Popper, Karl (July 28, 1902—September 17, 1994)

Karl Raimund Popper was one of the twentieth-century’s most influential philosophers of science. Qualified to teach elementary school and to teach physics and mathematics at the secondary level, Popper received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Vienna in 1928. Popper’s first and most influential work was *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (*Logic der Forschung*), originally published in 1934 and translated into English by Popper in 1959. Popper was critical of positivism and of the inductive mode of science, in which observation of singular instances could lead to universal claims. Even large numbers of singular instances, he claimed, could never conclusively demonstrate a universal claim. His main contribution to the philosophy of science was the concept of falsification—the belief that a scientific proposition can never be verified, but only disproved. Thus, only claims that could at least theoretically be disproved counted as scientific claims. The terms falsificationism and fallibilism have been used to describe his theory, but he himself most often used the term “Critical Rationalism,” which reflects his reliance on pure deduction. Popper’s work led to the establishment of the philosophy of science as a discipline, and Paul Feyerabend was one of his students.

Bibliography: Popper, Karl. *Unended Quest: An Intellectual Autobiography*. (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1976.)

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