



TIME STAMP: ((0:00:00))

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Welcome. Wonderful to see people here and first of all I want to say thank you, as I'm sure Matthew will later, to the other members of the panel because it is a tremendous and wonderfully diverse and very appropriate panel that has been invited and accepted to come here. And the reason we're here is basically is this is a book launch of a, I think extremely impressive book that Matthew has written. He very kindly gave me a copy of it last week and I would say to him that I've already ordered, and obtained from Routledge, my copy, because I was interested in reading it anyway. And was therefore able to return, in the nicest possible way, the copy that he had kindly given to me. And it's a book I read for a number of reasons, and I'm very glad I have done.

For a start, and I don't want to participate too much to some of the threads people pick up but Matthew thought it wouldn't be a bad idea just for me to introduce the broad themes, and fairly obviously one of the broad themes of the book that we're going to be addressing today is Islam and our understanding of Islam today. And as somebody who is not a Muslim I have to say I valued hugely the way that it was written in particular, and again I'm not a historian, for me the historical perspective which when I read theology, one reads rather rarely, was extremely helpful as a way in. So for those people who don't consider themselves to be particular experts on Islam, I can certainly recommend this book.



I can most definitely also recommend the book whether you do or do not consider yourself an expert in critical realism. Critical realism, as we all know, or probably most of us know anyway, I mustn't assume too much because people come from a range of expertise and backgrounds, but critical realism has increasingly over the decades been widely used to address a number of issues. It is not always a way of thinking that everybody finds easy to understand or indeed everybody who tries to teach about it is especially good about so teaching. I'm genuine, I'm not going to carry on flattering you for the whole evening Matthew, but this is I think a very well-written, almost if you like, guide, because what Matthew does is go through several, quite succinctly but very clearly, of the key foundational positions that critical realism has held and then uses them to address the particular questions that he's interested in addressing.

So that's another theme obviously we've got the theme of Islam, we've got the theme of critical realism and then, not surprisingly there is a theme of education which is in a sense closer to my own, as it were, home territory, so I felt very, very interested to read this indeed. And for a start there are some extremely rich data I am very happy with people writing only conceptually but it's always wonderful if you have data to which you can then apply the theological frameworks and relate them to existing conceptual ideas and so forth. And this really succeeds.

I have written in the past ways of trying to make sure that school science is not quite so western and narrow and one of the things I really liked that Matthew did was talk about how attempts to do this sometimes in history do not always work. So he had some wonderful accounts of well-meaning attempts by teachers to, for example, have more teaching of



Bangladeshi history in the classroom when a lot of the pupils were British Bangladeshi pupils and it just didn't work. And Matthew then carefully dissects well maybe why didn't it work? What do we learn from that? Does that mean one just stops doing any sort of culturally sensitive history teaching? No of course it doesn't. What's the way forward? And there is if I might say an excellent analysis and Matthew has written on this before as well as in this book, an excellent analysis of absence in the curriculum and ways of dealing with absence and the various levels at which absence manifests itself.

Mention of absence in this context almost inevitably means and I want to say a minute or so about Roy Bhaskar because he of course is a presence who is not here obviously unavoidably today, some people here knew Roy much better and for longer than I did but he and I were colleagues together and so I knew him quite well the last sort of five, six, seven years, and I think I've used this phrase before at book launches that he organised to which seemed to come his books at about the rate at which my papers got published to be honest. But he was a bit of a sort of *tour de force*, a force of nature. And I think he had two different sort of effects on people, I was in the camp who found him pretty inspirational and just loved talking with him and listening to him and learning from him. Other people found him almost overwhelming, in a number of respects, whether intellectually or personality or he was just too much for them. The two of us were chatting very briefly – Roy is not somebody who naturally fitted into institutional structures and so part of my role, which I enjoyed was trying to allow Roy to, as it were, survive within the IOE because I'm quite happy to say this, there were times when the IOE did not treat Roy as well as he should have been treated. We hung on to him but it was a



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battle for Roy at times in various circumstances and I'm glad that he was with us for this last academic phase of his life.

Okay at that point I think I can go and sit down and watch Alan who I think is going to very kindly lead us off with the next contribution. Okay thank you Alan.