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From: "Mark A. Foster" <owner-AT-markfoster.net>

Subject: BHA: Realism?

Hi, folks,

I would appreciate whatever information any of you might be able to offer. I consider myself a critical realist, but I also find that I disagree with what appear to me, perhaps incorrectly, to be some of the extreme essentialist assumptions of certain posters. However, I am a sociologist of religion, specializing in NRMs (new religious movements) and Islamics, not a philosopher.

As I see it, all beings are particular, not universal. Individuals have their own peculiar essences, but there is no universal quiddity. Therefore, although the universal exists, it is found, not in particular entities, but in laws or principles (structures) which are templates for the production of beings. The mind can discover these structures by observing patterns of similarity in the attributes of beings.

Likewise, the reality of social structures is embedded in the historical processes of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. It is in the pre-existence of a particular social structure to a group of persons that one locates its reality. This reality is socially constructed and transitive. Its future condition will result from a dialectic between the wills of those persons, partially shaped by the structure in its present state, and the socially constructed realities themselves.

As I understand it, Bhaskar's primary criticism of Giddens was that he did not focus sufficiently on history. Thus, Bhaskar said that critical realism is actually a restructuration theory.

Is that realism?

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"Sacred cows make the best hamburger"
-- Mark Twain and Abbie Hoffman

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