

THE PHILOSOPHER AMONG PHILOSOPHERS*

HIRAM J. MCLENDON

Hiram J. McLendon (1919–2000) was an American philosopher who taught at Berkeley, Harvard and New York University. Awarded Harvard’s Sheldon Traveling Fellowship for 1946–47, he studied with Bertrand Russell that year at Trinity College, Cambridge. His assistance with the manuscript of Human Knowledge was acknowledged. His son, James McLendon, accompanied his parents and has kindly permitted this 1956 paper, as sent to Russell, to be published. The incident involving Wittgenstein, Popper and a poker is discussed. Russell’s letters in response (which “delighted” McLendon) follow. The paper is an abbreviated version of a book manuscript entitled “The Philosopher among Professors” that he worked on for many years. He was also then working on a three-volume manuscript on Russell’s philosophic contributions, especially in epistemology, under the title of “Justifying Knowledge” (volume titles: “Revolution and Counterrevolution in Philosophy”, “Beyond the Mythic Way” and “Where Things Are”). Square-bracketed notes are editorial.

One spring evening, while the yellow forsythia still gladdened Cambridge, the members of the Harvard Philosophy Faculty bestirred themselves and came together to honour a distinguished visiting Professor of Philosophy.¹ After a dinner marked by easy philosophical talk, we continued chatting over brandy and cigars in the Faculty Club Library. Unobtrusively, the guest of honour had been established in a large chair at one end of the room; the rest of us were sitting in chairs arranged roughly in an ellipse, more or less facing

* © Hiram James McLendon, Jr., 2014.

¹ Professor John L. Austin. [Austin had recently reviewed *HK* anonymously (as was the practice) and disparagingly in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 March 1949.]

him. As the sociable spirit advanced, the Professor thrust forth, like a flare cast into a dimly-lit room, this question: "I wonder: what has Bertrand Russell taught us that we did not already know?"

Being one of the junior members, I did not answer immediately, despite my long interest in Russell's philosophy. In the momentary silence that resulted, I quickly recalled to memory the aged philosopher,² older than Russell himself, whom I had visited a few days before in his Back Bay apartment. I could almost hear his quavering voice but precise words: "So you are writing a book on Russell. To write a book on Russell is to write a book on the present state of philosophy." With almost defiant emphasis he had raised his voice: "In fact, Russell *is* the present state of philosophy!"

With a jolt, I came out of my reverie to hear one³ of our older, more communicative, and much beloved members, who had once been a close follower of Russell, saying with vehemence: "I agree that Russell has taught philosophy nothing. Russell is a plagiarist. He has had no ideas of his own. Whitehead talked his ideas out with Russell, who then hurriedly wrote them out as his own before Whitehead had time to finish them carefully himself."

Somewhere in the room there was an audible gasp, but out of deference to his seniority as well as the intensity of his feeling, no one interrupted.

"Everything was fine", he continued with a characteristic gesture with his hands, "as long as Whitehead and Russell worked with the abstract subtleties of logic. But when they could no longer tolerate either logic or each other, they parted both from logic and each other and turned to philosophy. But Russell was not prepared to do philosophy; he had stayed too long in the deserts of logic. Seeking to absorb philosophy within the precisions of logic, he made philosophy sterile! Russell has been very bad for philosophy."

I noticed our logician's face light up as he took his pipe from his mouth. "Russell may have been bad for philosophy," he said pointedly, "but he was surely mighty good for logic!"⁴

A murmur of approval passed through the library as this man who could best speak for logicians, who was competent in philosophy as

² Professor Dickinson S. Miller, contemporary and critic of James.

³ Professor Raphael Demos.

⁴ Professor W. V. O. Quine.

well, enumerated a half-dozen important contributions made by Russell to the disciplines of logic and philosophy of mathematics.

Many of us were not content to let Russell's original contributions to philosophy itself go unnoticed in this discussion amidst the already established claims of his greatness in logico-mathematical areas.

One of our articulate and wise colleagues leaned forward to summarize his own view of the matter:

"With all my regard for Moore", he said,⁵ "still I must say that, in my opinion, there are at least three achievements by Russell any one of which is enough to place him far ahead of Moore and all of which taken together secure for him a position as permanent contributor to philosophy from our time, such as none other in this century can thus far match. These contributions are, first, his theory of descriptions; second, his sustained programme of exhibiting the constants of physics as logical constructions whose elements are instanced in experience; and, finally, his integration of mathematics with pure logic in cooperation with Whitehead."

Others singled out features of Russell's work that seemed to be of paramount importance. We were surprised by the variety of new ideas to be found in Russell's work as our scrutiny continued under the pressure of our Oxford guest.

"But I maintain that all this only proves my point", said the older Harvard professor who had first verbalized his antagonistic attitudes toward Russell as a contributor to philosophy. "I think he has done nothing for philosophy. I will concede that he contributed to logic; that was prior to 1914. But since then he has done nothing but cheap, popular, moralistic pamphleteering."

This repetition of our elder colleague's view was followed by a calm appraisal from one of our dinner companions from the Physics Department, a philosopher-physicist,⁶ the man who was chosen by Einstein to be his successor at Prague when Einstein went to Berlin, and who later became the biographer of Einstein. Slowly, almost musingly, he said:

Is Russell original in philosophy? In the English-speaking world of this first half-century, *only* Russell is original. Besides, in comparison with

⁵ Professor Morton G. White.

⁶ Professor Philip Frank.

him, no one else has had any influence in philosophy. The Vienna Circle was his offspring; and his influence continues long after the demise of the Vienna Circle.

As he spoke I couldn't help but remember Einstein's own tribute to Russell's philosophical writings on science: "I owe innumerable happy hours to the reading of Russell's works, something which I cannot say of any other contemporary scientific writer with the exception of Thorstein Veblen."⁷

The discussion broke up shortly and I found myself walking along for a few steps with this kindly (to me) Russell-hater. As we parted, he said, as he had said many times before, "McLendon, you're making a mistake. Russell isn't worth a book!" We bade each other good-night; I walked slowly across Quincy Street past the President's House toward Emerson Hall. I noticed the broken brick walk crowded by the roots of giant trees; I thought vaguely of the resistance that the aged, the traditional, like the brick laid long ago, always exerts when some new giant growth develops, whether in nature or in the kingdom of men's minds.

"But it isn't just the aged that react against Russell", I said almost aloud. I thought of the philosopher older than Russell himself whom I had visited just the week before who was so ardently pro-Russell. In the discussion tonight some of the oldest had spoken of Russell's great originality. Also, I remembered a young graduate student of mine in the University of California in Berkeley who sat in my study a few years ago and said with unreasonable emotion: "I wish Russell had died in 1912."

I remembered the neatest and cleanest instance of uncompromising hostility to Russell that I ever met came from Mrs. Alfred North Whitehead. It was an occasion I'll never forget; it was the last time I ever saw Professor Whitehead. My Dorothy⁸ and I had been invited to visit them in their apartment in The Ambassador, just outside Harvard Yard. The invitation was for nine o'clock on a Sunday evening, the usual time when the Whiteheads began their social evenings. The purpose of the visit was to talk about England and especially Trinity College, Cambridge, for I had just completed our plans for a year of

⁷ [EINSTEIN, "Remarks on Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge", p. 279.]

⁸ [Dr. Dorothy McLendon, née Fullenwider, 1918–2011.]

residence and study as a member of Trinity. Professor C. I. Lewis, chairman of the Harvard Department, had sent the decisive telegram to the Head Tutor of Trinity, which, at the last moment, had won my admission. We were sailing in a few days, and we were excited. It was sure to be a vintage year. C. D. Broad was there and had assured me that he would welcome me as a student. Wittgenstein was still going strong as the master of Cambridge philosophy. Wisdom and Ewing⁹ were there. And Bertrand Russell was coming back to Trinity as a Fellow after thirty years of exile.

For months I had been reading all I could about Cambridge that I might be prepared to take best advantage of every opportunity during the one year of being a member of Trinity. Professor Whitehead, I knew, had been there long before Russell had appeared as a youthful student and had even helped Russell find his way there.

So it was that some of the enchantment of the year at Trinity College actually started on that September Sunday evening of 1946, even before I started for England. The Whiteheads talked of England nostalgically, and they seemed to enjoy anticipating our *trip*. They spoke wistfully of Cambridge and of nearby Grantchester, where they had spent happy days.

Then, I remember a sharp turn in the conversation took place. Mrs. Whitehead said, "Bertie is a very brilliant man. But, he is a very bad man, too; and he has a very bad philosophy. I warn you against him."

There it was. The first and most direct antagonism toward Russell.

Whitehead did not join in the expressions of disapproval nor the warnings about Russell. He underscored his wife's praise of him as a very brilliant man and philosopher, but turned the conversation with this advice: "I warn you *not to walk on the grass* in the college courts. At Trinity the grass in Great Court is sacred; it has been carefully tended for more than 300 years. They are proud of it and protect it. Only Fellows of the College, or guests accompanying them, are allowed to walk on the grass."

On the day we arrived in Cambridge we went at dusk to see the Great Court of Trinity College, one of Wren's best designs. Oddly enough, as we watched the students carefully keeping to the walks about the Court, we saw one Fellow in flowing black academic dress stride across the grass to the Hall where dinner was being served.

⁹ [John Wisdom and A. C. Ewing.]

Without difficulty I recognized that this was Bertrand Russell, walking with privilege across the grass from which he had been disallowed since the First World War.

Later in the fall I walked with Russell across the grass in Russell's company and knew that I was enjoying a privilege that was not earned but bestowed. I had heeded Professor Whitehead's advice; I had disregarded Mrs. Whitehead's. I both studied with Russell and trod, with Russell, upon the sacred grass of Great Court.

No reader, I trust, will be misled by this recounting of Mrs. Whitehead's evaluative comments; there was no bitterness, and no hostility. Indeed, I have been assured by the Whiteheads' elder daughter¹⁰ here in Cambridge that the rumours of antagonism between the two families during or after the completion of *Principia Mathematica* are wholly groundless. "Our door, the front door, was *always* opened to the Russells. They never needed to notify us ahead of time of their coming. And they always brought their bags into the house without even knocking—except in cases when they already had their clothes and personal effects in the house from a previous visit!" When I asked Miss Whitehead about the rumour that Russell, during the writing of the *Principia*, was *persona non grata* to Mrs. Whitehead and often had to go to the back of the house and be smuggled into the house through a second-story window, she was aghast, assured me that it was a wholly false, indeed, outrageous slander, and that "Mother would be infuriated if she ever heard of such a mendacious slander." Personally, the Whiteheads and the Russells were always very good friends.

But why it is that Mrs. Whitehead's granite-like reaction to Russell is but a model of most everyone's response to him as a thinker? There are no neutrals.

Age seems to have nothing to do with the kind or intensity of reaction to Russell. It's a strange thing, I thought, that most of those who have drawn near enough to his massive force as a lecturer and a writer do not succeed in escaping from a dilemma: to be a Russell-admirer or to be a Russell-hater. Some wouldn't admit they hate him; they just try to eliminate him as if he never existed. Others use his techniques, even against him, but are loath to admit that they have borrowed them from him. Why is Russell so immensely effective as a divider of men? That became my question, pressed upon me afresh by the events of

¹⁰ [Jessie Marie Whitehead, their only daughter.]

this dinner occasion just finished.

The warmth and fragrance of the spring night pressed upon me as I passed beside Emerson Hall, the seat of Harvard philosophy. As I often liked to do, I paused in the centre of the Tercentenary Theater, the great outdoor quadrangle named to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Harvard, where the Commencements are held each year. The sheer geometrical beauty of the view at the centre walk, the precision of the plan, never ceases to excite me. On *this* evening I noticed that the grass in this American Cambridge was protected, too—not by custom, as in Great Court at Trinity, but by wires. For a few weeks in the spring the grass at Harvard is protected and coaxed that it may make a proper carpet for the guests of the President and Fellows of Harvard on Commencement Day.

Pondering Harvard's external, calm beauty and her well-established devotion to the pursuit of truth, I couldn't cast off the feeling of the intensity of the emotions shown toward Russell. To say the least, Russell is a rare embodiment of the truth-seeking spirit. Yet here I had witnessed a kind of verbal scrap over Russell that was filled with passions, not just calm and evaluative. It seemed an occasion made up of incongruous elements. Russell was but the subject of the occasion, and the Oxford guest only its provocateur. And the occasion was but symbolic of a larger phenomenon of our times.

Why is it that Russell as a man and as a philosopher in both America and Britain evokes a raw, naked, decisive response, and one usually loaded with emotion? The response is never neutral, and almost never a mixture of praise and blame. Why does Russell divide his audience into two groups: those who are for him and those who are against him?

I had a good opportunity to observe Russell as a philosopher. As soon as I arrived at Trinity College, I dropped a note to him telling him that I had come to study philosophy with him. Within a day or two I received a handwritten note inviting me to tea the following Thursday in his rooms, the same that Newton had occupied in the seventeenth century.

Thus began an academic year of regular philosophical discussions for two hours every Thursday, and, irregularly, for an hour after Russell's Tuesday noon lecture and Wednesday afternoon one. Within a month Russell had given me a typescript of his *Human Knowledge*, still developing, which became a basis for our discussions.

What impressed me about Russell in these conversational explorations was, in the first place, his utter leisureliness. He was never in a hurry. In the second place, in his adaptability to others in the argument, Russell was like an elevator: he could always come directly to my level and talk at that level of comprehension which was comfortable for me. He was intuitive in his comprehensions this way. Besides, Russell never, never posed as one with authoritative prerogatives in matters of argument and opinion; always, it was the subject that engrossed him, the chase that lured him, the argument that led him. He is the easiest man to argue vehemently with that I have ever engaged in argument, partly for this very reason, that ego-involvement is an element that never entered into the arguments. He never felt the need to win an argument, only to follow it through. The last thing that would ever enter his mind in philosophical debate would be to pull his rank or to expect deference to his opinions from another arguer. All stand on equal terms before the argument. He listens without interrupting, and expects to be listened to similarly. He concedes points readily. He states his own with stark directness, and never apologetically. In this matter of recognizing one's fellows as standing on an equal footing before the argument only two other men, among competent philosophers whom I have conversed with at leisure over the years, approach Russell: Ralph Barton Perry and Dickinson S. Miller, who also never pull rank and never feel a compulsive need to win an argument, as if their ego status were at stake.

But of all Russell's characteristics in philosophical discourse, the most striking one is the eagerness with which he not merely welcomes criticism but seeks it, and uses it. For example, when Russell gave me *Human Knowledge* in typescript, he cautioned me to be careful not to lose it. He also gave me a 125-page handwritten essay on probability, and added, "Never worry about that; it is no good anyway." After reading both scripts, I contended that *Human Knowledge*, concerned with the justification of science, was incomplete without a section on probability, and that the handwritten essay ought to be incorporated with *Human Knowledge*. He listened with characteristic attentiveness, made no reply. Two weeks later, he returned to the subject. "So you think I ought to include the probability stuff? I think I will take your suggestion, even though, in lengthening the book and in making it more technical, it will cost me dearly in sales." He did include the material as Part v. To do so, he excised six or seven chapters on ethics

found to be irrelevant to *Human Knowledge*, and later published them in his recent full-scale ethico-political book.¹¹

This is altogether characteristic of Russell as one who is eager for criticisms, quick to use them, and extravagant in his acknowledgments of indebtednesses to others for them.

In saying that Russell is never authoritative in philosophical discourse, that he never pulls rank, I do not mean to imply that he cannot on occasion exert a mastering influence, indeed, an overwhelming one, in discussion. By sheer strength of his personality I have seen him become figuratively a towering giant, a roaring lion. I once saw him become so exercised, under deep provocation.

It occurred one Wednesday evening in February, 1947,¹² at a meeting of the Moral Science Club, at Cambridge University, in England. The Club members and guests had assembled, as usual, around an open fireplace in the rooms of Professor Braithwaite, Kings College. The arrangement of the guests was itself interesting, in concentric semi-circles around the hearth. To the right of the fireplace, on the innermost circle, and snugly near to the wall, sat the man Wittgenstein, Russell's most eminent pupil, and by then the master of all philosophy at Cambridge. He was, as always, cleanly shaven, ruddy-complexioned, blue-eyed, with closely cropped greying hair; his shirt was wide open at the throat; his leather jacket was zipped high. He was nervous, uncomfortable, incredibly shy of speech except when "lecturing" in his own private rooms, to which all his students were required to come for his soliloquizing lectures. At these lectures visitors were not welcome and notes were not to be taken.

Nearby was Professor C. D. Broad, sitting to the left of Wittgenstein. In the speaker's seat to the left of the fireplace and close to the wall and just squarely opposite Wittgenstein, was Professor Karl Popper, who had journeyed up for the evening from London University. Roughly in the centre of the inner semi-circle, directly before the fireplace, though far back, and just in front of me, sat Russell in a big, high-backed, rocking chair. He looked then, as he usually does, like a silver fox, sly, quiet, wise, confident, resourceful, never making a move unless and until an occasion arose that required his participation.

To the left of the inner circle were John Wisdom, the Braithwaites,

¹¹ [*Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954).]

¹² [It was Friday evening, 25 October 1946.]

the Geaches,¹³ and Ewing, all of them philosophers in their own right. Off behind Wittgenstein were his many students, who, in fact, included most all students of philosophy at the University. By this time, Wittgenstein had reached the position of the only philosopher at Cambridge; Broad and Ewing were at best only useful pedagogues whose lectures might help one prepare for the Tripos examinations; and Russell, by general consent, had outlived his usefulness by at least twenty-five years. Even among the small faculty and aspirants to the faculty, there were only three philosophers who were not satellites of Wittgenstein: Ewing, Broad, and, of course, Russell. These exceptions were generally attributed to their incorrigibly advanced years! Only Wittgenstein was, by tacit consent of students, a great philosopher.

Part of his greatness consisted in exposing all other philosophers, previous and contemporary, as self-deceived deceivers. Part of his lure consisted also, no doubt, of his willingness to be eccentric, even rude, and never conventional. Each of us attending his class on Mondays and Fridays from 5 to 7, always brought a folding chair into Wittgenstein's living-room in Nevile's Court, where he held class, and removed it to a nearby corridor upon leaving. This way, by never giving a formal lecture in a university hall, Wittgenstein never had to wear the customary academic gown, a survival of the medieval demarcation of university and clergy alike from the vulgar citizens. And no one had to wear academic dress to his "class". Likewise, he never came to the Trinity College Hall for his meals, where he would have dined in academic dress at High Table with his colleagues, Fellows of Trinity College.

It is my impression that Wittgenstein never, since becoming a Professor, was seen in academic dress, and that he therefore never gave a university lecture at Cambridge, in the proper sense, not even an Inaugural Address. Students and faculty alike came to his private rooms, the living-room serving for the nearest thing to lecturing that he ever did. He excluded guests, professors visiting from the United States being excluded with special zest. He was autocratic in his professional and philosophical stance beyond anything I have seen or thought possible in a university. And no one seemed to think this master's behaviour at all reprehensible. His disciples seemed to enjoy it, and to hang upon his every gesture as well as his every word.

¹³ [Peter Geach and G. E. M. Anscombe.]

Into this tense and worshipful cult of esoteric philosophers stepped the erudite Popper, and with one purpose: to attack the idolized master of the sect, Wittgenstein himself.

As he read his paper, in all gentleness and almost with apology for his boldness, his disciples, many of them concentrated to my right, became themselves tense, anxious, agitated, angry; and outbursts of interruption, such as seldom occurred during the reading of a paper, began to appear.

As the paper finally came to a stormy end, the President of the Club, Professor Broad, naturally gave the first place for discussion to Wittgenstein. In characteristic fashion, Wittgenstein assured Popper that Popper did not understand Wittgenstein, that the issues were vastly more complex and subtle than Popper ever began to realize, and that Popper was but confusing them.

At a disadvantage when told by his subject that he had misunderstood him, Popper alluded to the fact that he had himself made use of the *few* available writings by Wittgenstein and all his pupils.

Instantly Wittgenstein turned active. Stung by Popper, Wittgenstein scooted forward in his chair, grabbed the iron poker standing beside the fireplace, and waved it in a thinly disguised but barely controlled, hostile manner toward Popper, but with the ostensible purpose of using the poker as an object for illustrating a point, which, however, got lost in the excitement. Wittgenstein rose to a high-pitched charge against Popper: "But you do not understand the issue; you are bringing confusion into it."

Whereupon Russell, so far silent, suddenly sprang forward to the edge of his big rocker, sat up full height, and roared forth like a Sinaitic god above the confusion: "But Wittgenstein, you are the one who is creating all the confusion!"

Wittgenstein at once, and for once, subsided. The meeting, never to be forgotten, came quickly to an end.

By the next morning rumours, caricatures, and embroiderments upon this original event had begun to fly through the community of Cambridge, out to its environs, and thence around the world. The very next noon my wife, that year on the faculty of Psychology at Homerton College in Cambridge, told *me* the story: three Cambridge dons, one of them Russell himself, had had a quarrel and one had used a poker on another!

Though the rumours left the truth, the truth was more exciting than

any of the fictive additions to it.

The next afternoon, when I went to Russell's rooms for my regular two-hour period of philosophical discussion, Russell, still visibly moved by the events of the evening before, told me that he had never seen a guest so rudely treated in all his career. "Popper", he said, "is a man of greater learning and erudition than all of them taken together; and he is a person of great philosophical competence. He did know what he was doing. The conduct of the vocal members of the Club toward him was shameful. In fact, so shameful was it that I have already written to Professor Popper this morning a personal letter of apology for the barbaric reception given him here."¹⁴

This is the only occasion, during many hours of philosophical discussion that I have shared either alone or in groups with Russell, and during approximately 50 lectures I have heard him give, when he showed the slightest tendency to speak authoritatively. Customarily, he is the animated and selflessly absorbed pursuer of topics philosophical wherever the argument may lead, or wherever the arguers may go.

This one outburst, however, could have been predicted. If there is anything that Russell despises and has fought all his life, it is the pretences of any group, religious, philosophical, or other, to possess in an esoteric manner important knowledge to which its members have some preferred access but from which persons not initiated into the cult are excluded. So long as Wittgenstein lived and ruled at Cambridge, he sustained such an esoteric cult; and he ruthlessly kept others under his unabashed mastership. One master, many deferential disciples. It was this cultism that Popper came to challenge; his challenge so stung the cultists from leader to ranks that Wittgenstein himself assumed a more-than-usual belligerent posture of massive superiority and of superior authority toward another competent scholar and thinker. Russell's decisive voice was stridently raised on this occasion in the cause of dispelling such cultism. Incidentally, this is the only occasion throughout the year, either in "classes" or in the Club, when Wittgenstein's compulsively autocratic domination of every philosophical group at which he was present was checked. In every other situation, he had been not a member of the group but a tyrannical ruler over its members as toward so many inferior subjects.

¹⁴ [This is Russell's letter of 18 November 1946, in reply to Popper's of 27 October. Both are printed by I. GRATTAN-GUINNESS, "Russell and Karl Popper", p. 15.]

Indeed, never once did I hear anyone in his classes dare to criticize him in class or out. And, worse yet, none of his students even wanted to do so, not even in his absence! Wittgenstein terrified them, subdued them, paralyzed them, made criticism seem impertinent. They became all too often incapable of thought in his presence and afterwards. They not only imitated his thoughts but even came, unconsciously, to mimic his very gestures and his grotesquely feigned inarticulateness. As he spoke, so did they in an empty manner imitative of him, as if, when philosophizing, they were, like their master, waiting upon the slow promptings of a philosophical muse to tell them what they ought to say. And they must wait for the word, meantime stuttering, inarticulate, indulging in long, painful, silent vigils between utterances. Were those lectures? Or spiritual seances?

Protagoras was powerful over his disciples, too, and dictatorial, so that they were his slaves. But he was chummy, too, and stimulating. Wittgenstein was just powerful, dictatorial, paralyzing, toward his admiring dependents.

There is no serious doubt in my mind but what this man's influence as a human being upon his students dealt with face to face has been a massively deleterious one, and the more so as his students have stayed with him longer. Whatever be the merits of his philosophy as left in his two published books and in further tracts and little books of various "colours" surreptitiously circulated hitherto among the initiated but soon to be published by his literary executors, his personal conduct made him a philosophical Frankenstein, an unmanageable encroachment upon his students, who, for the most part, either relished or were forced into a master-dependent relationship.

When Professor Broad was our house guest here in Cambridge during the Christmas season in 1953, he then quoted Wittgenstein himself as having recognized, before his death but after his retirement, that his brutal force upon his students had tended to make weaklings of them.

In our times, cultism has flourished among the Thomists, among the Personalists, and among the Logical Positivists to a shameful degree. These cultisms, however, have, each of them, been softened by having divided leadership and loose discipline and no one geographical capital. Roughly, we may say that, among these three cults, the Logical Positivists have been the least partisan, the Personalists noticeably more so, and the Thomists yet more exclusively cultish.

Nevertheless, in comparison to Wittgensteinianism, which has benefited from none of these wholesome checks, they are but innocent adolescent experiments in cultism, indeed, but gentle *Gesellschaften*. It has been my privilege to work very closely with leaders in all four of these cultish philosophies, and I have listened to them well. I have been profoundly shocked by the dogmatic, illiberalist, disciplinary, cultishness of them all alike, but by Wittgensteinianism in its paradigmatic form most of all.

There is this marked difference to be noted, however: while Personal Idealism, Thomism, and Logical Positivism are less cultish than Wittgensteinianism, they are still objectionably cultish, and, besides, are creators and conveyors of doctrines that are patently false. They are therefore doubly cursed.

Such is not the case with Wittgensteinianism. Wittgenstein, while, as a man, founding a most intolerant philosophical party of esoteric pretensions made in his own image, has nonetheless *not* given us another false philosophy further to clutter up the landscape of philosophical history. In part, he escapes falsehood by avoiding assertion. But in addition, he has many important techniques and cautions of supreme importance to philosophers, the most important being a fierce protest against the worst trait in the history of philosophy, a reckless habit of excessive and vacuous and brutishly heedless overgeneralization of small results into fantastic systems.

In my contempt for this man's tyrannical manners and often ruinous effects, therefore, I am not evaluating his philosophy, which is another matter altogether.

Indeed, I will not conceal my hope that in due time Wittgensteinianism will crumble as an esoteric and partisan school, as did Pythagoreanism of long ago, and that what will survive from it of importance will be an even greater carefulness concerning the uses and misuses of language in philosophical constructions than Russell showed. Such results from Wittgenstein's career, to be expected, will nevertheless be in due time recognized as brilliant extensions and modifications of some of Russell's earliest and most secure results in the philosophical study of language, rather than as originalities created by Wittgenstein totally *de novo*. Wittgenstein is no philosophical Melchisedec, no miracle man sprung full grown upon the earth without father or mother. He is rather like Minerva sprung full grown from Russell's head, as different from Russell as Minerva from Jupiter, or Eve from Adam,

and considerably more subtly analytical, but infinitely less wise.

Though the increase in technical analytical care may survive and be turned to large and useful domains of human intellectual endeavour, the false pretensions of complete Melchisedecian originality on behalf of Wittgenstein and, above all, the insufferably deleterious esotericism and cultism we may expect to vanish. The sooner this vanishing occurs, the better for philosophy and hence for our needy human family.

On this dramatic occasion in Braithwaite's rooms, Russell actively struck a blow against its continued survival. The strength of such cultism and of Russell alike are both dramatized by the Popper–Wittgenstein–Russell battle. Never on any other occasion to my knowledge, whether in Vienna before his Cambridge days, or at Cambridge, or in his rare visits to Oxford and Ithaca, was Wittgenstein the cult-maker ever challenged at all, least of all successfully. Russell put him into an egalitarian posture at least once, at least for a moment, and so denied his cultism unchallenged right of way at least for a brief time. Typically, when that happened, the philosophical discourse in which Wittgenstein was a participant at once ceased, as if he were capable of monologue but not of philosophical conversation.

This encounter of Russell with Wittgenstein over Popper may, therefore, be regarded merely as an especially concentrated instance of Russell's steadfast opposition to cultism, however masked. This resort to rank and use of an authoritative posture, such as Russell so crushingly used against the pretences of Wittgensteinianism that evening, is, however, a resource that Russell almost never uses in conversation. His customary posture is that of one among equals before an argument to be objectively conducted in the full view of all who care to judge. This manner of philosophical conversation may be one reason why Russell is so successful in personal communication and so evocative of decisive responses to his ideas.

Not for a moment am I suggesting that Russell is a humble man; I do not think he knows the meaning of that word! Nor is he a proud man. Pride and humility alike are vices that spring from an obsessive self-regard, in the one case from a willful subordination of one's ego and in the other from a will to exalt one's ego above others. Neither of these ego-obsessed vices attaches to the philosopher Russell. As thinker, he is engrossed in the world thought about. He is neither humble nor proud, because he is not preoccupied with his own ego

status but is, rather, engaged in selflessly contemplative inquiry.

To be sure, in a social situation, by which I mean one that contains at least one woman, a different Russell emerges. He becomes very self-aware; he shows off; he engages in thinly disguised self-praise; and he does so as naturally as he breathes. When Mrs. McLendon and I first were guests of Lord and Lady (Patricia) Russell in their London apartment¹⁵ in 1947, I saw this other Russell for the first time, and have both seen this other person and heard of him many times since. Lady Russell, when she met us, the picture of immaculate feminine beauty, had a delicate little brownish red pipe in her mouth; it matched her auburn hair and tweed suit, and had obviously never been used. Apparently it functioned as a piece of jewelry. Throughout the day I got the impression that there was a faint duel in progress, in which Lord Russell was active at mild self-praise and Lady Russell was equally active at counteracting it. Praise and puncture seemed the twin processes, one *from* the Lord and the other *from* his Lady, but both directed *toward* the Lord.

For example, Russell at lunch told us that he had once had to give a lecture in Litchfield.¹⁶ He got off the train there, and, not knowing where he was to lecture, walked up to the first man he saw, who was apparently a local train employee, and asked, "Where am I to lecture here this evening?" Immediately the worker replied, "Why, Lord Russell, you are to lecture at ..." and named the hall. The implication that Russell was universally recognized wherever he went was at once countered by Lady Russell, who said, "Of course, the moment he saw your long shaggy hair and your baggy unpressed pants, how could he miss knowing that you were the philosopher come to town?" To which Russell retorted: "An English Lord is supposed to look a little shaggy!" In this social situation, Russell was very much Lord Russell. So he is in social situations generally. But in philosophical discourse, he is selfless: the argument is lord of all and hence of Russell and of his conversationalists alike.

As a writer, however, Russell is even more harsh in the directness with which he presents his ideas than he is in his conversation. To

¹⁵ [27 Dorset House, Gloucester Place.]

¹⁶ [Russell told a similar story on the *Brains Trust*, 8 January 1945. The time was "the last war" and the place Birmingham: "I looked around and saw one (of about 2,000 people on the platform) who had the sort of face that went to my meetings, and I went up to this person and said 'Where is my meeting?' and got an answer at once."]

understand his capacity to evoke the intensely partisan responses, pro and con, which he arouses, we do well to look at Russell as writer.

For one thing, there is a naked simplicity, a brutal forthrightness, and a fresh, crisp, lively touch of stark creativity about Russell's very *style*. It serves to set forth his ideas with the force, clarity and challenge of a piece of Norman architecture.

Struck by this style of Russell's compositions, I asked him how he has composed his 60-odd books and hundreds of articles. This kind of question always pleases Russell, as he thoroughly enjoys discussing his own achievements, not boastfully neither apologetically nor with any sense of guilt of talking of his works, but freely as if he himself were astonished and delighted at what he has done.

"I observe", he told me on one of those leisurely Thursday afternoons at tea time,

three short rules. First, state your main idea, in any paragraph or other unified part of a composition, *in one sentence*, without any qualifications at all. Then add in separate sentences whatever qualifications may be needed to protect your idea against misunderstanding. Otherwise, your main idea is lost amidst a flurry of qualifications. Second, never use big, unusual words, or technical vocabulary, where little, usual, non-technical words will suffice. Then readers will concentrate on the idea rather than be distracted by impressive vocabulary. Third, never revise what you write, for the creativity that is found in writing as it flows from your pen is lost when you go back and, in doubt and hesitation, with your original creative ardour gone, try to improve the manner of what you have said. You almost always make it worse.

This manner of writing serves to give to Russell's expression of his ideas a directness of thrust, a forceful clarity, that hits his readers squarely between the eyes, and makes them take notice.

The absence of revision, I fear, has, however, contributed to a certain lack of obviousness as to systematic interconnections among Russell's ideas thus expressed. This is *one reason* why, while every sentence or even paragraph or chapter by Russell may be lucidly written and clearly understood by itself, Russell's system as a whole tends to escape our view. Thus, he is both a good writer and a bad one. This calls for just that kind of systematic representation of Russell's system as a whole which Russell does not happily present to us, but upon which I have been working for some time now.

Yet this lack of revision undoubtedly contributes to the raw forcefulness of his prose and gives us the sense of participating in the very birth of his ideas as they come to light in a creative style untampered with by a mind grown cold toward the ideas once expressed.

Besides, Russell has a device to compensate to some extent for his refusal to revise. To avoid revision, he has a routine for incubating what he wants to say before he tries to write it. First, after choosing a subject for an article or a chapter, he jots down an approximate subject heading and a title. Then, he lets the subject incubate in his mind for a while, jotting down ideas as they occur to him. Then, in due time, he draws up a fairly systematic but not overly detailed outline. One outline, which he loaned to me, after I had queried him on his composing procedures, for a chapter of about twenty pages in *Human Knowledge*, was only about two pages long, closely handwritten. Once an outline is written out thus, Russell then allows another week or so, during which the chapter is further growing in his mind as to details. At last, usually on the eve of a scheduled time for delivering the lecture that also goes as a chapter into a book, he sits down and writes out the chapter, in one continuous sitting if possible, but in any case, straight off. Then, unless special needs arise, he does not revise it.

There is, however, another sense in which Russell does revise. "I never know what my book is really about until I have finished it", he told me; "and then, when I have finished it and know what it is about, I may find ways to re-arrange chapters and to introduce connective tissue which, giving the unity to the book as a whole, may call for some internal modifications of chapters as originally composed."

I saw this kind of revision as to ordering of materials as it proceeded through the year that I worked with Russell and had a copy of *Human Knowledge*; I saw it shift and change as to sequence and component chapters in its last year of production and receive additional chapters as they were composed for addition to the original typescript. The changes were *not* of the sort that constituted piecemeal revisions of the paragraphs or sentences, or even of whole chapters. The bricks, once baked, stayed as first shaped.

Russell as writer reminds one of that genius in another of the arts, Mozart, who, we are assured, composed wholly in his mind, and re-arranged his melodies over and over again, as he jolted along in a carriage, or walked in the country, till he heard them in his mind just the way he wanted them. Then once he had created an entire work in his

mind, he sat down and furiously wrote it out, never revising it one bit. Russell works roughly in this same manner.

This account of his genius at work tends to explain this miracle of Russell's achievement as a writer of sheer volume, though it of course leaves, as always, the nature of genius itself quite as mysterious as before.

In Russell, it is genius more than hard work. He is a refutation of the idea that genius is 90 percent hard work! Almost never has Russell worked more than five or six hours a day, usually nine to one and five to seven, at philosophy, writing and reading included. Every time I have come upon him in his rooms, he has been happily reading some excitingly jacketed murder story, except once, when he was reading a new tome on Physics in German!

One experience of Russell's writing, as he described it, makes his creative genius seem even more remarkable: the way in which he composed *Our Knowledge of the External World*. Russell told me that it happened as follows:

I had agreed to deliver the Lowell Lectures in Boston in February of 1914. As the fall of 1913 came, I not only had no lectures: I had not an inkling of an idea for a series of lectures. I began to be worried. I tried to write; no ideas would come; I read; no suggestions appeared. October passed—no light; November—no leads still. The first of December came. Even in the absence of any ideas to write, I decided that I would call in a secretary and start dictating, in the hopes that I could thereby force an idea for my series of lectures.

This plan worked: one morning as a beautiful blond secretary, whom I had not seen before, arrived to take dictation, the moment I saw her the complete outline for my series of lectures burst forth in my mind. At once, I dictated the book straight off. Only one mishap occurred. The secretary and I, in having tea together one day, got jam on the typescript. That is why the book is a little sticky in places!¹⁷

Russell is a popular lecturer. He attracts large crowds of people whenever an announcement is made that he will speak. Those who

¹⁷ [Russell had agreed the subject with President Lowell. The lectures were to start on 16 March 1914. He had written the lectures in autumn 1913, as his letters to Ottoline Morrell make clear, but had struggled with them. What he started dictating on 1 January 1914 was very likely "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics". See BLACKWELL, "Our Knowledge of *Our Knowledge*".]

know his work are amazed to discover that in his lecturing nothing new or different as to content will emerge. The reason is obvious: every time Russell lectures he writes out his lectures for publication. Every lecture, it seems, is destined to be printed. This procedure of making his lectures and his publications coincide has some interesting consequences. In particular, he never adapts his lectures to his audiences; he writes them out of regard to his own publishing plans, and audiences must listen to whatever he is working on at the time. Sometimes this produces remarkable situations.

At Cambridge University in 1946–47 Russell was scheduled to give *popular lectures for the general public* on Tuesday afternoons at five o'clock. The largest lecture room in the university, a new lecture hall on Trinity Lane, had been arranged for him. On the first evening, not only was the room jammed, but two adjoining rooms were filled to the maximum, and were supplied with loud-speaker connections. Guests were milling around in the hall, not able to get into any of the three large rooms.

What did Russell use as lectures in this Introductory Course in Philosophy for these enthusiastic mobs of students and general public? He read to them chapter after chapter of *Human Knowledge*, his *magnum opus* in pure philosophy. Why? He was engaged in completing the book for publication. Not a single concession did he make to the fact that the audience was composed of folk untrained in philosophy. He cast his pearls quite as if he had been lecturing to an international congress of philosophers.

The English Cantabrigians did not take it; first, the audience diminished to two rooms, then to one room; and finally, by spring, to part of the main room. Russell, as we were walking along toward the lecture early in the year, predicted this: "At first, the crowds are big; then they fall away. The reason is obvious. They come not so much to hear philosophy but to see and hear me. Then, when they have done that a few times, they begin to fall away." It never occurred to Russell that *Human Knowledge* is philosophy for philosophers.

On another and later occasion Russell did it again: he came to give one general lecture at Harvard—the Philosophy Department was willing and able to pay for him at his rate! As the Chairman, acting as Russell's host, was bringing Russell from a visit with Mrs. A. N. Whitehead to the Yard for the lecture, a massive exodus from the large lecture hall in Emerson to Sanders Theater, the university's biggest

auditorium, was in progress. Long before the lecture time the crowd had overflowed the large room which had been originally designated. As Van Quine drove Russell to the Yard, they had to creep along through Kirkland Street, crowded by the students and public moving to Sanders Theatre. Russell, Quine assured me, was visibly pleased, altogether delighted that he should be the centre of this excitement.

And what did Russell use as lecture? He used a chapter from his recently published *Human Knowledge*, one devoted to arguing that all our percepts are located inside our brains.¹⁸ This was what he wanted to use. It coincided with his publishing interests! Let the audience hang on the window sills and sit in the aisles and tremble with sheer anticipation of hearing the wise man speak. Percepts-in-the-brain it was to be!

Russell does not always cast philosophical gems this indiscriminately. He often speaks on politics, population, society. But he always lectures from a publication schedule, and it is a matter of good luck or bad whether what he is working on for publication happens to be suited to his audience. He is not one to compromise his publishing interests to the interest level of his audience.

Russell's determination to lecture from the materials on which he is working for publication at the moment may be hard on the audience at times; but it is one reason why Russell publishes so voluminously and lectures so widely. Every lecture is aimed at the printing press. This fact together with his rule of never revising helps him achieve a sheer volume of publications not otherwise achievable even by one of his immense gifts.

To be sure, Russell's *style* of conversing, of writing, and of lecturing is only one of the characteristics as a man and as a philosopher that give him the power to evoke sharp divisions of responses among his readers. There is another feature at least as compelling: I mean the great *range* of topics on which he has written. There is hardly a topic of great interest to men of science or of philosophy or of morals and politics but what Russell has declared himself on it with utmost clarity and raw forcefulness.

¹⁸ [It was "Mind and Matter" (see "Bertrand Russell Speaks Today on Mind and Matter", *Harvard Crimson*, 3 Nov. 1950). *Human Knowledge*, Pt. 3, Ch. 7, has the same title, but a similar but new lecture with the same title, published in *Portraits from Memory* (1956), was given at several other venues during Russell's 1950 US lecture tour, sometimes as "The Physical Conditions of Thinking". See *Papers* 11: 279.]

This variety of his writings is not a surprise once a person remembers Russell's background and his personal motives for entering philosophy. Coming from a titled family distinguished in British history for public life, Russell has always been interested in ethico-political questions. Instead of entering politics, however, he entered into pure philosophy, and did so for personal reasons.

"I turned to philosophy", he once told me, "to find the answers to two questions: (1) Does God exist? (2) Is mathematics true? The longer I have studied philosophy, the more doubtful I have become regarding both these topics."

Russell's contributions as a thinker, then, have fallen largely into three roughly differentiable areas:

There are his most abstract writings, in logic and pure mathematics. They have revolutionized philosophy in the Anglo-American community in the last 50 years.

There are his most concrete writings in his ethico-political books and pamphlets. They have served to get him into an English jail once, to his being denied a passport to the United States to accept an appointment at Harvard, and to his being ousted first from Trinity College, Cambridge, England, and then from City College of New York a quarter of a century later. Russell would have loved to be a statesman, or even an honest politician—if there be any such creature. Indeed, he has spoken of himself as retreating into philosophy whenever his hopes to do something more useful in the world at large were cut off. Besides, in his practice as a writer on public affairs, he has been a kind of "elder statesman" in English intellectual life, and in his mature years has, of course, been a member of the House of Lords. He has for years been top billing on the BBC on international politics. We know that he enjoys this connection with the political life of his country. Indeed, Santayana, who loves to rib Russell for his impassioned engagements in practical life, tells us that Russell appeared on the Thames to take his elder brother's seat in the House of Lords very soon after his death, only to be sent back home to observe a suitable period of mourning, as required by custom, before occupancy of the recently deceased brother's seat.¹⁹

¹⁹ [See SANTAYANA, *Letters*, ed. Cory, p. 262, and *Letters*, ed Holzberger, 4: 290, 293. McLendon wrote in his review of *Portraits from Memory*: "I cited this anecdote to Russell recently; he was not amused; but he confirmed that the occasion for his being

Russell's writings on ethico-political questions spring, therefore, from very deep reservoirs of interest in public life in himself and in his family, and these interests have deepened with advancing years. Nothing could express this increasing interest in world politics²⁰ more fully than a letter that I received from Russell in 1948 written by him on March 8. I had written him, as I often have, about points in his philosophy, also, on this occasion, about techniques for handling a graduate seminar I was conducting at Berkeley, and had expressed the hope of returning to London, where he then was still living, to visit with him again, and had inquired about Wittgenstein's abrupt retirement. In response, after replying to points of inquiry and advising me on seminar procedures, and welcoming my proposed return visit, he then abruptly said:

It is true that Wittgenstein has retired, in order to have leisure to write a book. His successor has not been appointed, and I have heard nothing as to who is probable. His retirement has nothing to do with the evening's battle over Popper.

I have done no philosophical work lately, having become engrossed in

turned away was the matter of a possible posthumous male heir, a probability which mathematician Russell had doubtless reckoned as extremely slight in view of the strained relations long obtaining between his brother and Elizabeth" ("Russell's Portraits and Self-Portraits from Memory", p. 272).]

²⁰ [James McLendon comments on his father's interest in world affairs: "He spent the academic year 1950–51, just as the Korean War was breaking out, in Asia (primarily in Japan and the Philippines) on a State Department contract teaching US military officers about the ethical dimensions of government and administration so as to function properly and effectively in the occupation of Japan and in their interactions with the Filipino people. He became fascinated with Japan and East Asia.

"During his two years in Paris (1957–59), he met with many French intellectuals and philosophers, took part in philosophic conferences in Paris, and became fluent in French. He was always reading the French newspapers and following all the political twists and turns at the end of the Fourth Republic and the emergence of de Gaulle and the Fifth Republic. He was always eager to be in the thick of the demonstrations in Paris in 1958 and to observe first-hand the birth of the Fifth Republic. In a demonstration in Avignon, we were afraid we would lose him when violence broke out, but he escaped unscathed.

"In the 1960s he worked with WILLIAM YANDELL ELLIOTT, a professor in the Harvard government department, on an edited-book project on the role of the US government in developing countries entitled *Education and Training in the Developing Countries: the Role of U.S. Foreign Aid* (1966). My father worked with a large number of leading figures in the field of international relations and economics at Harvard and elsewhere in editing this book. Until his final years, my father was always deeply engaged with world affairs."

broadcasting and international politics. I visit capitals and talk against Russia. You are not likely to see London again; it may cease to exist any day now.

Best wishes from us both to you both.

In addition to his intensely practical and opportunistic writings in the ethico-political area, there are also his writings in pure philosophy, designed, he says, for the general educated public, but actually sufficiently difficult to require a little help in understanding them. These make up the great central area of his philosophy. It is to this third area of Russell's output as a thinker, in contrast to his logico-mathematical achievements, on the one hand, and his ethico-political maneuverings, on the other, to which I refer when I speak of his work in *pure* philosophy.

Few men, if any, know all of Russell's work; most men have heard of only parts of it. I met a professor of law at Harvard recently who knew that Russell was a mathematician, and that he wrote on morals and marriage, but he had not the least idea that Russell had spent the great long meridian period of his life from 1912 to 1948, insofar as he was concerned with philosophy, at work in philosophy of science and technical theory of knowledge. As a matter of fact, it is Russell's work in pure philosophy, not his logic nor his moralistic preachments, that Russell prizes most.

The logic is for specialists only; the ethico-political writings need no commentary but are readily understood by anyone who reads them. In pure philosophy, however, Russell's system is not obvious. Its systematic outlines tend to get lost amidst the wealth of scientific detail and the variety of piecemeal systematic doctrines that he includes within it. Its systematic structure is, however, eminently worth locating. It is this structure that I have sought both to locate and to evaluate in my forthcoming book upon Russell's philosophy.

All three of these areas of Russell's work have tended to evoke the most decisive responses, and highly contrasting ones. Philosophers either welcome his introduction of logico-mathematical tools into philosophy or reject them and curse him for introducing these tools of precision into philosophy, which they wish to leave vague. His ethico-political views, as indicated, have surely evoked the sharpest reactions.

It is, however, the main message, the intellectual *content*, of the central area of Russell's work in pure philosophy that, I think, has

tended, more than Russell's other work, *as far as the content of Russell's philosophy goes*, to arouse people to their utterly partisan responses to Russell, as either anti-Russellians or pro-Russellians.

Stated in maximum brevity with details omitted, Russell's central message that he has given his life to trying to deliver is just this:

Every man has some view of the world as a whole, at least one such view. But these world views differ very greatly, in at least one respect. Some of them are inspired by daily practice, by common sense, and they do not lift us very far above animals as regards our contemplative knowledge. Other world views sprout from morals, which themselves have been inherited largely from prehistoric and early historic superstitions. Yet other world views are rationalizations of established religion; while yet others spring from unsponsored myths that may receive systematic expression in great philosophies.

But there is now science in the world, hardly 350 years old. From it also there grows a world view, the scientific view of the world. Science and the world view growing from it, however, must, if accepted, crowd out of our minds and imaginations and emotions those world views inspired by practice, by morals, by religion, and by unsponsored myths.

The only question of great moment here, therefore, is, in Russell's mind, this one: what good inducements may be given for our accepting science and the world view that is inspired by science? Once these inducements are found, science and the scientific view of the world are supposed by Russell to be vindicated by reasonableness itself, and all rival views, intrinsically incompatible with the scientific view of the world, are supposed by Russell to stand permanently condemned and to be rejected by all men who, being reasonable, may accept both science and the view of the world inspired by science. This is the programme that Russell seeks to advance in his pure philosophy.

Russell's principal work in pure philosophy, therefore, is an outgrowth of his youthful question: does God exist? Rejecting all *Weltanschauungen* inspired not only by religion but also by common sense, by morals, and by uninstitutionalized myths, his supreme effort, since he withdrew from logic in about 1913, has been to protect scientific reasonableness and the world view that arises out of science from the choking thistles of non-scientific ways of viewing the world and man's place in it as an actor, a thinker, and an aspirant toward ideally achievable natural values.

Here, then, lies one of the principal reasons why many philosophers resent Russell. According to Russell, most philosophies defended by professional philosophers since Plato have been no less inspired by non-scientific human involvements than have the unphilosophical world views of ordinary human beings. Naturally, contemporary philosophers attached to great philosophers of the past whose philosophies are regarded by Russell as crowded out by science and the world view inspired by science find no reason to respond meekly to Russell. Now, could any message be more likely than this one to evoke total responses from Russell's readers, as they feel the point of some thrust of his overall strategic challenge to common sense? to moralists? to religionists? to myth-lovers? and to all makers of world views inspired by these fertile valleys in the human psyche? Here is a message *planned* to divide men.

The central message to the world that Russell has to deliver is, therefore, of such a nature that, when a person grasps it, he has confronted an idea, indeed, a system of doctrines, designed to produce first a shock and then a clean response of acceptance or of rejection. Arguments over fine points may arise. But neutrality toward his central message would seem to be evasion. And Russell can only be evaded by being ignored. Moreover, it is tautologically true that only by the ignorant can he be ignored.

One point should by now be perfectly clear: Russell's philosophy, viewed in its totality and not myopically in some of its technical details, is a prophetic one, and, like all prophetic deliverances, is not designed to bring comfort and contentment to men. To be sure, Russell's philosophy is not regarded by himself as a source of comfort to anyone, not even to himself. About this he is quite clear. Though he has never abandoned nor deviated from his lusty search for the truth about the world, he has never presented his philosophy as a road to the sort of complacent comfort offered by religious, common-sensical, moralistic, and mythical world views, nor indeed as a source of any kind of comfort to anybody. It is addressed to those rare spirits who are moved powerfully by pure curiosity as to what in fact is the nature of our actual world.

In his elegant though brief autobiographical sketch, "My Mental Development", Russell concludes with an open confession of the uncomfortable yet permanently sustaining strength of his life-long quest for an alternative to religious views of the world as the mainspring of

his philosophical career. He says there:

My intellectual journeys have been, in some respects, disappointing. When I was young I hoped to find religious satisfaction in philosophy; even after I had abandoned Hegel, the eternal Platonic world gave me something non-human to admire. I thought of mathematics with reverence, and suffered when Wittgenstein led me to regard it as nothing but tautologies. I have always ardently desired to find some justification for the emotions inspired by certain things that seemed to stand outside human life and to deserve feelings of awe. I am thinking in part of very obvious things, such as the starry heavens and a stormy sea on a rocky coast; in part of the vastness of the scientific universe, both in space and time, as compared to the life of mankind; in part of the edifice of impersonal truth, especially truth which, like that of mathematics, does not merely describe the world that happens to exist. Those who attempt to make a religion of humanism, which recognizes nothing greater than man, do not satisfy my emotions. And yet I am unable to believe that, in the world as known, there is anything that I can value outside human beings, and, to a much lesser extent, animals. Not the starry heavens, but their effects on human percipients, have excellence; to admire the universe for its size is slavish and absurd; impersonal non-human truth appears to be a delusion. And so my intellect goes with the humanists, though my emotions violently rebel. In this respect, the “Consolations of Philosophy” are not for me. [SCHILPP, pp. 19–20; *Papers* II: 17]

Russell, therefore, lives in a world revealed by objective knowledge; but he lives in it as a rebel against it, for it falls beneath his unquenchable expectations, which themselves have been those of Western religion. He lives within a steady tension between the desires that have made men religious and a view of the world that denies our religious hopes. And so, fundamentally, he is disconsolate, though wittily so.

In focusing on this fact that Russell in his prophetic philosophy has no largesse for the passions, we have come upon a feature of Russell as a philosopher that makes him a unique phenomenon in the history of philosophy, and, perhaps, his success a milestone in human history. It is this: all the great philosophers in the history of philosophy except one, that is, all of them who have managed to survive as great among their contemporaries and to appear great to posterity, have had three characteristics, above all others: (1) They have dramatized man’s yearnings to be reasonable, and have assured men that they could be

so. (2) They have also catered to the heart, reassuring men that their passionate wants from the universe could be granted. (3) And they have maintained that men may be *both completely reasonable* in their beliefs about the world at large and *ultimately optimistic* about their personal fortunes in relation to the universe as a whole, *at one and the same time*. History has been kind to such philosophers, and, with but one exception, to them only.

But those who have been just reasonable in their beliefs about the world at large and have not been concerned at the same time to serve the heart with agreeable beliefs have, for the most part, been weeded out. Hume is the one exception, and possibly Hobbes, but neither was recognized as great in his time; and neither has any direct influence or appeal to general readers nowadays, except to technical philosophers, who, however, for the most part, condemn them, myself being an exception for thinking that these are the two greatest philosophers each in his own field, Hobbes in political philosophy and Hume in epistemology.

Russell, on the other hand, whatever history does to him, has become a recognizably great philosopher purely on a platform of a heartless view of the world and of man's place in it, has sky-rocketed to philosophical pre-eminence in his own lifetime, and has continued to enjoy the pinnacle for nearly a half-century, without any compromises, in his philosophy, with man's softer passions.

In doing so, he has never been in intention a partisan sect-maker, though cliques have formed around him, and in his name, as around Aristotle of old and Dewey of late. But he has, for reasons considered, among others, evoked astoundingly strong and amazingly contrasting responses both from professional philosophers and from the general public.

In all of these multiform responses, whether friendly or hostile, however, one great fact stands forth: Russell has made a phenomenal personal success in the English-speaking world of a philosophically prophetic message that is not addressed to men's impassioned optimisms, but instead even confounds them. This is a phenomenon in the history of philosophy. One significance of this spectacle appears to be that, in the English-speaking world at least, men have become a little more susceptible to stories aimed at purely objective truth-telling than ever before in the history of Western man. If this be true, then philosophers concerned to tell stories that are just true may in future

not have to sacrifice their personal fortunes to their intellectual consciences on account of savage publics. Messy little details being left aside, perhaps this, above all else, may be said, in response to the query of the distinguished Professor of Philosophy from Oxford, to be what Russell has taught us.

APPENDIX: RUSSELL'S RESPONSES

18 December, 1956.

Dear McLendon,

Many thanks for your two letters and for the typescript which I have read with the greatest interest. There are very few points that I have to raise in regard to it. I am utterly amazed by the malicious gossip which you report as to my relations with the Whiteheads. My relations with both of them were always entirely friendly and, until they went to America, very intimate. I had no idea that such ridiculous falsehoods had been circulated. You report Mrs. Whitehead as saying that I was a "bad man". I think this must have been only on the ground that I was not sexually conventionally virtuous: she was very puritanical in this respect.

As regards Santayana's remark about my taking my seat in the House of Lords, the truth was that I could not take my seat until it was clear that my brother's widow was not going to produce a posthumous heir.

You make some remarks about my fitting my lectures into my publishing schedule. This is not quite just. I did not have any publishing schedule, but as various subjects occupied the focus of my interest, it was natural that the subject of the moment should be the one I chose both for writing and lecturing.

I very much like your account of Popper's visit to the Moral Science Club, and generally what you say about Wittgenstein's personality.

Demos is an ungrateful fellow. I took a great deal of trouble for him in the years 1914–18 and gave him a lot of personal instruction gratis. But when people become Christians, they think it gives them an excuse for not behaving with common decency.

I have not found anything in your typescript that I should object to on grounds of taste. I look forward to seeing your next chapter,²¹ which I am sure will interest me.

Best wishes to you and Mrs. McLendon.

²¹ [The title of this chapter, on the philosophic relationship of Russell and Wittgenstein, is not obvious from McLendon's 1957 book outline sent to Russell for "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Contemporary Philosophy", volume 1 of his trilogy "Justifying Knowledge".]

P.S. It is very kind of you to send me a cheque for postage, but I think I am sufficiently in your debt for the matter of your typescript to be able to defray the postage myself. I have burnt your cheque.

26 Dec., 1956.

Dear McLendon,

There are two further points which I wish to add to my recent letter. The first is that the stenographer to whom I dictated on Jan. 1, 1914 (*not* Dec. 1, 1913) was neither blonde nor beautiful. She was Jourdain's secretary whom he lent to me for a short time. I forget her name, but you will find it in the preface to Jourdain's little book on *The Principle of Least Action*.²²

The other point is as to my audiences always diminishing. This was not true at Columbia in 1950. The opposite occurred then and in 1916 when I lectured on the Principles of Social Reconstruction and twice had to be moved into a larger hall.

Best New Year Wishes.

WORKS BY HIRAM J. MCLENDON
AND OTHER WORKS CITED

- BLACKWELL, KENNETH. "Our Knowledge of *Our Knowledge*". *Russell* o.s. no. 12 (winter 1973-74): 11-13.
- EINSTEIN, ALBERT. "Remarks on Bertrand Russell's Theory of Knowledge". In P. A. Schilpp, ed., *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*. Evanston: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1946.
- ELLIOTT, WILLIAM Y. *Education and Training in the Developing Countries: the Role of U.S. Foreign Aid*. New York: Praeger, 1966. (McLendon is credited.)
- GRATTAN-GUINNESS, I. "Russell and Karl Popper". *Russell* 12 (1992): 3-18.
- MCLENDON, HIRAM J. "The Causal Theory of Perception". PHD dissertation. Dept. of Philosophy, Harvard, 1949.
- . "Has Russell Answered Hume?" *Journal of Philosophy* 49 (1952): 145-59.
- . "Uses of Similarity of Structure in Contemporary Philosophy". *Mind* 64 (1955): 79-95.
- . "Has Russell Proved Naive Realism Self-Contradictory?" *Journal of Philosophy* 53 (1956): 289-302.
- . "Russell's Portraits and Self-Portraits from Memory". *Journal of Philosophy* 54 (1957): 264-80. [The longest, and the best, review of Russell's *Portraits*.]
- . "Plato without God". *Journal of Religion* 39 (1959): 88-102.
- . "Beyond Being". *Journal of Philosophy* 57 (1960): 712-25.
- RUSSELL, BERTRAND. "My Mental Development". In P. A. SCHILPP, ed., *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*. Evanston: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1946. *Papers* 11: 1.
- . "Mind and Matter". In *PfM; Papers* 11: 35.
- SANTAYANA, GEORGE. *The Letters of Ed. Daniel Cory*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.
- . *The Letters of Book Four, 1928-1932*. Ed. William G. Holzberger. Cambridge, MA: MIT P., 2003.

²² [Her name is not to be found there and remains unknown.]