

1. As with Voltaire in the 18th Century. Russell then Chomsky proved to be widely and long influential public intellectuals. Articulate, persuasive currents of dissent turned into a new consensus – if not as with Christians who “their early Agape decline / For a late lunch with Constantine”¹ – sclerotic orthodoxy.
2. How did these sage roles come about? Did being perceived as a sage, both vilified and venerated, detract from other work achieved?
3. An insight from world history helps explain the spell on public opinion woven by Voltaire, then Russell and latterly Chomsky. The rulers, governing strata and their regimes, nominally legitimate, and elected or no, sought world hegemony in their respective epochs. France in the 18th century. Victorian and Edwardian Ukania, and late 20th century United States each fit the book. A dissenting voice from within the empire was assured of an appreciative public, both from the internal majority denied rights, and the world majority over which empires rode roughshod.
4. Voltaire died shortly before the revolution of 1789. He lived in exile near Geneva, literally on the frontier with France, and had been when younger imprisoned in Paris’s Bastille, by a nobleman’s lettre de cachet. Despite the police state, books travelled to and through France. Here is an example, a volume of Locke published in Amsterdam”.²
Voltaire considered oligarchically ruled yet relatively tolerant and secular England an example for France. Consciously he wrote novels, and plays, to diffuse his more or less progressive ideas. Russell’s deft and ironic short stories, collected accessibly in Satan in the Suburbs, have a ring of Voltaires Candide. Not only “man-made manacles” were smiled and laughed out their comfortable and sadistic power. Natural catastrophes too, such as the Lisbon tsunami once called the Lisbon earthquake, figure. Candide wonders at high sales of earthquake pills, claimed to be proof versus the earthquake during the days before the waves joined the earthquake to extinguish so much more life.
5. Voltaire took up the Calascase. This concerned the framing and judicial murder of a French protestant / Huguenot, an upright and respectable victim of what was termed “the infamcy” of Roman Catholic persecuting zeal, yoked alongside Bourbon state power.
6. Bertrand Russell inherited his earldom from a grandfather, a duke’s son who became prime minister, Lord John Russell. “Little Lord John” was a late Whig rather than Liberal grandee, in his youth fascinated by Voltaire and the ideas of the Enlightenment. At the same time, France was popularly regarded as the hereditary enemy, as once Spain and later Germany featured.

7. Russell's great work, *Principia Mathematica*, is not widely read. There is a filiation from Newton. Yet it was Russell's public stances which earned him respect from a growing minority, and fear and vituperation from the powers that were.
8. Russell supported extending the franchise to all adult men and women, and lived to see this happen in 1918 and 1929 in Britain, and in most of the world. There were female opponents of this expansion of democratic rights, and male proponents of the shift towards inclusiveness. The 2015 film *Suffragette* offers a glimpse of the world Russell sought to change before 1914. ³
He opposed the first world war, and was imprisoned for this. Nearly half a century afterwards, he was taken to jail by another British government, from Trafalgar Square, where he was sitting down and would not be moved, in protest and witness against nuclear weapons.
9. "Nor was the nightmare over. It continued with the cold war". ⁴ Towards the end of his long life, he opposed the United States invasion of Vietnam, and predicted Washington's defeat. With hindsight, as in the film, *The Fog Of War*, an architect of the Vietnam genocide, Robert MacNamara, came to repent, and share Russell's insights. MacNamara denounced not only the bombing of Vietnam over which in his pomp he had presided, but the bombing, including two nuclear attacks on cities, of Japan in the second world war.
10. Over the wars against Vietnam, Chomsky shared common ground with Russell. Chomsky's *American Power and The New Mandarins* traced the rise to genocidal globalism of the United States. After Russell, Chomsky opposed 21st century wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. A vibrant example of the Chomsky consensus is *NozonclIX*; classified among other categories as "protest literature" by the Library of Congress. ⁵
11. Russell and later Chomsky endorsed ways of thinking not in line with passive obedience, still less so with deference. What the 1920s still called 'morals' were transformed, as values became less rigid and more inclusive. An example of how Russell's arguments affect the reader comes from his stated views on education. ⁶ Note that he uses "man", where today "person" or "individual" would be usual.

"Passive acceptance of the teacher's wisdom is easy to most boys and girls. It involves no effort of independent thought, and seems rational because the teacher knows more than his pupils; it is moreover the way to win the favour of the teacher unless he is a very exceptional man. Yet the habit of passive acceptance is a disastrous one in later life. It causes man to seek and to accept a leader, and to accept as a leader whoever is established in that position."

12. Reverse a timeline, if we have no time machine as yet. How did Russell swim into my ken? Aged fourteen, near Godalming in Surrey, I was going through a brief Anglican phase. I had even been awarded a school prize for an essay on Faith, in which, following Jesuitical tenets, I distinguished between the faith of the informed, pullulating with ambiguity and doubts

and subtle paradoxes, and the blessed and credulous faith of the simple, which was designed to buoy up the morale of the suffering masses.

13. Asked by an older pupil to prove the existence of God or gods, Aquinas's proof I wheeled out, that proof explicitly "excluding infinity". My challenger pointed out the invalidity of such an exclusion. Next, infinitely more enriching for my development as a flawed humane being, he asked me to read Russell's Why I am Not a Christian. That changed me from a potential hypocritical bishop, like Browning's Bishop Bloughram (supposedly based on cardinal Nicholas Wiseman). Watching in real time the Anglican Bishop of Guildford at my confirmation, as he winced over the honey and flowers hair oil all the boys were dripping with, I moved towards being a mild agnostic, veering to atheist, assisted by Lucretius and Hardy, as well as Russell.
14. I found, after his death in 2015, that my Russell suggesting school frenemy had autism. The condition was quite unknown then, and helps to explain, perhaps, sudden rages which overwhelmed him. He was also, I learnt now, "the youngest member of the committee of 100", the group sharing Russell's anti-nuclear civil disobedience. He was imprisoned in Pentonville. ⁷
15. The marches to London from Aldermaston, den of nuclear scientists and supposed, assumed weapons research, were part of my own adolescence. I twice marched from Sloane Street to Trafalgar Square, a marathon cheat's last lap. Russell was the demonised and ridiculed target of comedians, and of Giles the cartoonist. But I then saw him as noble indeed. I was aware of disagreements between his chosen, state-challenging direct action approach, and that of Canon John Collins, who I had met via his son, Richard. Most contentious was the invasion or occupation by Russell and cohorts of a "RSG" (Regional Seat of Government", one of the key nuclear bunkers from which government would be carried on, in the event of a nuclear attack here. This was the time too of Nevil Shute, in his prophetic prime, of the films of On the Beach and also Doctor Strangelove.
"Now from their concrete suites below
Statesmen demurely emanate
And down the line of millions go
To see the people lie in state".
16. Russell below the whistle on nuclear war. Later, I found inconsistencies in his trajectory, especially a time in 1949 when he appeared to advocate a "pre-emptive strike", nuclear of course, by Washington on the then Soviet Union. Overall, his anti-nuclear stance remained impressive, including his warnings about United States attacks on Castro's Cuba. ⁸
17. By the time of the "Cuba crisis", I possessed, and listened to an Argo spoken voice 33 inch record of a fine long interview with reminiscing Russell. The high-pitched voice held me rapt, inconsistencies such as "since we preferred killing Germans to having an empire notwithstanding. He was the first public intellectual, in what I came to see as a Tolstoyan way, to retain my full attention.

18. Who or what is a public intellectual? Transnational influence, polymathic aspirations, and the sacred odour of denouncing the regimes' wrongs, are all bound up in the public intellectual. Jacob Bronowski, and his daughter, Lisa Jardine, come at once into this picture. One of Lisa Jardine's obituaries called her "the leading British female public intellectual of our time."⁹ Joseph Needham, Graham Greene, Gore Vidal, Harold Pinter, Lewis Lapham, and not so many others in the realms of John Bull and Wall Street, fit the bill. Their writings inform, dazzle, perplex and, it goes without saying, initially outraged many who had never read them. Each sage dared to be Daniel.
19. A particular foe of Russell was the Roman Catholic church, chiefly in the United States. To those changed by Russell, as I was in my inoculation with *Why I am not a Christian*, the encounter involved something akin to leaving a closet. Whilst his native Poland voted by an electoral majority for a sort of fascism lite, pioneered in Hungary in the 21st century. Krzstof Charamsa was sacked from his work in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the contemporary Vatican's equivalent to the Holy Inquisition, and indeed defrocked. He had announced that he was gay, and in love with someone he was contemplating getting married to. He said "this decision existentially for priests is like going away from prison like Guantanamo".¹⁰ This take on coming to consciousness encapsulating the enduring appeal of immersion in Russell's scattered texts and relates as well to Voltaire, and to Chomsky who remains on earth.
20. Russell, like Chomsky, was belling the cat. The naked emperor, the ruler with no clothes, was publicly described as a menace to all the people of the world. To quote Danny Kay's song of the late 1940s, "The King is in the altogether / He's altogether as naked the day that he was born". Actual, and former, and would be rulers have not, historically, welcomed being thus identified to the populace at large. Their media, over decades even centuries, sought to ridicule and simultaneously demonise the philosopher who made for social transitions to less blatantly unjust societies. George Brown, rival of Harold Wilson to be prime minister, tore up Russell's Labour Party membership card, as he was expelled. Who now recalls George Brown?
21. There is a real filiation, from Alexander von Humboldt, and his Cosmos, to Chomsky, which I will consider in Part II. The evidence for Voltaire, then Russell, then Chomsky, was strong each time. How did the "victory of the vanquished, as J.S Mills called it, get under way? Each respondent may advance a different aspect, yet overall the impression is that what was considered beyond the pale crosses over to mainstream, and what was once a canonical norm seems to another generation incredible. The distance from the Sermon on the Mount to the Vatican is as far as, and no further than a reverse journey, from lettres de cachet, censorship and political persecution to the abolitions of slavery, the death penalty, nuclear weapons, and war itself.

References

1. W.H Auden, New Year Letter
2. M.Locke Essai philosophique concement l'entendement humain ou l'on montr
Quelle est entendue de nos connoissances continues at la maniere don nous y
pavenons.
1.3 (Amsterdam 1784) Copy inscribed "Louis Bonaparte".
3. See Emelyne Godfrey, "A woman's work – the suffragist movement on screen –
now and a century ago" (TLS 23.10.2015 pp. 17-18) and Peter Bradshaw (review)
Guardian 9.10.2015.
4. Cited Chris Rodrigues and Chris Garratt, Introducing Modernism (2001, Icon
Brookes ed. 2013) p. 143.
5. Princeton Architectural Press, New York 2004
6. This passage influenced a fictional approach to the Soweto school childrens'
revolt, and eventual democratic transition in South Africa.
7. Heathcote Williams, "Michael Lesser (Guardian 12.10.2015)
8. On the "Cuba Crisis", Russell's Unarmed Victory remains fascinating, but see also
Peter Anthony's film The Man Who Saved the World (2014) and Michael Dobbs
One Minute to Midnight: Kennedy, Krushcher and Castro on the brink of nuclear
war (Hutchinson London 2008 ed).
9. Helen Kennedy and Eleanor Updale "Lisa Jardine" (Guardian 27.10.2015)
10. Stephanie Kirchgaessner "I am a gay man, not a monster, says Catholic priest
sacked by the Vatican (Guardian 29.10.2015)