



Islamophilia

Douglas Murray

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Columnist and broadcaster Douglas Murray, with trademark wit, delivers an alarming analysis behind the events of the past week in the UK, as the country tries to make sense of the barbaric slaughter of British soldier Lee Rigby on the streets of London. In a devastating satire on the climate of fear in the UK today, Murray's analysis is wildly entertaining yet ultimately profound:

“If absolutely everybody in the world agrees on something – from the President of the United States to most film-stars, pop-stars, Popes, Bishops, atheists, writers, film-makers, brain-boxes and everyone else – then surely they must be right. Well, no. I think they are wrong. Wildly, terribly, embarrassingly and dangerously wrong, “ writes Murray.

ISLAMOPHILIA shows how so many of the celebrities above, have, at some point chosen to abandon any hope or wish to criticize Islam and instead decided to profess some degree of love for it. Love, that Murray points out in the book, is often irrational and certainly misguided: Murray is not afraid to name and shame, and the book's tour includes novelists Sebastian Faulks and Martin Amis, Boris Johnson, South Park, Tony Blair, Ridley Scott, David Cameron, Liam Neeson, Justin Bieber, Random House Publishers, the BBC, Richard Dawkins, the Prince of Wales and even George Bush. Yes, George Bush.

“They may have done this for a range of good and bad reasons. Some of them have to done it to save other people. Some of them have done it to save themselves. Some of them have done it because they are too stupid to do anything else and others because clever people can be really dumb at times.”

Murray then goes to detail the extraordinary strategic cultural efforts made in recent years to “rewrite the last few millennia of history, minimising and denigrating the impact of actual scientists and promoting the claims of Islamic proselytisers” and he has fighting words for the version of history depicted by Ridley Scott and others in Hollywood.

Artists and writers have been caught off-guard, he alleges, “Having poked at empty hornets nests for so many years they have forgotten the courage required to do the necessary poking at full ones.”

He concludes, “Let's be clear. For the record I don't think everybody needs to spend their time being offensive about Islam. Not only is there no need to be offensive all the time, but most Muslims just want to get on with their lives as peacefully and successfully as everybody else. But there is an un-evenness in our societies that needs to be righted...to think that the answer to any criticism of Islam or Muslims is a delegitimizing of critics and an indulgence in self-pity is not to make an advance. It is to pave the way for self-harm. For all of us.

Where people are telling lies about it we should not be fearful to correct them. And where people are fearful – and genuine reasons to be so do keep coming along – people should remind themselves of something. Which is that just as bravery in one person instils bravery in others, so cowardice in one person has a tendency to be catching.”

Islamophilia Details

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From Reader Review Islamophilia for online ebook

Karla says

I'm one of those people that doesn't insist on someone lining up 100% with my own views in order to lend them an ear. Murray's positions on other issues don't coincide with mine at all, but he's had some interesting things to say about what's been called the "regressive left" that has shut down dialogue on any number of topics.

Personally, I think the term "islamophobia" is a bullshit construct, and Ben Affleck's idiotic performance on that episode of *Real Time With Bill Maher* certainly didn't do the cheap "You're a racist!" kneejerk debate tactic any favors. I didn't think confusing religion and race was a thing, but it hasn't taken much poking around the media to see that it is very much a thing, and meaningful debate has suffered.

So Murray's goal in this slim volume is to document those who have come under fire for voicing criticisms (sometimes couched so benignly) of Islam, the political use of it, and the violent wielding of it by groups such as ISIS. Why should it be off limits as a topic, especially in societies based on freedom of speech?

According to some, it IS off limits as a whole. No scrutiny or critique allowed, and angry masses can descend upon those who open their mouths on the subject. And the public pressure and, sometimes, outright threats bring these critics to their knees, groveling for forgiveness and heaping praise upon the same faith they had questions about only days before.

Ugh, don't get me started on this. If Christianity is - and has been - wide open for debate, analysis, reform, and critique, then Islam should be open territory to be reformed from within and questioned by non-adherents. (And the resistance to internal reform towards a more secular, modern bent is **fierce**, just from a glance at Twitter. The not-so-coded racial language & loaded terms between Muslims is pretty jaw-dropping. For example: calling secular Muslims "porch monkeys" and "native informants" <= a favorite term, apparently, from its pervasive usage)

Lines have been drawn between the camps, and to the perspective of an atheist outsider, it'll be interesting to see how the Islamic Reformation unfolds, if it's a faith whose most fervent adherents will even allow it to happen. But Christianity had its Reformation and if every faith has the same kind of life cycle with all its internal struggles, then Islam will eventually get there, too. But as with the 16th century Christian Reformation and its attendant backlash, an intolerably high body count is a given.

Kitty Red-Eye says

As one who is definitely in the "free speech" and not in the "sssh, we must not upset their feelings" camp, I feel that the topic of this book, in a perfect world, should be a no-brainer: If you can criticize one religion/belief system, then you should be able to criticize them all. It's that simple, really. Or it should be. But, the author gives a lot of examples on how this is not de facto the case in Europe and USA (although it remains so in theory). I think the book was a bit too short and superficial, however, so only three stars from here, even if it points at a phenomenon I think is very real, and is one of those texts which points to this phenomenon without getting into the yucky lands of muslim-bashing (which sadly often is the case).

If you, like me, should feel an urge to watch South Park after reading this book (and yeah, you know which episodes I'm talking about), here are the links:

<http://www.watchcartoononline.com/sou...>

<http://www.watchcartoononline.com/sou...>

Vince Darcangelo says

I must confess: About a third of the way through Douglas Murray's Islamophilia, I tossed it onto the discard pile. (Islamophilia OK, not really, since I was reading it on my Nook.) But before I abandoned this book, my conscience got the better of me. I re-launched the file and read to the end.

I am very glad I did.

If I were to blurb Islamophilia, I would say, "Douglas Murray has provided us with a document that is challenging, bitter, distasteful, and difficult to digest. And it may well be one of the most important books of the past few years." (Hey Mr. Murray, don't forget me when the print edition goes to press.)

In this short book (more of an extended essay), Murray vents over post-9/11 media treatment of Islam, which he considers to be inconsistent with treatment of other religions. For Murray, Islam is like an update on the Seinfeld episode when a reporter thought Jerry and George were a couple, prompting qualified denials ("not that there's anything wrong with that").

Unfortunately, this is not a book with a strong sense of humor, and it reads more like a polemic than an essay. In the early pages, Murray's anger overshadows his argument. For example, Murray expends much energy going after the 1001 Inventions multimedia education project, which spotlights Muslim contributions to science and technology. He argues that the exhibit crosses over into historical revisionism, and perhaps he's right. I've never seen the exhibit myself, but he's not the first person to make this critique. But regardless of the factual accuracy, his mocking tone is more befitting a late-night drunk dialogue.

Here is where I shut it down.

I intentionally avoid politics in this column, particularly because I believe—excepting the extremely polarized rants on the nonfiction bestseller list—that literature is one of the few uniting or at least neutral spaces remaining. (I would say animals and football are the others. Folks love their dogs no matter where they stand on universal health care.)

But due to the subject of this book, I feel some disclosure is appropriate. I am a liberal, yet what drew me to this book is that I agree with Murray, a neoconservative. It's an area of contention with my liberal friends, who apply inconsistent standards toward Islam. Were the Catholic church to require women to wear hijabs and be accompanied by men in public, it would be denounced as part of the church's war on women. But when mandated by Islam, it's dismissed as a cultural difference.

I'm not asking my liberal counterparts to feel one way or another about these religions, but as a matter of

intellectual integrity, I do expect them to be consistent.

So, I was drawn to the thesis of this book, but turned off by the tone. What made me pick it back up?

Cartoons.

When it comes to Islam and art, there are three events that are indefensible: the fatwa against Salman Rushdie (for writing a novel); the brutal assassination and near-decapitation of Theo Van Gough (because of an 11-minute film); and the more than 200 people who have been killed in response to Danish cartoons.

And then there was the censorship of the animated show South Park and the death threats aimed at the show's creators. Murray writes:

“This, however, is the new normal. Cartoons are censored. Any possible offence to Muslims is averted by series and broadcast networks that routinely and enjoyably satirise everything else under the sun, including all other religions.”

Here, Murray hits his stride. He addresses the violent backlash against artists and how it has led to pre-emptive self-censorship. For example, *The Jewel of Medina*, a book Random House dropped for fear of attack—a merited fear as weeks later a book publisher in Britain was fire-bombed for agreeing to release the book (which Murray says has still not been released in Britain).

What's happening now, he argues, is self-censorship for fear of reprisal. Something absent following critiques of other faiths:

“Artists and writers have been caught off-guard. Having poked at empty hornets' nests for so many years they have forgotten the courage required to do the necessary poking at full ones.”

Murray then sounds the call for bravery and the courage to support artistic freedom. He closes with some of the book's most thoughtful passages and proposes solutions to overcoming both phobias and phillias.

It is this last part that really elevates Murray's argument, and makes me glad I stuck with the book.

Like I said, this is a difficult read, but an important one. I often disagree with Murray, and at times he made me cringe, but in the end, his argument is thorough and thoughtful and worthy of consideration.

<http://ensuingchapters.com/>

Keith says

After the 9/11 attacks many in the commentariat openly spoke of the backlash that would inevitably follow as citizens terrorized non-violent Muslims in revenge for the attacks. Sad to say, some of these predictions came true. The U.S. Department of Justice reported in 2011 that:

In the first six years after 9/11, the Department investigated more than 800 incidents involving violence, threats, vandalism, and arson against persons perceived to be Muslim or of Arab, Middle Eastern, or South

Asian origin. In the decade after 9/11, the Division prosecuted 50 defendants in 37 different cases, obtaining convictions of 45 defendants. In addition, the Division investigated and pursued a number of important civil cases to address unlawful discrimination on the basis of religion or national origin

That this violence, including several deaths, occurred in a country supposedly dedicated to liberal tolerance and religious freedom is troubling but even in our "enlightened" times is part and parcel of the history of America. As a 2010 Smithsonian.com article on religious tolerance in the United States noted:

In Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, anti-Catholic sentiment, combined with the country's anti-immigrant mood, fueled the Bible Riots of 1844, in which houses were torched, two Catholic churches were destroyed and at least 20 people were killed.

Fortunately, none of this is what Islamophilia is about. Author Douglas Murray begins by stating that "Islamophilia" . . .

could be defined as the expression of disproportionate adoration of Islam. I don't say because I don't think – that Islam has no redeeming features or that the religion has achieved nothing. But it seems strange to me that so many people today can be quite so asinine and supine when it comes to the religion. No other religion in the world today receives the kind of pass that Islam gets. Most religions currently get a hell of a time. But Islam does not. And people express their resulting feeling for it for a number of reasons.

Murray continues:

But most people who begin to express wildly over-the-top praise or love of Islam do so whether or not they feel it. They do it because they either think they ought to or they feel they have to. Some of them probably think it makes them liberal-minded, fair or otherwise decent. Others genuinely see Muslims in a beleaguered light and think they should give them a bit of a gee-up. But a proportion – and as we shall see, quite a large proportion – express an adoration of Islam that jars and comes across strangely because they don't express it for any political or spiritual reason. Many of the Islamophiles we will come across in this book are Islamophiles because they don't want to be thought to be Islamophobes. Or because of another reason: they are very, very scared and decide that the best way to avoid something scary is to praise it and hope it will feel satiated.

He then goes on to document examples of where people, generally politicians, actors, writers, and scholars have managed to work themselves into the most incredible contortions by trying to maintain the most positive of attitudes towards Muslims. As the initial examples illustrate this is not a bad thing to do; however, there have been many incidents where these contortions have been of the most incredible and often cowardly stripe. On the one hand, ordinary Muslims have been discriminated against as a result of terror attacks such as 9/11 in New York and 7/7 in London; on the other hand, thousands of people died. Murray's

point is that, in order not to hurt anyone's "feelings" allowances of a type completely antiethical to Western values have been made by our contortionists. Examples in the book point to the Danish cartoon incident, Comedy Central's censoring of South Park, the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gough and another favorite, the backlash against Lego's "Jabba the Hutt's Palace." Authors Martin Amis and Sebastian Faulks both critically spoke of Islam and agonizingly and immediately recanted their comments, mild as they were.

My favorite example is Murray's treatment of the brouhaha surrounding the historical romance novel *The Jewel of Medina* by Sherry Jones. It is a fictionalized version of the life of Aisha, one of the wives of Mohammed. Murray describes it's literary value as "atrocious" but what happened to it is well documented. The publisher sent galley copies to prospective reviewers, including University of Texas Professor Denise Spellberg. Spellberg hated the work calling it "ugly" and "stupid." OK, all well and good; however Spielberg wasn't satisfied to stop with a negative review. Instead she claimed the novel's publication could provoke violence. She then contacted Muslim groups and warned them about the book. So, as Murray humorously frames it: "And so a non-Muslim who had read the book had persuaded Muslims who had not read the book to start a campaign to ban the book." Jones's publisher quickly rescinded Jones's contract. Ultimately, what is generally true in most book censorship cases was true here too:

What is bizarre in all this is that Spellberg's concern that any Muslim who actually read *The Jewel of Medina* would see it as offensive was fantastically far off the mark. Far from being provocative the book is from its opening pages wholly and quite stomach-churningly fawning. At the opening Jones describes the story she is relaying as 'one of the most touching love stories ever recorded'. She always refers to the 'Prophet' Mohammed and, amazingly for a non-Muslim, refers to him casually in her author's note at the start of the book as 'the revealer of Islam'.

Aakar says

Shocking tales of prominent people who have shamelessly refused to call out the violent side of Islamic ideology, rather white washing it and projecting it as eternal truth. Some of the stories are so outrageous, I had to google them to confirm if they are really true. Indian readers will easily identify with it as recent events have been similar, where media, politicians and 'intellectuals' have conveniently ignored Islamic bigots and focused only on fringe Hindu bigots.

Andrew Georgiadis says

"Demands that you believe the impossible do not lead to peaceful outcomes. Nor do they lead to peaceful or tolerant regimes."

~Christopher Hitchens, debate with Tariq Ramadan, 10/5/2010

Mysteriously, this e-book has disappeared from (nearly) the entire WWW. Whether you think so or not, the subject on offer affects all of us, now as ever.

Freedom of expression begins with the freedom to criticize religion. Douglas Murray is a young, clear, cogent voice on this point. In a free society, Islam cannot be immune to critique and handled with kid gloves.

To vilify those who cartoon or mock Islam is a surrender of what is most important in our own societies. I claim the right to voice my opinion and will defend the right of any religious person to practice his or her faith privately. However, no one has the right to never have his feelings hurt:

“If people are ever all going to be genuinely equal and genuinely integrated it will be when the playing field is genuinely level – tilted neither one way nor the other. That includes hearing things you don’t like hearing, have to defend things you don’t like defending and discovering for yourself- at some point along the way – that societies in which your deepest beliefs and feelings can be questioned and trodden upon are the only societies worth living in.”

David McAdam says

This book is not an attack on or critique of Islam. It is an expose of a particular response to it by a certain group of people who are regarded by many as society's elite.

'Islamaphobia' besides being a bad grammatical construct is - along with the equally bad construct 'homophobia' - a condition that does not exist. It is not recognised by the British Society of Psychology. It is nothing more than a pejorative lobbed against the genuinely tolerant by the counterfeit tolerant in order to shut down discussion.

In Islamophilia Douglas Murray substitutes philia (friend) for phobia (fear) to produce a counter construct. 'Islamophilia' describes those who shamelessly bend over backwards to appease and flatter the religion that in reality they have no genuine interest in. They do so in the hope that extremists will consider them nice and leave them alone. For some this hope met with unintentional consequences. Murray documents examples of 'Islamophiliac' actors, pop stars, authors, film makers and bishops etc who have sycophantically fallen over themselves in slavish deference to Islam. The examples are cringe inducing yet informative which is where the value of the book lies. Highly recommended.

John Wood says

The book has nothing to do with the teachings or practice of Islam. It explores the fawning over all things Islamic by many non Muslims. Many cases are so profound that, despite being practitioners of other religions, the people actually appear to be espousing Islam. There seems to be little corresponding behavior in relation to other religions. Whether because of fear or not this phenomena limits the rational exploration of ideas. It is troublesome that a minority group of terrorists can so profoundly affect public behavior and often even negatively affect the perception of the cause they so passionately espouse, By writing this book the author proves that he is neither Islamophobe nor Islamophile. The book does have many good points but I found it a bit boring by the end.

I received my copy of Islamophobia from Netgalley

Kiven says

Islamophilia is a condition that many progressive and otherwise sane people suffer from. This book provides just the right dosage of mockery and common sense, especially those Islamophiliacs who are ignorantly suffering from the condition, to trigger the self-reflection necessary to cure them from this malady. A must

read for Islamophobes and Islamophiliacs alike.

Eustacia Tan says

It seems to me that there are two types of opinions floating around on Islam: the haters and the slavish adoration. This book attacks the slavish adoration but doesn't veer into hater territory.

Let me state up front: this book is not attacking Islam. It's attacking the uncritical adoration of Islam by non-Muslims. The premise of the book is that society has become too uncritical because of "the combination of the desire to be nice with the knowing of very little."

Most of the book deals with how people bend-over backwards not to be critical of Islam (while being critical of everything else), but my favourite quote comes at the end of the book. It says:

"But we do not need to keep handling Islam with kid gloves. If people are ever all going to be genuinely equal and genuinely integrated it will be when the playing field is genuinely level - tilted neither one way nor the other. That includes hearing things you don't like hearing, having to defend things you don't like defending and discovering for yourself - at some point along the way - that societies in which even your deepest beliefs and feelings can be questioned and trodden upon are the only societies worth living in."

To me, I think everything is fair game for reasoned criticism. Not the "You're wrong and anyone who thinks like you is stupid" comments that are all too common, but comments that say "hold on, I don't understand this" or "wait a minute, I'm not sure I agree with this interpretation/this intent." There are lots of ways that you can disagree with something and not hate it.

And yes, when I say everything, I mean everything. Even Christianity should have to be scrutinised. The Bible does say to love the Lord your God with all your hearts, with all your soul and all your mind after all. I believe Christianity can stand up to the scrutiny.

So when we rush to coddle anything, we're not being nice, we're being rude. We're telling a whole religion that "I don't think you can take even a bit of criticism, so I'll treat you like a baby." That's just rude. I believe that everyone should be treated as an adult - with respect.

There are parts of the books I do disagree with though - For one thing, I think that after a terrorist attack, there's nothing wrong with politicians stressing that this not how all Muslims think. For me, that's less of bending backwards and more of trying to calm down an understandably nervous population. And another, I don't think there's anything wrong with a General responding to allegations of the Koran being desecrated - of course, he should do the same for the Bible, for the Veda, for any book that is held sacred by its respective religion.

On the whole though, this book does a good job at pointing out at what the author calls Islamophilia.

Disclaimer: I got a free copy of the book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for a free and honest review.

This review was first posted to Inside the mind of a Bibliophile

Tom says

(nb: I received a review copy from the publisher via NetGalley)

There's a scene in "Judgment at Nuremberg" where a drunk Richard Widmark is talking to Spencer Tracy about how no Germans seemed to know anything about what the Nazis did during World War 2. "Oh, no. There were no Nazis in Germany. It was the damn Eskimos."

Imagine "Casablanca," only instead of the creepy-evil Nazis, the evil people were Eskimos, too.

Imagine, now, that the entire reason the Nazis were not portrayed as bad in these films is because everyone was afraid to offend the Nazis for fear of what could happen. Even odder, everyone--from newspapers, to authors, to filmmakers, to news programs--portrayed the Nazis in only a positive light, never daring to question the validity of "Mein Kampf" nor the semidivinity of Adolf Hitler.

(Let me make it perfectly clear before proceeding that I am IN NO WAY comparing Nazism with Islam. IN NO WAY!)

Douglas Murray's treatise "Islamophilia" points out just such behavior in today's world. He provides examples upon examples of how Islam is largely given a free pass in the media, because nobody has the courage to write against it.

Murray describes a BBC series on Christianity, where the producers essentially proclaimed Christianity to be unfounded in fact, and full of of nonsense superstition.

A few months later, they produced a series on Islam, and it was almost fawning in its approach, accepting the Koran as inspired, even never showing Mohammed on the screen, which would violate Muslim propriety.

There was nothing critical in the Islam documentary, a few months after the same producers skewered Christianity.

Murray claims the press is loathe to criticize Islam due to fear of reprisals. Instead of everyone subjecting Islam to the same criticism as every other religion gets, the media seems to have developed Islamophilia. Even George W. Bush--whose armies were attacking Muslim lands at the time--praised Islam as a faith of peace.

And that is really Douglas Murray's thesis. For most of this 76 page treatise, he calls-out and mocks those entities who wuss-out rather than say anything non-laudatory about Islam.

His conclusion is spot-on: NO, he's not saying anything derogatory about Islam--not at all. NO, he's not suggesting people should immediately start attacking Islam in the media. YES, he states clearly that the huuuuuge majority of Muslims are kind, peace-loving people, who just want to build a good life for themselves and their children.

Where Murray casts his aspersions is at the hypocrisy of a media that soft-sells when a Muslim group kills dozens of people in a suicide bombing, or beheads a non-Muslim for being an infidel, noting that if a

Christian or an agnostic did such a thing, there would be great hue and cry and denouncements ringing from every tower.

Again, his jabs are not at all against Islam. It's against a double-standard, where every religion on earth is up for criticism or mockery, but when it comes to Islam, everybody's full of cake and ice cream. Murray's sardonic wrath is aimed solely at those whose job it is to report objectively, and who--being Islamophiliacs--just don't.

Highly recommended.

Arvind says

This short book is actually a long journey that will make u anguish, laugh, dismay, marvel and read up a lot of wikipedia stuff along the way. And finally, you may feel the same as u might after reading Fahrenheit 451 or 1984.

Katherine says

Absolutely brilliant work, and a must-read for anyone interested in the religio-political climate of modern-day Britain and America. Murray succinctly and cogently describes the simplistic and ignorant take many people have on Islam, and the fear that is behind it. I wish there were more books like this.

Daniel Lomax says

Christopher Hitchens was fond of telling this story: When Samuel Johnson had finished compiling his first comprehensive dictionary, he was approached by a couple of elderly and respectable ladies of London, who told him they were delighted to find he hadn't included any obscene words in the book. "Ladies," he responded, "I congratulate you on being able to look them up".

This tells you everything you need to know about those who are always on the lookout to be "offended". In Islamophilia, Murray gives us an array of examples of people - from religious, military and political leaders to the so-called "intelligensia" - refusing to criticise Islam, or retracting previous criticisms of it, in transparently cowardly ways, out of fear of the inevitable violent backlash. What the author calls for is a climate of bravery: those who have misgivings about Islam should refrain from self-censorship, and hold their nerve. Allowing freedom of debate to become stifled in the West will have the same effects it had in the Middle East when the Ottoman Empire banned the printing press.

This kind of cowardice seems to me particularly prominent in those who tend to consider themselves "fearless" and "free-thinkers". As the author puts it: "Artists and writers have been caught off-guard. Having poked at empty hornets' nests for so many years they have forgotten the courage required to do the necessary poking at full ones". Did you notice, after the Charlie Hebdo attacks, the folks clamouring to criticise Charlie for "punching down" when satire is supposed to "punch up"? Perhaps it is indeed bullyish to

punch down at a religion which can claim only a billion followers, on which a disproportionate number of the world's remaining dictatorships are founded, controlling most of the world's oil reserves. How can the offended possibly defend themselves? Well, they could use assault rifles to gun down an office full of cartoonists in Paris and the police officer who comes to their aid. They could start a pogrom against cartoonists in Copenhagen. They could force one of the world's most renowned novelists to go into hiding for more than a decade. They could behead a military drummer in the streets of London in broad daylight. But the reflex of most of those writing on my Facebook news feed, or for the Guardian or the Independent, was to attack the criticism of Islam, both by the deceased of Charlie Hebdo and by those of us who had not even had chance to vent it yet.

In his short and brave book Douglas Murray has some good turns of phrase - "dinner party literati", "Great Leap Backwards", "pre-emptive backlash stirring" - and I'll close this review by citing a sequence of events recounted in the book, which explain the current climate of moral cowardice as succinctly as the anecdote I opened with explains the moral hypocrisy of censorship.

Prior to Jeremy Stangroom and Ophelia Benson releasing their book "Does God Hate Women?", critical of all major religions, the Sunday Times ran an article warning of fears (presumably, their own) that there could be an Islamic backlash against the book because it "criticises the Prophet Muhammad for taking a nine year old girl as his wife". As of this point there had in fact been no threats, no hint of violence, directed at Benson or Stangroom, but now the UK's newspaper of record was phoning prominent extremist spokespeople and asking for comment. One such person went so far as to warn that there could be a backlash. "But", Murray writes, "he had only contributed this because the paper had decided a backlash was possibly being threatened and had alerted an extremist in order to see if he was willing to promise a backlash as soon as possible. And so the pre-emptive fear became instituted a stage earlier even than it had before. Previously there had been warnings of a backlash before any backlash had occurred but after something had actually happened. Now there were warning of a backlash before anything had even been done that could provoke a backlash. It was pre-emptive backlash stirring." And now you see perfected the hysteria and moral chaos of an industry whose sole purpose is to find and speak the truth, but no longer has the moxy to do so.

Michael Palkowski says

Some thoughts:

A good sequence of thoughts that should be beefed up into a larger, more argumentative book. It is a fairly brave and surprisingly contrarian in being unshakably unapologetic and due to this conviction it reads very well. Part of its strength is in focusing in on the ways cultural sensitivity through political correctness has been afforded to Islam which is not afforded to other religions in the West. Legitimate criticism of the Quran (from a liberal perspective) is labelled as being islamophobic by many as outlined in the text.

The main thesis is that Islam is not afforded the same criticism that other religions are faced with, when it comes to our politicians, media and so on. All religion has good and bad parts, but as Murray suggests, we rarely hear about the bad when it comes to Islam. We need to be able to critique the aspects of Islam that lead to radicalization and bigotry. This is a highly debated and controversial point of view. Mainly because people often disavow any influence the religion might have on terrorism as this often reflects a bastardized and unhinged appropriation of Islamic values. The majority of Muslims are peaceful and so their interpretation is the correct one.

When Bill Maher and Sam Harris made comments similar to what Murray argues in this book on Real Time, it immediately caused significant tension in the liberal media, with Cenk Uygur and Glen Greenwald being opponents to their comments, suggesting that it tarnished all Muslims with the brush of extremism. The argument is that terrorists are not true Muslims, in the same way that right wing extremists who bomb abortion clinics are not indicative of Christians. Whilst this is true, the problem is that the goal posts are being moved. The discussion is on critiquing an ideology which has developed which is a legitimate reading (out of many) of a holy text which promotes these ideas. This does not tarnish all Muslims. Further, I believe we should be able to stand up for our principles of gay rights, women's rights et al and not allow these to be curtailed in anyway (the same for any religion trying to impose a way of life on a secular society). I am thus sympathetic to the views that Murray espouses here and believe that we have began gradually capitulating our liberal principles in order to appear culturally sensitive and inclusive.

The tone of the book is largely comedic reflecting of course the great aphorism of Wittgenstein that sometimes we can only speak of the most testing and difficult subjects in the form of jokes. However, the subject matter is of course very pressing and of great concern. The text makes good points regarding the religion of peace moniker that is attributed to Islam by pointing out the following:

"Mohammed was not a man to 'turn the other cheek'. He was a man who slew his opponents and enslaved or beheaded his enemies."

A strength of the book is in delineating the preposterous Museum exhibit, "1001 Islamic inventions" and the dishonest and false claims that were made to try and attribute nearly everything we use today to Islamic culture. Murray notes that it is an example of reverse causation. The example of the argument structure here is as follows: We have predetermined that Islam is responsible for everything and so find evidence to justify said claim, regardless of how spurious. The most egregious being Cordoban Abbas ibn Firnas as "discovering flight" in 852, supported by unsourced contemporary accounts. Murray notes that these "flights" were more like plummets.

"We are reminded that pre-Islamic history is filled with stories of flight which people take to be just that – stories. But that does not dim the telling of these 'real' 'Islamic' flights. For now that we are after Islam it is not 'stories' but 'facts' which we must by necessity be dealing with."

Wikipedia notes a quote from the Moroccan historian Ahmed Mohammed al-Maqqari about the flight attempts by Cordoban Abbas ibn Firnas as follows, which is very revealing:

"Among other very curious experiments which he made, one is his trying to fly. He covered himself with feathers for the purpose, attached a couple of wings to his body, and, getting on an eminence, flung himself down into the air, when according to the testimony of several trustworthy writers who witnessed the performance, he flew a considerable distance, as if he had been a bird, but, in alighting again on the place whence he had started, his back was very much hurt, for not knowing that birds when they alight come down upon their tails, he forgot to provide himself with one"

The thinness of the text means that key aspects of history concerning the term "Islamophobia" are missing, which is more interesting at least to me as a sociologist. As a neologism, I am not convinced that "Islamophillia" will catch on in quite the same way that the term, "regressive left" has in describing much of the same thing.

Given my view that the text needs refined, it should have end notes providing information regarding sourced material.

