

ROY BHASKAR

FROM SCIENCE TO EMANCIPATION

Alienation and the actuality of enlightenment

*JOURNEYS TOWARDS METAREALITY:
A PHILOSOPHY FOR THE PRESENT*



From Science to Emancipation

From Science to Emancipation: alienation and the actuality of enlightenment is the second of three books elaborating Roy Bhaskar's philosophy of metaReality, which first appeared in rapid succession in 2002.

This book contains some of the original transcripts and the questions and answers they provoked, from a variety of lectures and workshops Roy Bhaskar presented for Indian audiences before this book was first published. Because of the spontaneous and informal nature of these talks and discussions, this book continues to provide the most immediate and accessible introduction to Roy Bhaskar's philosophy as it charts his intellectual journey.

The talks recorded here have retained an immediate local but also a deeply universal interest. *From Science to Emancipation* provides an indispensable resource for all students of philosophy and the human sciences.

A new introduction to this edition by Mervyn Hartwig, founding editor of *The Journal of Critical Realism* and editor of *A Dictionary of Critical Realism* (Routledge, 2007), describes the context, significance and impact of *From Science to Emancipation*, and supplies an expert guide to its content.

Roy Bhaskar is the originator of the philosophy of critical realism, and the author of many acclaimed and influential works including *A Realist Theory of Science*, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, *Plato Etc.*, *From Science to Emancipation* and (with Mervyn Hartwig) *The Formation of Critical Realism*. He is an editor of *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, *Interdisciplinarity and Climate Change* and *Ecophilosophy in a World of Crisis*, and was the founding chair of the Centre for Critical Realism. He is currently World Scholar at the University of London Institute of Education and Director of the newly founded International Centre for Critical Realism located there.

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Roy Bhaskar

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From Science to Emancipation Manifesto of MetaReality

M*etaReality* is a new philosophical position devised by Roy Bhaskar, originator of the influential, international and multi-disciplinary philosophy of critical realism. It accepts but goes beyond critical realism, in so far as it pinpoints the reality of non-dual states and phases of being, showing how they underpin and sustain the totality of all forms of human, and indeed all, life. Understanding *metaReality* is to realise the limitations of the world of duality.

Critical realism already understands reality as structured and differentiated, as in process and changing, as a totality or whole and as containing human, potentially self-conscious, transformative agency. The world that humankind has made and which we currently inhabit is a world of duality: of unhappiness, oppression and strife—more especially, it is a world in which we are alienated from ourselves, each other, the activities in which we engage and the natural world we inhabit, currently hurtling into crisis and self-destruction.

The philosophy of *metaReality* describes the way in which this very world nevertheless depends upon, that is, is ultimately sustained by and exists only in virtue of the free, loving, creative, intelligent energy and activity of non-dual states of our being and

phases of our activity. In becoming aware of this we begin the process of transforming and overthrowing the totality of structures of oppression, alienation, mystification and misery we have produced; and the vision opens up of a balanced world and of a society in which the free development and flourishing of each unique human being is understood to be the condition, as it is also the consequence, of the free development and flourishing of all.

In developing this vision the philosophy of *metaReality* confirms and re-presents many aspects of the vision of the great philosophical traditions of the past, but does so in a radically new way, apt for contemporary times. We begin this process of becoming free, that is, of expanding the zone of non-duality within our lives, by becoming aware of all the elements that currently constitute them and throwing off all those elements which are inconsistent with our free, creative, loving natures. In this process we come to realise that the very world of misery and destitution we have created itself contains and is sustained by the seeds of a society of abundance, peace and fulfilment, in which we are all free to express and fulfil our essential natures.

Preface

This book describes my journey from my presentations of critical realism in 1997, when I was already interested in and working on spiritual and transcendental questions, trying at once to relate them to my philosophical explorations and at the same time to the weaknesses and failures of socialist and more generally Left-wing politics in the west; through to the position which I called transcendental dialectical critical realism, which I articulated in my book *From East to West*,¹ published in April 2000. And then the journey from that position, my first systematic attempt to integrate spirituality into the philosophical framework of critical realism, to the position which I now hold, which I have elaborated as the philosophy of metaReality.

The main difference between the philosophy of metaReality and critical realism, in all its forms, including the transcendental dialectical critical realist system articulated in *From East to West*, is that critical realism has been founded on the principle of non-identity, and as such reflects the limitations of the world of duality; whereas the philosophy of metaReality stresses identity, identification and unity, and the ubiquity and centrality of *non-dual*

¹ Routledge, London and New York, 2000.

states and phases of being in our social life. The philosophy of metaReality accepts critical realism, as hitherto developed, as being the best account of the *dual* world of relative reality. That is a world which is at present (as it has been, as far as we can tell, in most recorded history) dominated by the *dualistic* world of demi-reality, in which the dualities of the world of relative reality sharpen into antagonistic, oppositional splits, proliferating into gaping contradictions and producing profound alienation at all the planes of social being.

Critical realism possesses a huge advantage over irrealist philosophies, whether of an orthodox (which would include empiricism, neo-positivism, neo-Kantianism, hermeneutics, structuralism, post-structuralism, including ethnomethodology and discourse theory) or a heterodox sort (ranging from various Marxist to various postmodernist positions, including ones which have been generated in the wake of the rise of the new social movements, particularly feminism, ecology and the peace movement). The advantage of critical realism is this: that for the most part and to the greater extent, these irrealist philosophies merely reflect the surface structure of relative reality, the world of demireal duality and the alienations, contradictions, reifications and dualisms of that world, which they merely replicate or elaborate in theory. Critical realism, in virtue of its commitment to the explicit thematisation of being and its understanding of the stratification of being and its development of the ideas of being as in process, as a totality and as incorporating transformative agency and reflexivity (as well as, in its latest, most contentious phase, a spiritual aspect) can show the possibilities of a non-dualistic world of duality, from which the structures which presently oppress us are shorn.

The deep structures which critical realism theorises are still however structures of duality, founded on principles of nonidentity; and so they cannot penetrate through to the non-dual basis which underpins the whole world of duality; including the structures of oppression and alienation which currently dominate not only the world of duality but its non-dual basis or ground.

There are three ways in which the world of non-duality underpins the world of duality:

1. It underpins it in a very quotidian, ordinary way as being essential to the constitution, that is the reproduction and transformation, of everyday life. Let me go into this a little bit here. Most philosophers who have talked about non-dual or transcendence/transcendental experiences have regarded them as being something very extraordinary, only achieved in special places or moments of communion with the divine or in nature or in some other way consisting in a bliss, peak and very unusual experience. Moreover, normally the other term in the experience of union or identity is left mysterious. On the contrary, I argue in developing the philosophy of metaReality that non-dual, including transcendental, experiences are essential for any form of communication between human beings, and ultimately any perception; and also for any act at all. For when you understand or even listen to what I say then in that moment of understanding or listening you are in a non-dual state of transcendental identification with me. Similarly, in order to act at all there must be something, at some level, which you do not do by thinking about how to do it, but which you just do, spontaneously, unconditionally, normally pretty effortlessly, and unless you acted in that non-dual way, you could never do anything at all. Moreover, in the case of communication, perception and action, the terms identified are clear enough: we are at one with another being or our action, and though we are not split or in duality, the terms which are identified are clearly defined, entities like you or me. In its most basic sense, transcendental identification is just unity with a context and there need be nothing mysterious about that.

In genealogical terms, elaboration of this moment of non-duality occurred to me by reflection of the way in which there was a non-algorithmic moment in any scientific revolution, discovery or even ordinary learning, that is a moment of pure creativity which could not be derived by induction or deduction or any mechanical formula. And it seemed clear to me that this was a very obvious paradigm of transcendence, with analogies to transcendence experiences in religion, art and other forms of life; but it was one, defining a moment of absolute transcendence in the movement of relative transcendence to a more totalising scientific or practical position, which was absolutely essential for the understanding of (among other activities) science, the

paradigmatic human activity for western philosophy from Descartes if not indeed Aristotle. An obvious question arose: what were the terms in the union when we had a moment of scientific or any other creativity, for in as much as it was a breakthrough, it was also a moment of emergence out of the blue. I came to see that this epistemological transcendence was quite consistent with ontological immanence. But in making full sense of this, I had to develop the idea of the moment of creativity, discovery or even simple learning (or re-creativity) as involving the union between something already enfolded within the discovering agent, brought up to consciousness by a moment of Platonic anamnesis or recall, with the alethic self-revelation of the being known, existing outside him. And this is of course, in all its terms—that of the subjective condition, the objective result and the union between the two—is a very radical theory of discovery, one applicable, however, to all spheres of learning and, *a fortiori*, to all human life.

So this is the first way in which the world of non-duality underpins the structures of duality, including dualism.

2. The second way in which non-duality underpins the world of duality depends on a feature of the stratification of being which critical realism should find it particularly easy to situate. Science reveals a hierarchy of strata in being; and such stratification is a very characteristic feature of all forms of activity and being. Theories of emancipation, whether secular or religious, have always posited a level of human nature or potential which, in some way, either man himself, or his existing social order, inhibits, stunts, suppresses or even altogether screens or occludes. The task of emancipation has characteristically been conceived as involving the throwing off of this emergent oppressive level which reposes on the primary; foundational but suppressed level. Christianity, Buddhism, Marxism, Western liberalism all involve the idea of human nature, which would usher in a better world, if only the structures which fetter it could be thrown off.

Now there is a crucial strengthening of this position which I would like to register. And that is that this level which actually underpins and sustains the world which we know must already contain all, but not necessarily only, what we need to realise the

utopian ideal. Thus we must assume that human nature, as it is constituted now, must be capable of sustaining a communist society in which, in Marx's vision of it, 'the free development of each is a condition of the free development of all', could be realised. And similarly, that human beings even now must be capable of being able to evaluate the realisation of all other beings in the universe as highly as their own, as in the ideal of the Bodhisattva. These are not utopian ideals. Rather, they point to or indicate a level which is an actual and continually efficacious condition of possibility for all states of being and systems of social order. This level of an essential human nature is actualised everywhere as a necessary condition for everything we do, it is a condition of the world which oppresses us and in which we oppress ourselves. Thus consider the phenomenon of war. This phenomenon, in a way the epitome of human hatred, is sustained only through the selfless solidarity of soldiers fighting at the front and the support they receive from their sisters, daughters and mothers at home.

This idea developed from an argument which made use of a concept I had already introduced as early as *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*,² namely that of an ultimatum, an ultimate or basic level of the universe which would have to be ingredient or immanent in all other levels of the universe emergent from it. This idea of an ultimatum is developed in the philosophy of metaReality into the idea of all beings having a *ground-state*, which both embodies the qualities necessary to bind the universe together as a whole and at the same time is always specifically differentiated in the species or being concerned. Thus every species, and every being within a species, will in principle have a different ground-state, but they will be united with every other ground-state through, and at the level of the ultimatum, what I call the *cosmic envelope*. The ground-state qualities of human beings consist *inter alia* in their energy, intelligence, creativity, love, capacity for right-action and the fulfilment of their intentionality or will in their objectifications in the natural and social world. It is the energy, intentionality and qualities of the ground-state which are everywhere used and abused in the world of the emergent orders which

² Verso, London and New York, 1993.

they sustain, and which constitute the hidden or dominated basis or ground of all our alienation, suffering and ills.

This then is the second mode in which non-duality is central to social life and human agency. It is that level without which no other level could exist and have the particular properties they do, no matter how horrendous they are.

3. There is a third level, only slightly more recondite, in virtue of which non-duality can be said to underpin the world of duality and dualism. This is the sense in which if you go deeply enough into any aspect of being you will find buried in its fine structure or deep interior qualities which can only be described in terms of such quasi-metaphorical language as emptiness (*sunyata*), suchness (*tathata*), the void or the Buddha-nature, pure unbounded love or *sat-chit-anand*, that is the bliss consciousness of being which, whether you want to argue it possesses a teleological dynamic, in the sense that in some actual or metaphorical way all things strive for it (so that it would then be the fundamental driving force of evolution), it nevertheless certainly constitutes, in interiorised form, the ground-state of every moment of all being, the ‘quiddity’ of everything which is.

Whereas the first two modes of non-duality can be shown by relatively simple transcendental *arguments*, this third mode has to be *experienced*, and pertains to the experience of mystics and poets throughout the ages. However, these three modes are also inter-related. For if you go deeply enough into any non-dual state you are in, or into any being or object you have achieved transcendental identification with, ultimately you will come to *that* mystical experience, and when you do, you will be at one with its ground-state in *your* ground-state. At this point, we have, if you like, the unity or transcendental identification of two ground-states.

These are not the only ways in which the philosophy of meta-Reality differentiates itself from existing critical realism. But this is not the place to articulate those further differences. My *Reflections on MetaReality*³ does that; and they have been systematically

³ Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, April 2002.

set out in *The Philosophy of MetaReality*,⁴ where I show how we need to add two additional levels of ontology to the existing five of critical realism. The first, which I call the sixth realm (6R) of *re-enchantment*, and the second which I call the seventh zone or awakening (7Z/A) of *non-duality*, underpin the existing five levels which I rehearse in Chapter 1 of this book. Moreover these issues come up systematically throughout the book, and in the interview in Chapter 10 with Mervyn Hartwig, the differences between critical realism and metaReality are specifically thematised. It is also just worth mentioning here that this book has a companion, consisting in a sustained series of dialogues, *Fathoming the Depths of Reality: Savita Singh in Conversation With Roy Bhaskar*,⁵ which retraces in great detail the development of these ideas from their first seeds in the late 1960s and early 70s through to the present.

This book is based on talks given in Europe, Asia and America over the years 1997–2002. The most basic acknowledgement I need to make is that of my appreciation of and thanks to the organisers of the meetings, projects or programmes in which they were held, all voluntary contributions by people dedicated to the cause of free debate and discussion of these issues. Without such unconditional commitment none of these talks could have taken place. During the initial stages of the period covered by the talks in this book, my colleagues in the Centre for Critical Realism, and its sister organisation the International Association of Critical Realism, played a very important role. In particular I must mention Andrew Collier, Margaret Archer, Doug Porpora, Tony Lawson, Alan Norrie, Nick Hostettler, Sean Vertigan and Mervyn Hartwig. I was at one point intending to write a book with the first three of these, and a discussion which took place around some propositions which I had formulated on the basis of the discussions the four of us had had, is recorded in the interlude between Chapters 5 and 6. It will be apparent then that, though we were all committed to the importance of the philosophical discussion of issues

⁴ *The Philosophy of MetaReality Volume I: Creativity, Love and Freedom*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, forthcoming.

⁵ Sage Publications, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London, forthcoming.

to do with spirituality and religion, and to the idea of their compatibility with a this-worldly approach oriented to transformative political practices, there were, even then, differences in the ways we were going; so that the book we intended to write together, they are now pursuing, with my best wishes, on their own.

My lecture and workshop tours in America, and possibly even more so in India, played a decisive role in stimulating the formation of the ideas which the philosophy of metaReality articulates. To my friends and organisers in America, especially Hans Despain, Howard Engelskirchen, Hans Ehrbar, Doug Porpora, Charlie Smith (but many more could be mentioned and are gratefully remembered), go my very special thanks. It seems even more gratuitous to single out a few people in India, when there are so many people who have done so much; but it would be extremely unfair of me not to record my very special appreciation of the unstinting work put in by Manindra Thakur, Savita Singh, Nirmalya Chakraborty and Madhucchanda Sen, and Lakshmi Kumar. However, I am only too aware of how much I owe to all those throughout the world whom I haven't specifically mentioned here.

Now is perhaps the time to say that, in a way, my greatest debt of all has been to my audiences, without their presence and attention, without the stimulus of their debate and questions, these ideas would not have been sharpened into their present form. Then I would like to thank my British-based organisers, who no less than their non-British counterparts played an absolutely indispensable role—among them are Juliet Nusser and Pauline Hadley. All these transcripts were superbly typed by Jenny Cobner, with great speed and accuracy, backed up with good philosophical acumen, and she also put the final touches to much of the editing work. Then I must thank my publisher, Tejeshwar Singh and all at Sage, especially Omita Goyal, for her extraordinary efficiency, industry and commitment. Andrew Neal also helped in the final stages in an administrative capacity; and finally I must express, not for the first time, my warmest appreciation to Elaine Parker for her unique qualities and commitment.

10 June 2002

Roy Bhaskar

Introduction*

Acronyms

CM	classical modernism
CN	critical naturalism
CR	critical realism
DCR	dialectical critical realism
EC	explanatory critique
HM	high modernism
M	the theory and practice of modernization
PDM	the philosophical discourse of modernity
PM	postmodernism
PMR	the philosophy of metaReality
TDCR	transcendental dialectical critical realism
T/F	bourgeois triumphalism and endism/fundamentalism
TR	transcendental realism

* A note on terminology. ‘MetaReality’ and cognate terms were originally spelt with a hyphen: ‘Meta-Reality’ (at the beginning of a sentence); otherwise ‘meta-Reality’, including within titles and chapter headings (with the exception of *Reflections on*

From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment is the second of three books elaborating Roy Bhaskar's new philosophy of metaReality, which appeared in rapid succession in 2002.¹ Routledge has commissioned me to write Introductions to these volumes, which it is currently reissuing under its own imprint. I have set out my global understanding of the new philosophy in the Introduction to *Reflections on MetaReality*,² which I will not repeat here except to say that I take its fundamental message to be that if we humans are to freely flourish in a sustainable way, we will have to get back in tune with nature understood as a totality profoundly interconnected at the level of the real, acting, as Bhaskar puts it in the present volume, 'from the perspective of the whole totality', i.e. 'the whole of the universe' (pp. 251–2).³ For the convenience of the reader,

MetaReality). In future publications Roy Bhaskar has decided to dispense with the hyphen and to capitalize the first letter of 'metaReality' in titles and chapter headings. I have accordingly followed suit here.

¹ Roy Bhaskar, *Reflections on MetaReality: Transcendence, Emancipation and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, [2002] 2011); *From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment* (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 2002); and *The Philosophy of MetaReality*, Volume I, *Creativity, Love and Freedom* (New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 2002; to be reissued by Routledge as *The Philosophy of MetaReality: Creativity, Love and Freedom*). Unattributed page numbers in what follows refer to *From Science to Emancipation*.

² Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction' to Bhaskar, *Reflections on MetaReality*.

³ This ancient philosophical theme of reconciliation with the natural order is currently being resumed, from different perspectives, by secularly minded mainstream Western philosophers. See for example Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009) and *Surviving Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Thomas Nagel, 'Secular philosophy and the religious temperament' in his *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002–2008* 3–18 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Galen Strawson, 'Religion is a sin', *London Review of Books* 33(11) 2011, 26–8. Unlike Johnston and Strawson, the philosophy of metaReality leaves open the question of whether the absolute is transcendent to the universe as well as immanent within it – whether what Bhaskar calls the cosmic envelope or ground of the universe itself has a ground or creator (see for example p. 274).

however, I reproduce the tables that accompanied that essay, which are I believe valuable aids to understanding Bhaskar's philosophy and grasping its coherent systematicity, whether considered synchronically or diachronically. These are grouped together at the end of this Introduction, the main focus of which will be on what is new and/or distinctive in *From Science to Emancipation*, including the clarification of existing positions and how they morphed into the philosophy of metaReality.

One of the most fascinating and invaluable features of the book is that it provides a record of Bhaskar's intellectual journey from 1997 to 2002, a period spanning the final years of the investigative phase (1995–98) of his spiritual turn and the actual production of the main works of that turn (1999–2002). It is the only one of his books that is made up almost entirely of transcripts of 'holistic performance[s]' (p. 316) with audiences, in lectures, seminars, workshops and interviews, pitched at a relatively popular level.⁴ The audiences are varied, mostly students and/or academics in the UK and India, but also teachers in Pune (Chapter 11) and members of the general public in Kolkata (Chapter 12), some of whose members are familiar with critical realism, many not. The topics traverse the whole of his system as Bhaskar walks the talk, practising 'the dialectics of recapitulation' in which we 'thoroughly come to terms with, understand and then shed, let go of . . . the presence of the past' (p. 45), as a propaedeutic to the elaboration of the new, having embedded what is valuable from the past in the depths of our being such that '[we] do not carry the knowledge of Greek or some other philosophy in [our] head, it is in [us]' (p. 252). For someone who is a relative novice in critical realism and philosophy more generally, there is no better single introduction to Bhaskar's overall thought than this book.⁵ But there is also much that is of great value for the more advanced. *From Science to Emancipation* is a treasure store

⁴ The exceptions are the brief Manifesto of metaReality (a version of which appears in the other two metaReality volumes) and the Preface. A partial exception is Chapter 13, which was 'abstracted' by Bhaskar from the transcript of a three-day workshop.

⁵ Roy Bhaskar with Mervyn Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism* (London: Routledge, 2010) is pitched at a more advanced level, as is Chapter 4 of Bhaskar, *Reflections on MetaReality*.

of rich and pithy sayings, felicitous formulations and quotable quotes – more so than his other works, for Bhaskar is in his *dharmā*⁶ in these performances, speaking spontaneously from the depths of his being. Two examples must suffice. ‘Everything would collapse’, he tells a gathering at the Kolkata Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation in 2002, ‘without absence, without negativity, without the not’ (p. 334) – a sentiment which is the exact opposite of the dominant monovalent materialist view beautifully caught by Honoré Balzac in 1842: ‘To modern philosophy, the void does not exist. If there were ten feet of void, the world would cave in!’⁷ Only a few breaths earlier, having suggested that, although when we are true to our essential natures we ‘just flow’ spontaneously, as the sun and the moon ‘just shine’, it is more than possible for ignorant humans to prevent this, he asks: ‘When is the full moon coming? Does it ever come anymore in Kolkata?’ (p. 333) – a question that adroitly aligns the smog over our cities with the categorial smog of the demi-real, and gives us to understand that the former will not lift until we get rid of the latter.

Two of the leading themes of the book are already announced in its title: that the movement of the earlier philosophy of critical realism ‘from science to emancipation’ tacitly presupposes the spirituality of the philosophy of metaReality (PMR) and that enlightenment is ‘actual’: people are already abundantly in possession of the qualities that are necessary for building eudaimonia, which are presupposed by and manifest in every genuine human act (‘ultimately human beings are fine, they are absolutely fine, there is nothing wrong with them, they are beautiful’ [p. 304]); ‘all’ that remains to be done is to shed what is inconsistent with and parasitic upon our higher selves. The Preface contains an important statement about the relation of PMR to critical realism

⁶ Bhaskar deploys the concept of *dharma* for the first time in print in *From Science to Emancipation* (p. 265 [May 2002]). It is also employed in Chapters 11–13, which date from a few months earlier, suggesting that he first began to use it in oral presentations at about this time – which was also the time when the philosophy of metaReality as such crystallized (see Note 11 and accompanying text, below).

⁷ Cited in Mervyn Hartwig, ‘Valence, valency’, in *Dictionary of Critical Realism*, ed. M. Hartwig (London: Routledge, 2007), 497.

and an indication of the three ways in which non-duality underpins the realm of duality, incorporating an important genealogical note to the effect that PMR had its inception in reflection on the moment of absolute transcendence or pure creativity in scientific discovery, involving experience of union or identity, one implication of which is that creative science, tacitly or otherwise, presupposes metaReality and creative scientists are ‘practical mystics’.⁸ The main contents of the book are organized into four parts. The first, comprising two lectures in Mumbai, recaps the progressive development of critical realism (including transcendental dialectical critical realism (TDCR), nicely epitomized as ‘basically [the application of] transcendental realism to the self’ [p. 24]), to the point where PMR begins to come immanently critically into view as developmentally consistent with, but remedying a lack in critical realism at the level of the absolute. The second is devoted to ‘debates within and about critical realism’ and includes Bhaskar’s famous encounters with Ernesto Laclau and Rom Harré, in the areas of discourse theory and ethnomethodology, respectively; his first public seminar, in November 1999, on TDCR (Chapter 5) – a great and brave talk, articulating a dialectic of co-presence (which I will come back to) of ‘an irrealist categorial structure masking and overlaying . . . a profound deeper realist structure which is waiting (and wanting) to be free’ (p. 127), that decisively broke the taboo on discussing religion and spirituality (other than sociologically) within the critical realist community; ‘twelve propositions on transcendence, critical realism and God’ (‘Interlude’, pp. 145f.), which Bhaskar presented to a closed seminar in London in December of the same year and which have remained central to his thinking in this area; and an eloquent plea for tolerance and boldly creative thinking addressed to a conference of the

⁸ The Preface also announces (p. xv) a forthcoming ‘companion’ to *From Science to Emancipation*, namely *Fathoming the Depths of Reality: Savita Singh in Conversation With Roy Bhaskar*. This has not to date been published. The interviews for the book took place in New Delhi shortly after 9/11 and a rough transcript was made, but that is as far as the matter was taken. Both authors have since had other priorities. Bhaskar has not returned to India since 2002, and Singh has gone on to become, inter alia, a famous Hindi poet.

International Association for Critical Realism at the University of Lancaster in August 2000 after the first book of his spiritual turn, *From East to West*, had met with hostile criticism, including from myself (Chapter 6).⁹ The third part, ‘En route from transcendental dialectical critical realism to the philosophy of metaReality’, comprising two lectures (Chapters 8 and 9) and an interview (Chapter 10), covers the period in which the philosophy of metaReality was actually born; why the interview, which is actually organized around the first of the metaReality books, *Reflections on MetaReality*, is included here is not wholly clear to me – perhaps it has something to do with the fact that the interviewer, unlike the interviewee, was still ‘en route to the philosophy of metaReality’.¹⁰ One important detail about the genesis of PMR not registered in this volume is that the idea of metaReality did not really crystallize until late 2001/early 2002, while Bhaskar was in India, and that this coincided with the most serious outbreak of sectarian violence in India since 1947 – a development that sharpened Bhaskar’s urge to produce a secular version of his spiritual philosophy, one that is not hostage to institutionalized religion.¹¹ Chapter 8 is perhaps the best single place to turn for Bhaskar’s critique of postmodernism, although this topic is also treated at some length in both the other metaReality books. The metaReal critique of the discursive intellect, on the other hand, the subject of Chapter 9 (and also 12), which was inaugurated in *Reflections*,

⁹ Bhaskar’s presentation was preceded by critical presentations by myself and Nick Hostettler. A more balanced version of mine was published as ‘New Left, New Age, new paradigm? Roy Bhaskar’s *From East to West*’, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 31(2) 2001, 139–65. Nick Hostettler’s views of the time may be found in Nick Hostettler and Alan Norrie, ‘Do you like soul music?’ *Alethia* 3(2) 2000, 2–8 and the same authors’ ‘Are critical realist ethics foundationalist?’ in *Critical Realism: The Difference It Makes*, ed. J. Cruickshank (London: Routledge, 2003), 30–54.

¹⁰ This is perhaps the place to add that, in editing the transcript, I (the interviewer) got what Bhaskar had said about the ground-state not quite right, which he has indicated by placing my question and part of the answer attributed to him within square brackets (p. 262, last two paragraphs).

¹¹ Bhaskar, personal communication; Bhaskar with Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism*, 168.

is carried through definitively in *The Philosophy of MetaReality*. The fourth part is devoted to exploration of themes within PMR: the primacy of self-referentiality in education and emancipation more generally; of the supramental consciousness of the ground-state in creativity; and, finally, of love in the coherence of theory and practice in practice and ultimately the cosmos.

The philosophy of metaReality arguably largely vindicates the intuition of the young Bhaskar that, of the three branches of the philosophical project he embarked on in the 1960s – a realist philosophy of science, a realist philosophy of social science and critique of the philosophical ideologies that constrain human freedom – ideology-critique would prove the most important.¹² *From Science to Emancipation* brings this out perhaps better than any other work, but it broadens and deepens our understanding of ideology-critique to include, not just the theory of Karl Marx (whose influence is handsomely acknowledged [pp. 217–19]), but theories of emancipation in general, West and East, which

whether secular or religious, have always posited a level of human nature or potential which, in some way, either man himself, or his existing social order, inhibits, stunts, suppresses or even altogether screens or occludes. The task of emancipation has characteristically been conceived as involving the throwing off of this emergent oppressive level which reposes on the primary, foundational but suppressed level. (p. xii)

This is the dialectic of deep realist and surface irrealist categorical structures to which I have already alluded. In the course of reading the book, we come to see that it is ultimately the fundamental logic of emancipatory critique entrained by this dialectic that propels Bhaskar's system beyond realism to metaRealism. There are a number of milestones along the way. First, the basic

¹² I mooted this as a possibility in Mervyn Hartwig, 'Introduction' to *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, by Roy Bhaskar (London: Routledge, [1986] 2009), xi–xli xl–xli. For an account of the intuition, see Bhaskar with Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism*, 33, 37–8, 55.

structure of emancipatory critique and the theories of the TINA formation and the demi-real¹³ that it entrains are already given in the argument of transcendental realism for the inexorability of ontology: not only is ontology necessary, but if your ontology is inadequate, you will necessarily presuppose in your practice an adequate one (pp. 172, 217). Second, this already presupposes ontological and alethic truth – that truth is fundamentally a real feature of the world:

[H]ow could we live in a world which was not constituted by truths? What would we be doing? Such a world would be a subjectivist – a huge subjectivist – illusion. It would mean, really, that there would be no constraint, either within me, or outside me, or on me doing anything. As soon as you introduce the idea of a constraint on your potentiality you have to have the idea of alethic truth, that that constraint is truly a constraint on your potentiality. (p. 286)

Third, implicit within the notion of alethic truth is a concept of truth or reality as absolute (p. 187).¹⁴ Fourth, implicit within that in a context of depth-stratification is the notion of an ultimate or metaReal stratum of identity-in-difference, already mooted in *Dialectic*, ingredient in and sustaining everything else, analogously to the ingredience of fundamental particles in emergent levels of being – the absolute as such (pp. 166, 181), otherwise known in PMR as the ground-state and cosmic envelope. Fifth – and this is crucial – the experience of union or identity in the moment of

¹³ *From Science to Emancipation* contains the first published reference to demi-reality (Ch. 2, ‘Critical realism and Marxism’ [March 1997], 55). Bhaskar (personal communication) had been using the concept in oral presentations from 1994. The fundamental structure of a TINA compromise formation, a concatenation of which constitutes the demi-real or web of *maya* (illusion), is identical with the structure apprehended, tacitly or otherwise, in emancipatory thought: ‘the suppression by the false of the truth on which it depends and which sustains it’ (p. 219).

¹⁴ Cf. ‘[O]ne’s account of the real grounds or reasons for something is fallible, but the grounds themselves are not . . . Ontological “infallibilism” is necessary for epistemic fallibilism.’ Bhaskar with Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism*, 131–2.

absolute transcendence in any process of learning or discovery can only be rendered fully intelligible on the basis that it involves

the union between something already enfolded within the discovering agent, brought up to consciousness by a moment of Platonic anamnesis or recall,¹⁵ with the alethic self-revelation of the being known, existing outside him (p. xii)

– i.e. it involves the union of two beings at the level of the implicit, supramental consciousness of their ground-states, entailing the theory of generalized co-presence or interconnectedness – that at the level of fundamental possibility or alethia everything is implicitly contained within everything else. From there it is but a short step to link ‘the latent immanent teleology of praxis’¹⁶ (the pulse of freedom of *Dialectic*) to the immanent teleology of the ground-state and cosmic envelope, and to view everything in the universe as enchanted and as ‘in the process of becoming one with its ground-state’ (p. 277).¹⁷ This move constitutes an immanent critique of Marx’s theory, which ‘does successfully capture a deep, perhaps the deepest dual level, in our social structure’¹⁸ but

one which presupposes, and depends on the efficacy of a deeper, untheorised level, that of the ground-state qualities of unrecognised (non-commodified) creativity and unconditional love and other ground-state qualities that Marx did not theorise, just as his vision of a communist society

¹⁵ This does *not* mean, Bhaskar subsequently explains (p. 244), that knowledge is, as for Plato, ‘basically recollection’, rather that the potential to see it, which is always already enfolded within us, is awakened.

¹⁶ Roy Bhaskar, *Plato Etc.: The Problems of Philosophy and their Resolution* (London: Routledge, [1994] 2010), 154.

¹⁷ PMR is thus a form of pantheism, which, however, is significantly different from the Platonic pantheism espoused by Nagel (‘Secular philosophy’) and Hegelian pantheism (see for example Sebastian Job, ‘Human sciences at the edge of pantheism: God and the limits of ontological realism’ in Mervyn Hartwig and Jamie Morgan (eds), *Critical Realism and Spirituality* (London: Routledge, 2011), 170–86.

¹⁸ Bhaskar, *The Philosophy of MetaReality*, 356.

actually depends on the process of self-realisation or enlightenment and its universalisation that the individual process [‘the free development of each’] both implies and presupposes for its completion.¹⁹

It is also an immanent critique of critical realism which, although it provides ‘the best account of what we have to get rid of’ (p. 266), no more than Marx can satisfactorily resolve the paradox or antinomy of the co-presence of realism and irrealism, essential freedom and actual slavery, potential plenty and dire scarcity (pp. 128f., 156, 171f.).

If realism is true . . . why is it that irrealism is so dominant? Well irrealism is so dominant because it reflects the irrealist, reified, heteronomous, oppressive structures of the societies in which we exist. Realism can only be conceived to be true if it reflects a deeper, more basic level which most of us have not fully developed or have so overlaid with structures that are irrealist in character that we find it difficult either to see why most people are irrealist, reified or unfree or to believe that realism, freedom, spontaneity, creativity, love, can actually be alethically true. (p. 171)

The antinomy is resolved, then, by the thesis, first articulated in *From East to West* and the presentations leading up to it, and thereafter given a more secular cast, that

¹⁹ Bhaskar, *The Philosophy of MetaReality*, 356, n. 10. On Enrique Dussel’s reading, Marx does actually theorize the non-commodified creativity of ‘living labour’, which by contrast to labour-power stands outside capital as ‘not-capital’ and is the ultimate source of value, though of course he cannot ground this at the level of the absolute. See Enrique Dussel, *Towards an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861–3*, trans. Yolanda Angulo, ed. Fred Moseley (London: Routledge, 2001) and C. J. Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx’s ‘Capital’* (Leiden: Brill, 2002). Before 2001, Bhaskar himself had not won through to the insight that the alethia of irrealism is, not realism, as he indicated in an address in August 2000 (p. 170), but metaRealism.

man is essentially godlike, subsisting and acting in a world of relativity and duality. A difference springs up only as a product of illusion. And it is the essential nature of man to come to see through this illusion and to realise their self-consciousness as free and/or godlike. (p. 129)

What we have here is a truly thoroughgoing naturalism that completely recasts the naturalism espoused by the positivistic, and tacitly endorsed by the Kantian, tradition.²⁰ The great aporia of the former is its inability to sustain an account of intentional causality, and the great mirroring aporia of the latter is the unknowability of the self that confers intelligibility on the world (p. 11). The partial critical realist resolution of both aporiai is carried through in the philosophy of metaReality. Both self and world are knowable, and human consciousness and intentional agency are emergent powers of the fundamental structure of possibility of the universe. This immediately entrains a critique of those religious traditions that emphasize God's ontological transcendence at the expense of his immanence, as well as of the doctrine of original sin or fallenness and of emancipation or

²⁰ Cf. '[N]ature without humanity contains almost all the categories of the dialectic', with the exception of categorial error (p. 77) and the rational kernel of Hegelian dialectic, involving transcendence and emergence, applies 'by slight extension of the argument' to the non-human world (p. 57). The charge of 'anti-naturalism' has been brought against Bhaskar's *The Possibility of Naturalism* (Ted Benton, 'Realism in social science: some comments on Roy Bhaskar's *The Possibility of Naturalism*', *Radical Philosophy* 27 1981, 13–21), but in fact Bhaskar rescues naturalism by thoroughly revising our understanding of the natural order. '[H]ow strange the truth about physical reality must be', writes Galen Strawson, a professed Spinozan (a)theist, 'given that consciousness is itself a wholly physical phenomenon' (Strawson, 'Religion is a sin', p. 26). But of course there is a sense in which it is not so strange, it is natural, and we are natural beings. It is we who are estranged from an adequate understanding of our relation to nature (cf. Peter Dickens, 'Society, subjectivity and the cosmos', *Journal of Critical Realism* 10(1) 2011, 5–35). On PMR, the potential for human consciousness is enfolded in 'physical reality' from the outset, and it is contingent that such consciousness has emerged and whence it will evolve; for Strawson, by contrast, 'good acts, good states of mind, are part of the history of the universe for ever' ('Religion is a sin', p. 28).

salvation as coming from without rather than, necessarily, from within: a transcendent god entails an immanent god, that people have the potential within them to conform to god's will (p. 358).²¹

There is a great deal else that is clarified or illuminated in *From Science to Emancipation*. Yes, Bhaskar does think that Marx got the fundamental structures of capitalism right (p. 55), and that class has relative primacy in social explanation (pp. 198–9) and the economy primacy under capitalism (p. 195) – can any sane person doubt it in these days of reverberating financial crisis and enforced compliance with the dictates of the market? Furthermore, in our world of globalizing capital, the demi-real is literally waging war against absolute reality, 'the vicious world' of commodification and reification against 'the virtuous world', for possession of relative reality; and although it can never ultimately triumph, it could well destroy the physical basis of our existence before people decide to walk away from it (p. 130; see also pp. 179, 195, 199, 251, 284).²² *Pace* much of the Marxist tradition, however, ideas are 'indisputably the dominant force in history' and getting them right is of the utmost importance (p. 170). One of Bhaskar's great gifts as a philosopher is his ability to identify with utmost precision a debilitating aporia within a tradition of thought and resolve it with a great and clear idea, the promulgation of which he is then 'totally clear and single-pointed about' – as he recommends we all should be in the pursuit of any goal, for it will eventually lead us into our *dharma* (pp. 345, 356). What the emancipatory projects of the West – communist, socialist and social democratic alike – have signally failed to address is the question of who will educate the educators. The primacy of self-transformation in social change is the obvious remedy of this lack, and it shines

²¹ See also Roy Bhaskar with Mervyn Hartwig, 'Beyond East and West', in *Critical Realism and Spirituality*, eds Mervyn Hartwig and Jamie Morgan (London: Routledge, 2011), 187–202.

²² Cf. 'you cannot be a truly spiritual being unless you are committed to the overthrow of capitalism' (Bhaskar, *The Philosophy of MetaReality*, 354).

through in this book: ‘if you want to transform society, you have got to educate and transform yourself’ (p. 276). ‘So little creativity, so little love, had been allowed to be expressed under actually existing socialism’ (p. 275).²³ We will never be rid of master–slavery until we get rid of the master–slavery internalized within our embodied personalities and consistently act consistently with our ground-states.

This moral is brought home in a stunning meditation on the theme of love that concludes the volume. This was abstracted from material developed for a workshop for residents of Kolkata, mainly but not exclusively academics, a few days before 9/11 in the gardens of the Rabindranath Tagore Ashram in Santiniketan, West Bengal. Invoking the paths to union with totality of the Vedic tradition, specifically the paths of truth (*jnana* yoga), of practice (*karma* yoga) and of love (*bhakti* yoga), Bhaskar demonstrates that, though distinct, they are ultimately one: a tri-unity. For love, first, is at the heart of the three modes in which non-duality sustains duality, corresponding to that other critical realist trinity, the domains of the empirical/conceptual, the actual and the real, respectively: it is the fine structure or ultimate binding force of the universe (closely linked with *sat-chit-ananda* or the implicit bliss-consciousness of beings); it is involved centrally in our social interactions, especially in the form of transcendental identity consciousness; and it is a natural ground-state property of human and other beings – indeed, the totality (cosmic envelope, god) is above all ‘pure unbounded love’ (p. 353). Second, beginning with self-love or love of our essential self, love radiates, like ripples in a pool, in ever-widening circles of union (totalities): love for another human, for all humans, for all beings, and finally for god or the cosmic envelope, on which the ground-states of all beings sit and are interrelated. Because love of self, which properly understood is

²³ A more straightforwardly secular version of the primacy of self-transformation is nowadays receiving strong support from within the Marxist tradition. See Michael A. Lebowitz, *The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010). Lebowitz draws on his experience as an erstwhile advisor to the Chávez regime in Venezuela.

love of god (the god within) – ‘*god is . . . the only thing you can love*’ (p. 351, original emphasis) – is a precondition for the other circles of love, and true love is always ‘love loving love’ (pp. 350, 359), namely you in your ground-state loving the quality of love in the ground-state of other beings, these circles constitute ever-widening forms of self-realization, of action in consistency with our ground-states. Finally, both the path of truth and the path of practice centrally involve love, for the conatus to truth is a drive to union with what you seek to know and the conatus to free flourishing a drive to the totality that is universal self-realization. In this way, the conatus to truth (theory) and freedom (practice) – epistemological dialectics and emancipatory axiology – find their ultimate unifying basis in love, and ‘the coherence of theory and practice in practice’ of *Dialectic*²⁴ is beautifully finessed as the coherence of love. Towards the end of the piece Bhaskar engages briefly in cosmological speculation that addresses the deep human future. The path of love issues first in individual self-realization, marking the beginning of the return cycle from alienation, then in universal self-realization or eudaimonia (the secular counterpart of the heaven on earth or theosis of the religious traditions), inaugurating an epoch of unconstrained flourishing and development, for ‘no heteronomy . . . can withstand the scrutiny and power of love’ (p. 352). Next it issues in complete union, a universal becoming one or merging with the cosmic totality (universal god-realization), as in the state of *fana* in the Sufi tradition and *nirvana* in the Buddhist, a merging which sees the elimination not just of demi-reality but of relative reality as such. Finally, we can imagine the cycle of cosmotheogeny coming to an end analogously to Big Crunch, and then being repeated, from autopoiesis out of nothing to universal god-realization. This is in no sense a posthumanism, for that tradition stresses the uniqueness and separateness of humanity from the cosmos, not its unity with it.²⁵ It is rather a very

²⁴ Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (London: Routledge, [1993] 2008), 207.

²⁵ See for example Samuel Wilkinson and Nick Haslam, ‘Is the future more or less human? Different views of humanness in the posthumanism debate’, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 39(2) 2009, 247–66.

radical humanism, an ‘anthropocosmism’²⁶ that views humans from the perspective of the universe, on which the whole of being is creatively unfolding, it is entirely contingent that we humans are playing a role in this,²⁷ and whether and how we continue to do so is very much up to us.

Mervyn Hartwig
May/June 2011

²⁶ Seo MinGyu, ‘Bhaskar’s philosophy as anti-anthropism: a comparative study of Eastern and Western thought’, *Journal of Critical Realism* 7(1) 2008, 5–28.

²⁷ Bhaskar rejects the argument for god from fine tuning or ‘anthropic coincidences’ as ‘absurd’ because the chances of any concretely singular being being what it is in the universe as we know it (for example, of you being you) are always astronomical and for all we know there may be an infinity of universes (p. 276).

Table 1 The moments of the philosophy of critical realism and metaReality mapped to the stadia of the ontological–axiological chain and the twofold process of immanent critique

<i>Stadion/Moment</i>	<i>1M Non-identity</i>	<i>2E Negativity</i>	<i>3L Totality</i>	<i>4D Transformative agency</i>	<i>5A Spirituality</i>	<i>6R (Re-) enchantment</i>	<i>7A/Z Non-duality</i>
CR/PMR as a whole: thinking being	as such and in general	as process + as for 1M	as a totality + as for 2E	as incorporating transformative praxis and reflexivity + as for 3L	as incorporating a spiritual or a transcendental dimension + as for 4D	as incorporating enchantment + as for 5A	as incorporating non-duality + as for 6R
Form of reflexivity – immanent critique of PDM + CR	classical modernism	high modernism + 1M	modernization theory + 1M, 2E	postmodernism + 1M, 2E, 3L	triumphalism and endism/ fundamentalism + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D	triumphalism and endism/ fundamentalism + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D, 5A	triumphalism and endism/ fundamentalism + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D, 5A
TR: thinking being as	structured and differentiated						
CN inflection: thinking being as	containing mind and concepts	negativity, dualism, contradiction, emergence					
EC inflection: thinking being as	intrinsically valuable	negativity qua absenting constraints (ills)	totality as including values (retotalization)				

DCR inflection: alethic truth (reality principle, axiological necessity); underlying identity-in-difference; co-presence; the pulse of freedom

negativity qua (determinate) absence, generalized to the whole of being as real, primary to presence and essential to change

totality maximized by praxis (which absents incompleteness); dialectical universalizability; unity-in-diversity

transformative praxis and **reflexivity** (the unity of theory and practice in practice, emancipatory axiology)

TDCR inflection: underlying identity-in-difference – transcendentally real self and God (the absolute) as the truth or ground of reality; co-presence

transcendence (the achievement of identity or unity in a total context) as essential to change and the rational kernel of any learning process; creativity

unconditional love spontaneous right-action (realization of reflexivity, i.e. self-realization)

spirituality fulfilled intentionality; universal self-realization; reflexivity generalized as cosmic consciousness

(Continued)

Table 1—continued

	Stadion/Moment	1M Non-identity	2E Negativity	3L Totality	4D Transformative agency	5A Spirituality	6R (Re-) enchantment	7A/Z Non-duality
PMR inflection: the spiritual exposition of being – thinking being as	underlying identity-in-difference (implicitly conscious) – ground-state and cosmic envelope (the absolute, non-duality, metaReality) as the truth or ground of reality; generalized co-presence	transcendence as ubiquitous in everyday life; transcendental identification in consciousness,* transcendental emergence (creativity)	unconditional love; transcendental holism or teamwork; synchronicity	spontaneous right-action (transcendental agency); practical mysticism; dialectically universalized synchronicity	spirituality as a necessary condition of everyday life; universal self-realization	enchantment* – being as intrinsically meaningful, valuable and sacred; generalized hermeneutics and semiotics; enhanced human perception and hermeneutical powers	(awakening of) non-duality being being (cosmic consciousness, at-homeness); human creative powers unbound (the unlimited self)	

* Introduced in TDCR but not nearly so fully thematized and argued for.

Note: This is a modified version of M. Hartwig, 'Introduction', *Dictionary of Critical Realism*, ed. M. Hartwig (London: Routledge, 2007), Table 1, pp. xvi–xvii. 'Moments' are the phases of the philosophical system as they develop diachronically. 'Stadia' are the fundamental features of the ontological–axiological chain, or the self-structuration of being, as apprehended in the system. Why they are designated 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D, 5A, 6R and 7A/Z is explained in M. Hartwig, 'MELD', *Dictionary*, Hartwig (ed.), pp 295–303. Apart from the fact that 7A/Z and 6R are both elaborated by PMR, it will be seen that the individual stadia of this schema (columns) correspond to the (main emphasis of) the developing moments of the system (rows). This means that (to take the example of PMR), in thinking being *primarily* as non-duality, PMR necessarily also thinks it as enchantment, spirituality, right-action, love, creativity and identity-in-difference; and so on for the other moments. The main emphasis or focus of each moment is indicated in bold, and may be taken as indicating the chief aporia in the previous phase that it remedies.

Table 2 The philosophical discourse of modernity and the critical realist and metaRealist critique

<i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (PDM)</i>		<i>The Critical Realist and MetaRealist Critique</i>		
Moment of PDM	Defining characteristics	Corresponding CR/PMR concepts and critique	Moment of CR/PMR	Main station and concept(s): understanding being as
Classical modernism (CM)	(1) ego-, anthro-centricity or -centrism, etc. (atomism) (2) abstract universality (actualism, irrealism) (both underpinned by the epistemic fallacy) 'the intrinsic exterior'	the self as social and interrelated at a fundamental level with the cosmos; dialectical universality	TR	1M non-identity; being as structured, differentiated and changing; holy trinity: judgemental rationality, epistemic relativism, ontological realism
High modernism (HM)	(3) incomplete totality (critique of CM) (follows from (2)) (4) lack of reflexivity (critique of CM) (follows from (3))	open totality, reflexivity; critiques HM's substitutionism, elitism, reductive materialism	CN	2E process, including absence or negativity and contradiction; emergence; irreducibility of mind

(Continued)

Table 2—continued

<i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity</i> (PDM)		<i>The Critical Realist and MetaRealist Critique</i>		
Moment of PDM	Defining characteristics	Corresponding CR/PMR concepts and critique	Moment of CR/PMR	Main station and concept(s) understanding being as
Modernisation theory and practice (M)	(5) unilinearity (5') judgementalism (5'') disenchantment	multilinearity, open systems; dialogue; (re-) enchantment	EC	3L totality; internal relationality, holistic causality, explanatory critique
Postmodernism (PM)	(6) formalism and (6') functionalism (critique of PDM, stressing identity and difference, and rejecting universality) (7) materialism (critique of PDM)	accepts difference but reinstates unity or (dialectical) universality (connection) and critiques PM's judgemental irrationalism and lack of a concept of emancipation	DCR	4D transformative agency, reflexivity, emancipatory axiology, unity-in-diversity

Triumphalism and endism/renascent fundamentalism (T/F)	(8) ontological monovalence (a purely positive account of reality, denegating change)	ontological polyvalence, the reality of absence; accentuated critique of materialism (implicit consciousness pervades being); critique of subject-object duality; false absolute of market and other fundamentalisms	TDCR	5A spirituality the absolute (God); universal self-realisation; co-presence; transcendence
			PMR	6R enchantment, being as intrinsically meaningful, valuable and sacred 7A/Z non-duality (primacy of unity and identity over difference) or the absolute (ground-state and cosmic envelope) – infinite or unending possibility; generalised co-presence; transcendence

Note: Columns should be read vertically (developmentally), such that (broadly) T/F > PM > M > HM > C,M, and PMR > TDCR > DCR > EC > CN > TR.

Table 3 Key concepts of PMR mapped to the stadia of the ontological–axiological chain

<i>Stadion of the ontological–axiological chain/phase of PMR > CR</i>	<i>1M Non-identity/ TR</i>	<i>2E Negativity/ CN</i>	<i>3L Totality/EC</i>	<i>4D Transformative agency/DCR</i>	<i>5A Spirituality/ TDCR</i>	<i>6R (Re-) enchantment/ PMR</i>	<i>7A/Z Non-duality/ PMR</i>
Thinking being	as <i>such and in general</i>	as <i>process</i> + as for 1M	as <i>a whole</i> + as for 2E	as <i>praxis</i> + as for 3L	as <i>spiritual</i> + as for 4D	as <i>enchanted</i> + as for 5A	as <i>non-dual</i> + as for 6R
Form of reflexivity – immanent critique of PDM + CR	classical modernism	high modernism + 1M	modernization theory + 1M, 2E	postmodernism + 1M, 2E, 3L	triumphalism and endism/ fundamentalism + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D	triumphalism and endism/ fundamentalism + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D, 5A	
Key PMR concepts	underlying identity-in-difference (implicitly conscious) – ground-state and cosmic envelope (the absolute, non-duality, metaReality) as	transcendence as ubiquitous in everyday life; transcendental identification in consciousness; transcendental emergence (creativity); accentuation	unconditional love; transcendental holism or teamwork; unification, unity; reciprocity, synchronicity; generalization of four-planar social	spontaneous right-action (transcendental agency); practical mysticism; dialectically universalized synchronicity	spirituality as a necessary condition of everyday life; fulfilled intentionality; primacy of self-referentiality; universal self-realization	enchantment – being as intrinsically meaningful, valuable and sacred; generalized hermeneutics and semiotics; enhanced human perception and	(awakening of) non-duality; being being (cosmic consciousness, at-homeness); human creative powers unbound (the unlimited self); open,

<p>the truth or ground of reality; the constellational identity or unity of non-quality and duality; generalized co-presence</p>	<p>of creative power of thought</p>	<p>being to include mental and emotional <i>sui generis</i> realities</p>	<p>hermeneutical powers, direct consciousness-to-consciousness causality</p>	<p>unending evolution</p>
<p>Modes or forms of transcendence (non-dual components of action)</p>	<p><i>transcendental consciousness</i> (supramental; at or of the ground-state)</p>	<p><i>transcendental identification</i> (feature of consciousness; becoming one in being)</p>	<p><i>transcendental teamwork</i> or holism (feature of agency; becoming one in or in the context of one's agency)</p>	<p><i>transcendental retreat</i> into self-identity (feature of consciousness; becoming one in being)</p>
<p>Direction of transcendence</p>	<p>ground of 1–4</p>	<p>1. outwards, onto (away from subjectivity into objectivity – loss of self)</p>	<p>3. on, at or in (absorption in activity)</p>	<p>ground of 1–4</p>
		<p>4. with</p>	<p>2. inwards, into (away from objectivity into subjectivity – loss of the object)</p>	

(Continued)

Table 3—continued

<i>Station of the ontological–axiological chain/phase of PMR > CR</i>	<i>IM Non-identity/ TR</i>	<i>2E Negativity/ CN</i>	<i>3L Totality/EC</i>	<i>4D Transformative agency/DCR</i>	<i>5A Spirituality/ TDCR</i>	<i>6R (Re-) enchantment/ PMR</i>	<i>7A/Z Non-duality/ PMR</i>
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Modes of transcendental or supramental consciousness at or of the ground-state (mindfulness (content without form: repletion of content) → spontaneous right-action → mindlessness)

Principles of self-referentiality or hermeticism (primacy of) (practical mysticism)

Principles of self-referentiality or hermeticism (primacy of) (radical hermeticism (primacy of self-referentiality entails the liberation and flourishing of all beings))

Qualities of the ground-state	transcendental ground	transcendental emergence	transcendental identification or union	transcendental agency	transcendental reflection	transcendental perception	awakening of non-duality
Human ground-state (<i>dharmic</i>)	<i>will</i> unbound energy or potential; freedom (the capacity to do one thing rather than another)	<i>creativity</i> freedom as absents constraints (negative completion)	<i>love</i>	<i>right-action</i>	<i>fulfilled intentionality</i> or self-realization or enlightenment (positive completion)	<i>enchantment</i>	<i>awakening of non-duality</i> universal fulfillment or peace
Conditions for self-realization	being in your ground-state or <i>dharma</i> (absence of atomistic ego)	clear mind, single-pointedness; mindlessness or innocence	pure heart	balanced body	absence of belief in the brute physicality of the world	enchantment	awakening
Elements of the human creative process (action)	will (initial impulse or calling)	creation (emergence) thought/unthought	formation, shaping feeling or emotion	making (physical action and objectification)	fulfilled or realized intentionality (reflection of objectification to the maker)	enchanted resonance of fulfilled intentionality	awakening to the non-dual ground of fulfilled intentionality (self- and god-realization)

(Continued)

Table 3—continued

<i>Stadion of the ontological–axiological chain/phase of PMR > CR</i>	<i>1M Non-identity/TR</i>	<i>2E Negativity/CN</i>	<i>3L Totality/EC</i>	<i>4D Transformative agency/DCR</i>	<i>5A Spirituality/TDCR</i>	<i>6R (Re-) enchantment/PMR</i>	<i>7A/Z Non-duality/PMR</i>
Dialectic of learning	enfolded or implicit knowledge	discovery and recall or anamnesis (emergence of enfolded knowledge)	shaping (binding knowledge back into our innermost being – self-formation) and elaborating it)	objectifying knowledge in practice	reflection or fulfilment		
Circles of human love	1. self	2. another human	3. all humans	4. all beings	5. the absolute		
Cosmogony (cycle of creativity of being as such, eventually perhaps repeating)	polyvalent foundational impulse (unbound energy from implicit potential enfolded in absence)	creation (transcendental emergence)	formation, shaping	making (objectification)	fulfilled intentionality of the foundational impulse (reflection of objectification back to the creator)	enchanted resonance of fulfilled intentionality	universal awakening of non-duality (self- and god-realization); open, on-going

Cosmotheogeny (cycle of cosmic creation, eventually perhaps repeating*)	self-creation of the creator ex nihilo†	emergence of realm of duality, becoming and time	emergence of realm of demi-reality	individual self-realization (commencement of return cycle‡ from alienation)	individual and universal self-realization or eudaimonia (theosis or heaven on earth); the elimination of demi-reality	individual god-realization (oneness with totality)	universal god-realization; open, ongoing; the elimination of relative reality
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† Corresponding to the descent of consciousness in traditional cosmotheogenesis, and to Big Bang in modern cosmological theory

‡ Corresponding to the ascent of consciousness in traditional cosmotheogenesis

* Corresponding to cycles from Big Bang to Big Crunch in modern cosmological theory

Note. 7A/Z > 6R > 5A > 4D > 3L > 2E > 1M, so that 7A/Z constellationally contains all the rest.

Table 4 Key moments and figures of PMR mapped to the CR domains of reality

<i>Domains of Reality</i>	<i>Real</i> <i>experiences, concepts and signs</i> <i>events</i> <i>mechanisms</i>	<i>Actual</i> <i>experiences, concepts and signs</i> <i>events</i> <i>mechanisms</i>	<i>Empirical/Conceptual</i> <i>experiences, concepts and signs</i> <i>[events]</i> <i>[mechanisms]</i>
REALMS OF REALITY	ABSOLUTE REALITY the enfolded, the implicit (the implicate order); fields of implicitity conscious possibility	RELATIVE REALITY the unfolded, the explicit (the explicate order)	DEMI-REALITY the falsely unfolded
SOCIAL PRINCIPLE	love and peace	struggle	war, control
PHILOSOPHY	metaReality	critical realism	irrealism
ONTOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE	truth	realism	irrealism
META-PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLE (1)	non-duality (identity, identification, unity) (a property of consciousness)	duality (non-identity, without alienation but with the potential for it)	dualism (alienation)
META-PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLE (2)	truth (most basically the revelation of identity)	non-identity	mis-identification, error, falsity
ORIENTATION TO BEING	being being	thinking being	evading being

SUBJECTIVITY— OBJECTIVITY RELATION	unity-in-diversity	expressive unity	disrempion (alienation)
DIMENSIONS OF THE SELF	transcendental or alethic self or ground-state (a field of possibility)	embodied self	ego (a real illusion)
FORMS OF ENCHANTMENT	enchantment	re-enchantment	disenchantment (emergent false level or ideology)
FORMS OF FREEDOM	peace (dialectically = universal fulfilment)	freedom to (lessening of positive incompleteness or the absence of total development)	freedom from (elimination of negative incompleteness or heteronomous determinations)
MODES OF FREEDOM AND UNFREEDOM (non-alienation and alienation)	autonomy (identity – true for, to and of itself)	unity	alienation
FORM OF IDEOLOGY (demi-reality)	underlying generative falsity (alethic falsity)	practical	theoretical
FORM OF ALIENATION (demi-reality)	self-alienation	practical	conceptual
LOGIC OF MASTER— SLAVERY (demi-reality)	exploitation	conditionality of transactions	desire (as dominant motivation)
PATHS TO UNION WITH TOTALITY (a tri-unity)	truth (<i>jnana yoga</i>)	practice (<i>karma yoga</i>)	love (<i>bhakti yoga</i>)
THE HOLY TRINITY OF CRITICAL REALISM	ontological realism	epistemic relativity	judgemental rationality

(Continued)

Table 4—continued

<i>Domains of Reality</i>	<i>Real</i>	<i>Actual</i>	<i>Empirical/Conceptual</i>
<p>MODES IN WHICH ABSOLUTE REALITY SUSTAINS, IS CONNECTED WITH, AND IS ACCESSED IN, THE WORLD OF DUALITY</p> <p>FORMS OF UNITY OR IDENTITY (modes in which non-duality sustains duality)</p>	<p>ground or basis (ground-state, cosmic envelope)</p> <p>co-presence (a property of all beings)</p>	<p>mode of constitution (or reproduction/transformation) via transcendence</p> <p>reciprocity (a property of animate beings)</p>	<p>fine structure or deep interior† of all aspects of being</p> <p>transcendental identification (a property of consciousness)</p>
<p>MECHANISMS OF IDENTIFICATION (modes of connection of non-duality)</p>			

DYNAMIC OR EVOLUTIONARY FORM OF MECHANISMS OF IDENTIFICATION (modes of connection of non-duality)	attraction (integrated rhythmic)	synthesis (of spatio- temporally spread phenomena)	economy (generalized synchronicity or unfolding, inwardizing englobement)
FORMS OF TRANSCENDENCE	transcendental consciousness at or of the ground-state	transcendental agency or transcendental identification in agency (solo or teamwork)	transcendental identification in consciousness

† Fine structure pertains to the empirical/conceptual domain because it is implicit (ground-state) consciousness and can be experienced as such. It pertains equally to the domain of the real. This concept is not deployed in *Reflections on Meta-Reality*; it is introduced in the present volume at p. xiv.

Notz. Correspondences are sometimes loose, particularly in the case of those between domains and realms of reality: each of the realms have real, actual and empirical/conceptual dimensions. The items in bold in the rows after the first can be arranged in a triplex structure in exactly the same way as in the first row (for further exemplification, see Bhaskar and Hartwig 2010, Table 17, p. 115). Lowermost (primary) levels can then be seen to constellationally embrace upper (secondary) levels, hence to have ontological, epistemological and logical priority over them – the priority of the enfolded over the unfolded, the possible over the actual. Where upper levels, which thus presuppose primary levels, embody categorical error and ignorance, they function to occlude lower levels. Square-bracketed levels are not given in the concept of levels without square brackets but are presupposed by it.

Part One

**The Development of
Critical Realism**

Chapter One

From a Philosophy of Science to a Philosophy of Universal Self-realisation*

Part I: From Science to Freedom

It is a real pleasure to be here with you in Mumbai and to be the guest of this institute. What I want to do is to talk this morning and tomorrow about the progressive development of critical realism starting out from a concern with science, through various stages, to a concern with questions of human realisation and ultimately universal self-realisation. There are five stages, as I understand it, in the development of critical realism. It started out as a philosophy of science, a critique of positivism but also of neo-Kantianism and radical philosophers of science like Kuhn and Feyerabend who said many shocking things which have also been resumed in postmodernist discourse today. That I call *transcendental realism*. Then it moved on to *critical naturalism* and concerned itself with the dispute between naturalists and anti-naturalists, between positivism and hermeneutics, and it tried to resolve this dispute. Basically it was oriented against the dualisms that beset social theory in the mid- to late 1970s

* Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 1 December 2000.

and still to a large extent do today. Those are the two things that I will concentrate on today, that is problems in the philosophy and methodology of science, but particularly leading on to social science. Tomorrow I will go through the next three phases of critical realism, which I will briefly mention today. The third stage in critical realism broke down one particular dichotomy, characteristic of the dualisms of social science, which was very popular and insistent particularly in western thought: that one could not move from a factual statement or any set of factual statements to a value judgement. This prohibition was called Hume's law, and I argued that one could move from facts to values. And I did this through what I called the *theory of explanatory critique*. This then provided the lynchpin by means of which I moved from a concern with science to a concern with questions of values and human freedom and emancipation. The fourth stage of the development was a dialectical one in which I developed a system which I called *dialectical critical realism*, which went into dialectical notions such as absence, totality, negativity and so on. In the latest stage of my work I have gone on to questions of the convergence of east and west liberatory thought around what could be loosely called a spiritual dimension. This I have called *transcendental dialectical critical realism*. Those later stages, particularly the dialectical and the spiritual turns within critical realism, I will be dealing with later. Here I will mainly be talking about science and social science.

So how did critical realism start off? It started off really as an account of science which critiqued the seeming incapacity of philosophies of science to really say anything about the world. As Professor Singh has mentioned I was initially a practical economist and I wanted to do a thesis on the relevance of economic theory to underdeveloped countries. And it seemed to me to be very difficult to do this in a rational manner because most philosophy as we have it today embodied presuppositions about the nature of the world which were so obviously false that we have no guidelines for any sort of assessment of the relevance of economic theory to the problems of developing countries. So I had to go back to what was probably my first love, intellectually, that was philosophy. What I found was that existing philosophy of

science, in the mid- and late 60s, when I started work on the movement of thought which eventually became critical realism, really pivoted on a central theory, that is the Humean theory of causal laws. This was a theory that the natural world was governed by causal laws which were understood as empirical regularities, that was as constant conjunctions of events. This theory underpinned the very fashionable Popper/Hempel model of explanation. I think you are probably all familiar with this, this is still the orthodoxy. It is called the deductive nomological model of explanation and it says that to explain an event you subsume it under a set of initial conditions and a set of covering laws; that is how you effect explanation. Now those covering laws are empirical regularities, constant conjunctions of events, Humean empirical regularities. This pivotal Humean theory of causal laws finds its way into very radical approaches to social science. For example Habermas, in describing in his theory of our three constitutive interests in knowledge, our knowledge-constitutive interest in prediction and control, presupposes a world which can be described and explained in a Popperian/Hempelian way. That account of reality informs his understanding of nature. Even without going to Habermas' standard anti-naturalist account of social science the dominant hermeneutical accounts of the 70s and 80s all took a very broad contrast and argued for the categorial differentiation of social science, the absolute differentiation of social science from natural science, because they believed that the natural world was described by constant conjunctions of events.

We can see this if we take what was a very influential text book in the 70s which was Winch's *Idea of a Social Science*. His argument was that social phenomena could not be understood in the same way as natural phenomena but instead had to be understood in terms of the rule-governed linguistic paradigm that Wittgenstein had enunciated in his *Philosophical Investigations*. This led to two things, and there are essentially only two main arguments in his book. One is that constant conjunctions of events, that is empirical regularities, were neither necessary, as Weber had argued, nor sufficient for understanding social life. This was achieved in an entirely different way, namely by the

discovery of intelligible links in its subject matter. You could certainly say that that is what we are concerned to do in social science, namely to discover intelligible links. But of course the idea that natural science is just concerned with the search for constant conjunctions is completely false, as I will go on to show in a moment. But it was tacitly presupposed and it provided the grounds for Winch's contrast. His second argument for the specificity of the social and the categorial differentiation of the social and natural sciences turned on the fact that social things, as distinct from physical things, have no existence apart from our conceptualisation of them. That of course is quite true, and that marks, at least in the first instance, a major difference between social and natural scientific methodology. But when he came to give his positive account of how social science was done we find there the displacement of themes from positivist philosophy of science. Thus rules function as a normative displacement of empirical regularities and the assumption is that conceptualisations which are ordered in a rule-like way completely exhaust the subject matter of social science and that they are more or less incorrigible. So there is nothing for social science other than investigating the way that agents understand their own subject matter as intelligible, and furthermore, that social science must accept the way that the social agents interpret their own subject matter as incorrigible. Those were assumptions or theses that I want to take issue with. So that is really why I felt that it was very important to come to terms with the Humean theory of causality.

So what we do in philosophy is that we start from phenomena, as in any other subject matter. You cannot just say something is false, you cannot just juxtapose in philosophy your idea of the world with something like the world. What you have to do is engage in an immanent critique of some existing conceptualisation or theory of the world. You have to engage in a reassessment of something which your protagonist thinks is pivotal and which you can show he has given a wrong account of.

Now there was one thing that positivism and positivists, empiricists and neo-Kantians all agreed was crucial to science, and that was experience. Experience, and more particularly experimental activity, is the heart of the empiricists' account of science.

Actually I did not disagree with this, but whether I did or did not, on the method of immanent critique that had to be my starting point. What I did was try to show that experimental activity actually presupposes a different ontology or account of the world. So let us see how this would work out. What the experimental scientist does in the laboratory is to artificially generate a closure of what is essentially an open system, in order to identify the working of a single generative mechanism or causal complex, a single process,¹ or complex, totality or field, whatever the object of study, in isolation from the influence of other factors. Only when he has effected that closure experimentally can he identify an empirical invariance. This means that what he is looking for, the object of scientific investigation, is not a surface pattern of events, because the surface pattern of events in natural life is chaotic. We do not actually find empirical invariances anywhere in the world happening spontaneously. The whole point of experimental activity is to generate an empirical invariance. Now if it is artificially produced, then we have to ask: is it that all man is doing in the experimental laboratory is discovering something he himself produced? The answer is of course not. Because what he or she is trying to do is isolate a structure, a causal complex, a process which will work independently of that closure, independently of whether he artificially closes the system or not. In virtue of that he can then apply it to the open systemic world where it will act in co-determination with a multiplicity of other factors, a multiplicity of other mechanisms, a multiplicity of other agencies. To give you an example, the law of gravity is operating on me now but I am not falling to the ground, it is operating tendentially, it is one of the factors that go to explain why I am sitting relatively stationary. It is actually not operating empirically, it is operating at a supra-empirical level, what I call *transfactually*, as one of the tendencies which are operating on me now. If you wanted to do a test of the law of gravity we would have to set up a laboratory situation and then measure the rate at which a heavy object falls to the ground. That we can only do in a few special contexts.

¹ I entirely agree with Professor Singh in wanting to accentuate process.

This had a very important implication because it does mean that what the scientist is doing is searching for something *behind* the pattern of events which generates them, whether or not we have a closure of that system of events—irrespective of the human activity which discovers it. So what I did was to argue that the field or the domain of the real is greater, more encompassing than the field of the actual, which describes the pattern of events; and that in turn is greater than the field of the empirical, which describes the pattern of events that we actually apprehend. Because clearly there would be things, and there would be events, actual phenomena, even if humanity was not here to observe it, even if one particular agent was not here to observe it, or there was no agent to observe it—there would still be patterns in the world. The differentiation between the real, the actual and the empirical was a big break with empiricist ontology. As was the view of causal laws as the workings of generative structures, causal mechanisms and processes; that is, as being tendencies, tendencies which could be possessed without being exercised, which could be exercised without being realised, which could be realised without being manifest in a one to one way with any set of phenomena, and which also could be manifest without being detected or identified by men, that is by humanity. This was a radically new account of causality and it led to a completely different ontology.

It led to a view of the world as stratified, differentiated and changing as distinct from the implicit, Humean empirical realist ontology which informed almost all philosophy of science since at least the days of Hume. It was there in Kant, also in Hegel in his account of nature, but probably goes back far longer than Hume, perhaps back to Aristotle in the west, and it was certainly there as the general assumption of philosophers of science in the 60s and 70s. So we had—through this analysis of experimental activity and a similar analysis of the conditions of possibility of applied activity, that is, of what happens when we apply science in the open systemic world where we find that exactly the same categorial distinctions are presumed—a radically different account of the world.

However, at a meta-level it was very difficult to say this, because Hume and more especially Kant had declared a taboo on ontology. To use Wittgenstein's words, all we could do in philosophy was talk about what he called the net, the net of language, the network, the framework—not what the network described. In other words we could not talk directly about the world. Now it seemed to me pretty obvious that any claim about knowledge must tacitly presuppose something about the objects of knowledge. But that is not in itself a very strong argument so what our transcendental argument from experimental activity had done was to actually ask the Kantian question: what must be the case for sense experience, in its specific form of experimental activity, to be possible? But it had come to a radically non-Kantian conclusion that the *world* must be structured. Kant, you will remember, had talked about the structure within us and the way in which we, as scientists, imposed the categories and schematisms on the empirical manifold. So there was structure inside, but of what there was outside us, we could not say anything at all. The best we could say was that there was a thing in itself.

This taboo on ontology is still very strong. I call that taboo the epistemic fallacy. Let us look at some of its manifestations today. In postmodernism, in discourse theory, there is a general assumption that all you can do is talk about talk. It is most clearly explicit in the work of discourse theorists like Ernesto Laclau, but it is there in Derrida in a slightly different form, it is there in others associated with poststructuralism and postmodernism. So discourse becomes a kind of intertextuality, a kind of relating of one text to another text or talk. But what you have to do is ask what is the status of that talk: *is the talk real or not?* If the talk is not real then it can have no causal effect, then you have to ask what is the point of the talk at all. If the talk is admitted to be real, then you can re-refer to it; if the talk is to be intelligible it must be possible for that talk, that statement, that discourse, to become an object of a subsequent act of reference. We must be able to refer to what we have said again, and if we can refer to what we have said again, then there is at least one real object in the world. That is talk. So that is the thin edge of the wedge:

because once you accept the reality of discourse, of talk, then you can accept the reality of a referent for any discourse, just a straight first-order referent. So when I am talking about a table or when I am talking about culture, there is a referent in the real world which is that which I talk about. In the language of semiotics, what we have is not only the signifier, the talk, and the signified, the meaning or the concept, but we have the referent, the thing or object talked about by the word or words, and so we have the *semiotic triangle*. What the postmodernists and many structuralists and post-structuralists did was to leave out the referent. What realists tried to do was to put the referent back in.

This mistake of discourse theory is sometimes corrected by saying, well of course we admit there is the thing in itself, but there is no way to describe or get at it except by talk. So what is the point of having an ontology, because after all anything that you know you know under a particular description. That is fine. There are two ways to take this line of thought further. The first is this—it has often been said to me, by postmodernists and discourse theorists: of course we do not deny that there are things in themselves, and nor would I deny that there are things like stones, because you do not need to conceptualise them. But then I said to them, well, if you accept the reality of stones then why will you not accept the reality of the molecules and atoms that constitute them, why won't you accept the reality of the universe that englobes them. The thin edge of the wedge has already been made, once you can say anything about the world then you are into ontology. The question then is not whether or not to do ontology. The question is whether your ontology is correct or not, which means whether it is adequate to your subject matter.

Another line that postmodernists and discourse theorists, contemporary deniers of ontology, will take is the more classical Kantian response, which is to say well, this is all just anthropic, something which is happening subjectively within myself. So let us look at Kant from that standpoint. Kant as you know had a view, contrary to Hume, that our knowledge was structured, and actually the neo-Kantians of the late 60s and 70s like Popper, Hanson, Harré, Hesse and so on (as did the more radical post-

Kantians, Feyerabend and Kuhn) also had the same view. Now in its classical, Kantian form the structuration of knowledge occurs through the imposition of the categories. Now what was it that applied the categories to the empirical manifold sensed in sense experience, what was it that did the schematisms that made empirical science possible as a structured totality? It was the transcendental ego. And what was the status of the transcendental ego? For Kant it was unknowable: it was a thing in itself. But surely, if knowledge was real then that which made the knowledge had to be real. So that is the great aporia, that was the great weakness, the great problem with Kantianism is the fact that it hangs on an unknowable thing in itself *inside*. Not only is there an unknowable thing in itself outside, the whole system is posited on a transcendental ego or self which is the unknowable synthesiser of the empirical manifold. So ultimately the structure collapses in on itself. And something like that tendency of thought happens within all forms of neo-Kantianism and all systems of thought which take their lead from Kant.

Now let us revert to the main thread of my argument. There were many philosophers of science around that time who were having problems with orthodox philosophy of science. They were saying it leaves something out, it leaves out the way in which reality is pictured in the scientific imagination, the creative imagination of the scientists. So that certainly empirical invariances cannot be *sufficient* for a scientific theory. But what I was arguing was not only was it not sufficient, but it was not even *necessary*, because it was in fact false. It was false that the world was constituted by constant conjunctions of events—false, because they did not actually occur. This was a much more radical break and it gave us a structured world *out there* and a structured world *in here*, in the scientific community, knowledge was structured and that reflected in some way the stratification of the world.

Thus, one of the first and most fundamental theorems of transcendental realism, after the categorial distinctiveness of the real, the actual and the empirical, and the analysis of laws as tendencies, was the distinction between what I called then the intransitive dimension and the transitive dimension. More simply between ontology and epistemology, between the world and

knowledge. And what I argued for was that ontological realism was quite compatible with epistemological relativism, pluralism, diversity and indeed fallibilism. This is what neo-Kantians have got right: knowledge was a social process, but it was a social process which was designed to capture the ever deeper stratification of the world.

To show the sort of problem that philosophers of science in those days got into because they did not have a concept of the world, let us take Kuhn and Feyerabend. They formulated what was known as the problem of incommensurability. What was this problem? What they noted was that Newtonian theory and Einsteinian theory were so radically different in their conceptual structures that they shared no meanings in common. If they shared no meanings in common there was no way to compare them. So that is why they said they were ‘incommensurable’. This seemed to make science a process of irrational breaks or splits—that was actually how Kuhn formulated it, though he did it in a sociologically sophisticated way. Now let us see how a critical realist might approach this phenomenon of incommensurability. The critical realist does not deny the phenomenon at all, but by adding to that level of *epistemological relativism*, the levels of *ontological realism* and *judgmental rationalism*, the second and third levels of what we could call the holy trinity of transcendental realism as an account of science, it resolves the problem. First of all, the very formulation of the problem of incommensurability presupposes common referentiality, that there is an object world in common. No one bothers to say that physics and cricket are incommensurable or that Newtonian theory is incommensurable with classical music. Why? Because they are not describing the same world; intuitively you know that Newton and Einstein are describing the same world, describing the same phenomena. The problem however still remains that the way they describe it is radically different. So is it the case then that we have no grounds for preferring Einsteinian theory to Newtonian theory? No. What we can do is formulate a very simple criterion. We can say that Einsteinian theory is superior to Newtonian theory because Einsteinian theory can explain in *its* descriptions almost all or all the phenomena that Newtonian theory can explain under *its* descriptions *plus*

some phenomena that Newtonian theory cannot explain. That is actually the case. There are very few phenomena that we actually know, only about eight or nine test situations in which Newtonian theory comes unstuck in its terms. But Einsteinian theory can explain them in its terms. So we have a purely quantitative criterion for preferring Einsteinian to Newtonian theory.

This goes against something which is a very widespread assumption of western thought, which is that basically we do not really have any grounds for anything in life. Any grounds for belief. This is something which is resumed, though in a more sophisticated way, by postmodernists and others. Let us take a classic formulation of it. Hume said we have no grounds for not preferring the destruction of the world to my little finger. That is extraordinary. If it is the case that there are no grounds for not preferring the destruction of the whole world to my little finger then there must be something very wrong with philosophy. But there was certainly something wrong with Hume's example because the little finger is of course included within the whole world. So he could have saved the rest of his body by preferring the destruction of his little finger. What he was tacitly doing was detotalising, extruding himself from the rest of the world, alienating himself from the rest of the world, setting himself off against the rest of the world. This is a categorial tendency in philosophy which we will come to tomorrow. Another example of this, he said really, when you think of it, there are no grounds for leaving a building by the ground floor door rather than by the second floor window. But of course we do have very good grounds. Once we know the Newtonian theory of gravity we know why it is we fall to the ground, other things being equal. Even common sense and experience give us inductive grounds for that belief. This trinity of ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationalism allows us to sustain say the postmodernists' grasp on difference, the processual, the geo-historical, diversity and change, all of which are quite true, with ontological realism, that is, a belief in the existence of a reality which does not depend on our subjective interpretations of it and with judgmental rationality, that is, with the idea that we have better or worse grounds for belief or action. So we begin to sustain, through

the concepts of objectivity and truth, the possibility of better or worse grounds for beliefs and social practices, and hence we can eventually sustain the possibility of the project of human emancipation.

Transcendental realism had marked out a dialectic of scientific discovery, in which at each moment of time, science was seen as a kind of snapshot of what is essentially a process in motion. The nature of this process was always moving from the description of a domain of phenomena, a level of reality, to the underlying structures, mechanisms or processes which would explain it. This scientists did by the creative imagination of models of structures which, *if* they existed and acted in the way they imagined, would explain the phenomena which occurred. By rigorous empirical controls and tests they eventually eliminated all but one structure or causal complex. When they got to the point where they could actually empirically identify and describe that structure or complex, they then moved on to discover the deeper structure, field or totality that explained it. Thus we saw science as a process in motion, of reaching out to ever deeper levels of reality and building ever greater totalities. It gave us a different account of science, as engaged in the search for ever deeper structures or wider totalities which were relatively or absolutely independent of scientists, which would help to explain the phenomena they observed at some more superficial level.

One interesting consequence of the analysis of causal laws and the objects of scientific thought as tendencies of structures, was that we had to accept that powers, tendencies, liabilities, fields, capacities and so on were all real. Ontologically, epistemologically and logically this meant the possible was real and more important to science than the actual. So it reversed, as it were, the priorities between the possible and the actual. That is what I called *dispositional realism*. But another consequence of it was also very important and this I called *categorical realism*. It is obviously part of the logic of transcendental realism that the world is really there outside, transfactually efficaciously operating independently of the working scientist, or relatively independently, as we have to say when we come to domains like quantum physics. Now if that is the case, then what are we to say about causality, or

about space, time, process, totality? Are they real or not? The philosophers really from Aristotle, but particularly Kant and more recently Popper, have thought of categories as subjective classifications of the mind imposed on the phenomena or the empirical manifold. But transcendental realism said categories were real, they were out there, for example the world really was tensed, well, the social world was at least. Causality was really there, part of the general furniture of the world. So we had a categorial realism. It is obviously absurd, when you think of it, not to accept categorial realism. Because what would be the point of saying that Ohm's law and all the other laws known to physics and chemistry are real but not lawfulness as such? That would be like saying, OK, we have knives, forks, and spoons but we do not have cutlery because cutlery is a higher order concept. Or it would be like saying we have rupee notes, 10, 20, 50, 100 rupee notes, but we do not have the money system as such because money is a category.

Now if you regard philosophy as having as its subject matter the categories, then this means that philosophy becomes important. And if you are a working scientist and you are working with, thinking reality in terms of, an inadequate categorial framework, sooner or later if not necessarily you, then someone who is applying your work, will fall into a theory practice inconsistency. Let us assume that you understand in your practice that laws are transfactual, that they are not empirical regularities, but you still have in your mind the idea that they are empirical regularities, then you are really going to have a false account of what you do. This is theory–practice inconsistency or what some writers have called performative contradiction.

Now we come to what I think is the most general criterion of philosophy, that is *reflexivity*, the capacity of an account to adequately situate and sustain itself. Typically most philosophers themselves fall into theory–practice inconsistency. Let us go back to the working scientist; what he is actually doing in his practice is to presuppose something that, in his intellectual theory, he is denying. That gives us a very interesting figure, the figure of, if you like, ideology or false consciousness going along with right practice. What I want to say, and to show, is that even if you deny

ontology, you are still implicitly assuming it, you are implicitly assuming the truth of ontology. If you are an empiricist you are still a realist, you are an empirical realist. This is what I called the TINA aspect (TINA standing for There Is No Alternative); there is no alternative to ontology, there is no alternative to realism. Even more so, we see from the example of the working scientist there is no alternative to an assumption of the world as transfactually efficacious. That is, there is no alternative to tacitly presupposing the nature of reality as it is. There is no alternative to the truth, at whatever level it informs your practice, if your practice is to be efficacious. So this is a very important figure that we have hit upon now. This figure of the necessary presupposition by what is false of something that is true, for it to have causal efficacy. It plays a great role in the idea of social science and philosophy as having liberatory or emancipatory powers. Because one way a philosophy or a social science can be liberatory is by getting rid of that illusion, that false account, and so result in greater consistency and great reflexivity. If you have a theory-practice inconsistency then you are sooner or later going to fall into error. That is why it is important; and this is how philosophy can come to inform science and social science. That is really all I want to say about the philosophy of science—except to say that in my first book, *A Realist Theory of Science*,² I did ask: but how do you explain all this? Ultimately, I hinted, that you had to explain it in terms of the dominance of certain paradigms. Certainly the Cartesian paradigm of action by contact. Then also in terms of the celestial closures that Newtonian physics had achieved, though these were geo-historically locally specific closed contexts. And finally in terms of an underlying model of man. This underlying model of man was essentially a very superficial one, which I will come on to talk about tomorrow. Because I want to argue for a very different conception of man, a deep, more essentialist conception of man in which the subjectivity of man himself, not just the world out there, is structured, differentiated and changing.

² Leeds 1975, London 1997.

Let us see how we can apply this understanding of science to methodological issues and debates within the social sciences. When I first started to go into the philosophy of social science I found that it was rife with disputes and dichotomies. The biggest dichotomy was definitely that between naturalism and anti-naturalism, between positivism and hermeneutics, but there was also a dichotomy between individualists and holists, a dichotomy between the proponents of structure and the proponents of agency, there was dichotomy between mind and body, there was dichotomy between reason and cause, there was a dichotomy between fact and value, and also between theory and practice.

The main question in the dispute between naturalists and anti-naturalists was about understanding social phenomena. Do we understand them in the same way as natural phenomena? Now the critical naturalist argument was that of course social phenomena would be different, but there would be no difference in principle in that we would still have the essential movement of science from a superficial phenomenon that you have identified to a deeper understanding or explanation of it. But this would have to be grounded in what was *emergent* in society and man from nature. Because it is clear that we are material things, so we are still governed by the laws of physics and chemistry and biology, but there are also emergent properties of human beings and social phenomena. Let us take the idea of the structure or a causal mechanism or a process. What we have to ask is: what are the distinguishing features of these structures or structure-analogues in the social world?

One thing is that obviously they are very dependent on human activity, very immediately, in a way in which they are not in the natural world, unless we go to very deep physics. So they are *activity dependent*. Secondly they are obviously *concept dependent*; these structures do not exist without some sort of conception that the agents have. This does not mean they have to have a concept of the structure, because they may know nothing about the structure but the structure could not operate without the agent's activity, and the agent's activity would not be a human activity unless it was also conceptualised. So conceptuality is clearly a distinguishing feature like (and derivative from) intentional

activity dependence in the subject matter of social science. But contrary to the claims of the hermeneutical tradition, that conceptuality did not exhaust the subject matter of the social sciences. Everything in the social world was concept dependent but not everything in the social world was a concept. Nor did something else follow from what was generally taken to be the anti-naturalist stance. It did not follow that the agents necessarily had the correct conceptualisation of the social world. Now the third thing that distinguishes the social sciences, or seemed to distinguish their subject matter, was their greater *space-time specificity*, their greater speed, their greater locality. This is only a relative difference because natural phenomena themselves were always in motion, they are in space and time like social phenomena, but the social world seemed faster, more transient. The fourth difference, which I also called the fourth limit on naturalism, was what I called the *critical limit* on naturalism.

This is very important because if we start from the conceptualisations that agents have of the activities in which they are engaged then we have the basis for something which is like a social scientific analogue of transcendental argument. Understanding the necessity for hermeneutical moments in social science gives you a basis for building up theories which answer analogous questions to the transcendental question, what must be the case for these activities, as conceptualised in the experience of the agents whose activities they are, to be possible? And this sort of transcendental argument is very common in social theory, at least in high level social theory. You can find it in Marx's work and Weber's work and Durkheim's work, all the great social theorists. But of course what you have to do when you have understood this hermeneutical moment is to empirically test the theories that you produce through this method of argumentation against empirical data.

Here we come up against a big problem. In the social sciences we do not have decisive test situations, we cannot really do true analogues of natural scientific experiments and we do not find, except in very rare cases, closed systems spontaneously occurring. So this means that the apparent symmetry between explanation and prediction in the natural sciences has no

analogue here. I say it is only apparent because it is only at the superficial level, of the analysis of laws as empirical invariances, that it works. But that apparent symmetry breaks down. The empirical criterion in social science can only be *explanatory*. So we judge one theory better than another theory because it can explain more, not necessarily because it is a better predictor. Now the best predictor, I am talking now from experience in England, the best predictor of the weather tomorrow is that it will be the same as today. But everyone knows the weather in England is always changing. Nevertheless the prediction 'same as today' is better than most meteorological forecasts. Econometricians have a terrible record at predicting economic phenomena but nevertheless few people would say that economics cannot throw light on to tendencies that work in the social world. Very few people, even if they are very critical of neo-classical economics, would not say that when a price rises, other things being equal, there will be a tendency for demand to fall. Other things being equal people will buy a cheaper good of the same quality rather than a more expensive good. That is only a tendency. So unless we have this kind of understanding of laws then you are not going to find any intelligibility in social science. You are going to throw out the baby with the bath water. This then was the essence of my critique of hermeneutics and what I tried to do was provide a more general account of social science which could do justice to both the hermeneutical and the empirical moments and reconcile them in a broader, more totalising theory.

Let me just go through how this approach resolved a few of the other dichotomies which beset the social sciences and still do so to a large extent today. In contrast to the dichotomy between individualism and holism or collectivism I argued for a view of the subject matter of the social sciences as being essentially relational. That is we were not really concerned with individual human beings or collectivities. I was not denying that human beings or that collectivities existed. But the collectivities that the methodological holists at the time talked about were very uninteresting. They were things like crowds at football matches and so on. We can see that they had a very limited conception of true holism. What I argued for was a relational view of the subject

matter of social science which took as their paradigms things like the relationship between husbands and wives, between employers and employed, between coloniser and colonised, between capitalists and workers. On the basis of these relational accounts you could actually start to define more interesting collectivities. To be in the social world is to be the bearer of a relation. It is to be related. This is the *relational* account of the subject matter of social science.

A third major and still ongoing dispute is between the protagonists of structure and the protagonists of agency. There are those philosophers and social scientists who wanted to explain everything in terms of the human agent. This was taken to an extreme in the work of some ethnomethodologists who believed that what basically happens is that when we wake up in the morning we recreate society. When we go to sleep we put society to sleep. Everything is just a result of our own spontaneous action. That is an extreme voluntarism but this voluntaristic tendency is there in the work of Weber and in the work of such social theorists as Rom Harré and Tony Giddens with whom I have a lot in common. What I argued was, against voluntarism, that we never create the social structure, we never create the social circumstances into which we are born. We never create it from scratch, it always pre-exists us. Therefore we must acknowledge the presence of the past, we must acknowledge the presence of the structures which we inherit. We can reproduce and change them as radically as we want or as conditions allow us, but they pre-exist us and that legacy of the past must be acknowledged. At the same time, against those who commit the opposite error to voluntarism, that of reification, these social structures would not be ongoing unless we reproduced them or transformed them in our conscious intentional activity. So we have a view of the social structure pre-existing humanity, but existing only in virtue of our ongoing human activity. This was the basis of the *transformational model of social activity*.

The mind–body problem was a classic case of what happened when a totality—such as ourselves as embodied human beings constituted neither simply by brute matter, nor simply by consciousness but as embodied consciousness and actually not

just mind and body but also feelings, thus as embodied feeling consciousness—is split up into different parts. What I argued for here was what I called *synchronic emergent powers materialism*, that was a view of mind and the other properties irreducible to the laws of physics, chemistry and biology as a genuinely emergent level, a genuinely emergent stratum of reality. This leads on to a fifth dichotomy, which is immediately related to the mind–body one, the reason–cause dispute. Here the general view was that reasons and causes describe different language games. They belong to what Waismann, in the spirit of Wittgenstein, called different language strata. So when we appeal to a reason and a cause we are playing two different games. In that case how can we make sense of any human action? Supposing I turn to Bridget over there and say Bridget, could you raise your hand. She has raised her hand, my speech action gave her a reason for performing a material change. Someone is nodding over there. I have given him a reason for nodding. If you analyse any human action of any sort it involves some sort of mediation by consciousness which has a material effect in the world. So we have to come to terms with the causality of ideas, the causality of reasons. I did this through the theory of *intentional causality*.

Turning to the fact–value dichotomy I have already argued that you can actually derive values from facts and will tomorrow expand on the way we do this. The fact–value dichotomy is also immediately related to the theory–practice dichotomy, the split between theory and practice. We have seen that is something that the social scientist has to overcome by putting himself in the picture he paints. In other words, social science is part of the greater totality it describes, it cannot be excluded from it. I go on in my later works to argue for a systematic view of it being part of the manifesto, part of the charter of social science to actually orient itself to the project of human emancipation. Human emancipation is something that cannot be imposed from without; so it has to be self-emancipation. Social science and science generally, can play a great role in that project. In my dialectical works, such as *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* or *Plato Etc.*, I deepened the transformational model of social activity a bit. The transformational model of social activity was that

conception which allowed us to reconcile structure and agency by seeing how structure pre-existed but continued to exist, or was perpetuated, only in virtue of intentional agency. So now in my dialectical works I have argued that we had to understand social being in terms of four dimensionalities, each of which was necessary for a full understanding of any social event. These were the stratification of the subject or self; our transactions with others, our interpersonal relations; our relationship to the social structure; and our material transactions with nature. These four levels were necessary for the location of any act. And here I talked about *four-planar social being*.

Now what I do believe is that we are profoundly alienated at all four levels of our social being. We are alienated from ourselves, we are alienated from each other, we are alienated from the social structures and we are alienated from the material world. Our alienation from the material world can be witnessed in the ecological problems that humanity is suffering. These ecological problems are so great, and also coupled onto our economic ones, that the very survival of the human species on this planet is at stake. We have all become aware of how globally interconnected we are, the fact that what happens here in Mumbai will affect what is happening in Tokyo and that will effect what happens in Rio de Janeiro. We are one world, a single world. So de-alienation, I am going to argue tomorrow and in the discussions we have today, must be *universal*. And in thinking of this de-alienation we also have to think very profoundly of our own role in that alienation. Because each and every one of us in what we do can make a difference. But we can only make a difference if in some way we are not alienated from ourselves. What I am going to argue tomorrow is that the *self-alienation* of man does not exhaust, but is the root cause of all the other ills that we have.

Now what I argued in my work was that because we were all part of a totality, the same totality, so inevitably, logically, we were all committing ourselves through what I call *dialectical universality* to the project of universal human emancipation.

Let us see how this might go. Suppose you have a desire and you find that desire constrained. Then inexorably you want

to get rid of your constraint. So you must be committed to getting rid of the constraint for all dialectically similar agents. Then you will move to a position in which you want to get rid of all constraints as such in virtue of their dialectical similarity as constraints on the flourishing of human powers, potentialities and possibilities. And this will mean that we are committed, in our action, willy-nilly, just by the merest want or desire (however you start up), purely logically, to the project of removing all social ills. And this in virtue of any human act that we do.

This is a very strong position, and it is one the basic meaning of which can be put as follows: that what we do when we act—this is the strong claim—is to tacitly presuppose (through this logic I have begun to sketch) a society in which, to quote Marx's words here because I believe that the vision would commend itself to everyone, and practically commit ourselves to a society and to a world in which the free development of each is a condition of the free development of all. Of course that was not observed and practiced by those who have tried to produce a communist society, but that vision, that very inspired vision of a society, a world in which the free development of each would be a condition for the free development of all, stresses, places at the heart of the problem, the issue of the *concrete singularity*, the freedom; the respect that we must all give to each other, but also preserves, indeed accentuates, the element of *universalisability*. And what I will argue tomorrow is that self-realisation implies action which is spontaneously oriented to a good society, the removal of all social injustices and ills, and the totality of what I called *master-slave type* or oppressive *relationships*. And moreover, that in fact that starting from the most ordinary desire we end up with a position in which we are committed to the realisation of every being in the cosmos.

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Part II: From Truth to Self-realisation*

Today will really be a continuation of yesterday so I will presuppose most of what I said yesterday, but we will be recapitulating, as we go through the subjects to be discussed today, some of the themes that we developed yesterday. So I hope that people who are here today but weren't yesterday will be able to pick things up.

Briefly to remind you, in these talks I am situating the whole topic of the progressive movement of critical realism from a philosophy of science primarily concerned with knowledge to a philosophy of freedom, human emancipation and ultimately universal self-realisation in the context of the development of critical realism. I mentioned five stages in its development: as a philosophy of science which I called transcendental realism; and a philosophy of social science which I called critical naturalism; then there is a theory of explanatory critique, concerned with the derivation of values from facts. These were the topics we discussed yesterday. Today I will concentrate on the fourth and fifth stages. The fourth stage was a theory of dialectic, in fact a dialectical system, called dialectical critical realism, which I elaborated especially in my book *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* and recapitulated in *Plato Etc.* Then there is the fifth stage, this is a spiritual turn within critical realism, in the development of a system or an approach which I have called transcendental dialectical critical realism. It sounds a bit of a mouthful but it is basically applying transcendental realism to the self.

What I will be doing today is talking about the dialectical and the spiritual deepening of critical realism and I will do it really by first of all elaborating the general structure of dialectical critical realism and showing how the latest stage, the fifth stage in the development of critical realism, deepens that system of dialectical critical realism, which already further deepens the levels of critical realism we were discussing yesterday. So the whole development of critical realism basically moves according to a

* Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 2 December 2000.

single logic, which is dialectical, and basically oriented to the norms of truth and freedom. What is this logic? This is a logic in which we are looking at a subject matter and this subject matter finds itself with an absence, an incompleteness. There is something a little bit wrong with it, it is leaving something out, leaving a dimension of reality out. And that *incompleteness* ultimately reaches a point where it generates *contradictions* either externally with the totality, the discourse, the knowledge systems outside and/or internally within the discourse of critical realism itself—actually it will always be both—and those contradictions must be remedied by taking into account in theory and practice the missing levels of reality. Let me just focus on the aspect of theory-practice inconsistency. Suppose one acts dialectically but one thinks according to the canons of non-dialectical deductive logic, then sooner or later that inconsistency will lead to error and a variety of other ills unless remedied by resort to a greater totality. So the dialectical process is a continuing movement of deepening, of greater totalisation, leading to greater reflexivity, ultimately that is the unity of theory and practice. At some point or other critical realism would have to come to terms with the processual nature of life which is what is thematised in dialectic and the spiritual dimension to life which of course has been talked about by lots of philosophers and sages before, but which was then a taboo subject within western philosophy.

To make things very simple and clear what I want to do is outline the four stages, moments or levels of dialectical critical realism, what they are, give them a name, and for ease of memory, I will call it MELD. The M stands for the *first moment*, 1M, of the system of dialectical critical realism, ontology. So there we will be recapitulating some of the themes of transcendental realism and in fact the whole dialectical and spiritual turn within critical realism can be seen as a deepening within ontology. That is what the M stands for in MELD. The E stands for the *second edge*, 2E, that is the second dimension or stadium of dialectical critical realism and that is the edge of negativity, of absence, of dialectic itself. The great absence that dialectical critical realism pinpoints in hitherto existing western thought was the absence of the concept of absence. This is in a way the key moment within

dialectical critical realism. That is what the E stands for. The *third level*, 3L, that is the level of concern with issues of totality. The fourth stadium or stage of that system, the *fourth dimension*, 4D, which is where the D comes in, is the dimension of transformative praxis and reflexivity. Let us call the fifth stage of development, a *fifth aspect*, 5A, or a fifth turn within critical realism, then MELD becomes MELDA and the A stands for the fifth aspect.

Let me just summarise what I am going to say by saying that at the level of IM, that is ontology, the spiritual turn or transcendental dialectical critical realism thematises issues to do with the ultimate nature of reality, including issues to do with god. That is the big topic there, god. The second edge thematises issues to do with transcendence. The third level thematises issues to do with love and emotions, particularly love which is the primary totalising agency (or so I want to say) in the social world. The fourth dimension deals with questions of right-action and also of enhanced reflexivity which ultimately entails what has been called cosmic consciousness or what is more popularly known as enlightenment, that is individual self-realisation. This I want to argue actually presupposes and entails universal self-realisation and without universal self-realisation you cannot ultimately have the unity of theory and practice.

Yesterday I argued that we had in contemporary society a profound alienation of the four dimensions in terms of which social being had to be understood. We were alienated from ourselves; we were alienated from each other; we were alienated from the social structures which we reproduced or transformed but which we had never created; and we were alienated from the material world, the natural world which we inhabit. This last is a very profound alienation which is taking the form of an oncoming global crisis. The root of all these alienations was self-alienation, that is alienation from ourselves. This is a position which brings together the most profound theorists, philosophers and indeed practitioners of emancipatory thought in east and west alike. They all presuppose that in some way we are essentially at some level far greater, far nobler, far more creative, far more loving, essentially free, even perhaps divine, unique (unified but unique) individuals

with powers and possibilities which are in some way blocked or constrained by a superstructure in terms of which we live our lives. So that deep reality is in some way occluded from ourselves and systematically at all those four levels of social being. These thinkers—and this is the line that I will be arguing—actually presuppose a very noble and great view of humanity. Equally at the same time, therefore, a thorough critique of what happens in actuality, including the actuality of alienated man. This whole turn really is a reversal of much of the interest of western philosophy. You will remember Kant talked about two things which he thought were fundamental. One was the starry heavens above, the other was the moral law within. We in the west have investigated thoroughly the starry heavens above, but we have not explored this moral law within. So what I am doing today is looking at how we set about exploring it. That is the deeper, essential self that is actually tacitly presupposed by all our practices and on which oppression, unhappiness and other ills feed as parasites because they could not live without it. They could not live without this more basic substratum but certainly we could live here without those ills and oppressions which are parasites on us.

Let me resume some of the themes of ontology, that is the first stadium IM of ontology. Yesterday I argued for the inexorability and irreducibility of ontology. And I also argued for the necessity of an ontology of a specific kind, that is for a view of the world as being structured, differentiated and changing against the flat, undifferentiated, unchanging view of orthodox western philosophy—particularly as encapsulated in theories like the Humean theory of causal laws which I argued was actually the lynchpin of most western epistemology. Then I looked at how someone who had a wrong theory in practice, say a working scientist, could nevertheless do good science, produce good results (as it will inevitably be the case that scientists and ordinary people do succeed in finding out about the world, just as they succeed in being loving, creative, spontaneous etc.). And we saw that a scientist to do science had to work with an idea of the trans-factuality of reality. This was a tacit presupposition of his practice. He had to assume that causal laws and the other objects of scientific investigation existed and acted at a deeper level than

that of the pattern of events. So if in his philosophical consciousness he thought of himself as merely passively recording empirical regularities then he would be in theory-practice contradiction. And this gave rise to the figure of what I called the TINA formation. That is the way in which a truth or a level of reality is necessarily presupposed in practice for any causal efficacy whether it is denied in theory or not. TINA, it will be remembered, stood for *there is no alternative*. So if something is true and we are operating at that level, whether or not we are aware of it, we must act in a way which is in accordance with that truth. And no engineer who is investigating a train crash, or trying to launch a rocket or trying just to mend his car, fridge or washing machine, will for a moment assume that the laws of nature that he is employing are merely describing the pattern of events, because the pattern of events is idiosyncratically chaotic. So he assumes that there are mechanisms really at work operating behind and irrespective of what is going on at the surface level where he is practically engaged. And that figure of thought, of a false theory nevertheless presupposing for its causal efficacy a truth, is a very important one. We can see in it parallels to Marx's critique of a political economy where he argues that the whole surface appearance of capitalism describes but nevertheless depends on a deeper reality which it occludes. He called that reality exploitation, because it consisted of the extraction of surplus value through unpaid labour, a mechanism necessarily screened for the effective functioning of a capitalist economy. But nevertheless a level of reality, which was there, without which nothing else could go on. That superficial level of reality actually dominated as well as occluded the level of reality on which it was parasitic. We looked at a comparison there with the Vedic concept of *maya*, the world of illusion, actually presupposing the world of spirit or the absolute or Brahman or whatever on which it reposes. But it reposes as a kind of veil until we force our way through the veil. And the everyday world of illusion, or to use Marxian terms, ideology, in which we live is the dominant world in our everyday life, or so it seems at a theoretical level.

Then I want to argue that though it actually is the dominant world, at least in our conscious activity, nothing at that dominant

level could happen *without* the tacit presupposition of the more basic level on which it is dependent. There is an asymmetry, a unilateral dependency of the false or mystifying, dominant level on the true, more basic, underlying but suppressed and screened level. We can take an example here from Chomsky. Chomsky argues that in virtue of our innate capacity to acquire a language we are capable, in principle, at birth of generating an infinite number of sentences, including sentences that we will never generate, including languages that we will never learn. There is an essential creativity which lies behind our specific uses of a specific language. We have that innate possibility of the infinite. Rousseau put this point of view very well when he said that man is born free but is everywhere in chains. So what we are trying to do in the project of universal self-realisation or emancipation is throw off the chains. This immediately gives rise to a general definition of emancipation or liberation as the shedding or disemergence of unwanted and unnecessary determinations. That much we covered yesterday under the general rubric of ontology.

We also talked about dispositional realism, the reality of powers, possibilities, tendencies. We talked about categorical realism, the way in which you had to be a realist not just about specific laws but about lawfulness, causality, space, time, process—all the basic categories in terms of which philosophy thinks the world. There was one thing which I did not go into yesterday and that was the concept of truth. I will briefly discuss this now before talking about what is perhaps the most troubling aspect for many minds, the aspect of this deepening of ontology at the first moment of dialectical critical realism, namely the topic of god. So let us discuss truth for a little bit first.

Now we could do a semantic analysis of truth, which applied to all reality. When we say that something is true there are four levels at which this statement or assertion must be understood. The first level is when you say 'that is true'. This is the fiduciary aspect, you are saying trust me, act on it, I give you my word, if I was you I would do it. It is like a social bond, it is a commitment, a promise, that is true as fiduciary. The second level of the analysis of the concept of truth is the epistemological level, in which when you say that something is true you are

saying you have good grounds for believing it to be so. This is warrantably justified, this is epistemically assertable. This is the level of analysis of truth on which most philosophers have fastened. The third level to the analysis of truth, in this progressive deepening of the concept, is invoked when in saying something is true you are making a categorial claim about the world, you are saying this is how things are in the world. If I say grass is green I am saying that is the way it is in the world. If I say the structure of water is given by the formula H_2O (leaving aside a few complications), I am saying that is the way the world is. That is. truth as expressive. So we have truth as fiduciary, truth as epistemic, truth as expressive of the world. Then the fourth level of truth is truth as alethic. This is that level of truth in which when we talk about the truth of something we are talking about the reality which grounds, explains or causes it. If I wanted to say the truth of the statement that water boils at 100 degrees centigrade is the molecular structure of water (plus some other laws of physics), then that would be the alethic or real truth of it. Once I know the crystalline structure of a particular stone then I know why it reflects light of a certain wavelength in a particular way. Once I know the crystalline structure of emeralds I know why they must manifest themselves to us as green. This is truth as the real reason or underlying ground for phenomena. So it is important for our topic today because what I am arguing is that there is an alethic truth to man, which is his deep, hidden, occluded self which is nevertheless a necessary condition for everything that happens in the superficial, ordinary world of events. And that deep alethic truth has been buried not only in theory but in practice. The task of liberation is to free it, to realise it. I will be saying more about this when I come to the fourth dimension of practice after moving through the second dimension of negativity, dialectical reasoning and the third level of totality.

I have to say something about ultimata, the absolute which we briefly discussed yesterday and I am going to say a little bit about god. Now I do not believe that a belief in god is a necessary condition for being a good man, or anything like that. Quite the contrary. There are so many bad people who believe in god that no sort of equation like that can be made. Secondly, most,

but not all, of what I say is susceptible to purely secular interpretation. Thirdly, what I am really concerned about is the re-emphasis of spirituality in life and right-action, rather than theology. Nevertheless I do believe that we can rationally discuss the topic of god. So let me enunciate seven propositions on god. Seven statements that I think are true or would be true about god if god existed. And they may give you grounds in some way for a belief in god's existence.

So the **first** point is that ontological realism about god, that is a belief in the reality or existence of god, is quite consistent with epistemological relativism. That is with the idea that god manifests himself or herself or itself in a variety of different ways or is accessed by different people in different traditions in a plurality of different ways. This is exactly on a par with any scientific object. We know that scientific realism, ontological realism in science is compatible with, indeed necessitates, a view of the cognitive process in science as being relative, as being a social product, as being transformable. So the content of the experience of god should not be expected to be the same from one region of space time to another, from one person to another. So that is the first very important point; and nothing else is consistent with the transcendental realism that I have been developing in these talks.

The second thing to note is that the compatibility of ontological realism and epistemological relativism also entails judgmental rationalism. That is to say we can have better or worse grounds for adopting some particular god-oriented, some particular spiritual practice, and this means also that our claims to knowledge of god are fallible like anything else. Just because you claim to have a knowledge of god, it does not mean that you do. Fallibilism and all our rational faculties remain intact. I said 'if god exists, if god is real'. There are two senses to ontological realism about god. The first is just to make god in principle something which could or could not exist. This is the first step in realism. The second step of course is to say, yes, god does exist. It is important to see that you can be ontologically realist about god in the first sense and be an atheist in the second, that is deny that god exists. This is opposed to a widespread view in the west

today, among many priests and bishops but also Christian theologians, who say we do not have to ask questions about god's existence. God is just a convenient metaphor, a convenient way of redescribing certain religious practices. That is their position, and it is probably the dominant position in western theology, that we can abstain from any view on whether god is real or not. This in fact is a kind of cop out. Because whilst it is fine to say that you do not know whether god exists or not, to invoke god in some way as a metaphor in a religious practice without considering it's truth or reality to be a legitimate topic for discussion is absurd. For this is something which is actually believed or disbelieved by religious practitioners; for instance in prayer the person who is praying is praying because he believes that god exists, is listening to him and in some sense cares.

All these moments are very important and they all imply certain things which are wrong about contemporary theology. Obviously once you accept epistemological relativism you must accept tolerance and pluralism. Obviously once you accept judgmental rationalism you must accept your own fallibilism and the fallibilism of your tradition to any claim to knowledge of the absolute or the divine. So that is the first proposition, namely, ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationalism are all compatible and they all must be applied to the topic of god.

The **second proposition** I want to assert is that ontological immanence, that is the view that god is immanent within being, is consistent with epistemic transcendence—either in the sense of being unknown, god could be real even if we do not know it, or in the sense of being knowable in a way which is not susceptible to the normal canons of our discursive intellect. That is, knowable in some sort of way, through some sort of experience, in which the normal subject-object division, distinction or duality, that is the terms of the categories in which we normally think the non-theological and the non-spiritual, as I will go on to argue later, breaks down. Typically in this moment of transcendence people feel infused. This parallels what happens in science when there is a breakthrough, a moment of inspiration. Or while we are listening to music, or when we are going for a

walk in nature and we have an experience of transcendence, in which we become engulfed by, that is, overawed by the object, phenomenon or experience. In this moment you become one with what you experience; and this is the characteristic of transcendental experiences. The subject–object duality, in terms of which we normally apprehend and think the world, collapses. There are two ways in which god could be epistemically transcendent, one is that he is not known at all, the other is that he is not known through the discursive intellect.

The **third proposition** I want to affirm about god is that the ontological ingredience, that is immanence within being of god, the ingredience of god within man, if god is truly a kind of envelope which sustains and binds everything, then god, in a certain way, must be ingredient within us. If you accept that there is a level of the divine which binds everything, which sustains everything, then it must also sustain or in some way be the ontological basis of man himself. To talk about the ontological *ingredience* of god in man is not to say that man *exhausts* god, because god will always be transcendent with respect to man and this is implied by the non-anthropocentricity and the non-egocentricity that I argued for yesterday. God will always be transcendent with respect to man because god, in this view, is the envelope which must be present in other beings to some extent or other, but of course in a different form. And secondly, because he is a bigger and wider totality he will always be something which is in part beyond man. There will always be a ‘beyondness’ about god, even if he is ingredient in man. This actually defines within religious practices and traditions a spectrum of immanence and transcendence, what I will call the immanence/transcendence spectrum. For some religious traditions, for example Islam or Judaism, god is transcendent, that is we cannot actually access him or we can only access him indirectly through the mediation of a holy text like the Koran or in a particular practice like prayer. For other traditions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, if it sustains the concept of god at all, which I believe it does, god is immanent, ingredient in man. So you can actually look at religious practices and traditions in terms of how much they stress immanence and how much they stress

transcendence. Now if god is ingredient in man, he does not exhaust man. Thus, not only is he not exhausted by man, he does not exhaust man, because man has free will and so we have the possibility of error, evil and what has been called 'structural sin', that is the proliferation of ills, evils at all those four planes of social being at which alienation occurs. And from all this it follows that god is the alethic ground, the ultimate essential ingredient within man. God would be, in some sense, the truth in man. That is to say the ingredient within man which we are trying to liberate would be divine. Not the whole of divinity but at least have a claim to be called divine.

The final aspect of this third theorem that I am discussing involves the distinction I made yesterday between the domains of the real and the actual and the empirical. Remember the real includes as a proper sub-set the actual, which in turn includes as a proper sub-set the empirical. God or the divine is present in man at all three levels. First at the level of the real, as I am talking now about god as the essential ingredient, god is there as real as an infinite field of possibilities. That is the deep, ingredient, essential self that we want to liberate. Secondly god, or this divine aspect within man, is present as actual, as the presupposition of everything we do. I once gave the example of the dependence of the violence of war on love. Oppression actually presupposes free, creative, loving human beings. The totality of what I have called master-slave relationships depends entirely on the creativity of slaves. All these things depend on innate, free, and great and noble capacities which are present there in man in actuality. So we have god not just as a field of possibilities, but as actuality. Thirdly, this divine ingredient within us can be experienced in at least two different ways. First of all it can be accessed through practices or in moments of what one might call deep or bliss or transcendent experiences. But secondly it is manifest spontaneously, or so I want to argue, in every genuine human act. For instance there is an element of creation *de novo* in all truly transformative acts. Creation out of the blue, creation which seems to come from nowhere, is an element of all genuine emergence, all genuine novelty and therefore all genuine transformation in the social world. In this sense man, in his human activity,

recapitulates in some way the idea of gods' creation of the world. This was however not only *de novo*, but *ex nihilo*, completely out of the blue, from the void, out of nothing and logically god must in some way create himself out of the void—a very difficult concept for dualistic, or indeed any other kind of thought.

When we have these transcendental experiences they typically slip between thoughts, they occur in moments when thought is suspended. Of course they only occur to people like our hard working scientist when the ground is immanently well prepared by rigorous discursive thought. So when Newton had the idea of gravity the sublimating concept came to him when he saw the apple fall. It came only to him, because only his mind had been so prepared that he was capable of getting this burst from nowhere. But it is also important to note that it only came to him because he was not thinking, because his mind was at rest. You might say this burst from nowhere is actually the kind of alethic self-revelation of some deeper being that knows it all, or just is the reality he is investigating, or that it is already present, implicit in him, waiting to be explicated in his conscious experience. Actually I would probably want to say all of these things (suitably qualified), but we need not go into this now. What the case was is that in that moment he touched or accessed a deeper level of reality, in virtue of his own deeper, essential self, which slid through the space or gap, in that moment between thoughts which was the occasion of his inspiration. This moment is typically of silence, of rest, of relaxation in which we recharge ourselves. When we talk about social transformation we must not forget the moment of play, of idleness, of silence, of sleep, of stillness, of peace, of calm.

Now very quickly on to the other propositions that I want to affirm about god; and then we will move on to the other moments of dialectical critical realism and the spiritual turn within them. The **fourth proposition** is that the proof of god's existence can only be experiential and practical. No one can prove to you that god exists. This can only come from your experience and practice, it can only come from experience within. The **fifth proposition** is that if you accept this view of god as an all-sustaining envelope ingredient in man but not only in man, an

envelope, a sort of cosmic envelope, which sustains, creates and plays a significant role in transforming man and the rest of the world, then this gives a certain view of what man's role is. Man's role may be called, appropriating a term used by medieval theologians in the west, 'theosis'. This means the maximisation of the presence of god or the divine on earth: then firstly in himself through the liberation of this essential ingredient, this (if you like) divine spark; and secondly, through the project of universal self-realisation, that is liberation of all beings everywhere. **Sixth**, the transcendent and transcendence are not unusual phenomena. I want to argue that the experience of transcendence is not just exceptional but a part of the normal process of science; it is not only saying there is something there which transcends our experiences, but that in scientific innovation we have an experience which is transcendental in the sense of collapsing subject-object duality. Transcendence then is something which is vital for scientific discovery and growth, which is never mechanical nor algorithmic, always involves a moment of inspirational creation on the basis of that hard prepared ground. Moreover, all dialectics of de-alienation, like this general project of theosis or universal self-realisation, will depend essentially on love, the great expanding, liberating force in the social world and arguably the universe. Even as a scientist you will never discover something new about your subject matter unless you, in some way, love it: Aristotle, Darwin, Newton, Marx, Freud are all cases in point. That then was the sixth proposition.

The **seventh** and final proposition that I want to assert about god (and remember I am really talking mainly here about the god within) is that there is a relationship of unilateral, one-way dependency. What has been called a fallen world, a world characterised by evil, oppression, sin, alienation, whatever categories you want to use, could not exist without that essential ingredient, that is without our noble, higher selves. But we could certainly do fine without them. Concretely this means that if we are emergent from god or the divine then we could not exist without that. If there is a bit of god within us, then this puts a different aspect or perspective on things. Just as Krishna told Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, your soul is immortal so do not

worry about whether you die or not, that soul will exist independently of your death, so you could say that if there was a higher essential aspect to humanity, it could survive and flourish without all the ills that beset us on this planet. But certainly those ills that beset us on this planet could not survive without that deeper essential creative, loving self. We cannot carry on as we are. Rosa Luxembourgh declared at the beginning of the twentieth century that the alternatives were between socialism and barbarism. We can say at the beginning of the twenty-first century that the alternatives are between self-realisation, ultimately universal self-realisation, or the decimation of the species, the mortal coil in which our immortal divinity is embodied within us. We could exist without those ills which are threatening the very survival of the species on the planet. I have said a lot about god, because it is a topic which has been rather taboo in western philosophy and because I wanted to air the subject. Not, as I said, because I want to convert any of you to a belief in god's existence. For what I believe is truly essential to rescue in human life is this element of spirituality which I will come to when I talk about right-action.

First a little bit about the second edge of negativity. This is the domain of absence. Absence is an absolutely crucial concept. Absence is necessary for the intelligibility of any being at all. It would be impossible for you to hear me unless there was a space, a gap between my words and indeed unless there was actually a physical gap between us through which that sound could travel. Absence is necessary to any phenomena. Most importantly absence is necessary for change. Because change and process is always the absencing of what was present and the presenting of what was absent. So there is this duality of absence and presence. But since the time of Parmenides western philosophy has had a taboo on absence. Parmenides said you cannot speak of what is not. Even the very greatest dialectician in western thought, Hegel, actually eliminated absence as soon as he could. At the beginning of the logic, his famous *Science of Logic*, starting from the category of being he moves quickly from being to nothing and in fact nothing is the last negative category we hear of. The next category is becoming and then everything else takes place on a purely positive plane.

The kind of absence I am arguing for is not indeterminate absence like nothing; it is *determinate absence*, absence as experienced as lack, as need, as want. It is the absence which prompts a hungry man to search for his dinner. It is the absence of water, the absence of fresh air which is what pollution causes. That absence is in fact a vital motor of change in social life. This brings out what I think Marx meant when he talked about Hegelian dialectic having a rational kernel which was shrouded by the mystical shell. So what I want us to do is say a little bit about what that kernel is.

The rational kernel of dialectic is as a learning or developmental process driven by absence. For instance in science we have a theory which is incomplete in some way, this incompleteness, betokening absence will generate contradictions, inconsistencies, anomalies which will pile up to a point at which they will become unbearable. Then we will have the moment of transcendence to a greater totality and that transcendence to a greater totality will remedy the initial generative absence; and in that remedying of the absence will restore consistency within the theoretical field. That is the dialectic of science; and that is also the dialectic of all developmental learning processes. It is driven by absence and it is also remedied by absence; because in this transcendence to a new concept, in this moment of scientific creation, this new concept which is going to do all the work leading to a new theoretical edifice, a greater scientific construction, that concept cannot be mechanically or algorithmically induced or deduced from the preexisting data. It is not something which is given by the data. It is something which is genuinely novel, which comes from the creative imagination. So within this moment of transcendence to a new concept there is a moment of transcendence itself—a moment of transcendence in the process of transcendence to a greater totality. It is in this moment that the new concept comes, from nowhere or anyway from an experience in which subject-object duality breaks down. That is the rational kernel in Hegelian dialectic. There is no time here to go on to talk about the mystical shell which is briefly the absenting of the concept of absence and its other features, but we will do that some other time.

I go on to two very important things which are implied by the dialectical view of the world at this second edge. The first is that analytical reasoning is limited: this is the dialectical critique of analytical reasoning. Every process of thought, every process of development breaks at some point or other the strict laws of deductive logic. Deductive logic has a role to play within science but what is happening when we are doing creative science or creative philosophy is that we are always teasing concepts, stretching our imagination. For instance, to give an example which I have used already, when initially in critical realism the subject of ontology was opened up, that is of a real world of being existing relatively independently of our beliefs, then it seemed like ontology, or being and our beliefs were being counterposed. But, upon reflection, of course those beliefs had to be situated within ontology itself. So knowledge became part of reality. Epistemology properly understood was not only opposed to, but a part of ontology: beliefs were in the same world as the objects they were about. In any movement to a greater totality concepts are always going to be stretched, so that the process is always going to appear slightly shocking and to violate strict deductive logic.

What then is the role of deductive logic? What happens then is that when a scientist has successfully described a field of data, and this is true of all practitioners, they will stretch their concepts, build creative models in order to capture a reality deeper than or wider than the data. The creative scientist is a bricoleur. The bricolage is the junk in a builder's yard, which is the Heideggerian ready-to-hand, the material a scientist must use if he is to capture in words or in materialised phenomena something new. This will always involve tinkering around, folding one concept in there, another in there, generating a lot of superficial inconsistencies until he gets to a point where he has built up a theory which can be rigorously tested, in the empirical moment of science, against that new deeper reality, which generated the more superficial one he was initially at. Then he can write it all up in a nice research paper and everything will follow from the premises to the conclusions, everything can be set out in strict deductive logic. That is what I have called the Leibnizian hour,

that is the final test of a theory. It is not the starting point, but an ending point. An ending point which is purely provisional. It is certainly not the end of science, but a bouncing off point for a new round of scientific discovery. For once you get to that point the scientist will then move on to discover a deeper, or wider totality which will explain *that level*. So science must be viewed as a process in motion continually, incessantly. Development in a science, in thought, in intellectual life, in culture, in society, must be viewed in an organic processual way. Our model should be the development of an acorn into an oak. It cannot be the derivation of our conclusions from premises. That plays only a limited role within thought. What most creative scientific thought is trying to do is to stretch itself, trying to stretch our concepts until it is able to appropriate discursively something new.

As I have touched upon transcendence, I just want to add that once you have a moment of transcendence, even though the subject–object duality may have broken down, this does not mean that it cannot be described *retrospectively* in a discursive way. It just means that the transcendental experience is not equivalent to its discursive description. So we not only have thought which does not satisfy the canons of deductive logic, but experiences which do not satisfy the canons of the discursive intellect; and both play a part in science as well as in ordinary life. The non-discursive experience can be described discursively, but that discourse is not the same as the experience. I may be talking about prayer or meditation but that talking is not the prayer or meditation it is about. It is also worth noting that both deductive logic and the discursive (as distinct from the intuitive) intellect are closely intertwined with a society which systematically privileges the digital, sentential, binary, oppositional, sequential, ‘masculine’ left brain over the analogical, iconic, holistic, synthetic, fuzzy, intuitive, convergent, ‘feminine’ right brain—that is conditionality, calculation, contract and control over unconditionality, immediacy, spontaneity and freedom.

The final point I want to make turns on the critique of the notion of the fixity of the subject in the subject–predicate form. Western philosophy always assumes that if there is any change, it will be at the level of the predicate. You know the standard form

of a proposition is: a subject is such and such. Pauline is happy. If there is any change it is going to come at the level of the predicate, what attributes she has. It is not going to come at the level of herself. And then the subject, Pauline, is assumed to be fixed. Only her happiness is changeable. Now this is a completely wrong view of change. What we have to do is understand that the subjects themselves are processes in motion. We cannot reify them in the way in which analytical logic has typically done. We can also note that no coherent account of change can be produced unless change is attributed to a subject—for what is it in the predicate that changes, that too must surely be a subject? Any change is a change in the thing; as such, always presupposes an Aristotelian material cause. Moreover, it is essential to place change within the subject, because I am going to argue (as I suggested yesterday) that not only is self-alienation the root of all ills, but that all emancipation is self-emancipation, that real emancipation, self-transformation can only come from within; it can never be imposed from without. And that self-change, self-transformation, which naturally will usher in change at all other levels of social being; and that self-transformation is the heart of the process of the project of universal self-realisation. So that is why the critique of the fixity of the subject in the subject–predicate form is so important.

The third level of totality. Totality includes concepts such as interconnection, objectivity, subjectivity, internal relationality, but above all universality and universalisability. Just as I argued for dialectical reasoning, which subsumed analytical reasoning as a special case, I want to argue for dialectical and developmental universalisability. Analytical universalisability is just the subsumption of an event or a thing under a universal without any mediation and this is characteristic not only of western philosophical thought but also the social systems in which we live. Thus, on the Humean theory of causal laws which we discussed yesterday, reality is seen as being empirical invariances. This means that everything can be subsumed under a universal covering law, seen as actualistically describing what the phenomena are. Everything is just subsumed immediately under that empirical invariance. In Kant's categorical imperative the maxim is this: what you do you

should be able to universalise. In other words test whether you can tell a lie. Is it the case that you want lying to be universalised? No. So you cannot tell a lie, therefore you must never tell a lie. Now this is very counter-intuitive because obviously we all know there are lies and lies, and some white lies are good. Similarly if I give Pauline some advice, this may not be the right advice to give to Bridget over there. What is right for one person is not necessarily right for another. These are the intuitions we have. What this means is that we have to think universalisability and universality in terms not just of analytical universality which covers everything in a blanket way, but in terms of specific differentiations and in terms of geo-historical trajectories, and then in terms of the uniqueness of that individual or phenomena. No two human beings are ever going to be the same, no two instances of an event, nor will the same phenomena ever be *exactly* the same.

The logic of uniformity, the logic of analytical universalisability is written into the logic of the capitalist mode of production; and I must add (because this is not a political point) that it was written into the practice of the so-called actually existing socialist states, and it is written into the practice of many political parties. It helps to explain the postmodernist reaction. The post-modernist reaction is to stress difference, diversity. The post-modernist is saying in his or her politics of identity, no we are not the same, we may be members of the same political party, but some of us are women, others of us are men. We women, we will be feminists, we will be different. You well know this form of reaction which stresses difference, diversity and change and that is a very salutary reaction. It goes wrong only when it leaves out the whole idea of universality itself. So it is fine for women, feminists to say we women are different, or for Indian women to say we Indian women are different, if they therefore do not split themselves off and perpetuate their own alienation by dividing themselves off from their essential unity as human beings with men or with other women who are not Indian. So that underlying unity is what is lost in the politics of identity. This politics has other forms besides postmodernism such as communalism and fundamentalism, forms which are fear-based reactions which reproduce the alienation they are a symptom of. Counterposed to fear is love. Love unites,

binds, totalises, heals. Fear divides, ruptures, alienates, splits. I cannot say anything more here about the third level of totality.

We now turn to the fourth domain of agency. What we have to do is, as Krishna did in the Bhagavad Gita, resolve the problem of action by an expanded conception of the self. The Leninist question 'what is to be done?' has to be resolved by asking the transcendental question 'who am I?' or 'what is the self?' Once we have a deeper conception of human being then we have a better conception of action. I want to enunciate five theorems or necessary truths about action, because it is very important to be clear about this.

Five theorems. Firstly the irreducibility of intentionality, action is always mediated by consciousness. This entails the critique of all materialism, but also a critique of dualistic disembodiment, we are embodied; and understanding that consciousness and ideas are causally efficacious and also causally explicable, which means that reasons must be causes. We are against an artificial dualism there. That is the irreducibility of intentionality. Secondly there is the irreducibility of agency. The fact is we must act. This is a critique then of what Hegel called the 'beautiful soul'. For example the yogi who disengages himself from action, or the would-be yogi, not the true yogi, because yoga as you know means union therefore it must mean engagement everywhere. The would-be yogi disengages from action but exists as a parasite on society, actually tacitly presupposing it. So this gives a model of engaged but unattached activity. That is what we are seeking. The moment of engagement is stressed by western philosophers. The moment of unattachment has been stressed by mystics in east and west alike. Thirdly, agency is geo-historically processual, always social, always has these four dimensions I talked about earlier.

Finally, agency ultimately, at some point, must be spontaneous. That is to say at some point a practical syllogism, as Aristotle understood, must issue in an action. We cannot just go on thinking; at some point thought must issue in an action. I may think about how to tilt this microphone and I may think well, should I do it this way, should I do it that way, but at some point I just have to do it, at some point we always just have to

perform an action. At some point thought must pass into action. There is a direct link then between thought and action. My argument is that the deeper the level of our selves from which we act, the more our actions will be complete, coherent and in this way spontaneously right. When we know how to drive a car, we do not have to think about it, we just do it. When we know how to speak, we do not need to think how to formulate a sentence, we just formulate it. So the deeper we go into ourselves the more spontaneously right our action will be. If everything depends on action and action is ultimately spontaneous or basic in the sense coined by the western philosopher Danto, then all the actions we do at all the levels of social being must ultimately come from the self. This therefore immediately prioritises self-change and self-transformation as the key moment in remedying the alienation at all those four levels of social being. So we prioritise self-change to social change. But there are three points to notice here. Firstly, and this is the fifth theorem about agency, I cannot act myself without simultaneously acting at all four planes or levels of social being. That is to say anything I do, coming from me, will be (or involve) an effect at the level of the stratification of my personality, but will also involve material exchanges with nature, social interactions with other human beings and impact in some way on the social structure. So though all action comes from the self, necessarily, at the same time all action is always potentially or actually efficacious at all other planes of social being. The second point to note is that we cannot be free as individuals unless and until that freedom issues in and is coupled with the self-realisation of all. Finally, more specifically, there is a dialectic between self-change and social change.

We can show this briefly through dialectics of inaction and dialectics of action. What we have to do is access our higher self; then—and this is the really important point—we have to shed everything which we are essentially not; then we have to fully embody it in the totality of our being; then we have to witness this higher self in every moment of our action and stabilise it in our daily life. These *dialectics of inaction* will automatically—in virtue of the fact that we must act, we cannot just be (this is what I have called the axiological imperative)—result in *dialectics of*

action. These are briefly the more fully in touch with ourselves we are, the more we will spontaneously do what is right, the more compassionate, loving, caring, our action will be. So we have dialectics of love and solidarity. You will recall the dialectic of desire to freedom which I sketched earlier, the dialectic in which logically, once we have a desire, we are driven to the abolition of constraints on that desire; and then to the abolition of all dialectically similar constraints; and then to the abolition of all constraints, in virtue of their dialectical similarity as constraints on the realisation of human freedom. That dialectic can be given a further twist, by seeing that it entails a state in which one has no desires. First, subjectively because any desire will itself be a constraint, a limitation on our freedom. And secondly because objectively one is living in a world of abundance, one is living in a world in which, to use Marx's words, the free development of each is the condition but also the reality of the free development of all. Then we have the dialectic of recapitulation, for, as Freud put it, what we cannot remember we are bound to repeat. So we must thoroughly come to terms with, understand and then shed, that is let go of the past, the presence of the past. That will include the totality of attachments, and among our attachments are of course our aversions. Finally we have philosophical dialectics which include understanding and changing reality in accordance with the level of its deepest, most comprehensive categories, and rooting out everything which is inconsistent with it. From this perspective we can see alienation as actually a category mistake in reality.

Seven properties of right-action. Firstly, it will be spontaneous, coherent and compassionate. Secondly, it must be in the present, in the moment, we must not live in the past, we must let go of the past, let go of our attachments. This involves the idea, if you like, of ceasing to be bound *karmically* and acting from the *dharmic* standpoint. Nor can we live in the future, we should not worry, we should not project our ideals into the future; our ideals are here, in the present even if they are actually hidden, occluded or prevented from being realised. So we live in the present but we can only act from where we are, on our own particular axiological world-line. So we must not act in a voluntaristic

way. We can only do what we can do with the resources we have got. So this universal new beginning I am arguing for must be a chipping away with the resources that we actually have. We have to understand how we are actually, and not just ideally, constituted. This means that we have to take on board the negativity, the limitations and the conditionalities that we have inside ourselves; if you think you can be immediately and spontaneously free then that is a recipe for disaster. Fourthly, this action will be orientated to the installation of social justice, the abolition of the totality of master–slave relationships, the ending of all reified, voluntaristic modes of thought and behaviour. The ending of all conditionalities. What is normally called love is an exchange, what is true love is unconditional, is a giving.

Fifth, this must be fully integrated and balanced. Mind and body will be linked but we must also include the great missing element, emotion; we need to understand the tri-unity or trinity of mind, body and emotion. We will not have the dualism that leaves out emotions (including the negative emotions as well as the positive emotion of love). And right-action will be action under the inspiration of that essential ingredient which is spirit. Sixth, we move beyond dualism to the synthesis of opposites and their transcendence in higher totalities; to the elimination as far as is possible of all strife, to living in peace and harmony in the world, to the ending of alienation at all those four levels of being. Seventh, this will result in a simpler, purer society but also a richer and deeper one. It may be easier to create than we think. Because once we let go of false modes of thought and being, once we begin to access our higher selves, we can begin to see that really the problem is not so much of evil. Or not only of evil. For there is also, at least philosophically, a problem of good. Because how extraordinary it is that there is so much goodness and love in the world. Just think about it, let us focus on that, that love, goodness, nobility, courage, these are displayed everywhere in the perpetuation of social ills. Once we can tap through to that level then we may find it easier to build a world that we already (but not only) have inside us and universalise it everywhere.

References

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