he was driving from Boston College to his home in Carlisle, Massachusetts. At one point, a police cruiser flagged him down and the officer came up and went through the usual inquiries. The interview gradually turned into a conversation, and the officer asked Richard what he did. He said he was a professor at Boston College, and the policeman asked, "What do you teach?" On hearing the answer "Philosophy," the officer drew himself up, pointed to his badge, and said, "Do you see this badge?" "Yes." Then, in stentorian tones, "Behind this badge stands the power of The Great Leviathan." This was a striking instance of philosophy flowing back into the *Lebenswelt*.

Husserl does not say much about Hobbes, in contrast with the extensive attention he gives to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, but he does mention him in his surveys of the history of philosophy and he makes some insightful, if general, remarks about him as being the source for a number of problems in later British philosophers. In the "Critical History of Ideas" found in *Erste Philosophie*, for example, Husserl says that the psychology being developed by both Descartes and his contemporary Hobbes modeled itself after the new natural sciences of the time. It proceeded as a purely inductive science, which, Husserl says, one might call "a natural science of the soul (*des Seelischen*)" (1965, p. 88). Husserl distinguishes Hobbes from Descartes, however, claiming that while Descartes attributed thoughts to a spiritual substance, Hobbes took cognitional life as "merely subjective appearance," which was to be correlated with material objects; he thereby became "the father of modern materialism and also the new materialistic psychology" (Husserl 1965, p. 94, cf. p. 301 note). He did so by transmitting into modern philosophy a bad inheritance ("ein altes Erbübel") from ancient skepticism and medieval nominalism

R. Sokolowski (✉)

School of Philosophy, The Catholic University of America, Aquinas Hall 100,
620 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, DC 20064, USA
e-mail: sokolowski@cua.edu

Chapter 5

From the World to Philosophy, and Back

Alfredo Ferrarin

In his very interesting and compelling *Husserl and Analytic Philosophy* (1990b), Richard Cobb-Stevens argues that what drives phenomenology and analytic philosophy apart is the different interpretation of the connection between predication and perception. While logical analysis since the time of Frege rejects all primacy of the presentational function of perception when it comes to the relation between sense and reference, for Husserl the description of pre-predicative intuition, how we identify particulars through their perceived features, is the indispensable foundation for all articulation in the form of judgment. Since his earliest efforts, Husserl has identified the premise of modern philosophy (the period from British empiricism up to Kant) in the thesis that “mind is a self-enclosed inner space” (Cobb-Stevens 1990b, p. 132). For Husserl, even a statement of perception cannot simply mirror supposedly distinct impressions given in a particular perception and connected—so goes the story for Locke or Hume—by intra-mental processes such as ideas of reflection. Husserl’s broadening of the concept of intuition highlights both the surplus of meaning of terms denoting intuitive objects and the universality of formal and categorial dimensions expressed in perceptual statements.

Thus, judgments are not “appraisals of nominalized propositional contents;” our “speech is not guided by a scan of meanings, but rather by anticipated or achieved intuitions of the essential structures of things. (. . .) To know something is simply to possess its form” (Cobb-Stevens 1990b, p. 145). The theory of categorial intuition

A. Ferrarin (✉)
University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy
e-mail: ferrarin@fls.unipi.it

Chapter 6

Sense and Reference, Again

Jocelyn Benoist

Husserl's semantics is basically a *theory of meaning* (*eine Bedeutungslehre*). A preliminary issue it has to cope with is therefore the one of the *delimitation of meaning*: to delineate what is meaningful, and what is meaningless, if such a distinction makes any sense. As in any theory of meaning, Husserl's treatment of the question of meaninglessness must, as such, be revealing of what he takes to be the very nature of meaning.

As a first step into Husserlian semantics, then, I would like to go back over the problem of the theory – or theories – of ‘nonsense’ (meaninglessness) that is or are to be found in Husserl, an issue with which I already dealt several times, in my previous studies (cf. Benoist 2002a, pp. 67–172, 2005), but about which I only recently had the impression to reach some definitive clarity.

Expressions

The first thing we must emphasize is the very strict distinction that Husserl makes between what is an expression (*ein Ausdruck*), and, as such, has meaning, and what is not, and does not have any meaning. As it is well known, the *First Logical Investigation* starts with contrasting what is mere index (*Anzeichen*) and what is expression (*Ausdruck*) and means (*bedeutet*). The expressions as such, which do not constitute a species (*eine Art*) of the signs in the sense of indices, even if, *de facto*, in the communicative use of discourse, they always happen to function as indices (of the speaker's mental states, in particular those related to communicating) as well, ‘have meaning’. In contrast to them, mere indices (indices that do not function as expressions

J. Benoist (✉)

Department of Philosophy, University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne,
17 rue de la Sorbonne, 75005, Paris
e-mail: jocelyn.benoist@univ-paris1.fr

Chapter 7

Transcendental Phenomenology?

Rudolf Bernet

Husserl's characterization of phenomenology as a transcendental philosophy has been criticized and rejected from the very beginning. Although the first generation of post-Husserlian phenomenologists, such as the members of the Göttingen School, Scheler, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, had different reasons for questioning the transcendental character of phenomenology, they all rejected the idea of a transcendental constituting egoic consciousness that is disclosed by means of the phenomenological reduction and questioned the related phenomenological idealism. With some notable exceptions, the next generation of phenomenologists mostly avoided the issue in an effort to defend the significance of Husserl's philosophy. As a consequence, no critical appraisal of the validity of these earlier critiques of Husserl's transcendental philosophy has been developed and there has been little attempt to gauge the relevance of Husserl's phenomenology of transcendental consciousness for future phenomenological thought. This double neglect threatens the continuation of Husserlian phenomenology. One cannot claim to work within the tradition of Husserl's philosophy if one has not engaged with the central ideas of the eidetic reduction, the transcendental-phenomenological reduction, constituting intentional consciousness, the transcendental subject, and the status of a phenomenological eidetic science. However, such an engagement is only critical if one does not presuppose that phenomenology should necessarily commit to being a transcendental philosophy and that a contemporary transcendental philosophy is only possible in the form of phenomenology.

On the one hand, the Marburg Neo-Kantians developed a new, un-phenomenological transcendental philosophy according to which the egoic-subjective accomplishments of knowledge are necessary and *logical* conditions of knowledge, though not phenomena that can be *intuitively* investigated. According to this account, the conditions of experience are the conditions of objects of experience, but these

R. Bernet (✉)

Husserl Archives, KU Leuven, Kardinaal Mercierplein 2, bus 3200, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium
e-mail: Rudolf.Bernet@hiw.kuleuven.be

Chapter 8

Neo-Aristotelian Ethics: Naturalistic or Phenomenological

John J. Drummond

The development of contemporary, neo-Aristotelian approaches to ethics have proceeded on two levels. On one level, neo-Aristotelian thinkers beginning with Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) and Philippa Foot (2002a, pp. 189–208, b, pp. 96–147) have developed meta-ethical views regarding questions in moral ontology and epistemology (e.g., the fact/value distinction and realism versus anti-realism), moral psychology (e.g., the role of the emotions in moral experience), and practical reason. On a second level, neo-Aristotelian thinkers beginning with Peter Geach (1977) and Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), and later Philippa Foot (2003), Rosalind Hursthouse (1999, 2004), and Martha Nussbaum (1988, 1990, 1993) while also attending to the meta-ethical issues, have developed virtue ethics as a normative alternative to consequentialism and deontologism.

Some, no doubt, might find it odd to connect the phenomenological tradition with its focus on describing the transcendental structures of intentional experiences to these developments, but there are profoundly phenomenological moments in Aristotle's thought and in the neo-Aristotelian movement. Conversely, the axiological tradition that arose within phenomenology in the early part of the twentieth century has important things to say about some of the same meta-ethical issues that occupied the attention of the early neo-Aristotelian thinkers. I have in mind the tradition exemplified by thinkers such as Franz Brentano (1969, 1995), Edmund Husserl (1988, 2011), Max Scheler (1973), Dietrich von Hildebrand (1916, 1922), and Nicolai Hartmann (1967). While I am not convinced by the normative positions developed in this axiological approach, I think that the meta-ethical views are important and that there are other bases within the phenomenological tradition for developing a normative viewpoint, one that would resonate to some degree with contemporary neo-Aristotelianism. My title, suggestive of a contrast between the

J.J. Drummond (✉)

Department of Philosophy, Fordham University, 441 E. Fordham Road,

Bronx, NY 10458, USA

e-mail: drummond@fordham.edu

Chapter 9

Phenomenal Experience and the Scope of Phenomenology: A Husserlian Response to Some Wittgensteinian Remarks

Andrea Staiti

Introduction

In his groundbreaking work published in 1913, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Husserl affirms that ‘phenomenology is, so to speak, the secret nostalgia of all modern philosophy’ (1982, p. 142). Although we have to wait until the *First Philosophy* lecture in 1923/24 to find an extensive interpretation of the history of modern philosophy from the point of view of phenomenology, the core insight expressed in this brief statement is clear enough. The kind of thematization and direct investigation of subjectivity as the transcendental source of all meaning and objectivity that phenomenology sets out to accomplish brings to an explicit and mature expression a tendency that is present in the work of the major philosophers of the early modern period up to Kant: “The striving toward phenomenology was present already in the wonderfully profound Cartesian fundamental considerations; then, again, in the psychologism of the Lockean school; Hume almost set foot upon its domain, but with blinded eyes. And then the first to correctly see it was Kant, whose greatest intuitions become wholly understandable to us only when we had obtained by hard work a fully clear awareness of the peculiarity of the province belonging to phenomenology” (Husserl 1982, p. 142).

If we look at the history of philosophy after Kant, however, we see that this ‘nostalgia’ reaches far beyond the age from Königsberg. In fact, the term ‘phenomenology’ figures in the work of the most ambitious and original philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In particular, it seems to arise wherever the project of a radically new and encompassing philosophical project is undertaken. Apart from Husserl and all the thinkers directly inspired by him, we

A. Staiti (✉)

Philosophy Department, Boston College, Stokes Hall North – 3rd floor,
140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, USA
e-mail: staitia@bc.edu

Chapter 10

Thinking Fast: Freedom, Expertise, and Solicitation

Daniel O. Dahlstrom

In the past few years, Hubert Dreyfus and John McDowell have been engaged in a rousing debate over the proper way to understand human experience. The two thinkers share some common ground; they agree that rationality can be situation-specific and they agree that the mind does not organize our experience. They both see that such a view, a kind of constructivist rendition of Kant's thought, is a non-starter since it leaves the work done by experience completely in the dark. At the same time, neither thinker will countenance the empiricist notion that sensory experience in some unmediated sense provides an independent constraint on human experience.¹

Nevertheless, the two thinkers differ on whether rationality or mindedness, under some description, plays a role in embodied, human coping. For McDowell its role is pervasive, even when we are "unreflectively immersed" in what we are doing²; for Dreyfus, by contrast, embodied coping is mindless or, as he also puts it,

¹This paper is warmly dedicated to my colleague and friend on the other end of Commonwealth Avenue: Richard Cobb-Stevens. In a meeting of SPEP some years ago, Richard voiced concern publicly about the troubling notion of hyletic data in Husserl's thought. The notion is troubling since, on Husserl's account, they are at once non-intentional yet somehow part of intentionality. In certain pivotal respects, the debate between Dreyfus and McDowell echoes Richard's concern. Indeed, both thinkers attempt to provide explanations of the role of sensory experience by bypassing any reference to hyletic data that enter independently into the constitution of intentionality, by way of insisting on either the unconditional conceptuality of experience (McDowell) or the mindlessness of human coping – a "motor intentionality" – at the base of experience (Dreyfus). I am grateful to Lee Braver, Hubert Dreyfus, and Timothy Nulty for their critical discussion of an earlier version of this paper.

²John McDowell, "Response to Dreyfus," *Inquiry*, 50, no. 4 (August 2007): 366.

D.O. Dahlstrom (✉)

Department of Philosophy, Boston University, 745 Commonwealth Avenue,
Boston 02215, MA, USA

e-mail: dahlstro@bu.edu

Chapter 11

Aristotle and Phenomenology

James Dodd

Often in conversation, and at times in print,¹ Richard Cobb-Stevens is well known for drawing striking parallels between Husserl's phenomenology and Aristotelian philosophy. One characteristic aspect of his remarks that I have especially appreciated over the years is that they have rarely amounted to one of those rather dry scholarly footnotes that academics are fond of exchanging, where we track often faint and all too subtle lines of influence throughout the millennia. So in the case of Husserl and Aristotle, one sometimes comes across parerga and paralipomena of suggestions that Husserl had been influenced by a chance reading of this or that text of his ancient counterpart, or by some dissertation project of a long forgotten student before (or perhaps after) the war that analyzes an equally forgotten bit of flotsam of Aristotelian scholia. Despite their otherwise arcane nature, such scholarly affirmations of the influence of Aristotle, however limited, at least tease us with the promise of significant interest in the world of Husserl studies, since Husserl, though by no means an original interpreter of Aristotle, did arguably engage the legacy of the Philosopher in a significant manner. One need only recall that a discussion of Aristotle's doctrine concerning the meaning of non-assertoric statements frames an important part of the argument in the VI *Logische Untersuchung*.² And of course

¹ So for example his "Aristotelian Themes in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*," *One Hundred Years of Phenomenology*, Eds. D. Zahavi and F. Stjernfelt Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002 and also his "Aristotelian *Nous* in Husserl's Philosophy," *The Impact of Aristotelianism on Modern Philosophy*, Ed. R. Pozzo, Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2004.

² See §1, 67–70 of Edmund Husserl, VI. *Logische Untersuchungen: Elemente einer phänomenologischen Aufklärung der Erkenntnis*, Husserliana 4, ed. U. Panzer, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984 [English: *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2 [Investigation VI], trans. Findlay, ed. Moran, London: Routledge 2001], hereafter LU.

J. Dodd (✉)
Department of Philosophy, New School for Social Research,
5th Avenue, New York 11015, NY, USA
e-mail: Doddj@newschool.edu