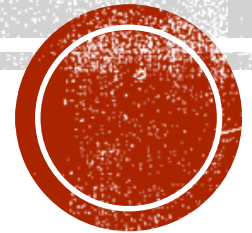


THE VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

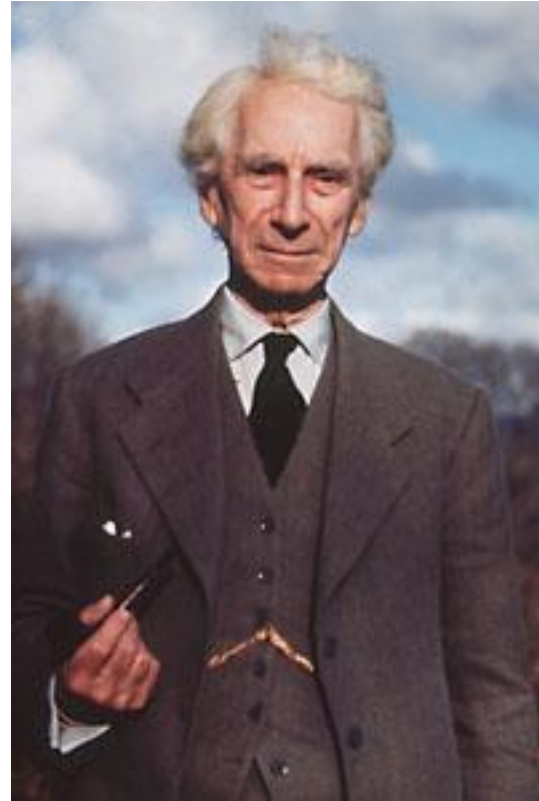
Part 1

The Value and Importance of Philosophy



BERTRAND RUSSELL

- 19/20th century British Philosopher; (1872- 1970)
- One of the 'founders' of Analytic Philosophy
 - 20th century's dominant 'school' of western philosophy
- Wrote important works in: mathematics, logic, language, metaphysics, epistemology, politics, and ethics.
- Influential beyond academia:
 - Well-known for his atheism, pacifism, liberalism on social issues (esp. sex).
- "The Value of Philosophy" is in an essay in *The Problems of Philosophy*, a collection of Russell's essays intended as an introduction to philosophy.



THE VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY



- Need v. Value
- What is the value?
- Russell identifies two main values:
 - “It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found”
 - “The value of philosophy is, in fact, to be sought largely in its very uncertainty.”
- Russell’s Summation:
 - “Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.”



IMPORTANCE OF QUESTIONS



- The focus is on the asking the questions; not the specific answers.
- Philosophical questions are (necessarily) unanswerable, so definitive answer is not important.
 - Get a definitive question, becomes science
 - True philosophical questions remain unanswerable
- If no answer why ask?
- “to make us **aware of their importance**, to examine all the approaches to them, and to **keep alive that speculative interest in the universe** which is apt to be killed by confining ourselves to definitely ascertainable knowledge.” (emphasis added)



THE VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

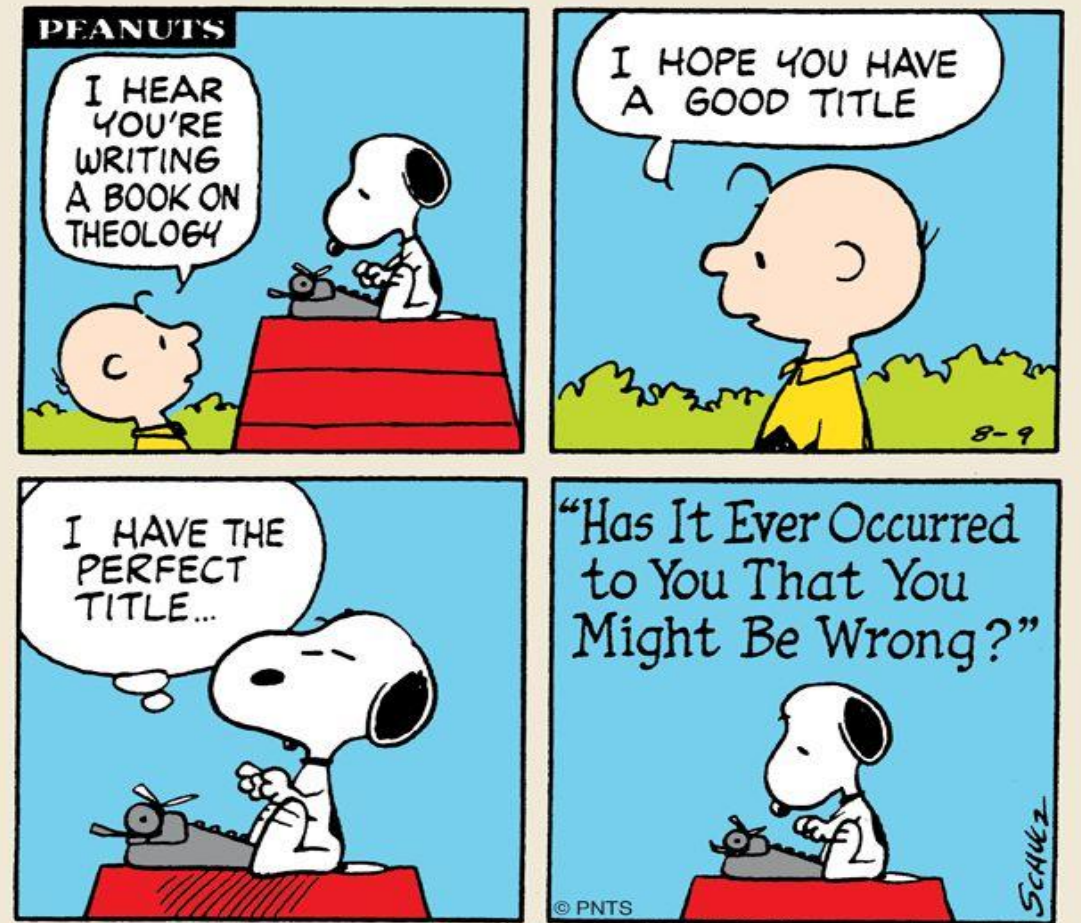
Part 2

The Value and Importance of Philosophy



IMPORTANCE OF QUESTIONS

- Enlarges imagination/broadens horizons
 - Uncertainty frees us to ask more questions.
- Reduces dogmatism
 - Focusing on unanswerable questions means we are not as likely to think we know THE ANSWER.



GREATNESS OF MIND

- “through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good”

- “greatness of the universe”:

- “The free intellect will see as God might see, without a here and now, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge”

- Timeless; Eternal; Universal.

- What sense ‘great’?

- Great in that they are just much beyond human affairs and perspective?
- Great in the sense of being better, higher, more exemplary?



Source: <http://www.aintitcool.com/node/66439>



GREATNESS OF MIND

- Studying these great objects makes oneself greater through a unification between self and objects.
 - “In contemplation...we start from the not-Self, and through its greatness the boundaries of Self are enlarged; through the infinity of the universe the mind which contemplates it achieves some share in infinity.”



“Star Child;” 2001: A Space Odyssey

