

Philosophy with Bertrand Russell

Dc Tue 18 March 2014 at *The Blue Mugge* pub 7.45pm

Notes based on BBC radio *In our Time*, December 2012.

1. This programme, despite Melvyn Bragg's best efforts, did little to enhance the reputation of academic philosophers... Any who have heard the broadcast (accessible via BBC i-player) will comment on this judgement.
2. The three philosophers discussing Russell attempted to summarise the importance of Russell's contribution to philosophy:
 - i) his rebellion against 'British idealism', arguing for a 'realist' position where the materialist world is independent of us.
 - ii) his work in mathematics, questioning fundamental axioms asking, for example, how we know that $1 + 1 = 2$ is actually true His use of logic for proof...
 - iii) 'Russell's paradox' explained - was this clear? So what? As Melvyn asked...
 - iv) Russell's theory of descriptions: his contribution to analytical philosophy
3. We might try to extend this to discuss our own views on the importance of geometry, mathematics, language (and philosophy) to everyday contemporary life...
4. The final ten minutes of the programme engaged with Russell's legacy - the way he combined the rigour and clarity of logic to ethics and everyday life. Through his *History of Western Philosophy* and books and essays on issues like 'Marriage and Morals' he made philosophy interesting for Every Wo/Man. His public engagement on social and political issues from women's suffrage to pacifism, from sexual morality to nuclear weapons made him a 'public philosopher' of significance.
5. If the weakness of the IoT programme is agreed and we therefore have little more to discuss beyond an hour, we will follow through with 'In the News' applying our reason and rationality to a big issue in this week's news!

DT