

Recovering Mary Evelyn Clarke

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This PDF collects everything that I have been able to uncover about Mary Evelyn Clarke at the moment. If you know more about her, or if you spot any errors, I would be very glad to hear from you: louis.doulas@mcgill.ca. Last updated: May 1, 2026.

1. Reconstructing Clarke's Academic Background

MARY EVELYN CLARKE earned her BA in Philosophy (First Class) from King's College London in 1918, and her MA in June 1920 from King's College for Women, where she was also a lecturer.¹ She began teaching at Smith College in 1923, where she would remain for thirty-five years, retiring in 1958. Between completing her MA at King's and starting at Smith, she also briefly taught in Wales.² She completed her PhD a few years later, in 1926, after already starting in Smith.

Clarke received her PhD as a private (i.e., external) student, rather than through any constituent college.³ This status suggests she was not formally enrolled at King's or any college for her PhD. In all likelihood, she was working independently or remotely as a private student—probably from Smith—while preparing her dissertation, which she then submitted directly to the University and not via any constituent college.⁴

Who supervised Clarke's dissertation? Her external status doesn't necessarily rule out having a supervisor, though determining who that may have been is far from straightforward. The published version of her dissertation, *A Study in the Logic of Value* (1929), offers little direct insight: its preface includes no explicit acknowledgement of a supervisor, only a general statement of indebtedness to the writings of G. E. Moore, John Laird, and E. G. Spaulding of Princeton University. These figures may have influenced Clarke's thinking, but they were not affiliated with the University of London and thus unlikely to have played any formal supervisory role.⁵ In the absence of explicit documentation, two possible candidates seem plausible to me (though see §2 for a third).

¹*Calendar, 1974–1975*, item reference KCLCAL-1974-1975-240, King's College London Archives, London, accessed August 6, 2025, <https://kingscollections.org/calendars/collection/1974-1975/page-240#page-header>.

²*Smith College Bulletin*, January 1959, p. 18, https://compass.fivecolleges.edu/system/files/2024-08/presidents_reports_1958.pdf.

³See 'Doctor of Philosophy—external,' in *University of London: the Historical Record (1836–1926)* (London, 1926), *British History Online*, accessed August 6, 2025, <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/london-university-graduates/158>.

⁴A separate entry in the University of London Graduates List indicates that Clarke was a Life Member of the Convocation of the University of London—a status granted to degree holders of the University. While not directly relevant to the submission of her dissertation, this confirms Clarke's formal affiliation with the University beyond the PhD award itself. See *University of London Graduates List*, 1931, p. 611, University of London Archives. <http://archives.ucl.ac.uk/resources/1931gradlist.pdf>. Moreover, her 1929 book, *A Study in the Logic of Value*, acknowledges the Publication Fund of the University of London for a grant in aid of the book's publication, the substance of which, she notes, was originally presented to the University for a degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

⁵Of the three, Clarke specifically thanks Spaulding for his verbal suggestions.

The first is HILDA DIANA OAKELEY (1867–1950), who taught at King’s College for Women during Clarke’s MA in 1920. When the women’s college was absorbed into King’s in 1915, Oakeley moved into the main college. She played a central role in launching King’s postgraduate philosophy program in 1923. She may have mentored Clarke during the MA and possibly beyond.

The second is GEORGE DAWES HICKS (1862–1941), who was Professor of Moral Philosophy at UCL from 1904–1928. Hicks was one of the longest-serving and most senior moral philosophers in the University of London system in the early twentieth century. Hicks may have been more likely to fill that role than Oakeley, who, while influential, was college-based and may not yet have been eligible to supervise external candidates.



Figure 1. Smith College Philosophy Department (1951). Clarke is second from the left in the front row; Morris Lazerowitz and Alice Ambrose appear in the back row (leftwards). Source: Smith College Archives via Five College Compass (object ID 1373134), accessed August 2025.

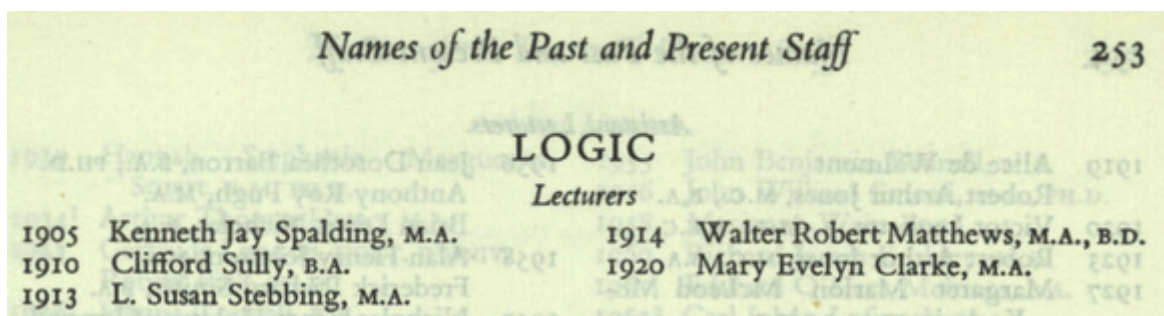
2. A Third Possibility: Susan Stebbing

SUSAN STEBBING (1885–1943) is another serious candidate worth considering. There is no question that the two were personally acquainted. Stebbing thanks Clarke in the preface to her *Philosophy and the Physicists* for “reading the proofs and for making some valuable criticisms” (1937, xiii). Clarke’s name also appears several times in Stebbing’s correspondence, suggesting sustained communication even after Clarke had been long based in the United States. In a letter to Dorothy and G. E. Moore dated 19 November 1940, Stebbing refers to Clarke in connection with the Moores’ visit to Smith College:

You will, of course, have seen Miss Evelyn Clarke. I wrote to her a few days ago—an important letter. Will you tell her so?⁶

Clarke also served as Treasurer of the Susan Stebbing Memorial Scholarship Fund, established following Stebbing's untimely death in 1943,⁷ further suggesting a close professional relationship.

Stebbing had completed an MA in Philosophy at King's College in 1912 and remained briefly as a Visiting Lecturer in 1913. This was obviously well before Clarke's appointment at King's in 1920 (see Figure 2 below where they are both listed under past and present staff); however, by that time, Stebbing had become an Assistant Lecturer at Bedford College, a constituent of the University of London, where she would remain for the rest of her career. She was promoted to Lecturer the following year with a five-year appointment and was then offered a full-time lectureship by 1923–24 around the time Clarke was likely completing or revising her dissertation. Given this, and that Stebbing's interests in logic as well as social and moral philosophy align closely with the subject matter of Clarke's dissertation, it's possible that Stebbing supervised Clarke.



Names of the Past and Present Staff		253	
LOGIC			
Lecturers			
1905	Kenneth Jay Spalding, M.A.	1914	Walter Robert Matthews, M.A., B.D.
1910	Clifford Sully, B.A.	1920	Mary Evelyn Clarke, M.A.
1913	L. Susan Stebbing, M.A.		

Figure 2. Excerpt from the Calendar, 1974–1975, item reference KCLCAL-1974-1975-240, King's College London Archives, London (accessed August 6, 2025).

An additional point, however, is worth noting. Clarke's designation as a "private student" meant her PhD would have been submitted directly to the University of London, rather than through a constituent college. This arrangement would have required oversight by a University-approved supervisor. And it's not clear Stebbing held the formal status necessary to supervise *external* doctorates at that time, even if she was intellectually well-suited to supervise Clarke's dissertation.

3. Clarke's Publications

Books

Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1929). *A Study in the Logic of Value*. University of London Press.

⁶L. Susan Stebbing, "Dear Dorothy and Professor Moore," 19 November 1940, GBR/0012/MS Add. 8330 8S/29/14, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, U.K.

⁷Wm. Pepperell Montague, "Note," *Ethics* 54, no. 3 (April 1944), p. 234, <https://doi.org/10.1086/290407/>.

Articles

- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1925). "Valuing and the Quality of Value." *The Journal of Philosophy* 22: 57–75.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1932a). "A Philosophy of Reality. E. L. Young." *International Journal of Ethics* 42: 381–383.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1932b). "A Phenomenological System of Ethics (I)." *Philosophy* 7: 414–430.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1933). "A Phenomenological System of Ethics (II)." *Philosophy* 8: 52–65.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1934). "The Contribution of Max Scheler to the Philosophy of Religion." *Philosophical Review* 43: 577–597.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1938). "Cognition and Affection in the Experience of Value." *The Journal of Philosophy* 35: 5–18.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1943). "Buddhist Devotion." *The American Scholar* 12: 362–373.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1945). "The Shape of Modern Culture." *Hibbert Journal* 44.

Reviews

- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1930). *The Central Problem of David Hume's Philosophy. An Essay Towards a Phenomenological Interpretation of the First Book of the Treatise of Human Nature* by C. V. Salmon and Max Niemeyer. *The Journal of Philosophy* 27: 575–579.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1932). *A Philosophy of Reality* by E. L. Young. *International Journal of Ethics* 42: 381–383.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1933). "Ethics." *Journal of Philosophy* 30: 404–417.
- Clarke, Mary Evelyn (1934). *Neue Wege der Philosophie: Eine Einführung in die Philosophie der Gegenwart* by Fritz Heinemann. *Philosophy* 9: 112–116.