

RUSSELL AND KARL POPPER: THEIR PERSONAL CONTACTS

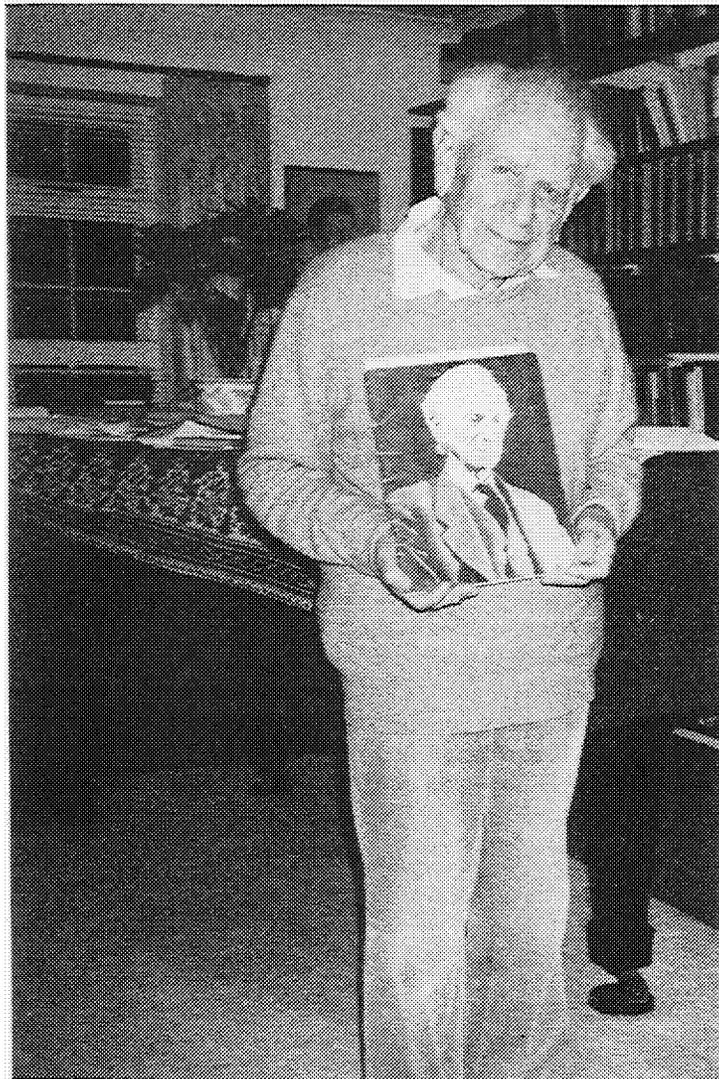
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✻ *A handsel for Sir Karl Popper
on his 90th birthday, 28 July 1992*

Russell and Popper count as among the most influential philosophers of this century. Although they followed substantially different lines and traditions, especially concerning *a priori* knowledge and abstract objects and the role of induction in science, they held each other in high esteem; and they corresponded on a number of occasions, largely after the Second World War. The recent organization of Popper's papers by the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University, California, where they are now kept, complements the files at the Russell Archives, and enables both sides of the correspondence to be available. This article presents the contexts and texts of the most significant documents, divided around three groups of events, two just after the War (secs. 1–2) and the last one in 1959 (sec. 3). The texts are transcribed in section 4.

I. EXCHANGES OVER BOOKS, 1946–47

At the time of the war's end both Russell and Popper came to Britain and published important books. Russell arrived from the USA in June



"I loved Russell" "This is Russell as I remembered him"
 Sir Karl Popper with his favourite Russell photograph, February 1992
 Photograph © I. Grattan-Guinness, 1992

1944, and was reinstated at Trinity College, Cambridge, as a lecturer.¹ Among other work he completed his *History of Western Philosophy*, which first appeared in 1945 in the USA from the New York house of Simon and Schuster.

After nine years at Canterbury University College, Christchurch, New Zealand,² Popper arrived in Britain in January 1946, to take a Readership at the London School of Economics. His *The Open Society and Its Enemies* had appeared the previous year in London from Routledge, but the American publication was not yet secured.

On 22 July Russell replied from Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales,³ agreeing to a request (now lost) from Popper to recommend *Society* to Simon and Schuster but asking to be sent a copy (Doc. 1), which is still in Russell's library. On 30 August he sent to Popper the promised "appreciation"; he praised the book very highly, agreeing with Popper's evaluation of Plato as a totalitarian and finding "deadly" his treatment of Marx (Doc. 2*b*). In a covering note he informed Popper that an unbound copy of *History* would be coming from Allen and Unwin (Doc. 2*a*). The "Inner Sanctum" of Simon and Schuster sent an encouraging letter to Russell on 30 September 1946, which Russell forwarded to Popper on 5 October; however, nothing came of this initiative, although Routledge used extracts of Russell's appraisal on the dust-jacket of their 1947 reprint of the book. *Society* appeared in the USA only in 1950, from Princeton University Press, who included some of the extracts from Russell's appraisal on their dust-jacket.

¹ On the role of G. H. Hardy in Russell's appointment, see my "Russell and G. H. Hardy: a Study of Their Relationship", *Russell*, n.s. 11 (Winter 1991): 165–79. Mis-handling of my word-processing facilities caused a footnote to disappear at p. 176. The account of Hardy's 1929 lecture should have been supplemented by this reference: "Mathematical Proof", *Mind*, n.s. 38 (1929): 1–25 (*Collected Papers*, 7: 581–606). Since my article was prepared, R. Kanigel has published *The Man Who Knew Infinity: a Biography of the Genius Ramanujan* (New York: Scribner's, 1991), an excellent study (belying its misleading title) which contains much information on Hardy.

² Russell had supported Popper for the New Zealand post in an open testimony dated 12 October 1936 from Telegraph House, Harting, Petersfield: "Dr. Karl Popper is a man of great ability, whom any university would be fortunate in having on its staff. I learn that he is a candidate for a post at Canterbury University College, Christchurch, New Zealand, and I have no hesitation in warmly recommending him."

³ Russell wrote this letter from a hotel in Penrhyndeudraeth, not from the house there that he was to rent and occupy from 1956 until his death in 1970.

Russell's *History* appeared in Britain from Allen and Unwin in November 1946, and Popper prepared a review of it for broadcasting on 19 January 1947 for the Austrian Broadcasting Service (according to Popper's recollection: Document 3, with an English translation published elsewhere in this issue of *Russell*). The circumstances of a radio talk with limited allotted time prevented him from analyzing the book in detail; for example, while he bracketed Russell with Kant at one point as among the great philosophers, he did not comment on Russell's unsympathetic chapter on Kant. He praised the author to the skies as the only great philosopher of our time, the most important contributor to logic after Aristotle when he published *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), the kind of thinker who saw philosophy as "argumentation" "before Fichte and Hegel ruined it" and kept it free from the "charlatanry and windbagery" of "our time", where the aim was "to beguile" rather than "to instruct". Popper took these terms from Schopenhauer, but as an example he may have had in mind a more recent experience.

2. A GAME OF POKER: POPPER, RUSSELL AND WITTGENSTEIN AT CAMBRIDGE, 1946

An event notorious in the annals of modern British philosophy occurred on the evening of Saturday, 26 October 1946. Popper had accepted an invitation from the Cambridge University Moral Sciences Club to speak on some "philosophical puzzle", but he actually addressed it on the topic "Are there philosophical problems?". The lecture was delivered in the rooms of R. B. Braithwaite at King's College. Popper began it by stressing the difference between the invitation and its fulfilment, whereupon Wittgenstein indicated that he had directed the form in which the invitation was to be sent. During the evening he interrupted, challenging Popper to provide an instance of a moral rule, and at one point even resorted to the behavioural extreme of brandishing a poker at Popper; he then left the room after Popper claimed that this action had infringed the moral rule advocating the peaceful use of pokers, thereby exhibiting to the members of the Cambridge University Moral Sciences Club the existence of a philosophical category which Wittgenstein prohibited.

Popper included his own account of this event in his autobiogra-

phy, which was published in 1974;⁴ but versions of it were in circulation soon after its occurrence, and some have appeared in print.⁵ As Popper indicates in his account, the truth-contents of the versions are extremely variable; in particular, a well-known variant states that Russell was not present. Letters between Popper and Russell written at the time allow us to avoid such mistakes.

The Cambridge lecture arose first in the correspondence in a letter from Russell of 16 October, now based at Trinity College. He promised to be present at the lecture (though he misdated it to Friday the 25th), and also offered to meet Popper. They did meet on the Saturday afternoon, and then Popper spoke and defended himself from various forms of attack in the evening, returning to his home in Barnet that night. The next day he wrote a long letter to Russell (Doc. 4), thanking him both for their meeting and for his support during the lecture. He recalled Russell's mention of Locke's philosophy during the discussion after the lecture, and criticized Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy and attitude to other philosophies. The sentiments expressed, and even in places the wording, are similar to the broadcast review of Russell's *History* which he was to prepare three months later.

From the end of Popper's letter it emerges that (on some occasion of which there is no surviving record) Russell himself had suggested the anti-Wittgensteinian subject for Popper's lecture; and in his reply from Trinity College on 18 November Russell indicated his cool attitude to Wittgenstein, deploring the "failure of good manners" during the meeting but not being surprised at its manifestation in Wittgen-

⁴ K. R. Popper, "Intellectual Autobiography", in P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Popper* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1974), pp. 3-181 (at 97-9); also in Popper, *Unended Quest: an Intellectual Autobiography* (n.p.: Fontana, 1976), pp. 122-4. Russell did not mention the event in his own autobiography.

⁵ Different accounts have appeared in Clark, *Life*, pp. 494-5; K. Blackwell, "The Early Wittgenstein and the Middle Russell", in I. Block, *Perspectives on the Philosophy of Wittgenstein* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1981), pp. 1-30 (at 3 and n. 11); Peter Munz, *Our Knowledge of the Growth of Knowledge: Popper or Wittgenstein?* (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 1-2; and Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: the Duty of Genius* (New York: Free P., 1990), pp. 494-5. An admittedly fictionalized account appeared in Bruce Duffy's novel, *The World as I Found It* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1987), pp. 12-15. On Wittgenstein's manner of conduct that year, see Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Memoir*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1984), pp. 39-40, 46-7, 52-5.

stein himself (Doc. 5: he did not refer to any particular incident). At the end he invited a further meeting, and in a note of 30 November suggested a date early in December to rendezvous at his London flat in Dorset House.

3. EXCHANGES OVER BOOKS, 1959

After 1947 contacts were much more occasional; some others were also oblique, such as Russell to a sixth-former, 10 February 1960:

I do not think that, if philosophy is what interests you, you need regret not going to Cambridge, as philosophy there is at a low ebb. I should have thought that the London School of Economics would be the place for you. There is a good deal of philosophy there and it has the merit of being vigorous.⁶

Another coincidence of publication occurred in 1959. Popper's own translation/edition *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* of his *Logik der Forschung* (1935) came out, and he wrote on 19 January from his home at Penn to say that he had asked his publisher to send Russell a copy. He also reported that a book-length *Postscript* was in preparation, of which the first chapter "was written in the spirit of addressing you—of an almost personal discussion with you" (Doc. 6).⁷ In a reply of 22 January from his home at Penrhyndeudraeth, Russell thanked him for the copy of *Logic*,⁸ and looked forward to the appearance of the *Post-*

⁶ Russell to Barry Sturt-Penrose (RA1 720). Compare the sentiments (and also the comments on Whitehead's philosophy) expressed to Popper the following 6 May (Doc. 9).

⁷ In the book as published this material was presumably (a forerunner of) Popper's *Realism and the Aim of Science* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), Chap. 1, which begins with the occasion of 1935 recalled in the next footnote.

⁸ Russell also stated here that he had read Popper's *Logik der Forschung* upon its appearance in 1935, but he was being forgetful or overpolite: Popper sent him a copy which is in his library (now at the Russell Archives), but its pages are basically uncut. He may then have browsed in its first pages; and soon afterwards he will have heard some of Popper's views on the philosophy of science when Popper spoke in the discussion following Russell's lecture to the Aristotelian Society on 6 April 1936 on "The Limits of Empiricism" (Popper [n. 3], pp. 87–8; 109–10). He spoke after L. S. Stebbing (Chairman), C. A. Mace, W. Kneale and A. J. Ayer (*Proceedings of the*

script volume. When his own *My Philosophical Development* came out in May, he sent Popper a copy, which excited on 29 May both an admiring response from Popper together with criticisms of his treatment of induction, and also a request to dedicate the *Postscript* to him (Doc. 7). On 9 June Russell reported himself too concerned with nuclear war to deal with induction, but he warmly accepted the dedication (Doc. 8).

However, Popper has always been more deliberate a publisher than Russell; in the end the *Postscript* did not appear until 1982 and 1983 (under the editorship of W. W. Bartley III), and by then Popper had forgotten the planned dedication. And now in 1992 another connection comes into operation; for most books of both men will now be published by Routledge.

4. DOCUMENTS

The nine documents, five by Russell and four by Popper, are transcribed here. The archives involved are designated by the letters "RA" and "P", involving typed materials, top copies or carbons as appropriate. Editorial interpolations or corrections are enclosed within square brackets, although the first one is by Russell.

Document 1. Letter from Russell to Popper, 22 July 1946, holograph (P).

[Address till Aug. 15]
The Hotel Portmeirion
Penrhyndeudraeth, North Wales
22.7.46

DEAR DR. POPPER

Thank you for your letter. I should be glad to commend your book to my American publishers, Simon and Schuster. But owing to the fact that at the moment I have no house, my books (including yours) are inaccessible. Could you lend me a copy, as I could write a better recommendation after refreshing my recollection of the book.

My "History of Western Philosophy" was published last year in America, and will be published here in September. I think my point of view is very

Aristotelian Society, n.s. 36 [1936]: 274: Russell's paper on pp. 131–50). See also the text to footnote 9. See also footnote 2 and the text to that footnote.

similar to yours, but it would have been very regrettable if, on this account, you had refrained from publishing your book, the more so as, in mine, the kind of thesis that interests you occurs only in relation to some of the men discussed.

I shall be back in Cambridge early in October, and shall be glad to see you there if you ever visit that place.

Yours sincerely
BERTRAND RUSSELL

Document 2. Russell's (a) letter covering (b) a testimony for Popper's *The Open Society*, 30 August 1946, holograph (P). First complete and textually faithful publication of the testimony.

(a) The Hotel Portmeirion
Penthyndraeth, North Wales
August 30, 1946

DEAR DR. POPPER

I have just finished re-reading your book, and think even better of it than at first reading. My only serious disagreements are: (1) I do not think there is adequate historical evidence for your favourable view of Socrates (or for its opposite); (2) I think Plato's view of Justice is more complex than appears in your account, and more connected with traditional Greek ideas; (3) I take a more unfavourable view of Marx's character than you do. Otherwise I agree closely—with your hostility to Plato and Hegel, with your view that history has no "meaning", and with your positive opinions.

I have asked my publisher to send you an unbound copy of my *History of Philosophy*—published in U.S. a year ago, but still unpublished here. I have asked them also to send you my "Freedom and Organization, 1814–1914", where there is a long examination of Marx.

I am writing to Simon and Schuster on your behalf, and I enclose an appreciation, of which you may make whatever use you choose. (I have already sent it to Simon and Schuster.)

Yours sincerely
BERTRAND RUSSELL

Address after Sep. 20, Trinity College, Cambridge.

(b) "The Open Society and its Enemies", by Dr. K. R. Popper (of the London School of Economics and Political Science) is, in my opinion, a work of first-class importance, and one which ought to be widely read for its masterly criticism of theoretical enemies of democracy, ancient and modern. His attack on Plato, while inorthodox, is to my mind thoroughly justified, and is in line with my own view of that arch-totalitarian. Uncritical admiration of

Plato has vitiated political thought ever since the Renaissance.

He points out that Fichte, the philosophic progenitor of German nationalism, was willing to throw in his lot with either the French or the Russians until he was made Professor in Berlin. His analysis of Hegel is deadly, and very able. Marx, whom he discusses at length, is treated more leniently than Plato or Hegel, but is dissected with equal acumen, and given his due share of responsibility for modern misfortunes.

The book as a whole is a vigorous and profound defence of democracy and of a philosophic outlook likely to promote belief in democracy. It is timely, and calculated to have an important beneficent influence. It is also very interesting and very well written. I cannot doubt that it will appeal to a large circle of readers.

BERTRAND RUSSELL.
August 1946

Document 3. Popper's unpublished review for radio of Russell's *History*, 19 January 1947 (P): my translation is published after this article. Typed, but with handwritten alterations by Popper. Only those underlinings which seem to indicate scribal rather than vocal stress have been adopted. There is also an extra folio containing three lines of text, which appear in the definitive version virtually unaltered.

AUSTRIAN TALKS (408) for 19th January 1947
18[.]30

BOOK REVIEW: THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY BY BERTRAND RUSSELL reviewed by K. R. Popper.

Bertrand Russell hat ein neues Buch geschrieben. Es ist ein grosses Werk, gross in seinen Ideen, gross in seiner Anlage und gross in seiner Bedeutung. Der Titel ist: *A History of Western Philosophy*, auf Deutsch, *Geschichte der Abendlaendischen Philosophie*. Das Buch kann wohl einzigartig genannt werden. Jedenfalls ist es das erste seiner Art. Es gibt viele Philosophie[-]Geschichten, vielbaendige und einbaendige, gut[e] und schlechte. Aber bisher gab es noch keine, die von einem wirklich grossen und originellen Denker beschrieben wurde. Die meisten wurden von gutunterrichteten Gelehrten geschrieben, aber zwischen einem gelehrten Professor der Philosophie, der Philosophiegeschichte *schreibt*,] und einem Mann wie Russell, der selbst Philosophiegeschichte *macht*, ist ein grosser Unterschied. Das erklart vielleicht teilweise das einzigartige an diesem Buch. Es ist ein Buch, das mit Klarheit und gleichzeitig mit lebenswuerdiger Leichtigkeit geschrieben ist; ein Buch das[s] es wagt, und das[s] es wagen kann, die Geschichte der Philosophie mit Humor und Grazie zu behandeln.

Was ist das Besondere und das Grosse in Russel[']s Buch? Das Inhaltsverzeichnis ist nicht wesentlich verschieden von anderen Philosophiegeschichten. Russell selbst beschreibt das besondere Ziel, dass er sich gesetzt hat, folgendermaßen; er will jeden Philosophen aus seinem *sozialen Milieu* heraus verstehen, und seine besondere Philosophie (soweit so etwas moeglich) durch die *sozialen Umstaende* und die politischen *Institutionen und Probleme seiner Zeit* erklaren. Aber das Ziel ist, meiner Ansicht nach, kaum das Besondere an Russell's Buch. Denn diese Methode kann heutzutage kann mehr als originell bezeichnet werden.

Es ist wahr, dass Russell der *erste* ist, der diese sozialgeschichtliche Methode auf die ganze Geschichte der Philosophie ausdehnt; und daß es ihm gelingt, neues Licht auf viele Probleme zu werfen—insbesondere auf Probleme und Gestalten der Philosophie des fruhen Mittelalters, zum Beispiel Augustinus und Boethius. Aber trotz des Reizes dieser Probleme glaube ich nicht, dass das Grosse an Russel[']s Buch in seiner sozialgeschichtlichen Methode liegt.

Was das Buch gross macht ist der Mann, der es geschrieben hat. Das Buch ist der Mann. Damit will ich nicht sagen, dass das Buch weniger objektiv ist als *andere* Philosophiegeschichten. Im Gegenteil, [a]ndere Buecher versuchen kramphhaft objektiv zu sein, aber sie erreichen das niemals. Was sie erreichen ist nur, das sie objektiv zu sein *scheinen*, und damit auf den Leser einen falschen Eindruck machen. Russell gibt nicht vor, objektiv zu sein. Er erlaubt sich, einfach und offen sein *Meinung zu sagen* und er macht es ganz klar, dass dies *seine persönliche* Meinung ist—sein wohlueberlegte Meinung—aber nicht mehr; *sicher nicht das Urteil der Geschichte*.

In meinen Augen ist Bertrand Russell ohne Zweifel der einzige Mann in unserer Zeit von dem man sagen kann, dass er ein grosser Philosoph ist—ein Philosoph, der in einem Atem mit Maennern wie Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, oder Immanuel Kant genannt werden kann. Er ist der Mann, dem wir es verdanken, dass die Philosophie nicht ganz der unertraeglichen Mode unserer Zeit, der Scharlatanerie und der Windbeutelerei, verfallen ist. Die Ausdruecke Scharlatanerie und Windbeutelerei wurden von Schopenhauer gepregt, der diese Dinge ebenso gesehen und bekaempft hat wie Kant.

Die Philosophie war, bis Fichte und Hegel sie ruinierten, Argumentation. Argumente zaehlten—sonst nichts. Seit Fichte und Hegel wurde sie zur Zauberei. Sie gab es auf, uns zu belehren und versuchte statt dessen, uns zu betoeren, wie Schopenhauer sagte. Die Modephilosophen, die uns *betoeren* statt uns zu *belehren*, erfunden ein ungemein einfaches Mittel. Sie hoerten auf, Argumente fuer ihre Meinungen beizubringen. Sie *posieren als Propheten*, als Menschen, die durch tiefes Denken zu tiefer Weisheit gelangt sind, und die uns in der Fuehle ihre Weisheit aus ihrem Ueberfluss ein paar Brocken zukommen lassen.

Diese Philosophie der grossen philosophischen Fuehrer und Verfuehrer,

der grossen Propheten, Pedanten und Schwindler, dieser philosophische Faschismus, ist immer noch maechtig. Diese Philosophie ist ein maechtiger und ein *verderblicher* Einfluss. Aber sie ist *nicht* all maechtig. Dass sie in unserer Zeit nicht wirklich allmaechtig wurde, dass die Tradition der Vernunft den Angriff der Unvernunft bisher ueberlebt hat, das verdanken wir niemandem mehr als Bertrand Russell.

Russell hat viele wichtige Beitra[e]ge zu einer wissenschaftlichen Philosophie geliefert, insbesondere zur Logik. Seine [“]Prinzipien der Mathematik[“], 1903] waren wohl zur Zeit ihrer Veroeffentlichung der wichtigste Beitrag zur Logik der seit dem Tode des Begrueenders der Logik, Aristoteles, gemacht worden war. Der Einfluss dieses Werkes auf die weitere Entwicklung der Logik und der Philosophie der Mathematik war ungeheuer. Aber das alles ist nicht wirklich das *Grosse* an Russell. Was macht ihn gross? Ich traue es mich kaum zu sagen: Er war der erste Philosoph seit Kant, der es wagte, seine Meinung offen und ohne weitere Umschweife zu aendern. Der einzige Philosoph, der nicht als *allwissend posierte*, sondern der offen zugab, dass er sich *irren* konnte; der durch die Tat bewies, dass ihm nur eines wichtig war: zu lernen und die *Wahrheit zu suchen*. Ich weiss nicht, *wie oft* Russell seine Meinung geaendert hat, [a]ber ich weiss, dass jedesmal wenn er es tat, es einen *Fortschritt* in der Philosophie bedeutete. Er aenderte nie seine Meinung ohne gute, sehr gute *Gruende* fuer die Aenderung vorzubringen. Und immer gabe er diese Gruende mit grosser Offenheit und Schlichtheit an.⁹ Diese Aufrichtigkeit und intellektuelle Unbestechlichkeit, diese selbstvergessene Hingabe an die Sache der Vernunft, diese schlichte Menschlichkeit, das ist der Mann. Und das ist sein Buch—eine Philosophiegeschichte voll von glaenzenden Ideen; geschrieben von dem klarsten, dem schlichtesten und dem menschlichsten Denker unserer Zeit.

Document 4. Letter from Popper to Russell, 27 October 1946, typed (P).

The London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street, Aldwych
London, w.c.2
October 27th, 1946.

DEAR LORD RUSSELL,

I am typing this letter—it won't be very short, and I do not wish you to have to decipher my handwriting.

I returned from Cambridge fairly late yesterday night, and the first thing I am doing this morning is to write this letter. I wish to tell you how much I

⁹ At this point Popper annotated his text with the instruction “(langsam!)” (“slowly!”).

enjoyed the afternoon with you, and the opportunity of co-operating with you, at night, in the battle against Wittgenstein.

As to the battle itself (and the victory we won) I did not quite enjoy it as much as I had hoped. I must admit that it dispelled my doubts in the reality of Wittgenstein which I had mentioned to you in the afternoon. He *is* real. But he is not quite the Wittgenstein I had expected to meet. *My* Wittgenstein, as it were, is unfortunately unreal—as I had expected—although in a somewhat different way! In other words, I was very disappointed by the debate. Heated as it was, it did hardly produce anything new—no new light was thrown on the situation. My own paper contained only little (as, you will remember, I had warned you); it was, for this reason, that I had considered discussing something else.

Your bringing in Locke helped a great deal. Indeed the situation is now, I feel, as clear as it can be.

(a) Locke says something about ideas. What he says is neither very clear nor very enlightening, but obviously he has in mind something relevant to philosophy.

(b) Wittgenstein says "Why does Locke say such queer things?" thereby expressing (not very clearly) that he wants to give various interpretations of what Locke might have meant. Obviously, to give such interpretations as Wittgenstein has in mind is also relevant to philosophy.

(c) Wittgenstein's assertion that nothing but what he is doing under (b) is relevant to philosophy is, quite obviously, dogmatic and narrow.

Besides, it is itself a philosophical assertion not falling under (b), that is to say, it presupposes a philosophy (of philosophy and of language) which, if we discuss it, leads us beyond the "why does he say this?" of (b).

(d) it is only the fact that (a) was a *philosophical* assertion of sorts, which makes (b) philosophically relevant. That is to say, the primary problem is contained in (a), and (b) is only a *preliminary* for the improved re-formulation of (a). Thus Wittgenstein's assertion (c) is an attempt to confine philosophy to its preliminaries.

(e) Besides, the discussion of (b), i.e. the philosophical activity in Wittgenstein's sense, is not exoterically arguable. It cannot, and does not, consist of more than clever guesses about various intended meanings. It leads to a series of "He *may* have meant ...", but it does not lead to any assertion which can be open to argument. This fact completely destroys any link with the rationalist tradition in philosophy and must lead to esotericity.

(f) Thus, the only assertion available and capable of being discussed is the methodological assertion (c). It offers the only possibility to break through the magic circle with the help of rational argument. This is why I had to choose (and why, advised by you, ultimately did choose) this topic.

Please excuse this long letter. You will understand that I *had* to write it to somebody who was present (and who is sympathetic to the line I took).

I should very much like to see you again and to give you, if that is agreeable to you, an oral report of my solution (I believe it is a complete solution) of the problem of induction. I think I could do it in about 20 minutes.

Yours very sincerely,

[K. R. POPPER]

Document 5. Letter from Russell to Popper, 18 November 1946, typed (P).

Trinity College,
Cambridge
18th November, 1946.

DEAR DR. POPPER,

Thank you for your letter of October 27th which I meant to have answered sooner. I agree with you in what you say about the debate at the Moral Science[s] Club. For my part I was much shocked by the failure of good manners which seemed to me to pervade the discussion on the side of Cambridge. In Wittgenstein this was to be expected, but I was sorry that some of the others followed suit. I was entirely on your side throughout, but I did not take a larger part in the debate because you were so fully competent to fight your own battle.

I should very much like to see you again at any time when it is possible. After December 6th I shall be in London where my wife and I have a flat; the address is:—

27 Dorset House, Gloucester Place, N.W.1.

Yours very sincerely,

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Document 6. Letter from Popper to Russell, 19 January 1959, typed (P, RA).

Fallowfield
Manor Road
Penn, Buckinghamshire
January 19th, 1959.

DEAR LORD RUSSELL,

I feel very diffident about writing to you, and I can only ask you not to answer this letter if you do not feel like it. I know how worrying and time-consuming the answering of letters can be.

It is a long time since I saw you last, and I have all this time been working on a book entitled *Postscript: After Twenty Years*. The book has been in galley proofs for the last two years, but owing to various difficulties, (among them trouble with my eyes), I have not finished the correction of these galley proofs.

One of the reasons for the delay is my trouble with my English. I have

always considered your way of writing as my model, and as a consequence, I am always terribly dissatisfied with what I have written.

The first chapter of the *Postscript* is very long (129 galleys—about 260 pages, I should say), and it was written in the spirit of addressing you—of an almost personal discussion with you.

I had always hoped, for these last two years, to finish my corrections very soon, and to send you this chapter for your comments. But since I have still not completed my corrections, I have meanwhile asked my publishers to send you a copy of my *Logic of Scientific Discovery*. I do not expect that you will find time to read it, but you might find time to read the two Prefaces. The second contains my criticism of the present language analysts (both English and American). I feel fairly certain that you will not disagree. I wished I could feel as certain that you will be amused.

Yours sincerely,
K. R. POPPER

Document 7. Letter from Popper to Russell, 29 May 1959, typed. Popper misplaced the top copy and sent the carbon; the originals are held at P and RA respectively.

Fallowfield
Manor Road
Penn, Buckinghamshire
May 29th, 1959.

MY DEAR LORD RUSSELL,

Thank you so much for sending me *My Philosophical Development*. It is a wonderful book—to me it is more fascinating than any book I have read since your *Portraits from Memory*. I think that it is much better than the *Portraits* or your Autobiography in *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*. There are very, very few books which can compare with it.

I have, of course, some criticisms, and I should like to mention one of them.

As you explain your theory of scientific inference (pp. 200ff.), you make it clear that your credibility is to satisfy Keynes' formal system of probability, and that your five postulates have the purpose of conferring a finite prior (or *a priori*) probability upon *certain* generalizations and not upon others.

But the *interesting* laws of science can be shown to have a probability which is \leq that of the less interesting laws. Loosely speaking, one can measure the interest of a general theory by its *improbability*: the scientist tries to pack as much information or content as possible into his theories; and it is obvious that a theory that tells us *more* than another must have a smaller prior probability.

Thus what we may call, intuitively, the credibility or acceptability of a law

cannot satisfy the laws of the (Keynesian) probability calculus.

It is a prejudice that science aims at high probability. I do not know whether you remember the following incident[*t*]: In Amsterdam, in 1948, I said the same things in a discussion (after a lecture by von Wright).¹⁰ You talked to me afterwards, saying that my argument showing that science simply does not aim at high probability for its laws was new to you, and that you regretted not to have known it when you wrote *Human Knowledge*. I replied that it was already in my *Logik der Forschung*; see for example p. 273 of the English translation.

But I do not want to give you the impression that my attitude towards your book is largely critical. Although I am a very critical reader, I am in almost all of the really important points in agreement with you, and always, even where I do not agree, full of admiration.

The fact that you have sent me your book gives me the courage to ask you whether you would give me permission to dedicate to you my next book, still in proofs, *Postscript: After Twenty Years*. I do not dare to hope that you will agree with its contents, and it contains much criticism of you (and some that does no longer apply to your latest formulations). But for this very reason I wish to make it quite clear that I do not belong to those of your critics who think that another "style" of philosophising is required. In fact, I should like to put my dedication roughly as follows:

TO BERTRAND RUSSELL
whose lucidity
sense of proportion
and devotion to truth
have set us an unattainable standard
of philosophical writing.

Yours sincerely
K. R. POPPER

Document 8. Letter from Russell to Popper, 9 June 1959, typed (P, RA).

Plas Penrhyn
Penrhyndeudraeth, Merioneth
9 June 1959.

DEAR PROFESSOR POPPER,

Your letter of [M]ay 29 has pleased and gratified me in a high degree. I am

¹⁰ Popper was referring here to the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy. G. H. von Wright gave a paper "On Confirmation".

very glad you think well of *My Philosophical Development*.

The things you say about probability and the laws of science require serious consideration which I ought to have given sooner and would have if I had not been so preoccupied with nuclear warfare.

I feel much honoured by your intention of dedicating your next book to me with such a very flattering inscription.

Yours sincerely,

BERTRAND RUSSELL

Document 9. Letter from Russell to Popper, 6 May 1960, typed (RA). Reply to an invitation from Popper of 3 May (P, RA), to address the British Society for the Philosophy of Science on the philosophy of Whitehead.

Plas Penrhyn
[Penrhyndeudraeth, Merioneth]
6 May, 1960.

DEAR POPPER,

(I think formality between you and me is unnecessary)

Thank you for your letter of May 3, and for the enclosed lecture on "The Sources of Knowledge and Ignorance".¹¹ I have not yet had time to read the whole of your lecture, but I can see that it is interesting and important.

I am sorry that I cannot agree to give such a lecture as you suggest. I never studied Whitehead's philosophical work at all thoroughly and I made a point of not saying anything publicly in criticism of it. What I did know of his philosophical work displeased me, partly because of what I thought unnecessary obscurity, and partly because of the trail of Bergson. I could not give such a lecture as you suggest without first reading a lot of Whitehead's work, which, on the whole, I do not wish to do as my time is very fully occupied in trying to induce the human race to let itself survive.

I am very glad that you are so vigorously conducting the fight against the "Oxford" philosophers, some of the worst of whom are at Cambridge.

Yours sincerely,

RUSSELL¹²

¹¹ Popper's paper was published in the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 46 (1960): 39-71, and is most easily available now as the opening chapter of his *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

¹² For permission to publish these documents I express thanks to Sir Karl Popper (copyright © Karl R. Popper, 1992) and to McMaster University. Advice on details was received from Popper and from Dr. K. Blackwell. Mr. D. Reed, Deputy Archivist of the Hoover Institution, kindly referred to Sir Karl's files there on my behalf.
