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Thank you very much, Michael. And congratulations Matthew on your book and thank you very much for inviting me to come here to talk this evening which is a real pleasure. A real pleasure but an absolute impossibility, Matthew has asked me to speak for a strict ten minutes on the aims and purposes and moments of critical realism and the philosophy of meta-reality. Well if that's a ten minute stint then I'm going to have to be pretty good to deliver it, especially as I've never really regarded myself as being particularly an expert on Roy's philosophy of meta-reality, in fact for a long time I was really quite resistant to it being much more happy with the dialectical phase of his thought but I knew there was something in meta-reality and I would never deny it and looking over some of Roy's writings on it for the purposes of coming down here this evening I thought fantastic this is really something that I need to look more at and think more about. And my only regret is that Roy's not here to be a guide to me and to everyone else who's interested in his work but there's a sense in which I can imagine him being here in his wheelchair sitting quieting in a corner and ready to jump on you if you got it wrong – in the nicest possible of ways.

So I think I should probably start by saying I'm not a Muslim; I'm not a believer in God; I don't have a religious sense that pertains to a god of any kind. I was brought up as a Christian but it's a long time since I had any kind of belief of that kind. What I do have is a sense of what I'll call a



universality; a sense perhaps of an underlying unity of being; a belief in human being in the world and alongside other forms of being in that world and in the world itself; perhaps a sense of oneness in and with the world, yet in a world that in so many ways, and quite systematically I think, denies such oneness to us.

So that's roughly where I come from and I'm going to link that in at the very end to what Roy has to say about religion but I've been asked to say a little bit about the main moments of critical realism and the philosophy of meta-reality and as I work through them you'll see how this links up with what I've just said about oneness and then there'll be the question about the relationship between that and religion at the end.

So what's the starting point then? What's the first element in critical realism? Well it's the affirmation of being in the world, structured and differentiated so that we're no longer to be caught up in the travails of the human mind as a filter on being, although our understanding of being is inherently linked to the fact that we are human beings and knowledge is an important part of our being, but we live in a world that's structured and differentiated and we are structured and differentiated in ourselves within that world. We have agency – within structures there is agency. All this is the nature of, as it were you might call it the sociological or the psychological or the socio-natural understanding of what it means to be a human being in the world. And that's the starting point for critical realism.

What then we move on to, and there are going to be seven stages in this: so the second stage is then the idea of being in the world as changing and processual. We are in a world that is one of becoming and begoing. Everything that is comes into being and perishes so there is a sense of what, in terms of the western philosophical tradition, an affirmation of the



not, that there is change. Change can be analysed in terms of something being one thing and no longer being that thing and becoming something else and that process of becoming is a process of negation and emergence of something new. So this process, and we're in a world that's in process, and we have to understand alongside the idea of structure and difference.

And then moving on to a third element in this way of thinking we have the idea of a third level of a totality that we live in a whole, that the world is a whole and we are part of that whole. If you think about structures you think about people and persons in structures, you think about structures in and the difference between social and natural structures, there is a sense of a wholeness, a totality and we have to understand that whatever we think about ourselves it's never just ourselves, we're always being in relation to others and therefore we're being within a wholeness, a totality.

And then fourthly, within that world that is a whole, we are agents. We are acting. We seek to intervene in different ways. And we are moral creatures; we are ethical creatures; we seek to act according to a sense of the right and against the wrong. And that can all be very perturbed by reality and so on and so forth but nonetheless it is the case that we are creatures who think in normative terms: we think of ought, what we ought to do.

And within this context of what we ought to do there are important things that are true for us, morally, ethically. What is true for us is that a sense of freedom is something that we value and that is an intrinsic ingredient in human beings. But alongside freedom we need others to realise freedoms. So we are both creatures that seek freedom, and freedom has



a number of gradations that I can't possibly go into now but we are also creatures who act in solidarity with others. So freedom and solidarity are our ethical existentials.

And freedom and solidarity lead us eventually, if we think it through, if we consider the logic of being far enough we can understand that eventually we can think about, for three minutes, think about a condition in which the happiness, the virtue of all, would be realised and that would be a situation that Roy called the eudemonic society where the happiness of each, the freedom of each, the flourishing of each would be present and would be according to, would also depend upon the flourishing of all.

So these are some ways of thinking through what it means to be a human being in the world. And then once we get to that point we can then go down a level, or back a level, and we can start saying, "Wow there's something in being a human being that we can't simply keep it at a distance, we actually live this," we live this reality and living that reality takes us, as it were, what I've described I can describe it sort of arm's length but what I now need to do is I need to talk subjectively about the experience of being and about the sense of freedom that is within us and that's a kind of eureka moment.

And that eureka moment takes us on to, that's a fifth point, to a sixth point which is a sense of rediscovering our oneness with the world. And in rediscovering our oneness with the world with nature, with the joy of nature, the joy that is in the shared joke, the joy that is in every moment of cooperation, there we have a sense of the world becoming reenchanting for us. And in a reenchanting world we're eventually going to find that that is a world that is essentially a world ultimately of unity. Although we live in a world of difference, in a world of conflict, there is a level at which



there is also a unity in things and we are part of that unity and we are co-present with everyone else in a sense of unity, at a deeper level. And it's that deeper level of unity that I think is where we move onto a sense of the universal and that is where Roy's philosophy of meta-reality eventually takes us.

Now just a couple of points then just to finish off. This unity is a unity that is I think what Roy would say was where the great religions stood in their different ways. Now what he had to say about religion was that he was not a believer in God, but he was a believer in this sense of the unity of things. He did speak about God for a while but then he found that that was really kind of not the main point, that the main point was that he wanted to talk about the absolute. And he wanted to talk about the absolute in a way that everyone could understand and where people wouldn't get embattled by different religions. And just to give you a sentence from Roy, he says, God for him became the cosmic envelope and as the God within us became our ground state. And it's that sense of us being in a world that was one with a unity within ourselves that involved the co-present with everyone else. That was the basic kind of starting point that he said. What he wanted to do, he said, was to make spirituality compatible with secularism. And that in ten minutes is the philosophy of critical realism and meta-reality! Thank you.