Arnold Metzger

**Husserl to Metzger, Dec. 9th 1915**

Cassel-Wilhelmshöhe, sanatorium Dr Wiederholdt, Dec. 9th 1915.

Dear Dr,

My thanks for your kind sending me your dissertation, testifying to [your] serious striving and great absorption.[[1]](#footnote-1) I am not in the disposition at the moment to review your elaboration in detail, since I am in convalescence, recovering from a disease[[2]](#footnote-2), and I am still being medically treated. I learn from your address[[3]](#footnote-3) that you have been wounded or diseased while being in military service for our home country. My warmest wishes for an early recovery.

Yours,

Prof EHusserl

**Husserl to Metzger July 24th 1918**

Freiburg (im Breisgau)

Dear Dr,

Enclosed you will find, according to your wish, some lines for supporting your request to the military agency, written as I was in a conscientious way allowed to. Since I’ve read your dissertation once more, and had a good impression; I did not study it sufficiently though to be able to comment on it. I think you have some philos<ophical> talent you could well make use of, the great and pure ethos presupposed, without which serious performances in philosophy are never achieved. I would be pleased to take care of your further education and to support you in your entering phenomenology – the real transcendental one, and not the ph<enomenology> of Link’s character. But I need to [406] first let you know that the beginning of next week is the beginning of the holidays, during which I will not be in Freiburg.[[4]](#footnote-4) I only return at the beginning of October, that is, when lectures start. I immediately suggest to you to devote yourself especially to the study of my “Ideas”, whereas my Log<ical> i<nvestigations> are a mere preliminary step. I am completely certain that only the troublesome investigations, performed with all devotion, in the decade after the publication of the L<ogical> i<nvestigations> resulted in the complete clarification of the essence, method, problems of ph<enomenology> as a philos<ophical> basic sci<ence>. Of course I do not abandon the older study, especially not after its ontol<ogical> groundwork, as much as I see clearer now. But the radical and most strictly performed ἐποχή is needed for a useful study of the „Ideas“, in every regard, also with regard to the thoughts you have worked out yourself. You can only apprehend the sense of this ph<enomenology> and its radical problem in following understanding by self-active thinking in a completely unprejudiced way. I am sad to say that Prof L<ink> did not understand anything of that, since he is lacking true impartiality. This is what I had to say in advance. I am certain that you will not regret the efforts of the indispensable study of the “Id<eas>”, and that you will be grateful to me.

I can be of help at that and in proper attempts, and I would be delighted to do that. We are all still in the becoming and we need each other for help and reciprocate help. Apart from that all good wishes for your further life and striving.

Your most devoted

EHusserl

**Husserl to Metzger, Sept. 4th 1919**

Bernau in Baden Sept<ember> 4th 1919.

Ad<dress> in Freiburg Lorettostr. 40.

Dear Mr Metzger,

I have taken in your paper,[[5]](#footnote-5) I have engrossed my mind into your thoughts the last week, as much as possible in the turmoil of this Black Forest hotel, and I have made every effort. This speaks for the strength of resonance the first sentences, my probing view found when receiving the manuscript, already caused in my soul, and for the strength of ongoing participation in following the thinking and in thinking oneself, into which I was drawn, and in which I was kept. This is quite telling, considering the condition of my eyes, for which reading in itself is a difficult matter already, but reading such faint and illegible writings is torture. Luckily I had my daughter to read the manuscript to me once, and I could observe the impression it has on one of those young souls, of, I would almost like to say, hard straightness and veracity, having stretched towards pure light in spite of the gruesome wartime experiences. – It is the sound that makes the music. We heard – we distrusting ones, thus skeptical ourselves through negative experience with others and with ourselves, having become thus quick at hearing – we heard a pure, nay, actually a very pure sound: the sound of a truly selfless devotion to “the Ideas”. We understood this radical attitude, which is firmly determined to not lead this life as some business and to look at it with those two on-going rubrics debit and credit (in which debit expresses nothing else but demand for credit), and which is a deadly enemy to all “capitalism”, all final valuing and therefore senseless accumulation of goods and correlative to all egoistic valuing of persons – included therein honors, fame, pride -, even pride for reformatory insights, goals, missions.

We may think of us, as I hope for all time, as united in the invisible association of the “Friends of God”[[6]](#footnote-6), of the “Brothers of true Life”[[7]](#footnote-7) [408]. Because I may call this same attitude my not really simple life’s last gain of my own personal development. The fact, by the way, that you have sent me your script – this script -, shows great confidence already presupposing this same attitude in me, for which I may thank you warmly. The only explanation can be that you felt through the austerity without any phrases and the radical objectivity of my writings the personal ethos supporting them. And indeed, this must have been true, since they (as yours) are born from necessity, from an ineffable necessity of the soul, from a complete “breakdown”,[[8]](#footnote-8) in which there was the one and only salvation: a completely new life in the desperate and stubborn determinedness, to begin it anew in radical truthfulness, and to continue it, and to not back off from any consequence at all. Not as if even back then already, that is, in the last decade of the former century, I had seen the inner hollowness of the directions of the will reigning the whole European culture and as if I had made especially their most noble exponents, the unparalleled rise of the new German Reich subject to a deeper critique – and had thereby given my own life an all-round new orientation. I did not have any eye yet for practical and cultural realities, not any knowledge of men and peoples yet, I was still living within an almost exclusively theoretic will to work – even if the decisive drives (pushing me from mathematics to philosophy as my place of work) lie in overwhelming religious mental livings and complete turns. Because the enormous effect of the N<ew> T<estament> on the 23-year-old[[9]](#footnote-9) still resulted in the drive to find the way to God and to a true life with the help of some strict philos<ophical> science. But now I found, educated by some Weierstrass[[10]](#footnote-10) and his most truly rooted mathematics towards intellectual tidiness, that contemporary philosophy, swaggering with its scientificity, completely failed and thus contradicted the idea of philosophy – to be supposed to be the most radical perfection of all science [409]. And not only philosophy at that time failed, but also all historically traditional philosophy – unclarity everywhere, immature vagueness, halfness, if not even intellectual improbity. Nothing one could endure, accept as some piece, as a beginning of serious science. Critique – boundless, valueless, since it lacked a secure ground, from which it were to be performed with results – was of no help.

You see, my beginnings, my original motives and necessities, the absolute demands having been imposed upon me, may I say (as inevitably it is given and called within me) my mission – are different from yours. And still we meet and my theoretical work of life has been done for you as well, for you, being a practitioner from profession and will. That which I have worked out theoretically in, as I may say, the most passionate will to integrity and in self-critique most addicted to doubt, demands your study for following understanding, and then there is the enormous task originally intended for you, the study of human realities and their philos<ophical> screening and guidance. This is not my task, I am not appointed to be the guide of humanity struggling for a “blessed life”[[11]](#footnote-11) – I had to accept that in the suffering drive of the years of war, my daimonion has warned me.[[12]](#footnote-12) I live purely as a scie<entific> philosopher in a completely conscious and decided way (I therefore have not written any paper on the war, I would have judged this to be a philosopher’s pretentious fuss). Not because I accept truth and science to be of highest value. On the contrary: “the intell<e>ct is the will’s servant”, thus I am as well servant of the practical life’s creator, of humanity’s guide. – Certainly you will not accept the role allocation. You are young and full of the bristling consciousness of your strength, you still think to be able to and to be forced to want both. But your daimonion will – insofar as God keeps you in the Socratic attitude and in the radicalism of true life – talk to you at the right time. Certainly, you can only take on what you have worked out, what you acquired in the deepest, and a vivid soul can only follow thoughts that were planned ahead in thinking for itself and thereby thinking on. But I would like to warn you, at least advise caution to you. You obviously do not know yet (I have reasons for saying that), [410] how unspeakably complex the domain of phenomenological primal sources of idealistic-practical goals is. You may know how very little the realm of “mothers”[[13]](#footnote-13) is similar to a limitless empty night, in which old women spin in a gruesome way, or which enlivens the pure fantasy of postulates with metaphys<ical> ghosts, you also know, that the light of phen<omenology> has illuminated worlds of ideas for seeing eyes – but you do not wish to see yet that endless richness of primal springing processes, in which I view the medium of divine life having an impact (of a life “creating” worlds of physical things and worlds of ideas). The reason for that is that you, as someone thinking for himself, go on your ways and believe to be already secure, without having understood the motives of force, the intentions inevitably to be fulfilled, that determined my philos<ophical> development since the L<ogical> I<nvestigations> and lead towards new, absolutely doubtless insights. Certainly it is the tragic of my life’s situation, that I, first due to the war’s agitation and through temporary hypertensions, but then as well due to the multitude of ever new fundamental problems overwhelmingly closing in on me each year, in the passion of striving forwards and in the necessity of the mind’s self-preservation – have not arrived at any finalizing publications. Also that, which I had worked out already, like the second volume of the “Ideas”, was not sufficient to me any more, after I, in cognizing the too large difficulty of the condensed depiction, had screened it with new lights, and after I had once begun to rework it, the book lost its original natural structure. Thus you certainly do not know how far I am in truth, and [how far] you could be in truth. Of course I do not wish to raise the thought that I had already some philosophy, a system, that is all-round thought through and shaped as a sc<ience>, nay even will ever have. God beware. This is and remains for my small strength an idea lying in the distances of the sky. But I am speaking of an overwhelming abundance of problems of quite new dimensions, to which the “Ideas” and already the published volume 1, open an access, for which they create the ground, method, strict concepts, thereby at the same time predelineating the new type [411] of the whole world consideration and the pract<ical> goals.

All this points back to some serious doubts your work has raised in me. But how are they to be expressed in a written way, without writing any treatises, which is quite impossible to me. But how much would I like to, if I could show you more closely, how much indeed your magnificent ethical radicalism and maximalism (in a good sense all true philosophy is maximalistic) recreated my heart, whereas I still have my doubts and often my determined No! against so many things, from deep and secure reasons – contemplated in decades. Of course this is not directed against your sense-bestowing on your work through the firm direction towards ideas, not the demand being formal in its universality for a complete turn of humanity towards the dignity of a true, ideally directed work. Not the judging of Marxism, of the naturalism of any shape and kind, not the exhibiting of the turn of every anthropologism, biologism, positivism into an anti-ethical – ethically groundless, since idealess – egotism, the social downside of which is capitalism in the extended sense. But I can absolutely not follow you if you bring rationalism and transcendental philosophy in one line, and if you do not seem to see the size of the motives, only unclearly stuck in these tra<di>tions and only in phenom<enology> struggling to become manifest as a certain work problem. I generally\* have the impression, that your sense for the history’s mind is not fully developed yet, as I myself have seen it becoming and growing in me quite late. (I therefore suppose that you started from natural scientific studies as well.) God and God’s world, man searching for God, living in the childhood of God, etc. – all this will mean something new, more rich to you, as soon as you will have gained a viewing eye for history and – which is not that distant – an eye for an absolute consideration of the being, also consideration of the “world” from the pole of pure subjectivity. It is quite necessary that you relearn with regard to transcend<ental> philosophy, [that you] start anew; this does not mean at all though, that I would like to suggest the motto “Back to Kant”[[14]](#footnote-14) , which has always been and remained foreign to me. Only in [412] a completely different sense from the common one are you supposed to return one more time to Kant, namely to gladly notice the large motives governing through Kant’s struggling from phenomenology’s scientific transc<endental> phil<osophy> having grown from very own motives.\*\* I have learnt incomparably more from Hume than I did from Kant, against whom I had my deepest antipathies and who (if I judge this correctly) did not determine me at all. And yet, now he is a big one for me too, and in his degree higher than Hume. But I defend my ideas here and do not deny myself to reproach you, who is spiritually akin to me. Why did you, so deeply determined in your whole world apprehension by my Log<ical> Inv<estigations>, as you gladly admit, never visit me in person – for establishing an effective and fruitful “loving community”? How come that you changed your doubts against my “Ideas” in your study in a so quickly determined way into negation, without speaking personally with me about these doubts? How could you endure that for me myself the L<ogical> I<nvestigations> are only some transition for me towards a higher development, which, as certainly as I do live, I am convinced of, that my true mission willed by God will only have its impact in it, and which for you was mainly a satisfying ending? I lived through around an entire decade of passionate and often despairing work in order to wrest the L<ogical> I<nvestigations> from me. I needed more than a decade of no less passionate and no less consuming work for the “Ideas”. They developed like the L<ogical> I<nvestigations> from purely inner motivations, as the result of some constant, unchangeable inner willing and growing. I think a development has never been straighter, more target oriented, predestined, “demonical”. When I published the L<ogical> I<nvestigations>, I only had an agonizingly divided logical conscientiousness (that is why they had to be formally taken away from me by men being close to me)[[15]](#footnote-15), I felt, although I did not know why, that I did not have the completely pure philos<ophical> ground yet, and not pure method yet, [413] horizons of work being all-round clear. But when I had written down the “Ideas” – within 6 weeks, without any drafts as a basis, like in trance,[[16]](#footnote-16) and [had] read them over, printed them at once, I thanked God in all devotion, that I had been allowed to write this book, and I could do nothing else, but stick to it, despite the work’s many imperfections in details. And furthermore I had to thank him, that he allowed me to discover ever new problem horizons and that he allowed ever new gates to open in the constant ongoing impact of the old and ever again ramifying motives. But you wrote a dissert<ation>, in which you thought to deny the transcendentalism of the “Ideas” with all kinds of arguments and with certainly more clever ones (this was, as I remember, my impression) than the opposed, of course not laudable literature. The deeper sense of the work has remained foreign to you, you would have to try anew in a certainly troublesome study. There is not a sentence in it that was not pure expression of something truly seen. If you have actually grown into the vivid mind of the L<ogical> I<nvestigations> in the meantime, how could you do otherwise now, but to grow beyond them into the “Ideas”. Anyway, it is a serious matter. I, whose whole life consisted in learning and practicing pure seeing, and in enforcing my primal right, say: He, who has gotten through to pure seeing (in troublesome fulfilling of intentions), is completely certain of the seen in the repetition of the process of fulfilling as “originally given”, he has a “pure conscientiousness” thus far. And furthermore I say with regard to the method, the horizons, the “Ideas’” fields of work the single word: Look! Truly, I think I may say thus in the complete consciousness of responsibility. This does not exclude at all that there may be written and are written several things that need to be corrected, here and there something wrong in the book. It is as I am used to say, the pride of tr<anscendental> phenomenology and its mark as a strict science, that wrong sentences are possible in it, wrong in the strict sense of logic, proving their identity in and against truths respectively. Nebulous unclarity is beyond that, which is logically true and wrong, and this holds true for almost the whole philosophy up till now. All that is to be understood well, and in the mind of true modesty. I am speaking of phenom<enology> like the mathematician of [414] mathematics: that it is true science taken from pure evidence, a field of possible true and false sentences – he is speaking thus despite all skeptics and unclear philosophers, since he “sees”.

But enough. The reason for my writing you such things is my great trust in your righteous and pure mind that had turned to me in your paper and that has moved me. I therefore may not look at you limiting your field of view and at that remaining inaccessible for you, which should be of great importance for your worldview and your ethical-political strivings. And I have written it, because your trust in me, which I have to presuppose, excludes your considering me as speaking as some self-satisfied professor, in elaborated fix formula and lectures instead of someone incessantly developing.

I have to come to an end, although I was unable to speak of so many things lying at your heart, neither on the striking relation between the new revolut<ionary> movement and phenom<enology> - I had thought of this relation repeatedly myself, but not seized it in firm decision. Nor on the denial of all ranking of the fields of value – that I do not wish to take over the way you seem to mean them. But I would like to give my comments on everything if you, as I wish, come visiting me in Fr<eiburg>. I would like to read the cit<ed> articles in the N<eue> Rundschau,[[17]](#footnote-17) maybe you could send them to me. Those few holidays I was able to allow myself in such a limited way as a dean, and to which you owe this long letter, are now over. I return to Freiburg.

My regards, and I wish your development to be as <I am inclined> to hope.

Yours

E Husserl

\*

\* many times with regard to your explanations in terms of the history of ideas, frankly speaking.

\*\* and thus for the idealism after Kant!

[415]

**Husserl to Metzger, July 7th 1920**

July 7th 20.

My dear Dr,

I will welcome you here. A large circle of ambitious and exquisitely talented young phenomenologists has assembled for some nice collaboration this term – maybe you can still participate a little and get to know some valuable personality. Thus do be quick, since we already close in the last week of July after all.

Kind regards,

Yours

EHusserl

Lorettostr. 40 Freiburg in Breisgau.

**Husserl to Metzger Aug. 5th 1921**

My dear Dr,

You are welcome here[[18]](#footnote-18) on Tuesday and likewise on every other day, you will meet me for sure at home at around half past 3 in the aftern<oon>. My apartment is close to the sawmill of the Steinbach Hof, on the road towards Neuhaus; the mill is immediately visible when using the short way through the forest, as soon as you leave the forest.\* You need 15 min<utes> on the road, otherwise barely 10. There is a car from Fr<eiburg> 115.

Kind regards,

Yours

EH

St. Märgen, Thursday[[19]](#footnote-19) August 5th.

Convolute VII[[20]](#footnote-20) is here.

\*

\* Our house is ca. 40 meters downhill.

[416]

**Husserl to Metzger, Feb. 18th 1925**

Dear Dr,

Why does the printing of your work[[21]](#footnote-21) have come to a standstill?

I have only just received the 2nd corr<ection> of sheet 3 and the 4th! of sheet 2. I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that many corrections increase the costs a lot and [that] preferably everything should be ready in the 1st corr<ection>, and this does as well presuppose a quite complete manuscript in order to not become too expensive. Request, which indeed reduces the costs, a first correction in “galleys”!

Please do send the last correction to me. I write my impr<imatur> on it and then send it any time without any delay to the publishing house.

With kind regards,

Yours

EHusserl

Fr<ei>b<ur>g Feb. 18th 25.

**Husserl to Metzger, June 19th, 1925**

Fr<eiburg> June 19th 25

My dear Dr,

Many thanks for sending me the special print of your article in the yearbook and my best wishes for Hannover.[[22]](#footnote-22) After I had lost a week due to an influenza, it was difficult for me, to get by with lectures and other important business in this last one. Therefore only a few words: I cannot write any “letter of recommendation” to a foreign colleague completely unknown to me. This would not be considerate since you wish a hab<ilitation>. I did not write to Cornelius[[23]](#footnote-23) either, with which I even had [417] correspondences more often.[[24]](#footnote-24) I can only imply a card with best regards and the request for friendly advice.

My best wishes.

Yours

EHusserl

If Mr Sch<eler> wishes so, I am glad to comment on you.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**Appendix**

**Husserl to Metzger, s.d.**

Dear Dr,

Exactly at that moment, when I thought I had to cut off all hopes, new ones open up. I have found an option to intervene, which makes hope for the best. However the situation cannot be solved in the Whit week, but certainly in the following one. I have won a personality, whose comment must be of special importance.

May it be for the best.

Yours

EH.

Thursday.

**Husserl’s letter of recommendation for Metzger, Oct. 25th 1933**

Professor Dr EHusserl at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau, Oct. 25th 1933

Dr Arnold Metzger came to me right after the War – already a Dr of philosophy at Jena – to Freiburg, in order to continue his studies in philosophy under my guidance. I soon took a special interest in him: his huge philosophical talent, his passionate deepening into the most complex principal problems, his strenuous diligence raised my hopes for some important scientific future. After having matured as a thinker of his own, he went [418] his own ways in later years, which I of course could not follow, because he was distancing himself from my phenomenological philosophy. But I gladly acknowledge the unusual subtlety and systematic strength in his major writings, as well as a broad, historical scholarship worked out in a self-thinking way. It would be quite desirable for such a sincere and talented researcher to find the opportunity to furthermore live for philosophy, and to find therefore a position at a scientific academy abroad – since he is excluded from any public position in Germany for not being an “Aryan” – where he could exercise his abilities as a researcher and as a teacher.

EHusserl

1. A. Metzger, *Studies on the question of the difference between phenomenology and Kantianism*. *Attempt for an epistemic study of the concept of object*. Jena 1915 (in Husserl’s library, with hand written dedication: „To Prof Husserl, with deep respect and most obliged devotion. The author“). The study was made under the supervision of Paul Ferdinand Linke (1876-1955). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In autumn 1915 Husserl suffered from a nicotine poisoning and indigestions. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Husserl’s card is addressed to the field hospital VII of the 2nd Bavarian army corps. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Husserl spent his holidays 1918 in Bernau, Black Forest. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Compare A. Metzger, „The phenomenology of revolution. A political paper on marxism and the loving community“, in: the same, *Phenomenology of revolution*. *Early papers*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, pages 15-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Religious movement with a mystic impact in Southern and Western Germany in the 13th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Similar to the „Brothers of the common Life“ of the Dutch-German devotio moderna living in joint property. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Compare A. Metzger, „The breakdown“, *Neue Rundschau* 30 (1919), pages 1069-1082. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Under the influence of Thomas Masaryk in Vienna Husserl read the New Testament for the first time in 1882. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Husserl had studied under Karl Weierstrass (1815-1897) in Berlin from summer term 1878 through winter term 1880/81. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Following the title of J.G. Fichte, *The Way towards the blessed life* (1806). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Following Plato, *Apology* 31 c-d. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Following Goethe’s *Faust. The Second Part of the Tragedy*, 1st act. „Dark gallery“, especially V 6245 („You’ll see none in the endless void, afar,“), and V 6298 („Call the Hero and Heroine from the night,“). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. First raised by Otto Liebmann in his work *Kant and his inferior successors*. *A critical treatise*, Stuttgart 1865. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Above all Alois Riehl. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The original manuscript of the Ideas I (the so-called „pen-manuscript“) was written between Sept. 9th and October 21st 1912. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Apart from the mentioned article „The Breakdown“ in the Neue Rundschau Metzger’s contribution „Der neue Glaube und der Weg zur Volksgemeinschaft“ [The new belief and the way to the people’s community] in Der Geist der neuen Volksgemeinschaft. Eine Denkschrift für das deutsche Volk. Edited by the Zentrale für Heimatdienst, Berlin 1919, pages 1-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Husserl’s card had been written from St. Märgen. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. August 5th 1921 was a Friday though. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Possibly a convolute of Husserl’s manuscripts, Metzger was occupied with as part of his activity as private assistent for Husserl. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Compare A. Metzger, „Der Gegenstand der Erkenntnis. Studien zur Phänomenologie des Gegenstandes. I. Teil“; *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* VII (1925), pages 609-770. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Possibly for attempting a habilitation at the Technical University there. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Hand Cornelius was professor für philosophy in Frankfurt, Metzger had turned to already prior to that for his habilitation. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Compare Husserl’s correspondence with Cornelius in volume II of this edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Metzger had first planned to habilitate under the supervision of Scheler in Cologne. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)