

PodMag Week 22

Date: 22 May 2014

Speaker:

Previously on the PodMag.

Dave:

It's sorted, we're gonna have a professional studio so we'll get it all up and running and we can record this week's PodMag.

Karen:

Fantastic!

Dave:

Ok, so here we go, are you ready?

Karen:

Yep

Dave:

Do me a countdown – this is so exciting!!

Karen:

Ok, three, two, one.

(Music plays in the background, followed by an explosion and noise of falling shrapnel)

Karen:

(Angrily) Dave Middleton, I am not recording that stupid programme with you anymore. I'm sick and tired of constantly getting my clothes dirty – look at this heel, huh!

Dave:

I didn't..., I, it's, power it says. I didn't know that was going to happen. Oh gosh, give me that fire extinguisher quickly!!

Karen:

You are supposed to be the technical person here.

Dave:

Well, I didn't... oh you are such a drama queen, honestly Karen it will be fine.

Karen:

I have flown across the room Dave. I don't think you fully appreciate the severity of the situation.

Dave:

You didn't fly.

Karen:

I nearly died!

Dave:

You didn't nearly die, you leapt to the floor.

Karen:

Yes because there was a piece of flying equipment coming at me.

Dave:

Well I wasn't to know that.

Karen:

Look at me, I'm filthy!

Dave:

Next time there's a bit of flying equipment, I'll tell you there's a bit of flying equipment.

Karen:

Well there won't be a next time.

Dave:

What do you mean there won't be a next time?

Karen:

I'm sick of this.

Dave:

What do you think, oh don't be so silly, I'll soon have this up and running, I've probably... I think, look if this red one here.....

Karen:

Dave, Dave, Dave, Dave, Dave.

Dave:

If I put it in...

Karen:

Look, leave this to me for once. Why don't you go back to your Department for a little while, while I calm down, ok?

Dave:

Right, ok.

Karen:

Go find someone to interview or something.

Dave:

Right, well frankly I'm a bit fed up working with you, I'm gonna go and talk to someone sensible.

Karen:

Hmmm

Dave:

You're no fun at all.

Karen:

I'll see you in a bit.

Dave:

Right, bye.

Karen:

Bye

Dave leaves the studio

(Sound of door closing)

Dave:

I'm in the office of Raia Prokhovnik who's currently the Head of Politics and International Studies here at the Open University. Raia, thanks for joining me. Raia is also the author of 'Rational woman: a feminist critique of dichotomy' and I want to talk to you today Raia, if I can, about the way in which these sorts of issues around feminism play out in real time, now you just mentioned to me as we were talking before I turned this on and reminded me of David Cameron's recent jibe to a female MP, Angela Eagle, when he told her to "calm down dear", which obviously caused a lot of controversy – why is that so controversial do you think?

Raia:

It's controversial for feminists because it was obviously a jibe, but it was more than that, it was a put down and as a put down it tapped into a sort of underlying and persistent sense that women are associated with emotion and hysteria, whereas men are associated with rationality.

Dave:

Now in your book you talk about dichotomy and particularly those two, rationality and emotion, in which you actually argue they're not the dichotomy that they are sometimes presented as, so are rationality and emotion two separate spheres?

Raia:

Rather than set up in a dichotomy where rationality is the good thing and emotion is the bad thing, they're actually implicated in the way each other works, so when you're using your reason your emotions aren't completely out of the picture. If you're reading an interesting academic article or book, then you are going to have emotions while you are reading it and which spur you on to get on to the next page, and then on the other side, when we feel things, our emotions are..., we grow up in our different cultures around the world with a sense of which emotions are appropriate, which emotions are good, which are bad, which are significant, how to interpret emotional behaviour, how to value some emotions rather than others, so my view is that reason and rationality involve emotion. Rationality always has an emotional charge with it and that our feelings and our emotions are mediated through cultural norms and values.

Dave:

You wrote your book in 2002 and brought out the second edition 2012. Clearly, there's still an argument to be had about these dichotomies. Dichotomies seem to be really important in some way. How do you explain the fact that we haven't really moved much beyond those dichotomies?

Raia:

Well, I think in some ways we have moved beyond the dichotomies, in some ways we have attempted as a society to get beyond dichotomies but they are very entrenched. Dichotomy is something where you have two things which you see as opposites and you see them as exclusive of each other, and you see them as together exhausting the whole field of choices, and you see them in hierarchy, so with the reason/emotion dichotomy it's clear in our culture that reason is valued way above emotion. Reason/emotion maps onto man/woman and dichotomists thinking in social practices are discriminatory.

Dave:

Is there any hope, I mean are we just stuck with these or is there any chance we are ever going to move beyond that dichotomist relationship?

Raia:

I think that's a really tough question. I think given that these dichotomies have power structures supporting them, then why would the dominant category, say man, want to give up that dominance, but I think, you know, there have been gains in feminism over the decades and there are further gains now and I think it's absolutely fabulous to see young women taking up feminist courses.

Dave:

But feminism isn't just for women surely?

Raia:

No, it's not, and I think that goes back to why dichotomies are so pernicious because if you think of men and women as entirely separate sort of groups/categories, then it's very difficult to think of a way of how men and women can live harmoniously together in a relational way, in a connected way, in a way that respects difference as well as seeing commonalities between them so, you know, I'd really like to be able to look forward to a time when the connections, the relational kind of connection between men and women was valued more highly than the differences between them.

Dave:

Well that's fantastic, great ending. Thanks very much for your time Raia.

Raia:

You're welcome.

Karen:

Huh, oh that Dave, he really drives me mad. Hang on..., what's this green button here with power? Let me try switching that on.

Karen switches the button on

(Electronic beeping noise in the background)

Karen:

Ooh... oh you're back Dave?

Dave:

Yeah, yeah.

Karen:

How was Politics then?

Dave:

No it was great, Raia was really great, she's really interesting – all that stuff on gender and her book, it looks fascinating. I actually might get around to reading a book one day!

Karen:

Yeah, yeah, no fair point actually.

Dave:

Hey, you got the power on? I knew those two things connected, that would do it, I knew if I just walked away and left it, it would come on.

Karen:

Yeah, you were right there. I got the power on Dave. Have you noticed this big button here that says Power? Well, all I did was I pushed that and the power came on.

Dave:

Ah yes, I was going to phone you to tell you to do that.

Karen:

Hmmm

Dave:

Yeah, I'd forgotten my phone number.

Karen:

I've had some time to think as well and I was really thinking that in fact I got the studio working, you know, I'm getting out there talking to all the students and things and I could really do all this without you.

Dave:

You've been talking to students?

Karen:

Oh yeah, I've done that as well.... Hi Brandon, nice to see you, so you've been involved with the student connections conference, what's been the best bit for you so far?

Brandon:

Well, it's been lots of fun meeting up with lots of different students from all over the place. Do you know what? This whole online environment is brilliant. It's lots of fun like, I mean it is great to be connected to the other students. The online sessions are interesting, I mean it's strange actually, you know, being there but not physically being there. You know, you hear all the voices and it is kind of cool, because it's

only a computer but there are people there and they are actually interacting with you and it feels like I'm actually connected to the Open University, rather than just being isolated and on my own.

Karen:

Hi Amy, so what are you looking forward to at the conference?

Amy:

I'm most looking forward to coming down, because I'm hoping to be here for some of the time that the conference is going on. I'm really looking forward to seeing peoples' presentations and also looking forward to the end product of our digital story telling videos. The main thing for me is that this is something really, really different. I go to quite a lot of academic events, I've been to quite a few over the last two years and nothing like this has ever happened before, you know, involving students at all, I mean, in fact, I often get quite a frosty reception as a student going to lots of things so this will be nice to actually be a central part of it rather than a kind of outsider who, you know, I feel like I've gate crashed a bit. This is for us by us so there's not going to be any unwelcome feelings or awkwardness at all. I think it's just going to be really like..., casual is the wrong word. I think just comfortable and welcoming is what I am expecting it to be like.

Karen:

Hiya Sara. Now you're a first year student. Did you ever think that you might be involved in a project like digital story telling?

Sara:

Not in a million years (*laughs*). Yeah, just basically, when I started my OU degree, kind of it all felt very full on, I was kind of suffering from anxiety and issues of my own, and I was just really not in a place where I ever thought I would go actually. I'm gonna choose to go from my home to Milton Keynes, meet all these other people that I've never met before who are all completely different to me and get really stuck in. I would say to the people it's well worth it because it's just such a fantastic experience.

Karen:

Oh hi Lucy, am I glad to see you. Right (*sighs*), so how's your day been and how's everything going with the conference?

Lucy:

Yeah, it's going really, really well, knackered but really good. It's coming together really, really well. To begin with it was like I didn't really have any image whatsoever of anything about what it was going to look like or anything and it was amazing just going up there because it looked so sort of professional and shiny and big and (*laughs*) amazing really.

Karen:

Hey Harley-Jack you are the fan. Ok, so can you come here and tell me what's been the best bit about the conference so far?

Harley-Jack:

Oh hi Karen, I think the best bit for me is having this different relationship with the OU because we usually only engage with the OU through materials or every so often popping up to a Study Centre but with this it's actually coming down to the OU, really getting involved in the activities around the conference, and I just think that element of having something different with the OU and building a strong relationship with these activities has been the best.

Dave:

Oh yeah, well, yeah, they're quite good.

Karen:

Hmmm

Dave:

You're not serious – you don't really want to do the PodMag without me, I'm the technical guy.

Karen:

Well, hmmm, technically not Dave. The thing is though, you know, I don't know..., after all, as nice as it is to have a studio and stuff, I just think maybe I could do it better on my own, I mean I was talking to the students and I asked them actually who their favourite PodMag presenter was and this is what they said.

Student:

I think it's very difficult to choose between you both but I'm going to have to say you Karen.

Dave:

Well that's Harleyjack isn't it?

Karen:

Yes, yeah, he's my biggest fan.

Dave:

Well strangely enough, I was talking to Harleyjack the other day and this is what he said when I asked him that question.

Harleyjack:

I think that's a very tough one, I mean it's like a parent choosing between their children but I'd have to say you Dave.

Karen:

Oh that Harleyjack, well he's as bad as you.

Dave:

Well isn't it great to have a studio at last?

Karen:

Yeah

Dave:

I think we'll stay here and do a few more recordings.

Karen:

Well I'm not moving anywhere now the power's on. So yes, ok, brilliant, well that's that sorted. Come along next week Dave and we'll see how it goes.

Dave:

Ok, we'll see you all next week.

Karen:

Bye