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Philosophy Department

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Dr. Joske Agassi
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Dear Joske,

I have now read all the papers of yours that I have and propose to make odds and ends of comments. I have little to say about your review of Schlegel. I am sorry he turned out to be no good. I remember publishing what I thought was an interesting paper of his in the BJPS. I have also little to say about your paper on the ravens because I have never been able to get interested in this subject, and somehow your paper does not seem to me to proceed smoothly and it is hard to follow.

Your note on analogies seems to me okay. I have noted my agreement with your second paragraph, and the beginning and last paragraph. I think I made a similar point in my own book on inference.

So far nothing very exciting. The next one on revolutions in science is fuller and brightens up. There are some excellent things in it. Page 50 in particular puts the Lavoisier position beautifully. Also section 3 is very fine. When you mention on page 54 the shiftiness of Niels Bohr do you mean that he was intellectually shifty and consciously so? I always thought he was a man of the greatest integrity. One small point, if you are reprinting page 57, I think Lorentz has his initials the wrong way around, shouldn't they be H.A.? Page 58. Do you deny all beauty in Wagner? If so, why and what arguments would you give for it? On page 61 at the end I have noted my general impression of good stuff on "the continuity theory" but feel that the paper peters out, apparently lacking a point. It has a point but there is an absence of stuff behind it.

We come now to science influx which is nice. I have a note at the end of section two that it seems to have to do with explanation of good evidence found for false theories. Is this what you were after? Page 306. Your little joke I am afraid I don't get the point of. Generally speaking, I found it hard to get the point of section three. Isn't the heading of that section a bit trivial? Again with section four has me puzzled. Is the section about what the crossheading says? On page 317 you make a beautiful aphorism about criticism belonging to a main dish.

Although the paper is nice, it makes for relaxed reading, that is to say it ambles along a bit too gently, in fact it contains too much flux. It is something of the Sunday afternoon ramble amid scenery that is quite nice but hardly breathtaking.

As regards the paper on novelty, there are additional reasons for being interested in your opening. I did not know that these gambits had reached various advanced phases in the handling of Popper's philosophy. But one thing that did come my way, which you may or may not know about, is that at Pittsburgh a week before the conference where you and I met I went as discussant of a paper of Bill's, in which he was making a very strong thesis to the effect that Popper's central theses, as well as Wittgenstein's, were to be found in Schlick & Bühler. I suggested to Bill not to publish it without giving quotations to give firm evidence and I also drew attention to one or two other *purely fairly* obvious factors, *mainly* because a person says something similar it may not be the same and it may have been thought out fresh, etc. And in any case, that the theme as a whole might very well have taken a very different turn. One has to be careful about saying that Newton did not discover the calculus because his teacher knew its characteristics. That is by the way here.

Middle of page 445 you make the important point about working out or trying out an idea seriously in all details. I suggest a minor modification. It is not a question of working out the detail but giving enough detail to make the thesis specific. I agree wholeheartedly with your comment on Locke at the bottom of page 449 and this is another case and point. I think it is also wrong to locate Kant's theory in Hume. By the way, one of the best examples is that the ~~K~~arski-Popper definition of "validity" which was entirely new consisted of ingredients, all of which were known to Aristotle. Top of page 450 I think is an exaggeration or unrealistic, that is that critical realism is about the thing-in-itself. You have an interesting passage at the bottom of 453 on whether a crisis is a scientific crisis or a *philosoph* ~~methodical~~ one. My general impression of this paper is that it is a bit rambling and unspecific or that your explanation of novelty is a bit thin. Your paper on sensationalism I

read again last summer I think and I found the architecture hard to follow. There is undoubtedly an important point in it about sensationalism and conventionalism, but it does not come over too clearly.

The paper I liked best of all is the one in the Bunge volume and ^{the} close second is your paper on physics, metaphysics and histories ~~of science~~.

(56) I have also read your book again. It reads pretty well but could do with some clarification and considerable expansion, and perhaps development of some cogent ideas. [End of tape!]

Perhaps your very best is your thesis (you sent me a xeroxed chapter). If it goes on as it begins you should certainly publish it. [NB I want its title & date]

Years ago I took you to ^{J. O. Wisdom} task for not taking enough trouble over clarity, precision, & presentation; you jibbed about pedantry. In the meanwhile you have done something about this, but not enough. But what I'm really writing to you abt is something else - I to take you to task again!

Most of the above writings (apart from the book & a couple of the papers) are ^{& unwritten of you} thin; you are settling with the popper inside you, coming to terms, what you put up with & what you don't - footnotes. You shd be abt throng with this, i.e. grown-up. I suppose you are 'rising 40'. It is about the right time for you to settle down to a major problem & give all of yourself to it, without playing at it. The reason I'm saying this is not because you always gave ~~me~~ leave to speak openly, but because you have one of the best minds I've ever known, & I don't