

## Documents

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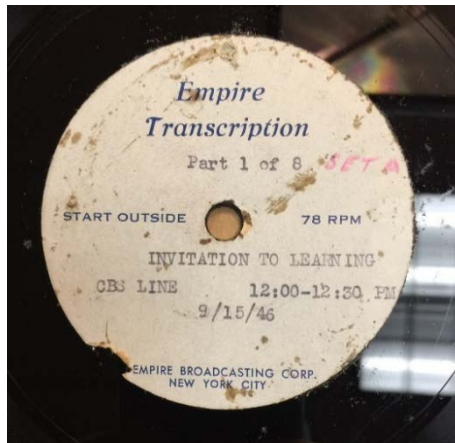
# “INVITATION TO LEARNING” DISCUSSES *A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY*

IRWIN EDMAN, HORACE M. KALLEN AND HAROLD A. TAYLOR

Introduced and transcribed by LUKAS SPENCER  
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Transcribed here is a 78 rpm vinyl (or possibly shellac) recording of the CBS broadcast of *Invitation to Learning* on 15 September 1946. In it Irwin Edman, the chair, and guests Horace M. Kallen and Harold A. Taylor discuss Bertrand Russell’s recently published book, *A History of Western Philosophy*. The roughly thirty-minute broadcast, which aired on a Sunday from 12:00 to 12:30 pm, was segmented onto eight “vinyl” sides on four twelve-inch discs. They came with the fourth accrual of the Bertrand Russell Archives to McMaster University Library.

“Transcription” holds quite a different meaning for a person who *listens* to a transcription than for a person who reads one. The image shows the “vinyl” recording in the Russell Archives which CBS may have sent to Russell himself sometime after the broadcast aired, or a friend or secretary may have requested it from the broadcaster. In radio broadcasting terms, a transcription is the product of a transcription disc recorder and is meant for subsidiary radio stations to play on their own airwaves. It was not necessarily meant for commercial use. The transcribing facility allowed the government-run US Armed Forces Network to broadcast domestic



radio shows in the UK and Europe during and after the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> In the image overleaf, the hand-printed “SET A” on the label, suggesting there was more than one set, may pertain to such distribution. In the National Archives of the United States, there are several transcriptions of *Invitation to Learning* sessions, but Russell seems not to have been a participant in them. Transcribing (into text, now) these Russell appearances on the programme—some dealing with topics not been found anywhere else in his known publications—would extend our understanding of Russell’s views.<sup>2</sup> From here onward, “transcription” means speech converted to text.

Whenever a speaker in the following discussion quotes *A History of Western Philosophy* directly, a page reference is noted. If the speaker misquotes Russell or if an extension of a pertinent quotation provides additional context for the discussion, the passage itself is provided. Other relevant publications by Russell are mentioned. Irwin Edman and Horace M. Kallen both published reviews in 1947 of the *History*; where these reviews relate to their comments in the discussion, quotations are provided.

In May 1940 Columbia Broadcasting Systems began broadcasting *Invitation to Learning* weekly after a year of internal deliberation, successfully impelled by Stringfellow Barr, a CBS adult-education board member.<sup>3</sup> The programme was broadcast almost exclusively on Sunday mornings or early afternoons.<sup>4</sup> In addition to Barr, whom CBS asked to step down amid the first season, a revolving door of programme chairs presided during *Invitation to Learning*’s twenty-four-year history; the guests, two for each session, came in through an adjacent turnstile. Among the programme’s earliest regulars was none other than the esteemed educator himself, Bertrand Russell. Appearing on at least a dozen sessions between 1941 and 1951, Russell was among a short list of honoured guests whose own book was the programme’s focus of discussion.

Before the session recording began, the chairman and guests convened for about an hour in a separate studio for a preliminary discussion of that session’s book. The only scripted part of the programme, save the announcer’s introductory and concluding statements, came from this pre-discussion huddle: the chair and guests would supply a representative quotation from the text which, of the three provided, the chair would choose whichever he thought was best and invite whoever suggested the quotation to read it aloud at the end of the programme (see Grams’ introduction). Given that Irwin Edman

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<sup>1</sup> For the technology, see STIRLING, *Encyclopedia of Radio* (2004), 3: 1097–9, 1190.

<sup>2</sup> See MARLEY BEACH, “‘Invitation to Learning’ Sessions”, p. 72 below.

<sup>3</sup> BUFFINGTON, “Invitations to Learning” (2011), p. 315.

<sup>4</sup> GRAMS, *Invitation to Learning* (2002), whose book is unpaginated. Besides a six-month trial-run in 1941 on Tuesday evenings, the programme aired reliably during the above-mentioned time until it moved in its latter few years to Sunday evenings.

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read the representative quotation at the end of the discussion, one can assume that his quotation was the one chosen—by him. The participants often refer to previously mentioned opinions which are not present in the broadcast itself. These opinions likely came from the preliminary discussion.

Two of the discussants were very familiar with Russell’s writings. The review by Irwin Edman (1896–1954) in *Book of the Month* (August 1947) is as measured and gracious as his comments are in the broadcast; so measured, in fact, that one may be forced to stifle a smile upon reading his sonnet, originally published in the *New York Tribune*, written in praise and inspiration of Russell’s *Why Men Fight*.<sup>5</sup> In the final two lines Edman directs himself to his hero of independent sober reflection, “[Y]ou / Up friendless and forbidden paths have fought / To wave white truths from lonely peaks of thought.” The following discussion shows how Edman’s overwrought regard for Russell—such as elevating him a step short of apotheosis—seems to have been assuaged over the course of a few decades. Edman also helped to arrange publication of Russell’s three lectures at Columbia University in November 1950.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Edman combined his interests in both philosophy and literature in his *New York Times* review of Russell’s first collection of fiction, *Satan in the Suburbs and Other Stories* (1953).<sup>7</sup>

Horace M. Kallen (1882–1974) was an early professional correspondent of Russell’s, dating as far back as 1907. Kallen affirms his admiration of Russell in his review published in the *Lawyers Guild Review* (1947). While challenging Russell’s historical method and the metrics by which he grades other philosophers, Kallen nonetheless extols the depths of Russell’s prose—claiming that Russell’s “wisecracks” potentially lure one into misconceiving a “false bottom” which veils his nuanced meaning, or what Kallen otherwise calls Russell’s “deceptive simplicity and clearness”—whereas another reviewer might reproach Russell for shallow ostentation.<sup>8</sup> In a brief aside, Kallen highlights the catastrophic potential of the close connection between philosophy and politics in such societies as “the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Communist State, the Nazi racist state or Lamaite Thibet”, which the liberal tradition, championed by Russell, could remedy.<sup>9</sup> By comparing the dogmatic “monists” and scientific “pluralists” in the metaphorical images of, respectively, an ever-hardening rock and a breathing sponge (*ibid.*), he employs an epigrammatic prose style, which he lauds, in the discussion, as characteristic of Russell’s own. Kallen’s review is so similar to his comments in the

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<sup>5</sup> “To Bertrand Russell: After Reading *Why Men Fight*” (1917), in *BRA* 1: 70.

<sup>6</sup> *The Impact of Science on Society* (New York: Columbia U. P., 1951).

<sup>7</sup> EDMAN, “Demonic Merriment” (1953).

<sup>8</sup> KALLEN, review of *HWP* (1947), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> KALLEN, p. 54.

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broadcast as to make one wonder if he wrote the former the same week he attended the latter. Moreover, Kallen reviewed several other books by Russell over the years and co-edited a collection of essays with John Dewey on the judicial abrogation of Russell's professorship at the City College of New York in 1940.<sup>10</sup>

Although the comments by Harold A. Taylor (1914–1993) in the following discussion are rather mordant and, at times, dismissive, nothing is known of his out-of-discussion views of the *History* or any other views he might have held concerning Russell.

Gather around the radio (or audio file) and enjoy Irwin Edman, Horace Kallen and Harold Taylor discuss Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy*.<sup>11</sup>

**A**nnouncer: Once again the Columbia Broadcasting System extends to you an *Invitation to Learning*, an invitation to join three guests as they share their impressions of *A History of Western Philosophy* by the noted British philosopher, Bertrand Russell. In this his most recent work, Russell shows how philosophy plays an active role in social and political life. In his view, philosophy is not the isolated speculation of gifted individuals but rather a cause that influences the character of the various societies in which different systems flourish. A recent visitor to the United States, Bertrand Russell is now returned to England where he teaches at Trinity College, Cambridge University. He is one of the very few persons who has both appeared on and been the subject of *Invitation to Learning*. Chairman of *Invitation to Learning* today is Irwin Edman, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. His guests are Horace M. Kallen, Dean of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, and Harold Taylor, President of Sarah Lawrence College. For *Invitation to Learning*'s discussion of *A History of Western Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell, we hear first from Chairman Irwin Edman.

**Edman:** Obviously anyone who knew the name of Bertrand Russell and anything about his place in contemporary thinking would a priori have had extraordinary curiosity about what he would say about the history of his predecessors, and in this book we have an opportunity to see what Bertrand Russell thinks about his predecessors, and, with his usual directness and wit, he tells what he does think and measures

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<sup>10</sup> DEWEY AND KALLEN, *The Bertrand Russell Case* (1941).

<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Ken Blackwell for reviewing the transcription against the recording.

them against the tenets of his own philosophy and what he believes to be his own common sense.<sup>12</sup> I wonder, Mr. Kallen, what do you think of this book as living up to its title of *A History of Western Philosophy*?

**Kallen:** Mr. Edman, I must say, I don't think very highly of it in terms of its title. Mr. Russell is rather concerned to express his preferences and prejudices than to employ the objective methods of the historian in interpreting material with which he agrees or with which he does not agree. He impresses me not so much as thinking about most of his predecessors, as of getting impressions about them and then analysing his personal impressions.<sup>13</sup> That's not exactly Historical Method, is it.

**Edman:** How about you, Mr. Taylor? Would you modify or support Mr. Kallen's feeling that this is pretty inadequate “history of western philosophy”?

**Taylor:** I should say, as a “history of philosophy”, it would perhaps be titled better if it were called “History of Bertrand Russell's Disagreement with Western Philosophers”. He does tell us what he feels, rather than what he thinks, about the philosophers he deals with.

**Edman:** Well, as a kind of amusing and amused meditation on his predecessors, you would certainly recommend the book, wouldn't you? I would. It's interesting to see what Bertrand Russell does feel, if not think, about his predecessors.

**Taylor:** I should think that the controversial points which he raises and his interpretation of each philosopher would send a person reading the book straight to the sources in order to defend his own point of view or to find out whether or not Russell were speaking the truth.

**Edman:** Though I can't help thinking that, despite the just point both you and Mr. Kallen raise, there is considerably more illumination about this book or, if you will, provocation, than there is

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. EDMAN “A History of Western Philosophy” (1947): “There is another distinguishing feature, the criterion of science and ‘common sense’ by which Russell judges nearly all philosophies.”

<sup>13</sup> Cf. KALLEN, pp. 53, 54: “Although it purports to be a history, and on occasion states a philosophy of the history of philosophy, it lacks the continuity of historical interpretation and analysis. It impresses me rather as a more or less chronological argument of essays on philosophers and philosophies appearing among the Greeks, the mediaeval Catholics, the seventeenth and eighteenth century moderns, the recent past and our own time”; “In his treatment of the philosophers thus generally placed and characterized, historian Russell forgets this philosophy of history of his, and gives his personal propensities and preferences full rope.”

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about conventionally sounder histories of philosophy. Scholars may quarrel with this, but surely, Mr. Kallen, despite your own quarrels, you would feel this is more [?] stimulating than a lot of the textbooks.

**Kallen:** Now, Mr. Edman, I would absolutely agree with you. This is a book which is an invitation to reading philosophy, and if you can discount the personal prejudices and the prejudices in favour of his own technique and perspective, which is a substitute for Historical Method, you get a very exciting presentation of, you might say, “line drawings”—sometimes caricatures—of philosophers at different stages of the history of thought, and you get it done in the characteristically lucid, clear and distinct style involved with epigrams and images and metaphors that have always characterized Bertrand Russell.<sup>14</sup> You could read it for the style alone, not to say content only, can’t you, Mr. Taylor?

**Taylor:** I should think that Russell’s style is his chief tool of argument. I’m thinking, for instance, in these remarks about Bergson. He compares Bergson’s basic philosophy to having the world conceived as a great charge of cavalry, and then dismisses Bergson as a philosopher because he writes like a cavalry officer.<sup>15</sup>

**Edman:** Well, he’s constantly doing that. He’s sometimes a victim of his own epigrams and yet, Mr. Taylor, he does use a kind of aphoristic, almost Emersonian separate sentence sometimes to say simple and often eloquent truths about philosophy. Let me remind you of one of them. For example, one sentence says, “To teach how

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. KALLEN, p. 54: “[D]efficient though his book may be as a *history* of philosophy, it offers the reader, as the discussion by one philosopher of the works and ways of others of his tribe, the most intriguing, vivid and revealing adventure in the wilderness of ideas to be found in recent print.”

<sup>15</sup> *HWP*, p. 800: “But a cool critic, who feels himself a mere spectator, perhaps an unsympathetic spectator, of the charge in which man is mounted upon animality, may be inclined to think that calm and careful thought is hardly compatible with this form of exercise. When he is told that thought is a mere means of action, the mere impulse to avoid obstacles in the field, he may feel that such a view is becoming in a cavalry officer, but not in a philosopher, whose business, after all, is with thought: he may feel that in the passion and noise of violent motion there is no room for the fainter music of reason, no leisure for the disinterested contemplation in which greatness is sought, not by turbulence, but by the greatness of the universe which is mirrored. In that case, he may be tempted to ask whether there are any reasons for accepting such a restless view of the world. And if he asks this question, he will find, if I am not mistaken, that there is no reason whatever for accepting this view, either in the universe or in the writings of M. Bergson.”

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to live without certainty, and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation, is perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can do.”<sup>16</sup> Or, perhaps, it isn’t the chief thing, but it’s a very good way of saying one of the things it can do, and on the other hand it can be, as you just pointed out, Mr. Taylor, a little bit invidious and malicious in dismissing things. For example, he says, “The problem of finding a collection of ‘wise’ men and leaving the government to them is an insoluble one. That is the ultimate reason for democracy.”<sup>17</sup> And he has a kind of sly placing of his tongue in his cheek half the time, and I think you said to me before, Mr. Kallen, didn’t you, that occasionally he will desert logical argument, by which he sets so much store, to give himself the benefit of an aphorism or epigram.

**Kallen:** Yes, of course. In the course of this book there appear successions of little essays which are gems of wisdom and sometimes of insight. I’d like to read a paragraph from the beginning, of which he’s discussing the rise of Greek civilization:

Civilization (he says) checks impulse not only through forethought, which is a self-administered check, but also through law, custom, and religion. This check it inherits from barbarism, but it makes it less instinctive and more systematic. Certain acts are labelled criminal, and are punished; certain others, though not punished by law, are labelled wicked, and expose those who are guilty of them to social disapproval. The institution of private property brings with it the subjection of women, and usually the creation of a slave class. On the one hand the purposes of the community are enforced upon the individual, and, on the other hand the individual, having acquired the habit of viewing his life as a whole, increasingly sacrifices his present to his future.

It is evident that this process can be carried too far, as it is, for instance, by the miser. But without going to such extremes, prudence may easily involve the loss of some of the best things of life. The worshipper of Bacchus reacts against prudence. In intoxication, physical or spiritual, he recovers an intensity of feeling which prudence has destroyed; he finds the world full of delight and beauty, and his imagination is suddenly liberated from the prison of every-day preoccupations. The Bacchic ritual produced what was called “enthusiasm,” which means, etymologically, having the god enter into the worshipper, who believed that he became one with the god. Much of what is greatest in human achievement

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<sup>16</sup> *HWP*, p. xiv. Russell’s passage ends thus: “... can still do for those who study it.”

<sup>17</sup> *HWP*, p. 107.

involves some element of intoxication, some sweeping away of prudence by passion. Without the Bacchic element, life would be uninteresting; with it, it is dangerous. Prudence versus passion is a conflict that runs through history. It is not a conflict in which we ought to side wholly with either party. (HWP, pp. 15–16)

The trouble is that Russell tends to side wholly against enthusiasm in philosophers with whom he doesn't agree.

**Edman:** He himself, however—Mr. Taylor and Mr. Kallen, both of you, I think, have noticed—while he's against enthusiasm, indulges in it quite freely, particularly when he can be malicious and dismissive. Haven't you noticed that in the book, Mr. Taylor, yourself?

**Taylor:** Oh, dear, I find it running all the way through the book, particularly when Russell writes about the Romantics. It seems to me, in a man whose temperament is so fastidious, whose own enthusiasms he professes to have cooled, for him to write so vigorously against the Romantics, with such loose use of language to describe their defects, is to betray his own search for philosophic wisdom. He becomes tremendously excited that other people won't stay cool and accuses Rousseau, for example, of being an eternal enthusiast who can't think clearly, and shows in his criticism of Rousseau that he himself has become so excited that he can't think clearly.<sup>18</sup>

**Edman:** As a matter of fact, he's very like Irving Babbitt, isn't he, who grew so red in the face in dismissing Rousseau that he was most Romantically enthusiastic himself. But, as a matter of fact, isn't in Bertrand Russell, isn't that present, really, a passionate enthusiasm for coolness, really, and doesn't he estimate philosophies just by the extent that they can be reduced to that consistent and precise formal analysis which he thinks is the special business of philosophy?

**Kallen:** Yes, it seems to me, Mr. Edman, that he might be compared to some of the Cubist painters who go in for geometrical form to such a degree that they lose their heads over it.

**Edman:** Well, as a matter of fact, he not only resembles a certain kind of Cubism in art, but he resembles a kind of calmly mad grammarian who thinks if you can find, so to speak, the grammatical errors in the thoughts of other philosophers, you've disposed of their whole vision. And I myself have felt as one of the great absences in

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<sup>18</sup> HWP, pp. 690–4.



this book, one of its great lacks, is the sympathy with the constructive vision, the kind of edifice of dream, if you will, or even myth, that suggests a dream that philosophers build up. Unless it makes a kind of analytical grammatical sense, it means nothing, and so he tosses out of the window all the great system-makers in philosophy. For example, in talking about Thomas Aquinas, though he refers to Thomas Aquinas’s chief work, he doesn’t discuss the *Summa* at all. And I’ve made a little list of various philosophers who are left out, or they include some with a kind of a cosmic vision, really, like Bruno. They include, shockingly enough, a great hero of that liberalism and scientific method which Bertrand Russell regards himself as an exponent of—namely, John Stuart Mill. They leave out, among contemporaries, Santayana and Whitehead. Now obviously there is a lack of what, Mr. Kallen, you pointed out at the very beginning of our talk today, there is a lack of historical imagination as well as a Historical Method in such a procedure, isn’t there.

**Kallen:** Not only that. You say he leaves out things that don’t justify his own point of view, or he belittles what doesn’t justify his own point of view, but even the things that he believes in, if I recall correctly, he is candid enough to describe in terms of an ultimate scepticism. For example, he said somewhere that the mathematician—and he is a great mathematician in his own right—never knows what he is talking about nor whether what he’s saying is true.<sup>19</sup> And perhaps we might carry that over to some of the discussions of the philosophers with whom Russell disagrees, like his discussion of Bergson, in which a historian certainly would take into consideration the very last and very significant work of Bergson’s, *The Two Sources of Religion and Morality*, which doesn’t figure in Russell’s discussion in this book at all.<sup>20</sup>

**Taylor:** I think that his preference for the calm serenity of mathematical truth makes him unfit to perform the purpose which he gives us as his own in the Preface. He sets himself to trace the political-

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<sup>19</sup> “Thus mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about nor whether what we are saying is true” (“Mathematics and the Metaphysicians” [1901], *ML*, p. 75; *Papers* 3: 366).

<sup>20</sup> Henri Bergson, *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* (1932). As Russell states (*HWP*, p. 791), the chapter is a slightly revised reprint of his 1912 essay, “The Philosophy of Bergson” (28 in *Papers* 6). Cf. KALLEN, p. 53: “An instance [of earlier essays reprinted] is the treatment of Bergson which Russell seems to have completed around 1912; it has not a word to say about the French philosopher’s *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*.”

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social relations of philosophy to life, and yet by his very insistence upon the analysis of language and the reduction of truth to a kind of mathematical clarity, he is rendering himself unfit to do the very task which he sets to himself. I think, throughout the book one finds that, where he may dismiss the biography of the time or of the philosopher's life in a few sentences, his interconnections between the thinking and the living of any given period in the history of western thought are quite tenuous and never clearly developed.

**Edman:** You would say, despite the quite interesting essays in the book on the Renaissance and on the background of mediaeval culture and philosophy, the actual connections between philosophy and society are not really very clearly brought out.

**Kallen:** No, they're not brought out, and those that he affirms are not used. For example, he talks about Greek philosophy as expressing the city-states; about Stoic philosophy as describing, expressing a cosmopolitan despotism of the Roman Empire; about Scholasticism as expressive of the feudal hierarchy and the power of the Church; he says that Descartes and Locke express the prejudices of the commercial middle class; and he attributes Marxism and Fascism to the modern industrial state.<sup>21</sup> Now those are very interesting, though rather conventional, hypotheses that are employed by those who use the economic interpretation of history very largely. Yet there is no demonstration of those hypotheses; the handling of the philosophers is rather piecemeal; and the correlation comes by analogy rather than by proof.

**Edman:** As a matter of fact, he would be the first one, wouldn't he, to perhaps hold up his hands in horror if he were accused of expressing in his philosophy the point of view of an English nobleman—which he is. I think he would see the conventionality and naïveté of his own dismissals of philosophy in the past on these purely social and economic grounds. But what bothers me even more than that in the book is not the philosophers he leaves out but some of the fantastic things he does with those he deals with. I wonder, Mr. Taylor, whether you were bothered by any particular case of that, as I was.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. KALLEN, p. 53: "Each system-maker expresses the hopes and fears of either the Haves or Have-nots of his time and scene. Plato and Aristotle spoke for the Haves of the Greek city-states. The Stoics were the voices of cosmopolitan despotism, the Scholastics of a feudal hierarchy, Descartes and Locke of the prejudices of a commercial class, the Marxists and the Fascists of the Have-nots and Haves of the modern industrial state."

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**Taylor:** Well, I became quite annoyed with his treatment of James, Bergson, and Dewey.

**Edman:** Well, Mr. Kallen mentioned that, too, a moment or two ago, and so was I, but I was almost equally annoyed—or perhaps just a little bit amused—by the rather fantasy versions of Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel which he gives. For example, his chief comment on Plato seems to be that Plato was a fascist out of his time without benefit of an explanation in terms of the Industrial Revolution, and the many things in Plato, beside *The Republic*, you hardly get in his exposition at all, although he does manage, in the middle of being wrong, to say things that always stop you by the excitement of their interest. He says the reason Plato is easier to read than Aristotle is that Aristotle is a mixture of Plato with common sense, and the two do not mix easily.<sup>22</sup> So that even when he says things that are wrong, he says them so well that I must forgive him.

**Taylor:** I didn’t like what Russell did with Hume, either. It seems to me that Russell missed some of the very important parts of Hume’s moral philosophy just as he omits John Stuart Mill. It seems to me he omits some of the best parts of David Hume. He sets himself the task of describing the relation of a social context to the philosophy, and in the eighteenth century, it seems to me, Hume expressed, in his moral philosophy, some of the attitudes throughout the whole of English society. And yet, when he writes about Hume, he said that Hume was “tutor to a lunatic then secretary to a general,” and, “Fortified by these credentials, he ventured into philosophy.”<sup>23</sup>

**Edman:** [*Laughs.*] It’s curious that he should say that about Hume because Hume is one of the people he is rather sympathetic with in many ways, but he can’t help but being gratuitously nasty for the sake of an epigram.

**Taylor:** And, of course, another thing he does with Hume is to criticize him for considering philosophy a game and implies to me a criticism of himself because, in so many ways, Russell is playing

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<sup>22</sup> *HWP*, p. 162: “Aristotle’s metaphysics, roughly speaking, may be described as Plato diluted by common sense. He is difficult because Plato and common sense do not mix easily.”

<sup>23</sup> *HWP*, pp. 659–60: “In 1744 he made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a professorship at Edinburgh; having failed in this, he became first a tutor to a lunatic and then secretary to a general. Fortified by these credentials, he ventured again into philosophy.”

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philosophy as a game and is emphasizing logical analysis in a way which rather defeats this attempt he's making to link social events to human thinking.

**Edman:** And yet, Mr. Kallen, you were saying before, I think, in answer to what Mr. Taylor has just said, don't you feel—or at least a good many people in this country have felt, as you know—that, despite this interest in pure and formal analysis, Bertrand Russell has more than a conventional interest—or seems to have more than a conventional interest—in a liberal position, and in the use of philosophy, [as] he sometimes quite eloquently puts it, for the clarification of human problems. How do you account for that curious inconsistency?

**Kallen:** Well, you have to bear in mind his origins and background. You know, he's the grandson of Lord John Russell, who was a Whig premier; he was brought up in a liberal English household in which there wasn't very much use for convention or religion; and he has throughout his life stood for the liberal issue in the struggles in England. He was a feminist before feminism became fashionable; and he ran considerable personal risk on the hustings back in the early 1900s in making, standing for Parliament on the platform of votes for women. He has a passion for the idea of freedom and the idea of righteousness; and he has a passion for the feeling of a kind of Calvinist necessity—the sort of thing that you get in his “Free Man's Worship”<sup>24</sup> and that is apparent in this book, too; and, on the other hand, he has the sense of human relations that come out in *Why Men Fight* and in *Proposed Roads to Freedom*,<sup>25</sup> which established his standing as a prophet of liberty and democracy here in the United States.

**Edman:** Well, now, one thing is to be said, I think, connecting his liberalism with his formal analysis. I think he distinctly feels that a great deal—I've said it over and over again—that a great deal of the cloudiness and fanaticism in the world comes from superstitions which linger, in his mind, largely because they haven't been clarified away, and that if you can at least prevent other philosophers from talking nonsense by pointing out their errors, you will reduce the influence of nonsense in the world. So I think that he doesn't think that this formal analysis, Mr. Taylor, is quite the game you suggested, but it's extremely important to stop people from talking elaborate

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<sup>24</sup> 1903; 4 in *Papers* 12.

<sup>25</sup> Published as *PSR* (1916) and *Roads to Freedom* (1918) in the UK.

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nonsense which they build up into systems. Don't you think that's a defence of his position, really?

**Taylor:** I think so, yet I can't forgive him for dismissing positive philosophies because of his ability to detect in them logical errors. For example, he rejects Rousseau thoroughly, partly because Rousseau was mean to his sister and wasn't too upright in his personal life; and principally, however, because of an attitude revealed in Rousseau's prose style towards diffuse statements of liberal doctrine. Now, it's all very well to detect these logical errors in Rousseau and to dismiss him as a philosopher, but it's another thing to trace from Rousseau, Fascism, all the evils of Romanticism, and some of the evils of the modern world,<sup>26</sup> without saying what positive contribution the man has made.

**Edman:** Like many other less clear philosophers, he does have to have somebody to shake his stick at, doesn't he, frequently, and Rousseau becomes the enemy of the modern world. One must feel, however, I think, in Bertrand Russell a perfectly candid candour and sincerity about his criticism of other philosophers—he's often prejudiced—but when he sees nonsense he can't help saying so, and that's a virtue all right.

**Kallen:** Well, Mr. Edman, I would phrase it differently. I would say, when he thinks he sees nonsense, he jumps the gun, but it must be said of him that he has an honest, straightforward mind; that while he has a passion for consistency, he will not make it the bugaboo that Emerson describes as to be for “small minds”; he is as boldly inconsistent as any Rousseau or Bergson ever was, and that is one of the beauties, one of the integrities of Russell's thinking.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. *HWP*, pp. 700–1. “It [*The Social Contract*] reintroduced the habit of metaphysical abstractions among the theorists of democracy, and by its doctrine of the general will it made possible the mystic identification of a leader with his people, which has no need of confirmation by so mundane an apparatus as the ballot-box. Much of its philosophy could be appropriated by Hegel in his defence of the Prussian autocracy. Its first-fruits in practice was the reign of Robespierre; the dictatorships of Russia and Germany (especially the latter) are in part an outcome of Rousseau's teaching. What further triumphs the future has to offer to his ghost I do not venture to predict.”

<sup>27</sup> Cf. KALLEN, p. 53: “Like the Leibnitz whom in his youth he studied with such minute, attentive sympathy, his sense of logical form every so often overrules his feeling for material truth; the premiss of any particular argument binds him to its foregone conclusion so that he seems to prefer being correct and mistaken to being inconsistent and right. Like the traditionalists, he appears to hold that logical consistency is the same as factual truth. That at different times the premisses from which he

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**Edman:** Well, one of the ways in which he is inconsistent is a moral virtue, really—namely, if he were to follow the necessities of his own theory, he really would not make any moral judgments or moral commitments at all, but he is constantly making not only logical and grammatical criticisms, so to speak, of other philosophers, but he’s condemning them in terms of the contribution they make to the clarification of the human estate. In fact, he acts a little bit as if he were a member of the House of Lords in judicial session, frequently, and making rather legalistic and moral judgments on philosophers—

**Kallen:** Mr. Edman, he wouldn’t like you for that at all.

**Taylor:** [*Laughs.*]

**Edman:** I’m afraid he wouldn’t, but I love the truth more than Bertrand Russell.

**Kallen:** Good opinion. [*Laughs.*]

**Edman:** Bertrand Russell has been in this country, as everyone realizes, so much of a figure outside philosophy itself, standing for freedom and liberalism that a history of philosophy by him becomes a set of opinions by a distinguished fighter for freedom. As Mr. Kallen pointed out, as long ago as the First World War he became a hero in this country—perhaps more than in his own—a hero of liberalism and a hero at least of the idea of freedom. Now, this book may have all the defects that the three of us have been pointing out today, but its virtues of that of a frank and forthright mind giving its net impressions of the history of thought, and a candid avowal of his own position, make it a most refreshing and un-textbook kind of analysis of thought. And I think perhaps we can do no better than conclude with a statement at the very conclusion of this book that gives the net moral value as Bertrand Russell conceives it, of philosophy and his own philosophy. There are some who will regard it as a little arrogant because he thinks there is only one kind of philosophy that can do what philosophy ought to do, but philosophers have always had a gift for regarding anything else done by their colleagues as something deserving of opprobrium and abuse. And, so, perhaps we’ll let Bertrand Russell conclude by speaking of his own philosophy at the end:

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argues may be mutually inconsistent and may be explicated in contradictory systems is another story. The systems are actual and potential wholes alike in the definiteness and clarity of the articulation of their parts and lucidity of their composition.”

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In the welter (he says) of conflicting fanaticisms, one of the few unifying forces is scientific truthfulness, by which I mean the habit of basing our beliefs upon observations and inferences as impersonal, [and] as [much] divested of local and temperamental bias, as is possible for human beings. To have insisted upon the introduction of this virtue into philosophy, and to have invented a powerful method by which it can be rendered fruitful, are the chief merits of the philosophic[al] school of which I am a member. (HWP, p. 836)

**Announcer:** You have been listening to *Invitation to Learning*, Columbia’s weekly discussion programme devoted to significant works in the world of literature, as it considered today *A History of Western Philosophy* by Bertrand Russell. Chairman Irwin Edman, Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, had as his guests Horace M. Kallen, Dean of the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, and Harold Taylor, President of Sarah Lawrence College. We invite you to be with us again next week at the same time, when *Invitation to Learning* will consider *Point Counter Point* by Aldous Huxley. At that time, Chairman Houston Peterson will have as his guests Russell Maloney and Charles Rolo. We also would like to call to your attention the fact that, two weeks from today, the subject of *Invitation to Learning* will be *Foundations of Science* by Henri Poincaré.<sup>28</sup> This is CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

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<sup>28</sup> GRAMS confirms these as sessions 302 and 303, broadcast 22 and 29 Sept. 1946.

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