

Joined-up knowledge for a joined-up world:

**Critical realism, philosophy of meta-reality and the emancipation
in/of anthropological spirituality - an exploration of confluence**

**Dissertation submitted by D.A Schreiber in fulfilment of the Masters in Theology
Degree in Christian Spirituality.**

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List of conventions and abbreviations

All words appearing in *bold* typeface are the present author's emphasis except where appearing in quotations.

All use of [brackets] are the present authors additions to quotations, except for Bhaskar's use as quoted on page 111, and his enumeration as quoted on pages 63 and 133 of this dissertation.

The present author uses *italics* to indicate emphasis

Abbreviations of concepts and publication titles are respectively conventional amongst contributors to critical realism and may thus appear in the dissertation as follows:

CR = Critical Realism

TR = Transcendental Realism

PDM = Philosophical Discourse of Modernism

TDCR = Transcendental Dialectical Critical Realism

RTS = *A realist theory of science* (Bhaskar [1975] 2008)

PON = *The possibility of naturalism* (Bhaskar [1979] 1998)

SRHE = "Scientific explanation and human emancipation" (Bhaskar 1980)

RR = *Reclaiming reality* (Bhaskar 1989b)

DPF = *Dialectic: The pulse of freedom* (Bhaskar 1993)

FEW = *From East to West* (Bhaskar 2000)

RMR = *Reflections of meta-reality* (Bhaskar 2002a)

FSE = *From science to emancipation* (Bhaskar [2002b] 2012)

PMR = *Philosophy of meta-reality* (Bhaskar, 2002c, 2002d)

Key words in this dissertation:

Critical realism, spirituality, meta-reality, methodology, inter-disciplinarity, emergence, absence, dialectic, transformation, emancipative axiology.

Declarations:

The dissertation presented here is a theoretical argument in which no interviews were necessary. Consequently a discussion on the ethical guidelines for conducting such interviews is omitted.

I, Dudley Alexander Schreiber, declare in accordance with the guidelines and ethics of the Academy, that plagiarism has not been committed and that all work that is not my own has been properly acknowledged as such.

Signed:..... **Date:**.....

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Summary

Seldom are we privileged to witness an international philosophical movement, which in addition to being a philosophical revolution, vindicates the values and concerns of a critical anthropological approach in Spirituality from the analytic tradition. The work of critical realists is potential remedy for the ills, dichotomies and lacunae inherent in the Western philosophical and spiritual traditions. Critical realism and philosophy of meta-reality, it is claimed, not only emancipate philosophy but, science and society as spiritual. This dissertation explores the many points of confluence and exposes dimensions of living and studying spirituality, which challenge us to think of ontological realism, epistemological relativism and rational (reflexive) judgement in a mode, which cautions against the naive relativism, tacit idealism and other mistakes which tend to over-characterise our academic discourse with social linguistification, to the detriment of humanity and our utopian freedom and flourishing.

Chapter One: Introduction, overview, argument, intentions and review

1 The general argument and intention: the emancipation of philosophy and spirituality as a grounding framework

There exists a natural epistemological confluence of interests and themes between the philosophy of Critical Realism (hereafter, not in capitals) and the critical approach to academic Spirituality. Bhaskar ([1975] 2008, [1979] 1998, 1980, 1989, 2000, 2002a, [2002b] 2012, 2002c, 2002d) has sought the emancipation of philosophy, science and society, whilst Kourie (2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2009) with numerous others, just to mention here Schneiders (1989, 1993, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006, cf. Kourie 2009), has celebrated the emancipation of Spirituality in its recent incarnation in the academy and noted an air of “eye-brow raising” (Kourie 2009:148), suspicion and antimony amongst other scholars. Spirituality as academic discipline bares a burden of marginality. Perhaps most telling is the critique of consciousness implicit in the common ground of critical realism and secular spirituality. De Villiers (2006:102, cf. Kourie 2009:167) has for instance criticised theology’s lack of conceptualisation of transformation, whilst philosophy has suffered a similar lack with regards to the person as agent, midst a legendary anti-spiritual attitude amongst analytic philosophers. Bhaskar’s analysis (1993:2) points to the *lacunae* within that tradition:

To put this is a nutshell, most philosophical aporiai derive from taking an insufficiently, non-anthropocentric, differentiated, stratified, dynamic, holistic (concrete) or agentive (practical) view of things. More generally, philosophy’s current anthropomorphizing, actualizing, monovalent and detotalizing ontology acts ... as a block on the development of the social sciences and projects of human emancipation – for this ontology currently informs much of their practice.

This state of affairs, Bhaskar’s diagnosis blames on a philosophical *irrealism* pervading philosophy, epistemology and the sciences. This dissertation deploys Bhaskar here in his “disruptive” element. The philosophy of meta-reality in conjunction with the categorical realism, upon which it is founded, is used synthetically in keeping with that philosophy. The “confluent” Bhaskar is presented as a more complete “*telluric*” and realist partner providing useful conceptualisation, amidst a resonance of critical explanatory power for the secular/anthropological argument and liberation of the practical mystic. The critical component in this dissertation at one level, rides on Bhaskar’s “coat-tails”. At the

constructivist level it introduces (as far as I am aware for the first time) Bhaskar into the part-world of Spirituality theory, where confluence is most easily read between Bhaskar, Bailey (2001) and contributors in du Toit & Mason (2006).

It is for this dissertation (a) to present this critical development in Bhaskar's critical realism, (b) to deploy this and other sub-critiques against both religious and epistemic hegemony and (c) to argue the necessity of retaining definitions of spirituality in Spirituality theory. At another level, the dissertation also seeks to accomplish a description of conceptual developments which characterise Bhaskar's philosophy of meta-reality. These contribute much to what Waaijman (2001:135-136) would describe as a "critical theory of spirituality" and what Bhaskar (2000, 2002a, [2002b] 2012, 2002c, 2002d) and Bailey (2001) might agree is a *practical mysticism* or with Heelas' (2012:5) "ultimate spirituality". Whatever the case, this ontological spirituality is implicit in every-day life and may account for the "principle" of lived spirituality naturally availing itself to "unitive" experience, states, stages (cf. Tassi 1994:21-33) well described by the Spanish Carmelites, who depended on Eckhart's mysticism, Aquinas' scholastics and categories of earlier monastic wisdom), but here deployed as spirituality "come of age" (Mayson 2006:1-23), indicating maturity in Spirituality study. This dissertation serves to "underlabour" for the emancipation of mysticism, spirituality and religion as separate and distinct categories, whose elision or glyphing to "spirituality" though "Marking the transition from the language of religion to the language of spirituality..." (Heelas 2012:4) is a "megatrend" (Naisbett 1982 cf. Heelas 2012:5) in the social realm and "distinctive construct" (Zinnbauer, Pargament & Scott 1999 cf. Heelas 2012:4) in the realms of academia. The process indicates the emergence of important ontological distinctions to be made between mysticism, religion and spirituality, for example. Many who theorise on the nature of ontological spirituality are somewhat exposed to either under playing distinctions or failing the test of conceptual enrichment. The implicit and agentive categorical realism necessary for the epistemological move to a distinctive construct (in non-atomist, non-monist, non-individualist manner) may not be adequately described. Without such it is largely difficult to target the ontological basis for "the most elemental of all spiritualities" (Heelas 2012:5) which argued here, constitutes the realm of mysticism where the depth of being is felt to be "of the sacred" and where epistemologically "the sacred is 'taken' to come into evidence" in *alethic* "knowing" and whose presence as "lighthouse" constitutes, or so Bhaskar argues, is the non-dual ground-state reality of all Spirituality (as knowledge) and the concretely singular diversity of spiritualities in the world.

Much in Heelas (2012) is interpretable from a critical realist stance. However, from purely Bhaskarian conceptions Heelas' lacks a total commitment to ontological realism, possibly because of the author's ambivalent closeness to Plato, or so I believe. Whilst attempting to accommodate transformation, the author claims: "those who make contact [with the sacred] take experience itself, *as* the transformative" (Heelas 2012:5-6). Implicitly transformation is reduced to experience, and ontological depth reduced to epistemology. It seems that Heelas (2012) falls into the inescapable dichotomy and consequential (and purposeful, consciously theorised) alienation of a "transformative middle" which is heir to Plato and more latterly the Kantian tradition. Bhaskar would undoubtedly accuse Heelas of a category mistake, which may expose Heelas' theory as a move against emancipation by suspending ontology into epistemology and thereby oppress our intuitions and actions with self-doubt. One certainly discerns a palpable "discontent" in the struggles which Heelas presents.

Heelas (2012:5-6) begins with an attitude of ontological realism: "Ultimate spirituality" exists as lived "sacred ... presence which motivates" and is "the ground of ultimate spirituality". Experience is transformative and the *gnosis* transforms "worldviews" and "judgements". In the realm of the sacred we experience "the perfect" and "the true" (Bhaskar's "alethia"?): "true love", "true vitality", "true freedom or equality" and "true bliss", wherein ideals fail. The "sacred" is the ontologically real ground for epistemological targeting and "zoning". Spirituality of the "ultimate" type could be described as "intransitive", whilst descriptive (perhaps overly deterministic in Heelas?) epistemological zones are transitive and relatively mutable. Zones and their social realities are embedded in the realm of "value clash" where cultures and selves "are not coherent", we experience "the uncertainty of science" (Feynman 2007, cf. Heelas 2012:7) and Braudillard's (1994:116) "end-ism", and which spirituality is seen to either accommodate or overcome.

Heelas identifies three taxonomic zones or "homes" of Spirituality, each possessing a polarity or "if you like the cultural-cum experiential extremity" (Bailey 2001, cf. Bailey 2012:10): (1) Theism is constellated around the sacred transcendent, it is dichotomous: holding to strong transcendent/immanent split in which the latter is dependent on the former and the "sacred" permeates reality but is not reliant "on the here and now" but on "experience". This zone "contains more than spirituality" or the experience of sacred agency. It is worth noting that Heelas' use of "sacred" is very much in-line with the transcendentalised divinity of traditional (theologised) ascription. It transgresses all and any secular accommodation. (2) The transformative is polarised around an indwelling sacred and which is accommodated in

“theistic ultimate spirituality” but equally available to “variations” of the ontologically ultimate spirituality in diverse social setting. This zone stands in “transgressive” relationship to the others. Transformation transgresses theistic ideology, because it regards religion as transgression. The secular is seen to transgress the inner sacred and the transformational zone recoils at secular imperfection. (3) The secular is polarised by atheism and rejection of “the sacred”. Ultimate ontology is prone to materialist reduction and spirituality devoid of the sacred becomes “emblematic of what is *best* in human and/or nature”. The conceptualisation here consists in categorically “hard” distinctions at the epistemological level but less so in culture. What keeps the polarity and the zone together, are *continua*. Heelas claims (2012:10-11):

The three zones are best conceived as located on the apexes of a triangle, not along some sort of spectrum which locates theistic tradition at one end, the secular on the other, with the transformative in the middle ... creating the misleading impression that people might have to pass through the transformative zone if, for example they give up the theistic to become secular.

In my view, Heelas stands too closely to “the perspective of those who believe in the [theistic] sacred”: he draws a *telos* of transformation towards Platonic virtue but developed in a derogated and dirempted secular realm. The implicit dualism makes for agonising reading at times. The secular realm as presented by Heelas is in my opinion frighteningly “torn”, “dys-topic” “irredeemably flawed” and in which realm the author claims, the vanity of humanity “is required for the virtues of the humble”. The pilgrim’s progress is necessarily located in the vale of tears of Platonic diremption. For Heelas there is no possibility of sacred-secular overlap. Non-duality is espoused in “ultimate spirituality” but irredeemably absented in the social realm. Transformation is central to only one zone necessarily. One wishes then to ask: are not the other two zones reduced pseudo-spiritualities in consequence? The presentation here is sometimes a painful reminder of Christian-Platonic dichotomisation of the sacred and secular and the concomitant war on being that has characterised the history of Spirituality in the West. The author’s reduction of spiritual “knowing” or *noesis* to “radical empiricism”, derogation of the secular to “imperfection”, one suspects, blinds the author to the secular as rejection of traditional dichotomy. Hard conceptions of alterity in the comparative zones, are not spectrum-processive and where transformation is given treatment, it is difficult to see how the “indwelling” sacred is truly transformative. Not only is transformation excluded on two counts of the taxonomy but even in its own zone, is

dubiously justified in my opinion. The transformation inducing necessities of life seem to be inadequately described and one wonders then how Heelas can claim that the secular is not transformative. I suspect inconsistencies and poverty of conceptualisation make Heelas' contribution, a torture to sustain. Nevertheless Heelas provides insight into the transgressive and transformational intention of critical theory and secular spirituality (despite himself?) as transformative. Argument could at this point become protracted but is here purposely truncated.

In Bhaskar's analyses, critiques and explanations of philosophy, the philosophies of the natural and social sciences (far in excess of Wittgenstein, Anscombe, Von Wright, Feyerband, Popper and Kuhn), modernism (exceeding postmodernism), ideology (transcending Hegel and Marx), he has proved that conceptual revolution is possible. It is clear, from contemporary literature that the study of Spirituality finds itself located in the gap between the old and the new: dissatisfied with the traditional and epistemic past, but uncertain about the future. Proof of this growth stage is detected in the explicit questioning of past epistemological commitments and traditional hegemony. Amongst his achievements most pertinent to Spirituality study Bhaskar is able to account for the reality of ontology, for the relativity of epistemology and then vindicate rational/moral judgement, thus re-theorising agency and transformation, the "two-cultures" of science and dialectic. Consequently he re-situates spirituality as a philosophical and ontological good in an "emancipatory" (*sic*) axiology (Bhaskar 2012:xxiii,129-131, 218). The points of confluence and counterpoint are both myriad and momentous for the contemplations of Spirituality scholars. An exploration of and justification of this claim characterises this dissertation's philosophical and spiritual trajectory.

1.1 Exploring the confluence of interest in the character of the literature field

The literature under review here is on one hand, predominantly that of critical realism, which re-frames many of the tacit assumptions within epistemology and its Spirituality theory partners. The primary interest here is to deliver a philosophically derivable critique of Spirituality in the university from Bhaskarian inspiration, in order to perhaps anticipate the "after the fact" critiques which must necessarily arise in the field of epistemology, but have partially shaped the critical philosophy of religion in the past. Here particularly the contemporary academic interest in secular, "*telluric*" (Kourie, 2006:79-80) spirituality is accompanied by and contextualised (or "contexted") in an anthropological and critical

approach. Such it is argued here, benefits from an open attitude to naturalism (under certain limits) and is informed by critical realist analysis and critique in philosophy of science. Former conceptions of natural religion are exceeded in consequence. A predominating interest in the social dimensions of spirituality well represented in Spirituality literature is potentially enriched in Bhaskar's exposition of the "four planar being" or "social cube", which amongst other achievements casts critical light on the past-bound nature of social explanation in the relatively enduring complex of relations of social facts and their realm.

Methodological implications arise. The epistemological prominence afforded to three-dimensional taxonomies of socio-historical phenomenology and doing-better-by-one-dimension descriptions of dualistic experience, especially those of the Kantian tradition¹, may be misguided as are any expectations that they elicit an adequate conceptualisation of transformation, agency and intention. Furthermore within these "de-agentised" taxonomies the possibilities for dialogue are remote since their descriptive content lacks a coherent theory of *ontological depth*. These claims expose a fallacious ideological trend in philosophy and methodology which Bhaskar discerns as a "primal squeeze" to our reality, depth, power to transform and emancipate ourselves from a deeply dichotomous, hegemonic, heteronymous reduction-effect on *being*. Methodologically our tri-angulated taxonomies tend to follow suit. Numerous authors have employed such epistemological strategies: Mouton (2011), Waaijman (2002), McGinn (2001), Bailey (2001), Heelas (2012) – to name a few. Any number of scholars in the realm of Spirituality theory may be accused of a tacit irrationalism in their epistemological assumptions to some degree or another, after reading Bhaskar.

Some content of the Western Christian spiritual tradition and religious milieu, which has come to hegemonise (ontologically implicit) spirituality receives critical attention in attempt to rein in its religious overreach and bring to light its implicit secular and anthropological assumptions, thus exposing fallacy and inconsistency in its religious self-explanation. Such critique implicit in critical realism and here built on those programmatic critiques, add philosophical derivability to arguments by Bailey (2001), the contributors to du Toit & Mayson (2006) and to Heelas (2012), yet may remain obviously critical of their epistemological and philosophical assumptions and unconscious participation in "irrationalism"

¹Both Bailey (2001:31-99) and Heelas (2012:1-69) offer and struggle with various problematic issues in the Kantian Tradition and its pre-suppositions. Heelas' longing and diagnostic insight into methodology is "that progress from the tortuous to the simple was being made: and this on a global compass" (2012:1).

and hegemony. Bhaskar's commitment to categorical realism is analytically developed as a critique of Western epistemology. Whilst adding more than a token of superior conceptualisation of science, social reality, dialectic, transformation and transcendence, the philosopher constructs an *a priori* argument for "non-dual" spiritual ontology diversified in social context (and in his opinion, epistemologically misread) and demonstrates the analytically derivable conditions for such ontology in his philosophy of meta-reality. Religion, in this conception is a special and limiting case of spirituality which latter, emerges constantly into the categorically distinct realms of the "real", the "actual" and the "empirical". These realms, set in an axiology of intelligible and emancipative progress of being, are reflected in relative (and transitive) epistemological expansion towards a totality of intransitive *alethically* knowable causative tendencies cohering in a cosmically-enfolded ground-state, conceptually and really expanding as a *sui-generis* open system. The background reading required to appreciate Bhaskar is therefore conceptually and critically rich.

Intelligible spirituality or "practical mysticism" for Bhaskar arises out of a natural need for trust, reflexivity and the unavoidable transcendence implicit in everyday acts, even if they be overtly religious acts. Religious acts are possible under the necessary (philosophically derivable) causative conditions for all actions which present their dualist-social face in pluralism, diversity and relative endurance of societal relations: each undergirded by a non-dual ground-state in which spirituality and emancipation of society ("the free flourishing of all") are enfolded. Critique of religiosity and the adoption of an emancipative axiology make Bhaskar, Bailey (2001), the contributors to du Toit and Mayson (2006) though unfamiliar to each other, partners in a confluence of interest, namely the liberation and re-conceptualisation of spiritual ontology in us (so claim critical realists) that breaks the tradition of irrealism within the philosophical discourse in which our epistemology and methodology are embedded. If our current epistemology targets "surfaces", critical realism targets "depth".

A common trend in the contributors to du Toit and Mayson (2006) and critical realist conceptualisation relocates spirituality away from religion. A reading of Bhaskar's appealing meta-theory empowers the critical, emancipative and transformative interest in Spirituality literature sometimes occluded or reduced in the all too common socio-historical taxonomic descriptions.

Presenting Heelas (2012) or Hense and Maas (2001) in any great detail, is not a manageable option within the current argument here. However, some comments (as for Heelas (2012))

above) may be pertinent, to demonstrate a greater epistemological context and also to suggest that, if critical realism ever gains the ground it promises, much re-working and re-conceptualisation of Spirituality theory will be required. In their alternate volumes, Heelas (2012) and Bailey (2001:31-98) address themselves to a wide gamut of methodological concerns. The presentation is undeniably and philosophically interesting, for instance Heelas' (2012:1-37), insight into how inconsistently we apply our realist dispositions, partly an inadequacy of conceptualisation and certainly for Bhaskar, "wanting" categorical realism. Heelas' (2012:23) conception of spiritualities as "continua" or thematic strings originating from a basic pole but extending into taxonomic zones makes sense and constitutes an enrichment of the Bhaskar-Bailey nexus, and the critical concern which must arise: "why has secular spirituality been so 'hidden' or hard to track among 'family resemblances'?" Furthermore his description of "items" (Heelas 2012:24) may be read as Bhaskarian "relations" and "mediations", and complement an appreciation of Bhaskar's "social cube" and beyond it, the mystery towards which it must necessarily expand.

Nevertheless, some conceptual confusion in Heelas' (2012) usage of relativised "ontologies" illustrates a fundamental fallacy with which he explicitly struggles, namely in his conceptualisation of spirituality as tripartite social derivation of taxonomised "zones", dirempted of a strong sense of a transformative middle. The history of category mistakes in our epistemology and methodology, one realises after reading Bhaskar, are ubiquitously resplendent in a general confusion between spirituality, mysticism and religious realms in theories of Spirituality. Waaijman (2001:123) writes, "Using the notion 'theoretical approaches' we are entering into the field of foundational positions, attitudes, motivations, steering all further scientific operations." The foundational position of critical realism is that greater categorical realism liberates our primary epistemological motivations and without which, it might be argued, Heelas (2012) and Bailey (2001) remain somewhat confused. However, some of their conceptualisation enriches an already problematic secular spirituality talk. For instance, Heelas' description of "zones" of spirituality is committed to, in my opinion, an implausible "golden triangle" (?) implying a prismatic reduction: the dimensional facets of which possess distinct "grounds" and "teleology" on the one hand, and on the other, share intermingling middles with their neighbouring zones (as "continua") perceptibly part of a life pattern but, nevertheless axiologically committed, to deterministic end. Somehow one suspects some intellectual puppetry. However the description of the possibility of transformation is confusing if not contradictory without an adequate description of

ontological depth and agency. Nevertheless Heelas (2012:23) contributes a useful explanation of the process of “de-traditionalisation”. By this is meant the movement of spirituality away from religion.

The concept of de-traditionalisation is very much of import to the methodological focus in Hense and Maas (2001), in which the contributors are at odds about whether to retain definitions of spirituality in the light of similar social processes. The tragic outcome of such reticence denies us any ontology of spirituality (as real transformative praxis) and also a targetable epistemological definition-field to speak of: committing us to epistemic fallacy by extension, the Bhaskarian elucidation of which we must temporarily look forward to. The conceptualisation in Hense and Maas (2001) is not widely representative, coming from the more traditional hegemony, but it is a meaningful contribution nonetheless. Clearly Spirituality theorists here are divided in their opinion on realism of any sort after the methodological debates of postmodernism. Yet Waaijman (2001:123) explicitly acknowledges a requirement for “methodological principles” to guide methodological “vision”, in agreement with Schumpeter (1954:41). Essentially for Bhaskar realism liberates the use of relatively enduring (epistemic) definitional ontologies. It is clear that Bhaskar intends to displace the resonance of irrealism many of us (falsely) slip into, across the multi-disciplinary gamut of “approaches” in which sociological taxonomies have come to be well represented also with the conception spread (falsely, in my opinion) that these are capable of *dialogue* apart from a limited though important social dialectic. Epistemological infatuation with ontological relativism is seen by critical realists to be the major lacuna in social theory and hermeneutic tradition which fail to describe “ontological depth” and (for Bhaskar typically) “co-presence”. Although critical realism in the Bhaskarian sense is different from that of the Frankfurt School and its later Oxford beginnings, Waaijman’s description of critical theory (2001:135-136) fits a description of Bhaskar’s interests well and neatly contexts Bhaskar as spirituality theorist. Reading McGinn’s (2001:291-326) “philosophical approach” we understand the traditional ties critical theory and philosophy have had with Spirituality study. Bhaskar fits the bill here too: as critical meta-theorist no principle or approach is beyond consideration. Bhaskar would however feel equally at home in Waaijman’s (2001:138) “holistic approach”:

In holistic approaches, on the level of theories, we may distinguish three main lines, which are complimentary. (1) The presumption, that all entities belong to one encompassing reality ... (2) The presumption that the whole of reality

internally belongs together ... (3) characterized by integration, coherence, complementarity.

Bhaskar theorises these things but from an attitude of categorical realism. Perhaps of all the Spirituality theorists Waaijman (2002) and Heelas (2012) are the worthiest targets for Bhaskarian critique. Notably in the first case Waaijman's heurism and hegemonic idealisation of the "forms", in particular his view of the "counter-movement" lies contrary to the historical pattern of being co-opted, so it may be argued. In my opinion Waaijman (2002:425-482) displays a special and vastly limited (religion bound) conceptualisation of transformation, agency or emancipation outside of theistic and traditional religious anthropology including here, questionable intentions in co-opting Buddhism into theistic, polar-centric conceptualisation. The author's argument (2002:427-430) in defence, is to attack the presumption that God is open to theological reduction, arguing that the term God is probably the earliest and most evolved conceptualisation and that the author's view of theism here incorporates its philosophical diversity and plural polarity including its mystical apophysis: in the sense of believing in God "atheistically" or as "the source of the [radically] questionable". Ultimately Waaijman's point is this: "The notion of 'God', on the other hand, has gone through so many divergent experiences that it has acquired the desired inclusiveness". "God" takes dialectical centrality in the space of epistemological realism of Waaijman's choosing here: "We are cautioned by the fact that secular forms of spirituality are found especially in Western (Euro-American) culture, and within that culture especially in urbanized and industrialized milieus". I think things have changed rather dramatically since Waaijman wrote this. Taking cautions about regional privilege seriously poses a challenge to which Bhaskar is well able to construct a secular spirituality of universal flourishing. Much is accomplished by the latter in "Achilles' heel" critiques and superior explanation if one takes the view of ontological realism, in which we are "stratified", have abundance of depth and reflexivity and operate in a duality-mediated open system of interconnectedness. An appreciation of which complexity in the midst of which both authors' reach for ontological realism but from which ontological spirituality, Waaijman slips in my opinion, perhaps in fear of naturalistic explanation.

Bhaskar, it is maintained here underlabours as critical theorist for the emancipation of spirituality by affirming its everyday ontological necessity, indicating a telluric re-owning of transcendence. In comparison, I suspect Waaijman (2002) pales: his diremption of spirituality into theistic past, conceptually presented as foundation for the future feels alethically

superficial despite the superb scholarship and erudition which is characteristic of this author. Critique of Waaijman (2012) is not directly my intention and is reserved for a creeping footnote for the most part. Detailed critique of Heelas in this presentation is likewise limited to this introduction for management purposes.

The ultimate critique in this dissertation belongs to Bhaskar who inspires. The deployment of Bhaskar as critic is aimed at the epistemological and methodological assumptions to which Spirituality theory is variously prone and comfortable in irrealist ambience, against which Bhaskar is set as decidedly contrary and enlightening. In this dissertation Bhaskar's position speaks for itself, when summarised or commentary and argument are called for.

1.1.1 Compliance and character of the introduction

It should be noted that because of my primary philosophical and epistemological interest, the institutional expectations of an introductory section in dissertation building, delineated in the various guidelines provided by the University of South Africa, possess a specific character here. It is not satisfactory merely to fill the expectations without thinking philosophically about their implicit values and the epistemological formation they prescribe. Consequently, my presentation in this dissertation is layered and on occasion argumentative. This is not because of some lurking recalcitrance but because I believe, like Schneiders (2005c:31, cf. Kourie 2009: 167) and the contributors to Mezirow (2000), that the values of knowledge should be appropriated and the writing of a dissertation should be transformative.

1.2 Reaping where others have sewn: a contemplative moment

As Schumpeter (1954:41) says: "In practice we all start our research from the work of our predecessors, that is we hardly ever start from scratch." The implications of this comment perhaps now rather unremarkable after nearly a century or so of historicist thought, in which epistemology and the introductions to so many publications have participated almost to the point of ubiquity, I still find rather inspiring in its simplicity. Firstly it acknowledges the profound historical context amidst which academic writing takes place: the long train of conceptual development and building (*Bildung*) on the work of predecessors who have inspired and challenged us and in the light of their insight, much academic writing contains a recursive and perhaps rehearsing content. Neither of these two elements is insignificant for our present field of interest and multi-layered task of dissertation writing, for implicit in them

are the material questions of what should be shed, appropriated, integrated, restructured and argued.

As synthetic moment this dissertation requires that we borrow elements from and embellish a vision. The contemplative dimension requires a meta-epistemological “balcony-view” on the principal vision. Here the vision is a value, namely emancipation. Emancipation and its corollary “transformation” are the reasons and intentional cause of the dissertation and a personally appropriated, desired end for the author, as for others. The unavoidable consequence of which desire effects transformation however meagre, to that desired state of emancipation. It seems to me as a matter of rational judgement that transformation has some sort of rightful (evaluative) priority in Spiritual meta-theory, the edges of which are wonderfully mysterious. Perhaps too spiritual and epistemic “formation” emerges in a new light as a result of mediating the vision into intelligibility and which thus emerges as “item” into the descriptive (epistemic) past of society. Knowledge is dualistic: as product it is always in the past and yet it looks to the future emergence of concepts and realities we want and need. Between these two poles of knowledge is a rather under-described process of the *transformative present*: the conceptual and traditional absence represented here is an adequately accounted ontology. The question of ontological realism is one that the human sciences have generally shied from. Yet without it one asks, how can a dissertation exhibit character as a personalised, appropriated, social product?

There is something in the internalisation of the questions we have to ask which is vocative, inviting a response or an appropriation which also inspires and provokes a transformation. Therefore the material response of producing this dissertation is encased by a more existential, internal vocation in the form of an argument at various levels of consciousness, noted by Schumpeter above. Working with knowledge under its more formal title “Epistemology”, transforms the scholar in the service of which, s/he hones his/her skills. The originality of response is obviously contextualised and limited by recursive content or reproductions of knowledge in which we embed or imbricate ourselves. All of these dimensions constrain and identify the zoned character of an academic interest.

As intimated, historical inspirations do not emerge purely from what one has read, but must necessarily come from part of an intellectual (“trans-) formation” and empowerment of an academic agenda. So what one reads here is hopefully part of a part-whole relationship, a

Hegelian “moment” in an intellectual development whose whole is never certain or determined or open to reduction.

1.3 A personal agenda

A second point I wish to make is that former inspirations are not always positive experiences. The dialectical nature of development is often riddled with problematic tensions, disagreement, oversight and mistakes and sometimes a constraining inadequacy of either material or cognitive determinate absences, each of which need to be given some voice. How then do I understand what I have said? Let me explain. Firstly, let me mention a life interest in spirituality, variously ill-conceived attempts at monastic life and more lately a translated or re-negotiated quest amongst the books and authors of academic Spirituality which is also an academically contextualised but nevertheless “lived” spirituality and whose “second coming” as Spirituality (much altered from its first (Lombaard 2013)) to the university, during the heyday of postmodernism, embroiled it in a “torrid affair” with epistemology and methodology. Consequently my Honours paper was an investigation entitled “On the epistemology of postmodern spirituality”, later published in altered form (Schreiber 2012).

Among the more inspiring writers in the later postmodern period, Roland Benedikter (2007) stood out as did the contributors to Berry & Wernick (1992), in particular their implicit claim that postmodernism exhibited an ontological turn - a return to *being*. This signalled for them evidence of a spiritual surge in philosophy and epistemology, not to mention the flourishing of a more popular publications industry. One of the authors mentioned by Benedikter, of whom I knew nothing, is Roy Bhaskar, the most prolific representative of the international philosophical movement called “critical realism”. It is my investigation of this philosophy which gives the present dissertation much of its material content.

1.3.1 The inspiration of dissatisfaction

Not all inspirations are positive or can be defined exactly: niggles and absences often context our progress. During the phase of research which characterised the Honours essays and this dissertation, my affair with methodology left me with a profound dissatisfaction. For all that has been written by the most profound minds to inhabit the arenas of philosophy and epistemology in the last centuries, especially in the Kantian tradition, fail to clarify for me the essence of a unified or workable methodology for the human sciences and (*ergo*) Spirituality. As a former philosophy student, this was an untenable situation. Four issues featured as

dissatisfactory: 1. The gap between nomothetic and ideographic methodologies, whose adoption of either positivist or heuristic stop-gap solutions to methodological problems appeared inadequately conceptualised, implying; 2. a lack of an intelligible account of knowledge, which put both interpretive hermeneutics and the interdisciplinary matrixes in a perilous “linguistified irrealism” (Bhaskar 2012:xxvi,171) ; 3. in this twilight who could possibly take Spirituality seriously as a science, even when it continued to reproduce article upon article (some indeed profound) on methodology?; 4. If then these doubts were to persist, how could the spiritual voice be applied? The failure of this spiritual voice to provide concepts apart from (a) reified conceptions of *faith*, (b) *positivistic* notions of traditional doctrine, and (c) theologically limited notions of “apophatic” negative discourse from the mystical tradition, gave us little new to propose by way of ontology or critique. Without this ontology or critique not only is Spirituality denied dialectical power, but also is denied any chance of deriving a truly spiritual emancipation (discernment) or mode of transformation for modern people. The latter is a project which for me implied a critique of consciousness and some level of engagement with naturalism, perhaps even posing some naturalistic theory of spiritual development. Previously I had felt comfortable with something like an anthropological frame for spiritual transformation, from an Aristotelian and later Thomistic metaphysical stance, so severely and successfully critiqued by Kant and Hume in past centuries.

So how to proceed from these “hotch-potch” clues, emanating from fields of disparate disciplines such as biology, quantum mechanics, emergence theory, systems theory, positive psychology and emotional intelligence, set against a pervasive phobia of naturalism (Benton 2001) within the social and personal fields, including theology?

1.3.2 The emancipative agenda: driving a hard bargain?

With these dissatisfactions in mind, I set about to “underlabour” (in the Lockean sense) for remedy in the emancipation of academic Spirituality: its methodology, science and relational-transcending-transformative impulse – an ambition which left me profoundly nervous, to say the least. In rephrase of Heelas’ terminology (2012:3) the question which required an answer is: how to offer simplicity out of the tortuous route of past epistemology? It was rather fortuitous then that I became aware of critical realism, since it had fastened onto these very issues (dissatisfactions and absences) within philosophy as a whole, thus adding another level of inspiration to my endeavour. Little did I know that the work of Bhaskar was so

sophisticated that it out-played any naive ambition of mine, extending beyond my wildest conceptions for advancement of the personal project. This too made me uneasy. Although as I have acknowledged, a certain recursive reproduction is implied in all reports on knowledge, Bhaskar's arrival knocked the wind out of my sails and I felt my academic voice ebbing into a gasp for air. A mounting panic was exacerbated by a veritable proliferation of critical realist literature which had to be engaged if I were to do justice to the field, all the while keeping on a manageable track for a Master's dissertation on Spirituality. Three challenges presented themselves: Firstly since critical realism is only coming to these shores rather late, a burden of recursive presentation of critical realist literature had to take some priority, and the critical or dialectical distance, so important in institutional expectations would have to take a lesser place if the project were to remain manageable. The best I could do below was to point out the criticisms and disagreements within critical realism itself, and then only in cursory fashion for space reasons. The originality of critique offered by this dissertation would then have to be deployed from critical realist perspective and insight, targeting implicitly hegemonic assumptions in the Western tradition of Spirituality. This I could live with - however since critical realism develops into a philosophy of meta-reality or Spirituality, the recursive question does not completely disappear. However it did strike me, again fortuitously, that the very critique of consciousness implied both in critical Spirituality and critical realism was of great confluent benefit.

Secondly, although critical realism is a progressively international philosophical movement, literature in the libraries of South African institutions of higher learning remain fairly under represented and sometimes in short supply. This challenge luckily did not prove the hurdle it might have, despite postal strikes in 2012 and 2013 which took some months to resolve. The third consideration was implied by the first, the problem of reception: how would a now necessary riding on Bhaskar's coat-tails, be usefully deployed in a purposeful contribution to the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, subsumed as it is under a Calvinist heritage of theological *Zeitgeist* at Unisa, and receive sympathy? The question must be raised because critical realism does require of us to think in a new way, which challenge then requires that we re-situate our conceptions of science, methodology and Spirituality, their debates and dialectics, from a new perspective without invoking further tyranny. There is then the risk that my under-labouring be viewed as a preposterous impertinence. Since many influences, operative under the level of consciousness, have produced a split epistemology, not just dialectically playful but indeed war-like postures

where confirmed positions and projected pre-suppositions have produced a history of antimony between philosophy (science) and theology (spirituality) which are not easily overcome, this constitutes a problem of ideology. I resolved to meet the challenge with the only internal resources at hand: not too much humility and a bit of bravery. I am also convinced following the history of Spirituality and philosophy, that to reflect on Spirituality in the contemporary sense means an inevitable engagement with the dialectic of philosophy itself, and that it is only a matter of time before critical realism becomes a standard feature in the problematic of research in our sub-continent.

1.3.3 Epistemological hegemony: a many-layered thing

Historical and epistemic consciousness empowers a certain acknowledgement of constraints and limitations which are operative at many layers in the production of knowledge, a state of affairs that is much targeted in critical theory. Thinking about the paradigmatic facet of dissertation writing, though in this case problems of periodising and other questions for instance are much reduced, all sorts of pre-conscious, conscious pre-existing and pre-existing pre-conscious agendas are operative (Schumpeter 1954), and their academic causality is only occasionally and partially mapped by reports on knowledge *et cetera*. Addressing the problems of epistemology from a meta-critical stance is much needed, as a reading of Heelas (2012) and Bailey (2001) indicates. The problem of recursively re-producing knowledge in the hope of effecting a meaningful transformation of knowledge seems seldom to succeed. In the academy growing acknowledgement and value for transformation features in the work of epistemologists and learning theorists, in psychology and in political theory. One is reminded that the idea of transformation is a core constitutional and legal value enacting the transformation of South African society. This is an *episteme* to which Spirituality has much to offer. However, the epistemological quagmire of mistrust which in post-structural mode has so influenced the recent past of knowledge making, casts so severe a doubt on “knowing” that authors are often at an impasse, uncertain where to ground their arguments. Sometimes we do not appreciate our responsibility to respond to dialectic and the critique of consciousness required. Likewise, any neat resolution to the limits of originality within the process of this dissertation is not easy. What this dissertation accommodates is partially an introduction between Bhaskar and academic Spirituality; “partially”, because the dissertation also has something to contribute to the conversation. It is therefore hoped that the novelty or emergent importance of the content and subject matter itself enlivens engagement.

1.3.4. Philosophy and the problematic

Setting a problematic in the epistemological realm, as we do, requires that we embed our small parcel of concerns in the mediations of structures which give epistemology certain features, which are constantly changing. We are it seems to misshape enquiries, to suit an established set of rules and interest. What are some of the symptoms? And does Bhaskar offer a solution? If we have dirempted ontology, do the symptoms support the conclusion at the practical level of dissertation writing? Do our heuristic conventions mask the disease of Bhaskar's irrealism, thus diagnosed?

1.3.4.1 Expanding personal “niggles” to philosophy and epistemology

Sharing a certain democratic value which holds as an ideal, that the profound thoughts of academia should be made more approachable to the everyday world is problematic. The use of colloquialism, expressly taboo and frowned on in dissertation guidebooks, even when speaking of profundities has a certain impact, much deflated by the terminology of philosophy and academia in general. Democratic values, some would say imply that the language of academia should avail itself of easier reading. It is an ambition that I share. Regrettably however, complexity of terminology and language when engaging philosophy, especially if that philosophy has epistemological consequence, cannot be avoided.

Furthermore, the language of critical realism is profoundly difficult, since it comes from the tradition of analytic philosophy. I feel there is little point in naively challenging an academic discipline's right to a lexicon of accumulated wisdom and the terminology in which it is encased nor whose presence nevertheless adds a characteristic dimension to a particular intellectual remit and whose availability in the interdisciplinary matrix may allow new emergence of knowledge.

1.3.4.2 Lexicons and epistemic complexity

Lexicons are, in my opinion somewhat existentially intransigent, even when they need not essentially be so. They exhibit a personality as text: there is always something real to interpret. One of the frustrations I have often felt is that the postmodern relativising of text has left us little to make friends with, it has resulted in an ontological inadequacy: infecting subjects, being and ultimately denying possibilities for transformation. In the interdisciplinary matrix however lexicons meet. Spirituality not only meets and uses terms from tradition, sacred text, theology, mysticism and philosophy, but also from social theory, economics and

even quantum mechanics, perhaps in more sophisticated fashion to critique modernism and its hegemonic consciousness.

Spirituality is much engaged with fellow travellers. However, although my instinct is that a condoned interdisciplinary matrix might have added impetus to a terminological cross-pollination amongst academic disciplines, I have not researched the phenomenon and therefore cannot come to any certainty on the matter. We can at this stage merely make note of the trend in academia, journalism and social media. Two terms which are used a great deal in the dissertation, “emergence” and “cosmic envelope” bare thinking on: “emergence” generally refers to conceptual and ontological novelty and has an established presence in the philosophical and scientific lexicon, although it has been theorised on differently at different times. The “cosmic envelope” is less established, although similar notions appear amongst philosophical theorists who contemplate the limits of big bang or creation and the problems of thinking “nothingness” (Wilber 2000:444-449) beyond these limits. The term as it stands might have roots in Eastern mysticism to conceptualise the inter-connectedness of all things, nevertheless in the realm of Western philosophy, it seems to be original to Bhaskar (?). So although “cosmic envelope” brings together and implies the philosophical cosmological thought and former metaphysical conceptions of “the great chain of being” or for that matter Wilber’s great “holarchy” of being (Wilber 2000:16-21) for instance, the official acceptance of the term “cosmic envelope” remains uncertain. However, it must be noted that it gains popularity amongst world-wide-web users, and thus indicates the makings of a democratically endorsed “resonance”.

1.3.4.3 Word counting and being: a problem for method

Paradoxically, the introjection of suspended ontologies into epistemology in post-Kantian tradition, has often inflated the academic ego-space where size and word numbers matter more because “after all” some would say, reproduction is “in”. I understand increasing specialisation amongst the academic disciplines often requires invention of jargon to describe new concepts far in excess of academia’s absorption rate. To some extent then scientific progress, if one has an opinion of realism about such, transforms or displaces the priority of the language-game. Whereas, if one is convinced of the existential intransitivity (realism) of language games, scientific progress makes little sense: transformation of knowledge is pre-closed. This is very much the insight which troubles Heelas (2012), Benedikter and Molz (2012) for example. These opinions are opposed in their consequences for methodology and

without a review of epistemic values produce an amount of frustration for thinkers at this level. For instance, when we speak of interdisciplinarity, are we talking about a real possibility (Hense 2011:5-14) considering that on one hand progressive specialisation makes the language less accessible across disciplinary boundaries, and on the other hand, the tacit reduction of knowledge value to a language game presupposes that such a game bares no rational grounds for interpretation at all?

If this conundrum poses a problem for methodology within the human sciences, it is compounded by an engagement across the two-cultures of nomothetic universals and idiographic singulars. Multi-specialisation no doubt makes it harder for individuals to keep up with the language and can disempower the process. Perhaps in the still emerging multidisciplinary matrix we sometimes imply some encyclopaedic ability, but we often fail to ask “to what level?” Often, deeper questions about the terms and conditions which make “interdisciplinarity” a valid option, are glossed over and surrendered to the market forces at play in the selling of our “rules of thumb” and other heuristic wares. There is no alternative, or so it seems. Academic writing perhaps can only participate in and add value to a human resonance or trend which it in turn affords a deepened conceptual emergence. In order to understand more about the process, we need some growing account of where and how methodological limitation is to be set, in other words what conditions and limitations are appropriate for the possibility of hermeneutic and interdisciplinary matrixes, hence require development. The problem of methodological limits affects not only the institutional guidelines for dissertation development, but the work of epistemology (science) itself in the conducting of research.

The zoning of my argument here, and providing ideological and philosophical context of my inspiration (critique of consciousness), is to make manifest the triangulated problematic at the disintegrated heart of postmodern epistemology and what Bhaskar throughout has referred to as the “philosophical discourse of modernism” and “ideology of late capitalism”. That project has secreted a particular “empirical realism” that tolerates no alternatives and has resulted in ontological monovalence: a flattening and squashing of beings and precluding/marginalising/nullifying any rational discourse on transformation without which Spirituality, despite its most obvious appeal is not viable, unless we are content merely to be game players and epistemological gamblers. Spirituality as critic can enter/engage with/interact with ever expanding field of targets.

1.3.4.4 Appropriation of philosophy

I think the above analysis demonstrates an appropriation and understanding of epistemic, philosophical and historical problems which should occupy one in an introductory section, and applied here to an introspection of dissertation building in a personal, social, institutionally obedient context, yet challenging them nonetheless. Moreover, if this particular introduction be judged eccentric insofar as it does not refer to the usual presentations of historicism we have all become used to, it is because the material of the dissertation resets and expands those very questions. What is left for us to achieve then is, in summary form to flesh out the philosophical context by presenting a particular and perhaps eccentric (dissertation limited) Bhaskarian view of the history of philosophy as it relates to the material of the dissertation: transformation and the critique of our world. My intention thus far has been to set up a philosophical resonance for the reception of the material to follow.

1.4 The role of philosophy: “contexting” the problematic

If philosophy is about thinking, what makes it different from any other academic discipline? What question does philosophy ask, that is special yet makes for the philosophical enterprise in all sciences? How does such a question ground philosophy and justify philosophy to itself? It seems to me that what philosophy has asked consistently from the pre-Socratics on is; “Under what conditions, necessary and sufficient, do phenomena, including intellectual ones, arise?” It is a question which can be asked of anything, lending philosophy a pervasive application to any science. Examination and identification of conditions (causality) is of course the nature of science and speaks of science’s philosophical inheritance. It also indicates the philosophical preoccupation with nature, its conditions, elements, atoms, quantum and structures which exceed, but nevertheless began with Thales. However, when philosophy (notably post-Socrates) has not asked about the nature of the cosmos, it investigates the nature of Man, or in less sexist language our humanity, problems of existence and our relationship with the cosmos.

Traditionally philosophy of “metaphysics” (from Parmenides onwards) has begun with the questions: “Who are we?” or “What are our origins?”: “ontology” and, “What can we expect?” or “How do we know?”; “epistemology” and, “What should be expected of us?”; “ethics” and “What is our destiny?” or “teleology”. Essentially Plato’s conceptions consisted in a form of idealism (out of this world), in which the conditions of man were highly dichotomised. We should note that the term metaphysics is merely a term used to catalogue

the works of Aristotle that had followed his *Physics*. The resonance distinctive of Aristotle's metaphysics in opposition to those of the Platonic or Parmenidean tradition, are encapsulated by Gilson (1952:52) thus:

Aristotle turned away from Platonic idealism because man's kingdom is a kingdom of this world, and because above all else we need to know something of the world in which our lot is cast.

During the time of the Christianisation of Rome's empire, both Platonic and Aristotelian traditions featured in Christian Philosophy as regional imbrications: (1) From Hellenism, at the inception of Pauline theology; (2) the neo-Platonic categories in the Alexandrian catechists (McGinn 1991:23-61), so influential in the early Church councils (Davis 1990:33-50,140-152); (3) the writings of Augustine of Hippo (Portalié 1960:95-119) and Plotinus; (4) the transposition of this philosophical tradition into the mystical teachings of the Cappadocian fathers/mothers, upon which the Desert (Spidlík 1986:55-150) and later Medieval traditions were to find their monastic grounds (Healey 1990:137-163); (5) not to be ignored, Thomistic neo-Aristotelianism (O'Meara 1997:41-86); (6) the latter whose continued influence in the Catholic tradition under the auspices of the Leonine Commission presents a pre-Copernican account of spirituality in Systematic Theology, which is still evident today and (7) against which metaphysics yet whose scriptural target is unquestionably pre-scientific, so much Bible exegesis finds its hermeneutical interests in post-critical theory (philosophically) and in the postmodern academic context. Gilson (1952:12) continues to explain the shift from Plato to Aristotle during the medieval period thus:

Christians turned away more and more resolutely from Platonic idealism because the kingdom of God is not of this world, but because the world, on the other hand is necessary as a starting-point from which to rise to the kingdom of God.

Of course today we may laugh at such a conception, since the "reign of God" in no way indicates a space other than that which we know, namely amongst us.

It should be noted that both traditions operated under Ptolemaic cosmological assumptions: human centrality in a (flat) world which had a fixed place in the universe. All was hierarchically structured for eternity. We do not need to dwell on the upheaval that the Copernican revolution caused for Gallileo and the Church; however, what it implied was a

scientific decentering which conceptually tumbled hierarchy and fixity and which took the Christian world many centuries to acknowledge and forgive (if indeed it yet has). Insight from critical realism suggests that philosophy has still not caught up with the full impact of the Copernican revolution, especially on the position of humanity. The logic is simple: Since Copernicus, we have scientifically noted a progressive decentering of the world, sun, galaxies and indeed possibly universes from their former positions in the expanding Cosmos. It might be noted that to describe this new reality, Wilber (2008) coins the term Kosmos. In line with these cosmological insights, Bhaskar proposes that contemporary humanity ought to decentre itself from its Cartesian ego, its individualised place in society, and society's place in the eco-system, in other words: resign from conceptions of our-selves as dominant. This I think parallels a reading of the ego-debunking “dying to self” metaphors in traditional mysticism.

It is easy to see that put together, new conceptions of humanity's placement in the philosophical landscape has had a number of consequences for so-called metaphysics, especially for Bhaskar who claims (2008,1998): (1) we know nothing about an otherworldly destiny and therefore questions of “teleology” (destiny) are abandoned for a more favoured “axiology” (movement); (2) older conceptions of metaphysical privilege or priority for humanity are untenable and (3) “metaphysics” as a privileged philosophy of the “unseen causes” is unjustified. Consequently metaphysics is resituated amongst the philosophical disciplines as a necessary but equal partner in philosophical reflection on the sciences. Hopefully also, metaphysics may resign its position as hegemonic underpinning for essentialist and “physicalist” dimensions in ecclesiology (the maleness of priesthood, for instance), a point of critical confluence in post-patriarchal contemporary Spirituality.

In summary, it may be argued then that from the beginning of the “enlightenment” period onwards, philosophy of science should have consistently moved towards decentred and descended (Adorno & Horkheimer 1944), (non-reified or non-supra) conceptions of the world. Essentially it is critical realism's claim that this has failed to be the case. It is this explanation that forms a great deal of the philosophical discourse, material to the dissertation.

Fleshing out the philosophical background to the formation of this dissertation, firstly we refer to the fact that in previous research (Schreiber 2012:1-8) this author conducted an analysis of postmodernism whose partial critiques of modernism inspire the current interest in critical realism. These together constitute the philosophical zone upon which a reflection and critique of Spirituality literature are here located. To give greater conceptual clarity on how

modernism and postmodernism relate in the philosophical discourse of modernism and which Bhaskar (2002c:167-169) critiques, five phases of reaction and critique are each successively set against the preceding phase: (1) The classical discourse of modernism (1640-1789); (2) high modernism (1848-1917); (3) the theory and practice of modernization from 1945 onwards; (4) postmodernism from 1968 onwards and (5) Western triumphalism after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Cumulatively these phases constitute an ideology (consistent with pre-modern premises) with hegemonic resonances and heteronomous effect².

Since Bhaskar's periodisation is situated here within an introduction, a place where we not only introduce ideas pertinent to the dissertation in the form of a rounded argument, but indulge ourselves in the problematic of historical and epistemic consciousness for their own sake, we must note that dates do not make history or epistemology. Usually dates are used roughly to convey a period (*epoche*) when certain things of significance to the argument happened. Here Bhaskar's dates are memorable and specific: the dates of factually occurring revolutions or public disturbance large enough to be noticed and publicly recorded. This does not mean that either Bhaskar or the reader should ignore the contexts and confluence of ideas and forces which resulted in their ultimate enactment. Quite the contrary, these revolutions are contextualised by a representation of history that is highly cognisant of historical realities and which make up a critique of philosophical discourse in which emancipation (transformation) are expressly denied, but (partially) happen anyway: that is their socially (need I say, historically) "real" and ontological point.

Bhaskar (2002c:33) summarises the main features of modernism as: egocentricity, false and abstract universality, incomplete totality, lack of reflexivity, judgemental-ism combined with unilinearity, "formalism in those multiple senses and materialism". Postmodernism, explained as a partial and partaking (reaction to) modernism, promoted: epistemic relativity, pluralism and difference, linguistic-ism, ontological irrealism (life as a pastiche), judgemental irrationalism, lack of totality (dualism and dichotomy), lack of a conception of emancipation, a heightened (but un-sustained) sense of reflexivity, proximity of the politics of identity and difference and traces of suppressed discourses, for instance on the emotions. The combined failure of this discourse resulted in an inability to account for *ontological realism*,

²The most evident examples of which are Lyotard's description of the postmodern condition as living in Dachau/Auschwitz and whose martyrdoms of Bonhoeffer and Weil *et al.* set the scene for a fuller appreciation of the emancipative impulse in philosophy and spirituality.

epistemological relativism and *rational judgement*, without which any talk of transformation (including spirituality) has no basis. Critical realism is set against these flaws and lacunae, as curative.

1.4.1 Problematising spirituality and methodology

Having described the pertinence of philosophy and its contemporary problematic, it is now necessary to describe the epistemological consequential framing of Spirituality and its methodology in terms that further the dissertation. For this reason I will focus rather selectively for the purposes of the introduction, on spirituality as a loosely systematic, multi-faceted process of transformation, implying a critique of consciousness. So too for the moment I shall isolate the interdisciplinary matrix as its methodology, again bracketing for the same reasons, the interpretive tradition (as if they can or should ever be treated separately). The artificial and engineered presentation filled with holistic absences here, will be remedied later. This remedy must be accomplished for two reasons: (1) the introduction and framing of the problematic is an institutionalised requirement as part to a whole dissertation, including a more satisfactory presentation of conceptual totality, and (2) if consistent and valid the argument presented here will have consequences for those ontological and totality-oriented absences, here acknowledged.

This goes some way in acknowledging that the totality of knowledge is always either temporarily foreclosed or uncertain, and that science progresses (including humble dissertations) towards a real totality which in itself may be advancing and expanding and is merely reflected in our conditioned/layered system of interactive conditions for knowing. I believe that such insight is incipient in the 1996 Gulbenkian Commission (Wallerstein 1996), for example. Its report is characterised by a deeply pervasive *historical consciousness*, without which conditions for knowledge must remain opaque and unavailable to epistemology (science). It appears therefore, that historical consciousness itself is a non-reductive condition for any philosophical reflection on being or knowing³. If this is so, continual progress (fear of planetary cataclysm aside) is theoretically possible. It therefore follows that knowledge presented a-historically without acknowledgement of its inherent polity, cosmology and *Weltanschauung* is knowledge not worth having.

³Also for the empowering of mysticism: See the philosophical development in Bonhoeffer and Weil for instance Astell (1994:1-18).

More materially if the threat of total ecological collapse is to be avoided, the “sutured” (Finn 1992) presentations of knowledge (including theological ones), often hegemonically endorsed but intimating closure have to be replaced by emancipative and “joined-up” models (Bhaskar 2010). If then a truly rational judgement is to be exercised, we require a philosophy which re-vindicates ontology and accommodates epistemic relativity as part of the ontological totality. In the light of this belief a philosophically grounded academic study of Spirituality and critique of consciousness must be afforded its right of voice.

Furthermore it should be noted that since the rise of empiricism and positivism in the natural sciences under the ideology of modernism, the relationship between philosophy and spirituality has been fraught with suspicion and acrimony (Beattie 2007:76-113), and which has often found us battling against illusions and shadows. If Sheldrake’s (2005b:38) question “whose story is told?” has any relevance, we must admit that it is quite difficult to tell stories about spirituality since the advent of Western Christianity without implicating the story of Philosophy.

1.5 Argumentative intentions

My more contemporary intention in this essay is to demonstrate how an understanding of philosophy, including and after postmodernism can help us overcome some serious doubts that although not often acknowledged and hence (sometimes unconsciously) approached with a resigned apathy, nevertheless pose a serious flaw for the methodological component of contemporary academic Spirituality and which ought to be accounted for and addressed, should Spirituality at this level accomplish its scientific and emancipative ambitions. These flaws are epistemic and have infected the world of epistemology generally and whose irresolution, have had the effect of blinding, constraining, oppressing and martyring.

1.5.1 Entering the fray on coat-tails

This dissertation underlabours by “fastening onto coat-tails”, “sailing under another’s flag” and hopes to “reap where others have sewn”. However recursive reproduction of knowledge is never sufficient in itself, if a somewhat original argument is to be presented. I mention this not to enforce an academically normative expectation, but to point out that a personally appropriated vision or inspiration is just that: an opportunity (under a pre-existing flag) to have one’s say, to make a contribution, however humble and in so doing impart an undeniably original “something”. This dissertation is no different. The “something” which is

original here lies in our underlabouring for spirituality as a real and empowering social alternative.

Two related complexities of un-clarity related to science in our time stand out: (1) The cleavage of science into two cultures of nomothetic universals and idiographic singulars, the effect of which has seen an anti-naturalistic fearfulness amongst the interpretive tradition, largely I suspect because the former has failed to account for the methodologies of the latter out of an ill-gotten snobbery, exacerbated by; (2) postmodern relativism whose deconstruction of history and the history of science suspended ontologies (scientific targets) and failed to justify any possibility of rational judgement in the world of science generally, but more particularly and in the face of which, despite the brilliance of Gadamer, Ricoeur and the like, interpretive theory failed to account for itself in coherent terms: the failure of critique. For instance reading the plethora of authors on interpretive philosophy to have come out of the past century, one may justifiably come to the conclusion that the strictly interpretive moments of method are about the best way to proceed in “making friends with” text. The value of making friends within the neo-Aristotelian tradition requires a reasonably developed sense of what the world must be like, ontologically. The failure to provide a clear account of ontology debilitates our theorising on emotional intelligence, rational judgement and transformation, all of which are squashed and sundered under modernist epistemological hegemony because we lack description of what it “is” that is proposed as having these interpretable aspects: very little can ultimately be made epistemologically, without a re-vindication of ontology. In postmodern suspension or absence of ontology theory makes any confluence between philosophy and spirituality including obvious methodological concerns, dubious.

The upshot has been a narrowing of the field of interpretations to traditional text and individual accounts (regardless of their intentions) on the one hand, and on the other highly unsatisfactory and positivistic phenomenological accounts and other sociological taxonomies, between which little enough meaty (heuristic) glue is theorised. The only refuge from this dichotomy has been to adopt and tacitly justify the type of Kantian categorical idealism (internal reasons, meanings and relations) held together by an implausible heurism (in empiricist terms of experience) which has hoped to cohere, the plurality of interests. In this context because rational judgement is suspended, tragically talk of transformation is unfounded. Without the possibility of rational transformation, the entire project of spirituality

is a pipe-dream and our interdisciplinarity is a shallow affair, without a sincere critique of epistemological consciousness.

1.5.2 Choosing representatives

To problematise Spirituality and place it within a workable and recognisable (pre-existing) dialectic or dynamic we can accept a distinction (for the moment) already made by Schneiders (1989:678, cf. Kourie 2009:152) between: “theory” (i.e. “Spirituality”); and the practice of spirituality as “lived experience ... of a fundamental dimension of the human being” perhaps then to theorise their unity, *contra* the distinction in an exposition of agency. The task now is to identify concepts that are in some way intrinsic to theory and practice respectively. This is not to dismiss the other facets, aspects and dimensions of a discipline that are equally intrinsically deep, operating in an open field and many-layered ontology of humanity. Secondly both chosen concepts (the representatives of theory and practice) must be in some way, reciprocal. The theoretical concept must be available to practice in some mode and likewise, the practical term must be available to knowledge. Thirdly both of these terms and their dialectical positioning must enlighten or enliven the grander concern of this dissertation that is, to render a critique of consciousness.

For the practical representative, I will argue for *transformation* and for the theoretical/methodological, one could choose either *interdisciplinarity* or *hermeneutics*. It matters not much which of the latter we choose since they are both recognised and accepted methodologies, both exhibit problematic elements and both are within the theoretical matrix reciprocally self-insinuating in each other. It is namely difficult to think of an interdisciplinary study that does not require interpretation or of a purely interpretive exercise without an open mindedness to foreign insight. Nevertheless whatever the choices here, they require some justification. There seems to be some agreement in the literature that transformation from interdisciplinary perspective is an “intrinsic” value in the fields of theory and practice of Spirituality. In more academic speak the term is already indicative of a recognised and established problematic in the social sciences requiring a critique of consciousness, either in the personal or general deployment of the concept. To understand what is being achieved in posing any problematic, the philosophical backdrop and the literature to hand must account for the relevance of *ontology*, *agency* and *transformation* in contemporary debate with some epistemological fluency. In order to argue fluently we need an analysis or narrative that embraces the epistemic complex (issues of history, philosophy

and knowledge) which grounds our targeted problematic in a coherent way. Such attempted coherence characterises the intention of critical realism.

Obviously such philosophical reflection should be more than acquainted with (1) the advent of critical theory (*inter alia* the Frankfurt school culminating in Habermas, Gadamer *et al.*); (2) a knowledge of historical consciousness (Sheldrake 2005:38-43; le Roux 1993:35-63; Burns 2000:1-29; and other significant philosophers of history); (3) the cultural/linguistic turn from Kant's categorical idealism, through the later Wittgenstein, Rorty and Taylor, onwards. In other words, those ideas which support the *pre-existence* of culture and language games, (4) post-structural thoughts from the post-Marxists characterised by awareness of the deep structures of knowledge and society (Foucault, and others of the French school of Continental philosophy, *et cetera*. (5) the rise of paradigm/systems-talk (Kuhn [1962] 1996; Luhman 1982; Kornai 1971; Bhaskar 2002a, [2002b] 2012, 2002c, 2010) inclusive of critiques of Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Newton and Smith, and (6) familiarity with the evolution (emergence) of cross/multi/inter/intra/trans-disciplinary methodology (Wallerstein 1996; Appelby 1969), (7) the wider trans-regional context, constituted by Western engagement in trans-Pacific philosophy and spirituality (i.a. Wilber 2005; Johnston 2000) in a geo-political scenario characterised by rapid technological globalisation, and (8) the steady rise of naturalism and the social sciences. Hence my reference to earlier research upon which insights this dissertation can progress without too much repetition.

1.5.3 A short argument for interdisciplinarity and transformation

Here I will present the required problematic in its shortest possible form by explicitly joining up the philosophical as well as the more narrow epistemic dimensions in historical context. Since the rise of historicism in philosophy and in Biblical studies (*ergo* Spirituality) is concurrent in their relative research fields during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's (Waaijman 2006:54) and insofar as this historical consciousness, appropriated by the Gulbenkian Commission explicitly endorses *interdisciplinarity*, this interdisciplinary endorsement being the traceable progeny of historical consciousness, Berling (2006:35-52) is able to conclude that spirituality is inherently, "intrinsically" interdisciplinary. In short form, the case for my choice of interdisciplinarity as intrinsic to the epistemology and methodological level of Spirituality rests upon a traceable historical development. The availability of interdisciplinarity as a personally appropriable attitude in the transformational context of a multi-dimensional "whole life" therefore, is self evident.

The case for human *transformation* as a viable representative describing practical spirituality, acknowledges the matrix of values and practice in the content of Spirituality literature insofar as the moral, emotional and mystical development of the human subject is never absent of metaphors of transformation. Without advancing upon an unnecessary detour, I think we can make a general case (without discounting the complexities) that there is reasonable reference in literature describing a movement from a less valued state, stage or realm, to a more perfect one. Thus regardless of the variety of ascriptions whether: from “Sin to Grace”, “Beast to God”, “Illusion to Enlightenment”, “Dark to Light”, “Separation to Union”, “Duality to Non-duality” and “human to Human” or indeed the medical metaphor “Disease to Health” adopted in the more secular Freudian tradition, an axiology of transformation is implied.

Even as I have contended, the Gulbenkian Commission opened the social sciences by endorsing interdisciplinary co-operation in the human sciences generally, thereby compounded the multiplication of theories of human being. The central problem shared by naturalism, behaviourism, sociology, history, psychology and indeed Spirituality is a failure to account for the phenomena of transformation coherently, namely ontologically. So in order to problematise the question of Spirituality within the epistemic matrix of the human sciences, in accordance with an arguably consistent literature and constancy of concerns shared by practical spirituality, it is useful as far as I can see to accept that the content of Spirituality is “about” transformation, in a progressing epistemology of that term in the human sciences, which has in recent years sought transformation. I also suspect that placing Spirituality into transformative matrices may usefully bridge Hegelian “shells” or phenomenologically taxonomic “surfaces” and the much desired grounding of “interiors”, through a critique of consciousness.

1.5.4 Restating the problematic

However returning to the philosophical concerns above, these things cannot be achieved if the two cultures of science remain at suspicious odds with each other, obeying schizoidal and ambiguous conceptions of causal relations (“in nature” as opposed to “in human”) as totally unrelated to each other, voiding ontology (things-in-themselves), avoiding the prickly problem of epistemic relativity and thereby defeating the only basis of transformation which relies on rational judgement, choices, beliefs, human agency and discernment (the Christian critique of consciousness, *par excellence*). The simple philosophical problem restated for Spirituality here follows thus: we have to re-establish ontology (the reality of being) to

answer the question “what transforms?” The alternative relativist ontology would hold “There is nothing *to* transform”. We have to establish the place of epistemology to answer the question: “How do we rationally describe transformation as a term?” An ungrounded epistemology (“irrealism” (Bhaskar 2012:xxvi,171)) would hold that: “The possibility of transformation is merely subjective and therefore talk of it is illicit.” We have to establish rational judgement to answer the questions about what are the proper objects of our moral choices and transformations, loves and attachments. Without an answer to these questions, the intellect, will and moral choices have no real objects and remain in mental suspension.

Why is it important to overcome these taboos, dichotomies and riddles? The possibility of interdisciplinary study must presuppose a matrix of human life, knowledge and choices as existing in a set of relations perhaps similar to what Bhaskar (1998:25-43) terms the “social cube”, that is: (1) material transactions with nature; (2) intra- and inter-personal relations; (3) attitudes towards social structures and the choices we make in reproducing, producing and transforming them and in addition, I would pose the option of abandoning or refusing them, and (4) intra-subjective engagement with interior stratifications and structures of personality. The reflexive aspect of spirituality, operating within these bounds, also requires a critique of consciousness *about* these dimensions of human life. In excess of Bhaskar I would comment that this cube of relations implies a fifth dimension: accommodation or relationship with unspeakable and unanswerable cosmologically total mystery. These relations then become for us, real (however limited) objects of knowledge in the multi/inter-disciplinary matrix. They also describe or pre-scribe the limited available field (as part of a potentially unlimited open field), in which we act as real transformative agents in a real world. Underlying the argument is an intuition that the dichotomy between theory and praxis no longer stands, since they share similar (but stratified) objects and targets in all rational activity.

1.5.5 Theory to practice: a demonstration from reality

How might such conceptions form a useful critique in the dialectic of Spirituality study? I have often heard in the academy the claim that the job of the academic is not to make a difference (usually meant as social activism): that what we do in our huddles of conversation need not be expected to be applicable or practical to the “outside world” at all. Purely for the demonstration of argument, I must confess the comment does feel empty and disparaging of the scientific endeavour. Let us, for a moment of argument assume that this claim features as a minor premise in some clever, anti-academic theory of transformation whose hegemony has

by some mischance vastly infected our epistemology. Such a position may propose that social activism is the only way of transformation and that “there is no ideational alternative”. Consequently human and social ontology is conceived of as monovalent and materially unaffected by academia!

Immediately it might occur to the more reasonable stance, that while it may be impossible to expect that we can substantively measure what difference it is that academics make, it cannot be argued that *no* difference is made. Reason, it may be proposed must object to such statements on the basis of logic and a failure on our part to see the reflexive transformation or spirituality in the “lectio scientia” of our practice. The moral lacuna, it may be held is that by which we fail to reflect on how we might plant truly emancipative ideas in the soil of culture, for which we are existentially accountable. To paraphrase Marx (1876:29, cf. Bhaskar 1998:86), “the conditions for the flourishing of one are the conditions for the flourishing of all”. Deprived of such a value some may ask, “What is the point of Spirituality’s place in academia?” “Surely” they may go on, “even if our interest is theoretical our value driven practice is a real praxis, a non-dual merging of theory-praxis in the everyday living of academics?” Some might even argue that it is untenable that the Spirituality researcher is remote to the dialectics of spirituality in social context. It simply will not do for them, that despite our failure to see the hidden transformations, conversions and personal empowerment that emerge interiorly, even in recursive learning and insights of colloquia and so on, and as products of knowledge, let alone the non-recursive transformation of such, that we cannot or do not effect a difference. Furthermore to entertain the possibility of transformative absence in our job of contemplating the world and its crises would leave us with nothing to say that is not merely a restatement of pre-scientific and traditional explananda or of a certain epistemic problematic then restated.

If spirituality is to speak truth to epistemology and or to the powerful, it cannot shrink from scientific meta-critique of reductionist, linguistic, materialist and actualist fantasies. We cannot justify a hope that pre-scientific theories of transcendence will deliver us into something like a contemporary *alethia*, somehow saved-up for another world. To thus presume is to foreclose on science, academic Spirituality and the transformation of humanity - and for that matter, theology (Stoeger 2009:345-349). It is clear then that in this hypothetical debate that there is only one winner. The doubts of the initial protagonist (“academics do make a difference”) shadow the intentions of that dominant hegemony (“academics cannot make a difference”) and do more to prove than dismantle it.

1.5.6 Critical powers

This hypothetical level of demonstration may well characterise the “cha-cha-cha-like” dance so reminiscent of inter-theory debate in the academy. Certainly a more effective way of defeating the shadowy ideology, is a critique of consciousness deployed in two ways. Firstly we may look for the inner inconsistency of the dominant theory, and from this chip away at the rest of the structured argument. For instance, we may demonstrate that the dominant argument (of social activism) poses an implication that it alone has the right ideology and the only true options for transformation. That: (1) such an ideology does indeed (according to its own values) so transform, and since (its) ideology transforms, (2) the conditions for transformative ideology must imply the same possibilities for academia, which becomes self-evident (*ipso-facto*), (3) *ergo* academia transforms. This is what is often referred to as “immanent critique”.

The second way is to find within the dominant philosophy/ideology a failure to account for transformation in its own theory. It is important to note that we merely have to establish one such example where the theory fails for its claim (that no other alternative exists) to be proven false: a method of critique similar to that of Kuhn’s ([1962] 1996). We can then propose a superior argument (as Kuhn did) that transcends the dialectical tit-for-tat by way of “transcendental critique”. Simple use of immanent and transcendent critiques in philosophically traditional mode, demonstrates the usefulness of philosophy for contemporary Spirituality in exposing hidden fallacies, inconsistencies and foreclosures, which left to their devices confuse and harm an epistemology of spiritual/noëtic progress and *ergo*, Spirituality as academic discipline and spirituality as transformative praxis.

1.5.7 Joining-up the problematic: philosophy, critique and hegemony

In critique then of a statement made commonly enough, one can bring about dissolution of false ideas to which we are all prone on logical and philosophical grounds. Critique and dialectic have rightful roles as (and in) transformative praxis and the critique of consciousness required for the former. The critique used here has two features: on one hand it exposes a hidden inconsistency in the belief that “I do not/cannot make a difference”, yet do so with the very word I speak (the nature of discourse). The second is that if it were true, “academics (discoverers of the new) do not make a difference” (as transformative agents), the very possibility of new (scientific progress) and transformation (in agency) must be brought into question for all claims.

Denial of these claims is to deny their possibility (falsely) in any part of the world and for all others. The only fall-back is to be *thrown* into powerless language games, in which the reality of spirituality cannot be conceived to arise. The greater pitfall however is the implication of both fixity (things do not change, evolve or emerge) and irrealism (there is nothing *to* change, evolve or emerge) within the premise and the shady epistemic complexes which act as operative principles within the dominant hegemony. These false ideas can however be overcome if we argue on metaphysical grounds that things like emergence (of new things, ideas and values) and transformation (towards these) are demonstrably real (a disposition of realism). I suspect that in both theory and practice of spirituality, we have been fighting a traditionally held but unconvincing battle against modernist hegemony by appealing to values about the reified “Unseen”. In critical realism we might find the tools to do so on the same level-headed ground upon which empirical realism thought it trod. If this is so, there is no need for the nagging fear of either the Copernican revolution, nor of a “worlded” ground of agency. Contrarily, a realisation that the individual as truly *real*, but not the value-centre of society and that real human society is not the value-centre of ecology, as indeed the world is not the value-centre of the Cosmos, might elicit celebration.

1.5.7 Facts, values and Hume’s law

A discernible ambivalence towards these philosophical commitments understandably persists in the various realms, strata or open-field of the academic Spirituality world. Twentieth century critique has rendered epistemology and methodologies somewhat nervous survivors clinging to perceived fail-safes, only lately to recognise the quicksand at their base. Fundamentally epistemology has failed to cohere for itself or for its practitioners, by failing to relate the content of idiographic human sciences and nomothetic science. Without such a coherent account of the major philosophical positions of the recent past – *ontological realism*, *epistemological relativism* and *rational judgement* – has seemed unbridgeable and in the face of their irresolution, many prefer the easier option (if dangling is easy) which is to cling to articles of faith in a pre-scientific form only to find themselves having to justify and defend convoluted distinctions between “rational” (modernist) modes of thought on the one hand and either “supra-rational”, “above-rational”, “a-rational”, “non-rational” (including “irrational”) modes of heurism, on the other. This implies (whether as I suspect or not, that these categories of non-discursive rationality have validity (Bhaskar 2012:37)), the “rational” in theses modes is occluded. The endorsement of the implied dichotomy is actually a function and generalisation of the fact-value distinction, held in the modernist hegemony as “Hume’s

law” which in its heteronymous effect separates Cartesian-empirical “rationality” from evaluative rationality, thus painting both faith and ethical judgement into a corner of a modernist padded cell⁴.

The partial liberation which Hume sought to prove: that an “is” does not necessarily presume a metaphysical “ought” (true), has received a hegemonic generalisation interpreted such that “is” *cannot* ever presume an “ought” (false). The value of justice is an especially pertinent case in proving the opposite: justice is a rational judgement (even though evaluative and its social consequences relative) because, although it may be held that not every “is” implies an “ought”, not *all* “is’s” prohibit an “ought” - therefore Hume’s law as a law fails. This might constitute a subtle but not a-rational, non-rational, supra-rational, above-rational nor irrational, but a rational distinction! Let me demonstrate. If *A* does not imply *B*, must it mean that all *A*’s must not imply *B*’s? The inverse corollary, all *A*’s infer *B*’s used by the normative fundamentalists, is that all *A*’s (majorities) are normative for all *B*’s (minorities). Oh the wily ways of power in reducing all *B*’s to *A*’s and otherness to likeness fits a wonderful excuse for us not to tolerate the oughts in “others”, for some!

1.6 Getting real: reflections on a world-located spirituality

To continue in this vain is my personal quest, by motivating for a philosophical intervention that understands its ideological commitment to transformation as philosophical, moral and spiritual, acknowledging that what we need and want is an emancipative spiritual meta-theory that speaks of transformation in a way that affirms being and agency in our secular “worldedness”, even if our thoughts about such a world be post-secular and therefore are embedded in postmodern context.

From what premises might such be built? A tradition exists amongst Western metaphysical thinkers (medieval debates between Dominicans and Franciscans aside) that spirituality exists necessarily as part of the *intellectus*. Writing contemporaneously it seems to me that in the phylogenesis and ontogenesis of spirituality (again post-Habermasian doubts about how one fits the other included (Wilber 1995:153-157)) is based on a post-Hegelian tradition inclusive of Freud, Adler and Marx: that reflexive spirituality’s emergence coincides with an

⁴Is not the operative modernist unconscious (value-fact distinction) assumed to be law, and despite the intellectual opposition to modernism, evident in Lombaard (2013:2-3)?

intellection about our contingency/agency and the limits to power of the human person within the cosmos as we understand it, explaining the trauma felt by traditional institutions of spirituality in the face of cosmological revolutions and the like.

New cosmologies engender philosophical positions which reset the conceptual life or matrix in which we come to new self-understanding, and in the light of which truths it is possible to review or recoup the earlier analysis of: material transactions with nature, interpersonal relations, attitudes towards social structures and the choices we might make in reproducing, transforming and/or abandoning them, interior stratifications and structures of personality and beyond these (in excess of Bhaskar), accommodation or relationship with unspeakable and unanswerable mystery. All in all, what is implied is a philosophically anthropogenic conception of Spirituality. What is therefore proposed is a re-contextualising of relationality and the use of power within our manifold complexity of relations, in order to understand how transformation is then best conceived. I think for this reason alone contemplation on epistemology is necessary for academic Spirituality at least and for which sake pre-scientific answers will not necessarily suffice. If as Bhaskar (1998:45) claims the history of philosophy since modernism is still trying to accommodate the consequences of the Copernican revolution, resolution thereof is ideologically pertinent to the corrective/moral and transformational intuitions within a truly contemporary Spirituality as science or meta-theory (programmatic discovery of the new) which must, in my view support a concomitant practical mysticism.

1.6.1 What next?

The emergence of the new and radically post-Copernican “worlded” spirituality (perhaps now absent or shady), must logically be the condition under which spirituality has both a past and future, and in the academy at least this requires a philosophical commitment as a part of a necessary critique of consciousness. Spirituality in part a philosophy of transformation, then should be in a position to contemplate its own hegemonies and implied heteronomy by engaging the world of ideas and practices beyond a narrow conception of its remit, thereby dialectically involving itself in the absencing of sins, ills, mistakes and oversights.

Postmodernism as an ideology of late capitalism has proposed the suspension of morality, replacing it with confused scepticism bordering on cynicism. The tyrannies of capitalism and Soviet-Marxist materialism which, in turn hosted and colluded with nationalist dictators to effect cultural ruin and spiritual devastation amongst the geo-political labour force, left the

twentieth century with a world society where few could be friends in any real sense: trust was systematically mistrusted. In the postmodern discourse true emancipation (as holistic, sustained and reflexive) was reduced to the politics of the revolutionaries, thus completing what their dialectical enemies had begun. Whilst societies floundered in the maelstrom of constraint and alienation, ideologues (including philosophers) busied themselves as usual either on their speeches and deals for war or amongst the catacombs of knowledge, poring over their hermeneutics of suspicion, sponsored by a traceable neoliberal political, economic (replete with capitalist transformation models, to sell it) sociological agenda (Wallerstein 1996:33-69): a tale of woe, incomplete against more ecological fears. Such narcissistic emptying achieved devastation of human and spiritual resources⁵ in the face of which, we have had little choice but to run for the interior ghetto of individualism and fear-based communalism (Bhaskar 2002c:176), reified notions of transcendence and magical realism (Lombaard 2013:1) to reproduce a recursive absence of goodness.

I think a valuable lesson from the history of philosophy from the so-called “enlightenment” on, is how skewed and oppressive it has been and how it must extricate it-self from modernist geo-political heteronomy thus imposed (Lyotard 1984:xxi, 1992:78, cf. Astell 1994:2). Postmodernism completes its predecessor by bringing a profound warning to some and irrealist stupor to others, but no resolution.

In some areas principle postmodern thinkers are being reformulated as the contributors to Joseph & Roberts (2004:199-297) suggest. Much conversation in the multidisciplinary array is testament to interest in such analysis. The historical reality, from which this dissertation takes its trajectory are those postmodern events, elements and themes often described in their contribution to twentieth century epistemic consciousness without claiming a final word on a work in progress or making a final assessment of postmodernism. However I think it valuable as Bhaskar has done to see postmodernism as a part of the modernist whole. Thus I believe it worthy that this dissertation deploys philosophy, meta-theory and Spirituality in an emancipative dialectic, constellating around a (for want of more adequate terms) postmodern

⁵In South Africa, as I write, the scourge of ubiquitous rape and vast under-education are hot topics. Education and Law reform are often offered as the silver bullet, but no one speaks about source values in the home-life: the lack of male role models, except to converse on the empowerment of traditional tribal patriarchy in absence of the equally tribal matriarchal balances!

critique of consciousness. It implies thinking anew, creating a new cartography of knowledge, assisted by tools and critiques available from interdisciplinary matrices.

Philosophically speaking interdisciplinary epistemology is specifically the context from which the expectation of the new (theory and practice) is here deployed (Hense 2011:5-14). From the context of Spirituality conversation the expectation could be said to be available to Sheldrake's (2005:42) paraphrase "whose narrative is told?" Sadly the latter too easily connotes an ironic or competitive expectation. Perhaps of some promise in Sheldrake's question is the centrality of the subject?

Chapter Two: Postmodernism, the philosophy of science and critical realism: the critical heritage

Introduction

This dissertation presents the philosophy of critical realism and meta-reality, a philosophy of liberation from the many dichotomies, fallacies and lacunae of accepted orthodox conceptions which have bound our traditional thoughts about being and knowing to a coercive hegemony of categorical errors and obfuscations, the effect of which is to produce a society and realm of knowledge of heteronymous powerlessness and untruth: a generalised mis-identity of self into irrealism. The axiology of spiritual and conceptual emancipation requires that we analyse, critique and re-explain *being* away from false consciousness, through critical realist critique of Western consciousness, to re-identity with Reality that is truly enchanted, connected and emancipative for the free flourishing of all. This short description of the architecture of conceptual development in Roy Bhaskar's philosophy also describes in the main that of the dissertation presented here.

2.1 A point of confluence – context

I stated in the introductory section that my previous research into postmodernism provided a confluence of interest with critical realism. It is also a many-pointed confluence for the values-driven discipline of academic Spirituality, its methodologies and various critical and theoretical commitments. Postmodern critique provides context to both a personal academic programme and this dissertation's introduction of Bhaskar's critical realism. These intentions thus run in a developmental confluence which clears the way for us to examine the issue of secular spirituality, its critiques of religion, society and epistemology. The postmodern critique of modernism mostly familiar to the academy is expanded by critical realism and forms the central theme here. The common philosophical and Spirituality interests become obvious as development proceeds. To begin from this context I present a redaction of Roy Bhaskar's summation of postmodernism as a part-whole relationship within and partially critical of the many fallacies in the "philosophical discourse of modernism, which he often has abbreviated to "PDM"" (Bhaskar 2002a:167-180):

1. The classical philosophical discourse of modernism evidenced in the writings of the philosophers of the so-called Enlightenment, was initiated in the *Zeitgeist* of British (1640-1660) and French (1789) bourgeois revolutions:

philosophically the period awakened (for Bhaskar), the liberty of egocentricity, expressed by Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* set against a false abstracted universality of others. "Indeed the whole PDM is constituted by the couple of an ego, be it individual or a group, class, gender, nation state (or some complex of these) objectively set against a manifold, described in actualistically universal terms, which is the object of that ego's action (manipulation and exploitation). This ego (itself purely illusory) is thus set against its (or at least an) other – but the categories in which the ego and its other are apprehended are both then so separated and qualitatively differentiated and opposed as to make the very universality presupposed by the discourse impossible to maintain" (Bhaskar 2002a:168). As a point of contrast from the non-/pre-modern, classical modernism sets itself against its contrasting other whose existence it must tacitly presuppose and include (in an exploitation of that same other) below the level of consciousness. The partial critique of this false and abstract, self-refuting stance, is sustained in the next phase.

2. High modernism with its hey-day situated between the age of revolutions of 1848 and 1917, reached its zenith in Marx who exposed the lack of reflexivity, *incomplete* totality (dualism) in the (for Bhaskar, the emerging conception of) of 1, above. However, that the intellectuals and critics of the time did not represent the *victims of the ideology* produced a discourse of the period that is characteristically elitist and patronising: "speaking for the other".

3. The theory and practice of modernisation after 1945, the Second World War and 1947, "the symbolically and practically significant decolonization and partition of India" (Bhaskar 2002a:167-171). "The theorists and practitioners of modernism [Westerners talking about Easterners, including Africans] were concerned to bring up (or down) to their level ... that non- or pre-modern part of humanity". Thus, under colonialism assumptions of *unilinearity* and judgementalism abounded. In the internalisation of politically engineered master-slave relationships, emotions and "higher" or "ground state" selves were enslaved by a "masculinized" psychic master.⁶

⁶It should be noted here my suspicion that Bhaskar's 2002a is an ironic twist of the abovementioned 'West to East' movement of modernist social and other engineering. If so, the book also signals reclamation of the spiritual values (as 'Eastern') and a siding-with (in solidarity) with the marginalised (spiritual) self against the dualisms and incomplete totalities of modernist (Western) hegemony.

4. Postmodernism, beginning with the revolutionary upsurges of 1968⁷, continued the *Zeitgeist* of disenchantment emerging in phases 2 and 3 above. Bhaskar (2002a:171) mentions the themes of Nietzsche's "death of God", Weber's "rationalisation", the post-structural "end of man" (Foucault), the "end of history" (Lyotard), and the "end of meaning" (Derrida). "Unfortunately in the very accentuation in this phase of a new politics of identity and difference [the politics of feminism, black consciousness and the gay movement, sometimes characterized in a selfish un-generalized liberation], the interconnectedness and unity of humanity and indeed [all] living forms was lost. What was missing here was any conception of a dialectical totality, with the crucial concepts of dialectical universality and concrete singularity absent". Consequently humans were described in formalist and functionalist (behaviourist) terms deployed in a plastic nature, open to a purely instrumentalist mode of reasoning along with its reductionist and mechanistic materialism which exiled *intention*, and the spiritual values, processes and flourishing of humanity.

5. Western (mostly American bourgeois) triumphalism in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, 1989-1991, constitutes the fifth phase. Bhaskar (2002a:171) suggests that Fukuyama's *The End of history and the Last Man* (1989) epitomizes the development of modernism with its unconscious intention to derail ontology and human freedom.

We will return to the hegemonic effects of the latter phase in the development of this dissertation.

Bhaskar (2002a:33) summarises the main features of modernism as displaying: egocentricity, false and abstract universality, incomplete totality (description of reality), lack of reflexivity, judgementalism combined with unilinearity, formalism in those multiple senses and materialism. Postmodernism as partial and partaking (reaction to) modernism, including epistemic relativity, pluralism and difference, linguistic-ism, ontological irrealism judgemental irrationalism, a lack of totality (dualism and dichotomy), lack of a conception of emancipation, a heightened (but un-sustained) sense of reflexivity, proximity of the politics of

⁷ Allen (2002:107) notes the profound effect 1968 had on ex-Pope Benedict XVI's conservatism.

identity and difference and traces of suppressed discourses, on the emotions. However he is not alone in his interpretation of something programmatic in modernism. Astell (1994), Nolan (2006) and numerous academic authors allude to its shortcomings, if not to its hegemonic effect. I am aware that Nolan is particularly drawn to discerning the “signs of the times”, a deeply held gospel value. There is then a mutual interest in this sort of Marxian deconstruction. Whether or not the same inspiration is acknowledged in academic authors of Spirituality generally, for instance Beatty (2007) and considering the fear Marxian connotations sometime engender⁸, the value of critique in academic Spirituality is a complex one which needs some investigation. Although not all authors are liberation theologians, obviously the emancipative inspiration deployed as critique (whether as a deconstruction of inconsistent targets of immanent critique or as moral-philosophical transcendent critique or in combination) is an important theme which provides a confluence for Spirituality literature and critical realism.

Although fair warning in Schneiders, (2009, 1989:689, cf. Kourie 2009:157) against normative generalisations and prescriptions inherited from Christian moral theology which cannot serve the comparative and interdisciplinary agenda is taken seriously here, we cannot in arguing for a confluence of critique afford to overlook the moral and ethical dimension within Spirituality. Within biblical context for instance, a prophetic mandate to criticise abuse of power in the name of YHWH who is primarily the emergent God of the marginalised and dispossessed, is traceable and commonly accepted after the profound reflection of liberation theologians like Nolan (1976). Since I am not a Bible scholar, I am not going to claim more than this. Furthermore I cannot claim for a similar theme in other religious scriptures although scholars of comparative religion might, namely for similar writings amongst other religious traditions. However I can most certainly claim that a point of sometime uncomfortable confluence exists between this biblical value of “liberation”, the Aristotelian idea of “flourishing”, Marx, and the critique of consciousness in Buddhist thought, for instance. The critique of power is therefore “confluent” most notably in the epistemology of the last centuries and the rise of humanism. Elsewhere, Kourie (2009:152-153) says: “One of the reasons for increased interest in spirituality is undoubtedly *postmodernism*.” This author’s reflection on the hegemonic effect notes: “a clear process of secularisation” in

⁸Remember “Die rooi gevaar”? The term is translated as “the Red threat”, used in the geopolitics of the Cold War era also used by the Apartheid South Africans to denote enemies of the state.

reaction to, “fanatical intolerance among some religious groups who are totally committed to an ideology”, “autocratic systems of religious governance”, “treatment of women” and “hierarchical ... elitism”, whose combined effect ignored “purely humanitarian feeling and ethical behaviour” are ignored” (d) “autocratic systems of religious governance”. As a result, she notes “true spirituality may be the way forward for these contemporary women and men who espouse a ‘secular spirituality’ ”.

I am inclined now to reflect that following Bhaskar’s programmatic suspicions and Kourie’s point above, on some social phenomena pertinent to South Africa. On 14th February, 2013, President Jacob Zuma presented his “State of the Nation” address to parliament and the country. It is based on a policy document better known as “The national development plan”, the premise of which is dependent on the role of education. Important though educational development might be one may be inclined to ask if this focus is not a convenient way of *not* focusing on the more basic values or relational issues in the family which either scupper or empower the family/cultural value of education. The inculcation of education-friendly, humanitarian values in families including freedom from abuse, must surely take priority (hardly mentioned in political discourse) before one can usefully take advantage of institutional structures and provisions (very popular in political discourse)? I can only adduce from the obvious (parenthesised) dichotomy that we prefer to throw money at a problem, where a more difficult value choice and appropriation of those values requiring no monetary input, is somehow dismissed. I would further suggest that this state of affairs is symptomatic of our penchant for speaking from positions of power and positivistic styled (including religious) discourse in which the discourse of the powerless is marginalised. At another level, I am aware of corporate healthcare workers who question the validity of corporations routinely providing “employee wellness programmes” which offer counselling on any number of adjustment matters, including relocations. A laudable development, but these same wellness workers seem to harbour serious doubts about a ubiquitous superficial mollycoddling culture which may ultimately dis-empower persons’ inner resources, emotional intelligence and resilience⁹ when those same corporates routinely retrench workers. It is perhaps wise to reflect that superficial piecemeal signs of political improvement and

⁹The questions and concerns raised are contextualised in a series (2012-2013) of informal reportage and discussions in cars and in private and not in any interviews of a solicited kind, and unintended for research purposes.

transformation are not always the curatives they promise. As part of the same National Development Plan various financial targets are set as though these were the key to our national flourishing. Again, although job creation can go a long way a significant debate around the actual model of economy best suited for “upliftment” of the poor is omitted, without which the same cycle of greed and inequity is sure to continue. Are we then to discern as many do a programmatic disempowerment below the level of consciousness? I think analysis would suggest its likelihood.

To continue making the argument for confluence and the role of critique from a completely different tack yet part of a (philosophical-anthropological) Spiritual analysis in the university and critical realist philosophy, let us begin with a famous example from the philosophy of science.

2.1.2 Falsifiability in philosophy of science

Thomas Kuhn needs no introduction: his 1962 *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is probably the most quoted and acknowledged work on the philosophy of science to come out of the twentieth century. Purely for the sake of summary: his achievement was to place the philosophy of science as discontinuous or at odds with its own history. Kuhn demonstrated to great effect that a positive and uninterrupted progress of science, presumed by positivism, was blatantly false. His study showed that the history of science exhibits periods of stability and revolution, wherein the latter science undoes pre-existing theory. Along with Feyerband, Popper and Hempel, he brought to prominence the role of “falsifiability” in the development of science. In excess of Popper and Hempel (who remained committed empiricists), Kuhn showed how science agendas resulted from the macro (finance and the politico-scientific community) and micro (the methodologically designed result of macro) social influences. To describe these influences he adopted the term “paradigm” which came to represent a postmodern resonance acknowledging the influence of the socially constructed nature of scientific discourse, the target of postmodern critique. Over his career and in response to much criticism, Kuhn refined his theory of the macro elements and eventually abandoned the now famous paradigm for “disciplinary matrix” (Kuhn 1996).

2.1.3 Postmodern scientific incommensurability

In conjunction with Feyerband, Bhaskar (2002a) notes that Kuhn proposed there was essentially no reason to assume a preference for one socially constructed theoretical set over

another. The notion of “incommensurability” between theories became the lynchpin upon which postmodern relativity and anti-positivism gained the status of new orthodoxy. Evidence of social construct in science cast serious doubt on the post-Humean tradition exemplified in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle, whose conception of scientific laws relied on an observable, experiential conjunction of recurring, experimental events. In this introduction to the philosophical scene of the late twentieth century, we can for the moment dispense with the critical boon postmodernism and the hermeneutical anti-positivists made of Kuhn’s work.

2.1.4 Postmodern epistemology: a summary

As López and Potter (2001:4-6) contend, “... postmodernism’s most radical propositions no longer, seem outrageous.” These authors note: postmodernism’s “discovery” of (1) “social determinants of knowledge”, (2) “the irreducible complexity of natural and social phenomena”, (3) “loss of hegemonic meanings”, (4) an enthronement of “irony and ambiguity” in language – all of which gained purchase across the fields of epistemology, including literature and social criticism, philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. It has to be said too that the influence of plural relativism (for Wilber 2000: 745-49, a sign of progress) found its way beyond the constraints of the academy and into the everyday lives of media and society, often producing a ludicrous and contradictory “rightness” to anyone’s and everyone’s opinion. More telling for me is that strong conceptions of the boundaries which exist between so-called epistemology and lay worlds of knowledge, as Mouton (2011:137) would have it, demonstrably failed and often continue to do so especially in the light of an emerging conception of reality as an open-ended, irreducible complexity or stratification which is reflected in the many-layered worlds of knowledge.

The exploration of Kuhn is purposeful not only to highlight his importance for postmodern relativism which when conjoined in the linguistic turn from Kant to the later Wittgenstein and then to Rorty (1983) and which radicalised the Kantian tradition, but also to note that postmodernism and critical realism participate in a profound critique of the history and philosophy of science (Archer 1998:x-xii; López & Potter 2001:1-21). It is a critique that has evidently not escaped academics in the field of Spirituality (Kourie, 2009:165). Apart from this similarity in critical realism and postmodernism and the value of social influence

(“construct”) in science noted in both movements, the two philosophies (as ideologies of science) however swiftly part company.

2.1.5. The attitude of critical realism

Critical realism as the name would suggest, favours any number of commitments to scientific realism (cf. Brock & Mares 2007; Groff 2008; Joseph & Roberts 2004), otherwise an attitude of confidence in the intelligibility of science. Far in excess of postmodern critique for instance Bhaskar’s) *A Realist Theory of Science*, building on the work of his tutors Harré and Valera, is probably the most comprehensive critique of post-Humean conceptions of causality which the philosopher claims “presupposes an ontology of empirical realism, whereby the world consists of experience and atomistic events constantly conjoined” (Bhaskar 2008:221-222), and as Hartwig (Bhaskar 2008:xiv) says, “hence [an ontology] of closed systems and undifferentiated depthlessness, a view underpinned by an atomistic model of the human subject as a passive spectator of given phenomena...”. The results of this produced a “squashing” of anyone and everything that is not like me and an alienation of both interiority and otherness - the philosophical “sin” inherited from Parmenides.

2.1.6 Preliminary comments on management

Some preliminary comments about how I propose to manage the present investigation have to be made before we go on to the development of Bhaskar’s transcendental realism. I should comment that for management purposes this dissertation is not intended to be a complete exposition of current philosophy of natural science. However it is necessary for the dissertation to present the major conceptual framework presented in *transcendental realism* (Bhaskar 2008) as encasing his later development, in order to follow more closely Bhaskar’s (1998) social theory and to further the argument of confluence. Consequently what Bhaskar’s *A Realist Theory of Science* (2008) most contributes, apart from the critique of the tradition, is in Chapter 3 an analysis of the practice of science and engineering which is far in excess of others’ (Anscombe & Von Wright’s 1950’s work on Wittgenstein, for instance) and for which Bhaskar might receive most acclaim (this is not presented in any great detail here). However a limited exploration of Bhaskar’s first publication (1975) refined in its third and developed edition (2008), will help an understanding of how this philosopher lays down the foundational concepts upon which his (and this) entire project rests and that, following therefrom a methodological basis for the human sciences, is established. As such Bhaskar’s philosophy and that of this dissertation have important things to say regarding his later

exposition on the human sciences and the proposal for mitigated, critical, non-positivist naturalism. This then culminates in his theory of explanatory techniques which has philosophical consequences for methodology in general and across epistemological/ideological/meta-critical fields of interest.

Choosing to manage the proliferation of critical realist literature in this way seems obvious since in general institutional terms, operating from within the Humanities this dissertation should pay more attention to the latter analysis and critiques of social science. It is furthermore obvious that such should be the case for there exists an internal, natural affinity between social theory, philosophy and Spirituality, beyond purely methodological concerns: the subject matter of these three disciplines often targets individuals and their relations with groupings not merely as passive objects but as agents who have something creative to say in their analyses, demonstrating an active and creative ability to target societal relations. Thus one is able to posit social theories (“sociologies”) of philosophy and spirituality (and *vice versa*) to expose their hegemonies and ideological lacunae. Sociology too might be targeted in this way by Spirituality and philosophy. In fact it would be remiss of us to suggest that such critiques and expositions could ever be accomplished without philosophical thinking and critical theory. It is my considered opinion that sooner or later, such engagement with critical realism will be recognised as essential for the student of academic Spirituality. That is to say, an interest in contemporary Spirituality must contemplate critical realism as it has so evidently postmodernism (Kourie & Ruthenberg 2010). Where Spirituality is taught within departments of Philosophy, and especially where the metaphysical tradition is given credence I suspect sooner or later, *A realist theory of science* (2008) will become prescribed reading in the natural sciences as *The possibility of naturalism: A philosophical critique of the contemporary human sciences* (1998), might well become for students of the social sciences.

2.2 Critical realism

In this section the dissertation presents the foundational critiques and re-conceptualisation in critical realism.

2.2.1 A realist theory of science

As a transcendental analysis and critique of experimentation, applied science and perception, Bhaskar’s analysis brings to light categorical differences between the domains of “the empirical, the actual and the real” (Bhaskar 2008:xvi), each in turn being sub-sets of the next,

respectively. Each field expands and advances on the domain of the larger set in a possible “totality” of things (cosmos), itself expanding and emerging. For Bhaskar these realms are categorically dissimilar and have to be disambiguated and so too the “intransitive” (real targets, laws etc.) and “transitive” (knowledge making) dimensions of science. The targets of critique, here conducted in both immanent¹⁰ and transcendental¹¹ fashion include the work of philosophers of science from Descartes (individualism), Comte (positivism), Hume (empiricism), Kant (transcendental idealism), Hempel and Popper (logical-empiricism), Kuhn and Feyerband (incommensurability) and others of the post-(later)-Wittgensteinian school (ontological relativism and linguisticism). The analysis could if appropriated, effect a disambiguation of presuppositions if such exist for the student of Spirituality and deepen our explanation of Spirituality’s science.

2.2.2 Roy Bhaskar and critical realism

It is useful and correct, as López and Potter (2001) contest, to distinguish between critical realism as a movement (1) preceding and including Bhaskar who is its most vociferous proponent, and (2) the disagreement that exists in critical realist debate and discourse. Some of the major differences and agreements will be noted as we proceed. Nevertheless, it is partly because of Bhaskar’s brilliant and prolific work that critical realism has received so much philosophical attention, and that a critical (mostly indicated in the footnotes) but close following of his thought is useful in understanding the movement and its concerns in general.

2.2.3 The first movement of critical realism: transcendental realism

The term transcendental realism is a nod to Kant’s transcendental method¹², although Bhaskar employs both transcendental and immanent styles of critique. In other words seldom does he attack the grander notions of his targets but rather the “minor premises”, there-in (Bhaskar

10Bhaskar, R (1998:120), also Hartwig’s “introduction”, in: Bhaskar (2008:xv). Immanent critique is described as: Targeting elements of inconsistency within an original account or in this case a philosophy of science.

11Bhaskar, R (1998:120). Transcendental critique is described as: Demonstrating that the claims of an account cannot sustain the phenomena it claims to describe, to then propose a superior explanation.

12Whether or not Bhaskar’s deployment is truly “Kantian”, is a matter of some conjecture.

2008:xiv). Thus Hartwig notes that Bhaskar's first chapters delineate Bhaskar's description of scientific experimentation, from which demonstration Bhaskar then refutes certain traditional conceptions of science. Transcendental realism as noted above shares some relativist values with postmodern conceptions of epistemological relativity however it transcends both modernism in which Bhaskar exposes an implicit ontological relativism, and postmodernism in which he attacks its explicit statement thereof. Hence both modernism and postmodernism (Bhaskar is sometimes doubtful if there is such a thing as the latter, preferring the appellation "high-modernism" to denote its critique and "the cultural logic of late capitalism" its ideological feature) are guilty of committing "epistemic fallacy".

2.2.4 The critique of positivism

Here follows the critical realist critique of positivism, based on a series of diagnosed fallacies.

2.2.4.1 Epistemic fallacy

The positivist account of science according to both Bhaskar and critical realism as a movement, commits an *epistemic fallacy* which is founded in a confusion of epistemology (knowing) and ontology (being). This entails that, because what we know (epistemology) is always relative and changing, it was supposed by postmodernism that a similar state of affairs existed for the objects of knowledge (things-in-themselves, that is - ontology), with the result that *being* became suspended and relativised. What critical realism then argues is that this is a category mistake: things-in-themselves are in converse to knowledge as real and scientifically intransitive (outside the realm of our knowing them). Reading between the lines, Schneiders (1989, cf. Kourie 2009:158) seems to have a similar attitude to spiritual reality, but offer no philosophical account or resolution. To put it more succinctly we may argue about "how" and "what" we know of a scientific target but in order to so disagree we must tacitly agree, that this "something out there" is real. This fundamental tenet which holds for all types of scientific realism refers in philosophical terms to the metaphysical necessity of its targets, that is, their ontology: residing independently of our knowing or in the case of empiricism, experiencing. The intuition of ontological realism shared by Spirituality and critical realism is a further point of confluence, coming from the Aristotelian tradition. For scientific realism and what is often called the primary transcendental move in critical realism, the philosophical priority of ontology is established. This is essentially Bhaskar's oft rehearsed claim in critical realism: the *priority* of ontology over epistemology or as he and so many commentators like

Archer, Collier, Lawson and Norrie (1998) have claimed for the philosophical movement in general, a “re-vindicated ontology”.

2.2.4.2 Actualist fallacy

It is claimed by critical realists that following from its first and fallacious presupposition, positivism further confused (1) the intransitive dimension of independent things-in-themselves, the domain of the real, enduring structures of the natural world, with (2) the transitive production of fallible scientific knowledge and theories as discussed above, culminating in (3) an epistemic mis-identity of the domains of the “empirical” and the “actual” which critical realism calls the “actualist fallacy”. The distinction to be made here is this: real laws of nature exist independently of our knowledge of them, as do causal structures in society. What actually is proven to exist at any one time (actuality) does not exhaust that reality, because new things are constantly made or are naturally emerging. Nor do the experiential facets of knowledge (empiricism) in experimentation produce infallible knowledge of reality. We have always presumed that we discover new things all the time, but empiricist hegemony has assumed that on the one hand the world as it is comes to us through our knowledge of that world, which advancing knowledge enlightens us about the new. The newness of things had thus been a function of our knowledge. This is the conception that critical realism seeks to dispel. Bhaskar says quite categorically and indeed in defence of categories themselves (an attitude of categorical realism), that the world is not just flatly as it appears, but has categories and strata and depth: critical realism insists on the need to distinguish between the experience of the world (empiricism), the realm of actuality and facts beyond mere experience, and the realm of reality or “transfactual” causative agencies and laws which exists apart from the facts it engenders and also beyond what we know of facts and their transfactual causalities. New things do not come to awareness just because we know more but really do emerge from the reality of processes existent in reality in the “intransitive realm”, their resultant facts in actuality and our transitive experience of these.

Upon reflection the question then has to be asked: are not those social things which cause us to produce fallible knowledge not real? Bhaskar’s answer comes in his later *The possibility of naturalism* (1998:47), where he distinguishes between “causal intransitivity” in the intransitive dimension (natural laws) and “existential” intransitivity in the “transitive” (social) dimension. The upshot for the human sciences is that social causes are described as causally “interdependent”: they are real in the social arena but not as intransitive, as other causes

might be in the natural realm. Thus concludes Hartwig (Bhaskar, 1998:xvii), all things which come into being are intransitive either as natural or social determinants in their respective spheres of operations (i.e. not in the same way): a “unifying principle for non-positivist naturalism”. Yet there is always an ontological distinction to be made between beliefs and what those beliefs are about, including such beliefs themselves.

2.2.4.3 Scientific individualism

Closely related to this explanation of actualism is the critique against (a) “atomism”, the possibility of the human subject as scientist to separate him/herself from the field of vision as either an isolated or passive recipient of knowledge for and in which our objectivity is guaranteed and (b) “monism”, the claim that such derived knowledge is of a unitary thing, somehow separate from the rest of reality. The critical realist objection is that life, reality and science are not that simple, but rather “complex” or “stratified” and operative in an “open field”. This requires that to describe laws means to pursue their (1) trans-factual nature in their operating beyond our experience of empirical instances (facts) and (2) non-empirical character there-in mostly beyond our experience at all. Together attitudes of atomism and monism have shored-up the hegemony of individualism, which (false) reduction¹³ became a highly debated methodological issue within the social sciences of the twentieth century. It is further contested by Bhaskar that the misconceived adoption of empirical realism rests upon an individualist sociology. Disprove the validity of *one* and we disprove the validity of *all*.

2.2.4.4 The critique of positivism’s false opposite: the critique of Kant

Bhaskar’s critique of Emmanuel Kant’s categorical idealism is perhaps easiest to follow, now that we have some idea of the way critical realism argues for its categorical disambiguation. The accusation here is that Kant “involved” the real categories of the natural world into the mind, making of them purely mental categories. Essentially Bhaskar says of these that they should be put back into the world where they belong (I certainly concur). This however is a position which necessitates the development of categorical realism within Bhaskar’s project. As Hartwig notes (Bhaskar 1998:xvii and in the footnotes 32-34) this development is gradual, but is eventually explicated in Bhaskar’s (1997) article “On the ontological status of ideas”.

¹³Critiques against reduction or reductionism are plethora for instance Howard (2009:141-157), Murphy (2009:19-39), Stoeger (2009:229-247), and Van Gulich (2009:40-73) not to mention Kourie (2006:166-167) and De Villiers (2006:102)

Bhaskar's development of dispositional realism (causal things having powers) is equally developmental, but present in inception (Bhaskar 2008:20). Certainly no one seems to be in any doubt that Bhaskar holds that in the realm of the real, the world comprises "enduring and *transfactually* active mechanisms" (Bhaskar 2008:20), even if these are tendencies which may or may not be discerned in the causality of a phenomenon.

So against both Hume and Kant including the traditions which follow them, critical realism poses a picture of categories, depths, potentialities and possibilities which are in the nature of things, as "worlded". The term "worlded" is my description: it accounts for the complexity of the world as we know it and experience it, and beyond this it describes the world beyond our knowing it. This worldedness or the realm Bhaskar's "real" is far in excess of what we can know of it. Consequently the term here is slightly different from Kourie's (2006:79-80) use of *telluric*: it is inclusive of all that has and can emerge. Since what we know (successfully) is about reality that reality exists, and since our knowledge is partial and fallible, *negative* knowledge (what we do not know i.e. conceptual absence) of it, also exists. Consequently what we do and do not know of a thing or a law of nature for instance, must presuppose a *totality* of things. The "worldedness" I speak of is this totality and it is this totality in which our social and spiritual relations must take their place.

2.2.4.5 A summary of critiques

To paraphrase the critical realist account, the philosophy of science since the enlightenment had it wrong by (a) setting up an artificial constant conjuncture of events in closed (experimental) systems, (b) describing such invariance as causal (a further dimension of the fallacy of actualism), (c) then generalising these *causes* to *laws of nature* (the empirical fallacy), (d) these features then being perceived as exhaustive of reality, which as maintains Bhaskar (1998:48), cannot hold in a world where systems are necessarily open. Consequently later critique of postmodernism's linguistic turn rests on the fact that the interpretive tradition has stood too closely to a logical positivist conception of science, transferred to the human sciences.

The hermeneutic tradition thus having bought into such positivist conception of science and its confusion of categories, posed an unfounded critique of (a caricatured) scientific endeavour in which causality as described positivistically and which hardly ever happens, was taken and assumed. Positivist human sciences therefore proposed a somewhat ridiculous notion of the human sciences as in some way mimicking the former. Thus for critical realists

both the extremes of positivistic sociology on the one hand, and its “critical foil”, the post-structural hermeneutic tradition and their allegiance to Kant, Wittgenstein and Rorty, find themselves in error both hegemonically (passively) and in temperament (of their positive statements). In short the interpretive tradition has mis-identified itself with a misguided sense of science and committed epistemic fallacy by extension.

2.3 Critical naturalism: the third alternative

In summary of its achievements critical realism claims for a non-positivist mitigated nomothetic hard science, which is conceptually softer and more accommodating in relation to which a more satisfactory conception of idiographic interpretive science is posed, as for instance in *The possibility of naturalism* (Bhaskar 1998). López and Potter (2001:8) note that critical realists are naturalists who claim that the social sciences can (only in general terms) be studied in some ways similarly to the natural sciences. The implied limits (because of the socio-linguistic determinants of social objects) will be examined later.

2.3.1 Bhaskar’s trajectory

The development from analysis of the philosophy of sciences and consequent critique-building is the stuff out of which the various stages and concepts of commonly called critical realism emerge. The conceptual stages which make for Bhaskar’s conceptual trajectory runs from (1) (Bhaskar [1975] 2008) “transcendental realism” (focusing on the natural sciences) through [+] (2) (Bhaskar [1979] 1998) “critical naturalism” (focusing on the social sciences), being [=] “critical realism”, (3) the “theory of explanatory techniques” (focusing on philosophies of science as ideologies) and (4) the “dialectical meta-critique” of the Western Philosophical tradition, targeting various fallacies in the history of epistemology and their social (moral) products. Each stage anticipates or is “proleptic” of the next. What is often claimed within the critical realist community is that these four stages together revindicate ontology in under-labouring for emancipation. In other words, the stages assert the reality of things, concepts, people, society and transformative praxis.

There are good grounds to believe that these stages of philosophical development dialecticised in the fourth, mark “Bhaskar I” as meta-critic from “Bhaskar II” as philosopher of meta-reality (These are my metaphorical descriptions however I am amused to note that Bhaskar (1993:329) uses a similar device in describing Hegel’s work.). The latter redeploys dialectical critical realism as a meta-critique, to pose its own critique and development

conceptualised in Bhaskar I, to be sustained and developed and turned into Bhaskar II, in which spiritual reality is then conceptualised. It is easy to see then how these basic concepts in the inception of critical realism stretched to include the reality of the social world, equally stratified and potentiated with its own possibilities and emergences, begs later conceptualisation of spirituality and which critical realist conceptualisation we will explore.

In retrospect, Bhaskar (2002a 166-1667) describes critical realism thus:

Diachronically in terms of its development over time from: [1] *transcendental realism*, as a philosophy of science; through [2] *critical naturalism*, as a philosophy of social science; through [3] *the theory of explanatory critique*, as a philosophy which showed how one could rationally derive evaluative (and in particular ethical and political) positions from matters of fact; through [4] *dialectical critical realism*, as a theory of dialectic pin-pointing the necessity for conceptions of *absence* (and *negativity* generally) and *totality* and laying the ground for a theory of freedom as the absencing of absences or the elimination [absenting] of constraints (blocks on human capacities and flourishing); through to [5] *transcendental dialectical critical realism*, as a theory of the necessary spiritual presuppositions of emancipatory (theoretical and practical) projects ... critical realism is to be understood in its essence as the systematic attempt to (progressively) *think being*, then this process, carried through to its limits, ultimately transcends (or both surpasses and suspends) not only realism conceived as involving subject-object duality, but thought itself.

2.3.2 Bhaskar's canon

The canon of Bhaskar I begins with, and in the order of stages above, (1) *A realist theory of science* (Bhaskar [1975] 2008) (2) *The possibility of naturalism* (Bhaskar [1979] 1998) (3) various publications of the 1980's including a refinement of his refutation of Rorty (1983) later summarised in Bhaskars (1989) *Reclaiming reality: A critical introduction to contemporary philosophy* (Bhaskar 1989:146-179), and in particular the article "Scientific explanation and human emancipation" (Bhaskar 1980), "Scientific realism and human emancipation" (Bhaskar 1986) and (4) *Dialectic: The pulse of freedom* (Bhaskar 1993) which thus concludes his "transcendental-critical-dialectical" phases of realism, merely to provide Bhaskar a well argued critique of philosophy with which to turn his attention to the project of Bhaskar II whose canon (2000, 2002a, [2002b] 2012, 2002c, 2002d) is emergent and

progressing under more trying personal circumstances. The newness of Bhaskar II published in *From East to West* (2000) and three other books on meta-reality; *Reflections on meta-reality* (Bhaskar, 2002a), *From science to emancipation: Alienation and the actuality of enlightenment* (Bhaskar 2002b) and a two volume: *The philosophy of meta-Reality* (Bhaskar 2002c, 2000d) is encased in a reflection on the progress of critical realism contextually placed within the critique of the Philosophical tradition from Parmenides onward but resulting in the particularly vexing philosophical discourse of modernity, often referred to as “PDM”.

It should be mentioned, that because Bhaskar’s critical realist literature is so prolific, including its revisions, the usual orthographic conventions can lead to confusion. Consequently it has become conventional amongst critical realists to abbreviate the titles of publications (in the order presented above)¹⁴ as *RTS* (Bhaskar [1975] 2008), *PON* (Bhaskar [1979] 1998), *SEHE* (Bhaskar 1980), *RR* (Bhaskar 1989), *DPF* (Bhaskar 1993), *FEW* (Bhaskar 2000), *RMR* (Bhaskar 2002a), *FSE* (Bhaskar [2002b] 2012) and *PMR* (Bhaskar 2002c, 2000d).

It is mentioned that critical realism has set up a growing resonance in the epistemological community, a claim that requires analysis. Firstly this resonance is composed of an attitude which is perceived in the work of the second founders of Spirituality as it is in the academy: a *Zeitgeist* if you will, in which a critique of modernism is implicit. Secondly one discerns in it a general dissatisfaction, with reductionism to either hard naturalism or to linguistified historicism. Thirdly this resonance evidences a growing diagnosis of a critical absence in accounts of transformation and human agency. The point here is that these three trends were already felt in the transformational sciences at about the same time that Bhaskar began his work. So the claim that critical realism sets the pace is perhaps true for philosophy but not necessarily so in the level of substantive social sciences which still struggle with these questions. What critical realism has achieved is a philosophical account which in its very impressive analyses, explanation and critiques has over-reached the piece-meal nature of former ontological or neo-essentialist intuition, and in the light of proposed and justified alternatives a great amount of rethinking and resituating old debates in substantive philosophy and the problem based level of epistemology, is required. So too the caricatures

¹⁴I have here omitted titles not read for the presentation of this dissertation

and prejudices about science and the role of philosophy evident in Kourie (2009:165-67) and De Villiers (2006:102-105).

Though not Bhaskar's canon *per se*, the series entitled *The Routledge Studies in Critical Realism*, is constantly growing and provides the most evident forum for the substantive rethinking, whilst some independent literature in the last two years and available locally imply that transcendental realist critique, is widely read in places where primary and secondary literature is easier to come by. Also where the influence of critical realism remains unacknowledged, the resonance of emergence and systems theory (for instance in Murphy & Stroeger (2012) and Wilber (2000)) is palpable.

2.3.4 Bhaskar's system

In attempting to illustrate the philosophical and dialectical logic in the heart of critical realist development, Bhaskar provides an easily learnt description which has come to be known as Bhaskar's system. Hartwig in Bhaskar (2008:x) notes:

Systems – though much out of favour these days, in which the complexities of the world are acknowledged, and in which, it is claimed, we can only ever get epistemological purchase (if that) – are very much like ontologies (which they sometimes embrace): if philosophers do not develop one explicitly, their work will implicitly or tacitly secrete one. Such an implicit system will, moreover, usually be highly confused, precisely because it has not been thought through comprehensively and as such will unwittingly incorporate elements of the compromise formations that [erroneously] define the intellectual horizons into which we are all 'thrown'.

The point being, if Bhaskar's system is to have any significance as a system or his intentional emancipative axiology remain uninterrupted, his work normally called critical realism should technically be read as "critical realism and Meta-Reality" (Bhaskar 2008:ix). Furthermore Hartwig describes each phase of argument as a Hegelian "moment" a "part or phase of a whole" (in a totality), considered either synchronically or in its diachronic development, where the parts and the whole are distinct from and internally related or essential to each other" (Bhaskar 2008:xxi, footnote 2).

Referring to the stadia of Bhaskar's system, Hartwig gives the shortest and most approachable description (Bhaskar 2008:x):

The system is also articulated in terms of seven dimensions of being (*the ontological – axiological chain*) ...its dialectic is a seven termed one – as follows (where ‘7A’ [seventh awakening] stands for *non-duality* ‘6R’ [sixth-realm] for *re-enchantment*, ‘5A’ [fifth aspect] for *reflexivity understood as spirituality*, ‘4D’ [fourth dimension] for *human transformative praxis*, ‘3L’ [third-level] for the *totality*, ‘2E’ [second edge] for *negativity*, ‘1M’ [first movement] for *non-identity*).

The first thing to notice is that Hartwig has here reversed the analytical steps of Bhaskar’s development. So to get a grip on the latter, a reversed reading from 1M to 7A gives a neat summary of Bhaskar’s analysis to date. The enumeration merely shows the trajectory of analysis (for some an irrelevancy) while Hartwig’s presentation above demonstrates a strong sense of vertical development in the dialectical and the axiological aspects: here read as conditions for the possibility of science “non-identity” between *being* and *knowing* means there are things we don’t know or are mistaken about, hence the necessity of a conceptual “negativity” (the conceptual gap) which then presupposes a “totality” (the fullness of being), which raises the possibility for “human transformative praxis” (filling the gap), (1) in the epistemological realm of producing science, new concepts and theories, (2) in the social realm of betterment and emancipation, and (3) in the moral realm of spirituality and conceptualised here in steps 5A, 6R and 7A (real ground-states of; non-duality, love, creativity etc.).

As noted above, it is a neat system of thought which sheds the sympathies of many “analytics” of the critical realist community along the way and to varying degrees. However for students of Spirituality and in growing numbers in the near future I contend, a fruitful field of contemplation. For those interested in the deployment of philosophical criticism in the anthropological approach to Spirituality, Bhaskar later (1993) proposes that the 1M ontology of reality poses alterity (otherness, difference and contradiction) in the face of which implied appropriation (as I am doing now), a dialectical working-through at an existential level confronts us with “negativity” and “absence” (either conceptual, moral, existential or spiritual and often hinging on real determinate and explanatory power). This alterity/absence then becomes the ground for imagining and searching or transforming towards totality. At this stage it is important to note that Bhaskar’s spiritual turn rests on the very possibility of transformative human praxis which inspires his “transformative model of human activity” as a social theory, the culmination of the philosopher’s methodological

analysis in the practices of substantive human sciences. From here, he consolidates the critique of Hume and Rorty in order to expand a meta-critique and explanation of Western philosophical tradition: identifying the “good” of discourse, the emancipative effect of dialectic and the inadequate conception of absence in the tradition.

Perhaps in retrospect, presentation of the “system” at this early stage of the dissertation is pre-emptive or rather precipitous. The system is in fact a synchronic articulation or sliced presentation of being/reality based on a retrospective view of the diachronic development of critical realism. Each stage represented here systematically is a stage in the development of critical realist insight and which has not yet been covered in the dissertation. For this reason we must return to it at a much later stage in order to demonstrate how it is expanded and deepened.

2.3.5 Reflexivity

Always begging the question, “Under what necessary conditions can ... arise or emerge?” Bhaskar’s philosophical notion of spirituality, “reflexivity” is a broad term largely owing its inspiration to the Aristotelian tradition of rational judgement and practical wisdom. Reflexivity as the argument would have it is not only necessary for rational judgement and the possibility to “see things right” or to seek intellectual and moral goods with real objects, self-critique and so on, but expanded to its fullest sense it holds, the goods of science could not be recognised without reflexivity (spirituality) as a condition for those “goods”. It is very much a continuation (but not limited to) the rational judgement and practical wisdom developed in Aristotle’s philosophy as necessary to live the good life in the domain of virtue. Aquinas’ extrapolation of *prudentia* comes to mind, the reflexive quality of which is equally applicable to practice of discernment and emotional intelligence work. For Bhaskar, reflexivity is the continually emerging condition for good science and philosophy but also love, creativity and human emancipation, wherein he sees human flourishing. Reflexivity (wisdom) thus justified, acts as an axiological pivot inclusive of a basic condition for the possibility of scientific progress but “proleptic” of spirituality conceived as meta-reality and practical mysticism.

2.3.6. Bhaskar’s features of being (ontology)

As features of Bhaskar’s ontology he includes “movement” (being moves), “edges” (experiences of limits)”. Being possesses “dimensions”, “aspects”, “realms” and “awakening”

as potentials and possibilities oriented to “totality”. All of which depend on the first principle that there is a fundamental categorical non-identity between ontology and epistemology. For Bhaskar there is a fundamental distinction to be made between being and knowing and that being is prior to knowing, whilst knowing always depends on being. This position requires that ontology take philosophical priority in our thought (and critique of consciousness) because ontology is real and epistemology is relative even when it talks about the real. So for Bhaskar then, *ontological realism* and *epistemological relativism* are entirely compatible if we get our ontological priority right. A value long held in the Aristotelian tradition and reflected in the assumptions to the insights of Schneiders and Kourie (2009).

As Hartwig in (Bhaskar 2008:xi) points out, Bhaskar shares his position on the priority of ontology with all scientific realism but his approach and argument is nuanced and for this reason I’ve called his ontological nuance “eccentric” to once again delineate his, as opposed to a more generally accepted metaphysical/critical ontology in which, I think Spirituality as discipline would very much like to participate. Hartwig describes Bhaskar’s ontology: “more specifically as structured and differentiated” (phase 1); “containing mind and concepts” (phase 2); “as intrinsically valuable” (phase 3); “also as alethic truth” and “spiritual” (phase 4) and “as enchanted and non-dual” in the philosophy of meta-reality.

2.3.7 Confluence and counterpoint.

No doubt exploring things in the domain of spirituality has made many of the analytic philosophers of his tradition nervous and Bhaskar’s spiritual turn is perceived in some quarters as either dangerous or a betrayal bringing controversy and perhaps entrenching essentialism or anti-spiritual intolerance in some. Where the analytics see an implicit conceptual reversal from Bhaskar I to Bhaskar II, Bhaskar sees a necessary dialectical (synthetic?) overreach (not unlike De Villiers 2006; Kourie 2009:166-167; Strauss 2012:66-68) of analytic argument, underlabouring for emancipation by providing a profound meta-theoretical basis for spiritual reality, whether one reads the project as a meta-theory of reality or philosophy of meta-reality. In any event the “meta” is consistent (I will argue, merely by begging the question), with a critical anthropological/anthropogenic reading of Spirituality.

It is obvious to me that it is when Bhaskar exceeds the normally accepted remit of critical realism as a movement that he has most to say about things close to the conception and heart of Spirituality and of which, we must say more. The reader is not required to infer or construct a confluence of interests between critical realism and Spirituality: it is given most

profoundly in the axiology of freedom. To further the argument for confluence one has merely to point out the similarity, counterpoints and advances of conceptions around transformation, transcendence, non-duality and the critique of consciousness in Bhaskar and more well-known Spirituality theorists.

Nevertheless what I believe the histories of Spirituality and Philosophy will find hard to ignore is Bhaskar's integrity and consistency of analysis. I think that part of the philosophers' appeal rests in a rigorous humility in proceeding from the begging question fundamental to all philosophy: "under what conditions..." Bhaskar I (if one excuses the continuation of the metaphor), asks: "Under what conditions is science possible?" and Bhaskar II, "Under what conditions is transformation or spirituality (and Spirituality) possible?" Clearly a point of confluence exists for Schneiders (1993:12, cf. Kourie 2009:165) in being "concerned with the conditions of possibility of such experience". A further agreement is reached in Bhaskar's later development of values as ultimate.

I think the ultimate assessment of Bhaskar I, rests on his ability to account for and respond to the big philosophical questions of our post-modern age but whose foundations have constantly plagued philosophical debates from Plato onwards. Bhaskar rightly identifies these problems as ontological realism, epistemic relativism and rational judgement. However this characterisation of Bhaskar as "I and II" should not be over played: its use here is merely to state an insight about there being two implicit questions in the unitary system of thought and bound into one "ontological – axiological chain" (Bhaskar 2008:x) and systematically developed.

2.3.8 Bhaskar's conception of scientific progress: reality and the essence of science

The objects of science for Bhaskar (López 2011:11) are "thing and not event centred ... Actually occurring events are not exhaustive of the real [which may be indicative of] unexercised or unrealised causal mechanisms ... powers, forces, characteristics, or sets of relations ... tendencies [and these] are not invariant ". Reality is complex, ordered and stratified and of which we know a little. Another way of putting it is that in the "intransitive dimension" the objects of knowledge are simply as they are independent of our knowledge of them and our alleged knowledge and belief about them is "transitive". Thus the appellation of transcendental realism in which the things of science remain (not above but) beyond knowledge as product. Production of knowledge must attempt to infer the real nature of things however imperfectly in a real context which interferes with our accumulation of

description. Hence: (a) Rigour and methodology are important but do not guarantee progress; (b) symmetrical prediction and explanation or similar positivist expectations dissolve because reality itself is dynamic, or as Bhaskar (2008:11) states, “the truth of things-in-themselves does not necessarily (or even usually) lie upon the surface”. Reality is possessed of an “otherness” very suggestive of a complex personality.

As a scientific realist, Bhaskar believes in the intelligibility of the scientific project which he analyses at various levels to expose the vulnerabilities in our traditional conceptions thereof. All science for Bhaskar, must display an essential movement from observable correlates to an invisible causal mechanism or interactive set of such. Consequently science in its essence is, the same for both natural facts and social facts and this means that in its most basic form science is potentially able to bridge the two cultures divide. Put more technically, if a correlation is noticed say between “*A* and *B*” (to paraphrase Bhaskar), logically stated as *AB*, then “science must move to a deeper level of significant causality *M*, which when excited by *AB* can theoretically account for *AB*. *M*, then becomes a new concept to be explained and modelled”. Consequently the role of science is to plumb through layers of real causal mechanisms and strata in search of a greater conception of causal relations. “Plumbing” then suggests that both natural and social reality is stratified and this fact imposes methodological consequences, upon science and epistemology and this then commits us to a conception of reality as possessing an ontological depth not reducible to sociological constants or phenomenological perennials. Archer (1998:xvii) summarises the technical breakdown of scientific process as it appears in (Bhaskar 2008) and (Bhaskar 1998:124-132) thus:

Thus theoretical explanation proceeds by *description* of significant features, *retroduction* to possible causes, *elimination* of alternatives and *identification* of generative mechanism or causal structure at work (which now becomes a new phenomenon to explain): *applied* explanation by *resolution* of a complex event into its components, theoretical *redescription* of these components, *retrodiction* of possible antecedents of the components and *elimination* of alternative causes¹⁵.

Later Archer claims, following Bhaskar, for the universality (for social sciences at least) of the formulaic movement from (summarised as): “Social Ontology to Explanatory

¹⁵Compare Schneider’s conception (cf. Kourie 2009:156-158)?

Methodology to Practical Social Theories” (Archer 1998:194). Bhaskar notes (1998:18) that the aspects of a philosophy of science “correspond roughly to the traditional fields of epistemology, logic and metaphysics respectively”, but here in inverse to Archer’s presentation above.

2.4 Social realism

If then critical realism in the natural sciences based its analysis on critiques of actualism, empiricism and positivism, extending these critiques to include the Kantian tradition which culminated in Rorty’s linguistic (wrong-) turn, social realism does a similar thing. Critiques include those of Comptes positivism, Newton’s mechanism, coupled with a critique of reductionism in which the entire tradition of social theory is taken to task.

Firstly social realists accept that the ontological reality of society as unlike anything else and disagree with the post-Compteans who they claim sought to nullify the difference between social and natural facts and whose conceptualisation of naturalism is therefore wrong! Consequently as a movement social realism accepts the challenge that no glib unity of theory (if that be positivist, empiricist, mechanist or reductionist) between natural science and social science can exist. By critiquing these elements and demonstrating their fallacy social realists transcendently seek to avoid social ontology becoming either “Durkheim’s indeterminate” (Archer 1998:189) or a victim of “playful language” (Lyotard and Foucault) or as (heuristically) “useful constructs”. Whilst social realism is committed to exposing epistemic fallacy it therefore continues its critique of the French postmoderns and likewise Wittgenstein then Rorty and seeks to transcend their positions. Whereas for critical realism in the natural sciences, one may legitimately seek causal mechanisms which may or may not be manifest, social realism seeks variable outcomes due to the variety of intervening contingencies - a holistic trend.

So unlike natural facts are social facts that not only do they defy extrinsic closure (separation of extraneous facts) but are intrinsically open, reflexive and creative. For Archer (1998:190), “Social reality is so different that the ‘vexatious fact of society’ can be expressed as a riddle: what is it that depends upon intentional human action but which never conforms to these intentions?” Clearly the reductions of the old debates in social ontology discourse around agency and structure or individualism and collectivism supported by positivist preconceptions are evident and require re-thinking (Bhaskar 2012:229-231) for example in Lawson, Latsis & Martins (2007).

2.4.1 Bhaskar, philosophy and science

In introducing Bhaskar's social critique and theory I'd like to comment that because he now touches on an area of study very closely related to the remit of Spirituality not only methodologically but ideologically, a closer reading of his critical naturalism and the transcendental realism upon which it is founded is required and therefore this philosopher is quoted more often and at greater length in this section. For reasons that will become obvious, our purposes also require a clarification of Bhaskar's conception of the relationship between philosophy and science.

Bhaskar argues for philosophy as a conceptual science whose analogies and metaphors are usually (not always) supplied by science. There is a natural resonance effect (explanatory power) that these conceptions come to have across the interdisciplinary divide which can account for the possible hegemonic dominance of any such scientific orthodoxy and emancipation there-from. Bhaskar's critiques of actualism, empiricism and positivism are already clear to us. "Suppose, though," writes Bhaskar (1998:7), "that philosophical and scientific accounts were to clash. What would this show? Merely that one had come up against the limits of a particular scientific form, just as the limits of the possibility of measurement may be given by quantum theory. But that measurement has limits does not mean that nothing can be said a priori about what the world must be like for measurement to be possible within those limits."

It has been claimed that most critical realists are non-reductive naturalists so this is where we now turn our attention. In former research, Griffiths (2007, cf. Schreiber 2012) has noted the rise of biological epistemology. I think it is true of naturalism in general from Darwin (as an extension of Copernicus) onwards. Bhaskar (1998:1) notes that the naturalist tradition has been skewed and unnecessarily complicated by the misconceptions already critiqued in Bhaskar (2008) and which positivist principles have created a falsely hard divide between the two cultures of science. Bhaskar explains further (1998:2):

Naturalism may be defined as the thesis that there is (or can be) an essential unity between the natural and social sciences. It must immediately be distinguished from two species of it: *reductionism*, which asserts that there is an actual identity of subject matter as well; *scientism*, which denies that there are any significant differences in the methods appropriate to studying social and natural objects, whether or not they are actually (as in reductionism) identified.

I think that this adequately describes the distinctions to be considered in the anthropological approach to Spirituality. It should be noted that Bhaskar therefore disagrees vehemently with biological reductionists like Richard Dawkins.

For the malaise which infects the social sciences Bhaskar blames the coupled concepts of empiricism and individualism which, under the tacit dominance of positivist thought, produced a blanket determinism where social structures were seen to be strongly coercive and in response to which, interpretive science was forced to use categories of “behavior”, a further reduction. “Rather one will have to look to the distinct *structures* that mesh together in the field of social life ... recognizing that social individuals are in general both complex and changing [that] provides a way of avoiding at the outset the false oppositions, such as between theory and history or the universal and unique, on which the hermeneutical dualisms turn” (Bhaskar 1998:20). Students of Spirituality are not unfamiliar with these dualisms (du Toit 2006).

As corrective to these misconceptions and false consequences thereof, Bhaskar proposes the “cure” of transcendental realism. For non-positivist naturalism in the social sciences, social predicates make for a distinction from the natural sciences which therefore may entail different procedures. However principles that govern their production will remain substantially the same across the science divide. “[B]ecause social objects are irreducible to (and really emerge from) natural objects, and so possess qualitatively different features from them, they cannot be studied in the same way” (Bhaskar 1998:20). It should be noted that at this point Bhaskar is not addressing transformative modes of knowledge although what he says supports them. Bhaskar (1998:3):

In particular it will be shown that *ontological*, *epistemological* and *relational* considerations all place limits on the possibility of naturalism (or rather, qualify the form it must take); and that these considerations all carry methodological import.

It is these methodological considerations with which critical spirituality theory struggles. Bhaskar claims that the positivist tradition is correct to stress causal laws and generalities which may be opaque to agent’s spontaneous understanding but nevertheless are at work in social life, but wrong to reduce these to empirical regularities. On the other hand hermeneutical tradition is correct to point to pre-interpreted reality and the subject-subject relationship in social science, but it cannot (should not) reduce science to modalities of this

relationship. Also, claims Bhaskar (1998:21) the tradition fails to situate or refer to social realities like “ideology and the rational defensible conceptual stuff for criticism and change”. The interpretive tradition disables itself by not being able to provide critiques. Is this so? In general perhaps, but what about transformative appropriations (critiques of consciousness) within Spirituality’s hermeneutic processes? Perhaps in Bhaskar’s conception Spirituality as we know it in the academy is perhaps a sub-science?

On the “cure” of transcendental realism, Bhaskar remarks (1998:16):

Now transcendental realism can under-labour for the social sciences in at least three ways. Firstly, it can help debunk the claims to scientificity made by practices which merely ape the image of science projected by positivism or one of its mutant forms. In this way it can cut into the web of mutually supportive resonance-effects sustaining the various homeomorphs secreted by the social order¹⁶. Secondly, it can set the terms for a more rational appraisal of the real problems the social sciences face by enabling fairer contrast to be drawn between their conditions and possibilities and those of the science of nature. And finally, by exploring an affinity which philosophy shares with social science in that both seek, as at least part of their project, to identify and describe the conceptions of agents engaged in social practices [to] illuminate a kindred mode of discovery.

In the above summary then, the project for his critique of contemporary social science and its consciousness is set.

To continue with Bhaskar’s conception of philosophy and science, he claims that philosophy conceives of conditions like the stratification of reality but science identifies them. Philosophy does not speak of a world different from science (Bhaskar 1998:6-7) but considers “what can be established about it by a priori argument ... its task is to show what must be the case for the ensemble of scientific activities to be possible ... Philosophy consists in an irreducible level of discourse; it does not constitute an autonomous order of being [it is therefore] in principle susceptible to substantive scientific (sociological) explanation.” I

¹⁶Do Waaijman’s “forms” (2002) “secrete homeomorphs”?

personally think this to be a clarification which potentially relieves the suspicion behind so much prejudice against philosophy in what we often read in Spirituality literature.

For transcendental realism there cannot be a special connection or a special science of such causal things that lie beyond sense-experience in a specialised field of philosophy, like former conceptions of metaphysics, for instance. If a “non-reductionist account of science is accepted, some ‘transcendental’ entities, such as magnetic fields, may quite properly be regarded as objects of scientific investigation. But their ‘transcendence’ is a contingent fact about the world, and philosophy speaks with no special authority about it” (Bhaskar 1998:7).

2.4.2 Critical naturalism

As Archer (1998:ix-xxiv) notes, in summary of Bhaskar’s critique (1998:1-22), the philosophy of the human sciences during the twentieth century evidenced a number dichotomies between: (1) “hyper-naturalistic positivism¹⁷ and anti-naturalistic hermeneutics¹⁸”, (2) “individualism and holism”, (3) “structure and agency” (Durkheim and Weber respectively) and (4) “Facts and values” (Hume), (5) “reasons and causes” and (6) “mind and matter or society and nature”. The authors claim that these are transcended in critical realism by (1) “a critical naturalism”, (2) “relationality and emergence of society”, (3) “a transformational model of social activity”, (4) a refutation of Hume in Bhaskar’s “theory of explanatory techniques”, (5) following such refutation “reasons could be causes”, and (6) Bhaskar’s description of persons in “synchronic emergent powers materialism” which transcends the standard dichotomies of the body-mind problem. What is described here in the five short concepts is the work undertaken in Bhaskar’s *The possibility of naturalism* (1998).

If both trends of unqualified naturalism and anti-naturalism are based on a positivistic misconception of science a third possibility exists of qualified naturalism which is grounded in “the specificity and emergent properties of the social realm” (Archer 1998:xiv). Opposed then to both Weber and Durkheim, the critical realist conception of science stresses that

¹⁷Archer (1998:xiv) mentions the tradition of Durkheimian sociology, behaviourism, structuralism and functionalism which attempted to bridge the dichotomy between Weber and Habermas.

¹⁸Archer (1998:xiv) The interpretive Philosophical tradition of Dilthey, Simmel, Rickert and Weber “fused Hegelian and Kantian dichotomies” to draw a distinction between nomothetic and idiographic disciplines, culminating in Gadamer and Winch (1959) who refused any purchase of positivism in the human sphere.

society is both (a) a pre-existing condition for intentional insight and (b) as existing and persisting only in virtue of it. Agents always act within the constraints and possibilities they did not produce. Structure is both (synchronic) condition and (diachronic) outcome of agency.

So in contrast to some interpretive tradition actors are constrained but their accounts always are the starting point of the social sciences. The “transformational model of social activity” as this conception is called is non-teleological but relational, transcending the methodologically individualist/collectivist utilitarian approach. The targets of social science are not the so-called constant patterns normally found in sociology¹⁹ but the ontological depth of stratified causal mechanisms in particular, emergent features of social systems which act as ontological limits on extreme naturalism. These limits are imposed by roles here described as “concept dependence”, “activity dependence” and “greater space-time specificity” as distinctive of social science. These limitations on a naturalist explanation for social science will become evident as we continue our presentation of Bhaskar’s thought.

Further limits on rampant naturalism include a relational limit or a causal interdependence between social science and its subject matter, the epistemological limit which comes with studying “open” as opposed to “closed” systems, necessitating greater descriptive not predictive theory. In short because of these distinctions in social science critical realists (here critical naturalists) hold that social causes are as retroductively targetable as natural causes in the natural sciences (Archer 1998:xvii).

2.4.2.1 Bhaskar’s social theory

Here the dissertation presents a social theory based on limited naturalism, from critique of alternatives, to pose an explanation of social life and the agency implicit in people.

2.4.2.2 The critiques

So convinced is Bhaskar (1998) of the ontological distinctiveness of social reality that he has quipped that his book might just as well have been entitled, *The impossibility of naturalism*. Here Bhaskar expounds the critical work of social realists, his root objection to individualism in the comment (Bhaskar1998:28, cf. Archer 1998:190): “the predicates designating properties special to persons all presuppose a social context for their employment.” His

¹⁹Are Waaijman’s “forms” (2002:6) sociological and “constant patterns”?

analysis throughout demonstrates how the positions of the old debates stood too closely to empiricism and positivism in their reductions and that to avoid the pitfalls social theory tended to engage in heuristic methodological games. Why they did so was not due their inability to perceive emergent properties or the relational aspects but due to a fear of their unobservable nature²⁰. Archer (1998:192-3) paraphrases Bhaskar's argument thus: "What went wrong with sociology (standing for social theory in general) was basically ontological disenchant and an increasingly torrid affair with epistemology." Amusingly, I think Bhaskar has this in mind when he accuses Foucault of a "reduction to rhetoric". Also we cannot deny academic Spirituality's compliance in the trend. Bhaskar's objection in short is that ontologies and structures described as subject only to discursive negotiation, "sells out" emancipation by squashing the possibility of transformational agency under a reduction.

2.4.2.3 Bhaskar and transformation.

For Bhaskar transformation of discursive content in institutions is an indication of a much bigger set of relations which make for discourse. For him we have to re-confront the problems of structure and agency outside the confines of empiricism from which starting point we can then pose a "transformational model of social activity and a causal theory of mind" (Bhaskar 1998:ix). These are built on the relational conception of the subject matter of the social sciences since in the morphogenic nature of society "only relations endure". Transformation though ubiquitous is socially mediated.

2.4.2.4 Intransitivity, trans-factuality and stratification.

Bhaskar (1998:1-20) begins with the three ontological tenets of social realism: The ontological characteristics of "intransitivity" pertaining to scientific objects, "transfactuality" of causal mechanisms and "stratification" of social reality. Their application for the natural sciences has already been described above. However in a relative discontinuity with his conception of social facts the intransitivity of which is the mind independent prerequisite of social science as it is for natural science is very different. Here the mutability intrinsic to society, as a "natural kind" to society, requires an explanatory methodology that takes into account the relational quality of social facts. Trans-factuality of mechanisms refers to causations which are real and therefore have properties and powers and are continuous and

²⁰Does this account for Waaijman's (2002:430) 'myopia' in regards to secular spirituality.

invariant, yet which display outcomes that are usually highly variant in open systems. In other words causal mechanisms in society are as causal as natural causes in natural sciences but exhibit a more relatively enduring consequence. However although things in society may be historically contingent this does not render social things purely a contingency (against Rorty).

To practice social science one must have the value that some relations are necessary and at least relatively enduring. Since trans-factuality in social causes is only relatively enduring and “quintessentially mutable” (Archer 1998:196), preconceptions about the ordering of society either synchronically or diachronically are avoided. Social realism in this way is non-prescriptive and non-normative. Explanation therefore must have something of an analytical history of society’s emergence. Commitment to stratification means a rejection of purely superficial data: accepting historical explanation but no reduction to it. Instead of relying on horizontal explanations of one experience, the fact that conditions and antecedents are present implies a vertical explanation of generative mechanisms which give ontological depth to social temporality. These factors then explain the depth of “the present”.

What is implied between historicity, vertical relations and time requires the cohesion (another necessary stratum) by ideological and dare I say spiritual commitment to a reflexive critique of consciousness. So Bhaskar would then support the idea that social forms are necessary and conditional for any intentional act because they possess a characteristically ideological component which gives those social forms their coercive power, yet these forms cannot be said to determine and therefore cannot explain agency (and *contra* Waaijman (2002), *ergo* not Spirituality). Yet too the individual is able to engage unconsciously with social forms reproducing or consciously producing or consciously transforming, ideology and society!

Social-realist theory does not have preference for one way of proceeding; methodology is most prescribed by its ontological target, similarly in the study of Spirituality. If there exists a universal *aetiology* of theory: from social ontology to explanatory methodology to practical social theory, it is a highly negotiable one. Bhaskar’s concept of social ontology is philosophical, a meta-theory perhaps appealing to a gamut of approaches in Spirituality uncluttered by concerns about what structures, mechanisms or entities, make up the social world. However the idea of underlabouring so dear to Bhaskar, implies that we cannot avoid (for Spirituality also) addressing society in its constitution as relational and relatively

enduring (Bhaskar 1998:29). Perhaps then in self contradiction of my former question, Spirituality may not be a sub-science but in some critical respects a meta-conceptual-science?

2.4.2.5 Relational and transformational dimensions

A cursory scan of the list of the articles from the *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* in which “relations” are a major concern shows 1054 entries ranging across the philosophical field. Obviously no exhaustive list of what these relations might be exists. It is implied that these are possibly (following social reality) ever expanding. They are variously reported as: internal and external, social, psychological and material, covering a gamut of social and logical agreements, contracts, structures, attitudes, thoughts, beliefs and conventions which receive some specialist attention within the remit of the various philosophical sub-interests. So when we speak of relations generally (as does Bhaskar) the term takes on the character of a functional glyph. What one might hope is that the term generates a general understanding of what we mean by the term “convention” and “convention transforming”.

For Bhaskar these relations (hardly ever just at one time (synchronically)) but as they are over time (diachronically) that provide the relatively enduring features of society and are what constitute the epistemological target, as relatively enduring ontologically real objects for the social sciences in general. These are the properties that societies possess and where Bhaskar in true realist style begins his analysis before shifting to the epistemological questions. “This is not an arbitrary order of development. It reflects the condition that, for transcendental realism, it is the nature of objects that determines their cognitive abilities for us that, in nature, it is humanity that is contingent and knowledge, so to speak, accidental.” (Bhaskar1998:25). Bhaskar is not much interested in mass movements and claims that sociology (social theory) should be concerned with the relations between individuals and groups and between such relations (thoughts, attitudes and beliefs) and their relations. To my mind in the second part of the preceding sentence relations are thoughts about thoughts, attitudes to attitudes and beliefs about beliefs thus indicating the reflexive quality of humans as “being conscious about being conscious” and so epistemologically justifying ideology, oppositions and meta-relations and a critique of consciousness.

People as individuals do not create these relations or society but rather, these relations act as pre-existing conditions for peoples’ activity. Society is an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform: often containing or expressing a moral problem (Bhaskar 1998:36). This position avoids the classical positions of Durkheim’s

top-down conception of things between society and individual respectively and Weber's converse stance. Bhaskar (1998:37) writes:

Society, then, provides necessary conditions for intentional human action, and intentional human action is a necessary condition for it. Society is only present in human action, but human action always expresses and utilises some or other social form. Neither can, however be identified with, reduced to, explained in terms of, or reconstructed from the other, There is an ontological hiatus between society and people, as well as a mode of connection (viz. transformation) that the other models typically ignore.

If philosophy in the past, as Anscombe, De Villiers and Kourie have correctly insisted did not address transformation seriously I think Bhaskar is some remedy. It is clear for Bhaskar that the causal mechanisms (relations) in society are themselves social products and possible objects of transformation. They are only relatively enduring and do not exist independently of human action and human conceptions. In this way society is *sui generis*. It is for this reason that human action or social action requires a social explanation/theory which then cannot rely on non-social parameters which act as social or naturalist reductions. As noted above by Archer (1998:196), social structures do not exist independently of the actions or the conceptions that they govern and this requires that social structures (as webs of relations) are only relatively enduring. Therefore both the natural and social sciences, (characterised by emergence) are available to and compatible with (a limited) "diachronic explanatory reduction" in the sense that is of a reconstruction of the historical processes of their formation out of simpler things (Bhaskar 1998:39). Let me comment here to avoid an omission, that critical realism and in particular Bhaskar is steeped in the philosophy of historical consciousness and it is from this absorption of the philosophy of the twentieth century that the critiques and theorising arise. This raises the question, is Bhaskar open to historical reduction?

2.4.2.6 Bhaskar and historicism

While Bhaskar exhibits historical consciousness so characteristic of postmodernism and academic Spirituality, he critiques a historicist reduction or the use of history for deductive or predictive purposes because anything can happen. Thus historicism as a predictive tool is untenable because society always operates within an open system which cannot be over-determined in any way. The insight here vindicates Sheldrake (cf. Kourie 2009:163):

“Spirituality ... must cast the net wider [than history] because of the recognition that Christian spiritual experience is not reducible to the history of Christian History”²¹. (The comment of course is implicit of a dichotomy which belies the point made by Bailey (2001)). Thus social science over and above the question of natural science is necessarily always incomplete. The consequential insight into the historical and transformational character of epistemological development means we can never anticipate the transformations we seek since these become apparent as knowledge, long after the emergence of the ontological development itself and that is why according to Bhaskar, history continually needs to be “re-written” (Bhaskar 1998:48). One of the consequences for this conception of the society-person connection (Bhaskar 1998:37) is:

a radical transformation in our idea of a non-alienating society. For this can now no longer be conceived as the immaculate product of unconditioned (‘responsible’) human decisions, free from the constraints (but presumably not the opportunities) inherited from its past and imposed by its environment.

People self-consciously transform society to enhance their flourishing or at least can do.

However it should be clear to us that relations while constituting structures are not themselves adequate *in the agent* to transform those structures. Agents are freer than the structures that precede them. To have effect, relations must be mediated. The mediations according to Bhaskar, are occupied by people; their *positions*, “places, functions, rules, tasks, duties, rights, etc. ... filled, assumed, enacted by individuals, and of the *practices* ... in which, in virtue of their occupancy of these positions ... they engage ... such positions and practices, if they are to be individuated at all, can only be done so *relationally*” (Bhaskar 1998:41). In other words transformation is effected by the causal placement or situation of relations and is held between positions people hold and the activities (including mental ones) their so doing enact. We note then that Bhaskar’s conception is a strongly structural position which neither, Valera or Harré (Bhaskar & Harré 2001:22-39), agree with.

Continuing with Bhaskar’s (1998:41) theory, he claims of it:

It allows one to focus on a range of questions, having to do with the *distribution* of the structural conditions of action, and in particular with differential

²¹Perhaps enough comment, to place Waaijman’s (2002) approach as historical reduction?

allocations of: (a) productive resources ... including cognitive ones to persons (and groups) and (b) persons (and groups) to functions and roles (for example in the division of labour). In doing so, it allows one to situate the possibility of different (and antagonistic interests) conflicts *within* society, and hence of interest-motivated transformations in social structure.

Consequently, the Philosopher (Bhaskar 1998:41-45) claims to avoid endemic weakness in conceptions like: the market economy, the “Hobbsean problem of order”, historical materialism in which Marx conceives (overconfidently) strong determinism, the false dichotomy of positivist “external” relations versus Hegelian “internal” relations and the Marxist/non-Marxist divide.

2.4.2.7 Comment

The comment here is a combination of my thoughts on Bhaskar, philosophy and with implications for the social task of dissertation writing and Bhaskar’s later reflection on his social theory from *Reclaiming reality: A critical introduction to contemporary philosophy* (Bhaskar 1989:77-88).

If society pre-exists the individual, human activity works on given objects which may be material or cognitive or both as provided, is there a place then for so called, formal causes? Our social condition as understood here applies to discursive and non-discursive practices, science, politics, economics *et cetera*. The idea is functionally an Aristotelian one, that in any processes a “material cause” as well as an “efficient cause” is necessary, but I suspect that we are scientifically and historically long past any adherence to the conception of *hylomorphic* formal causes in denial of contemporary mediations and relations. Bhaskar therefore would disagree with Plato, Aristotle and Waaijman, here. For Bhaskar social forms and their epistemic derivatives are rather mediations of causes. This is partly Schumpeter’s point, now offered in a summary of Bhaskar’s (1989:78) explanation, half a century later.

Thus people in their social activity must perform a double function: they must not only make social products but make the conditions of their making, that is, produce (or to a greater or lesser extent) transform the structures governing their substantive activities of production.

One of the conditions for such is intentional human engagement, not only monitoring our behaviour but to monitor the monitor, permits seeking the wise, a conception developed in Aristotelian terms and whose academic equivalent resides in supervision perhaps. Descriptions of intentional action (including writing and supervision of a dissertation) may include personal reasons and their social (academic) mediation/function. There is for Bhaskar the existence of autonomy of the psychological from social realms. “Thus we do not suppose that the reason why the garbage is collected is necessarily the garbage collector’s reason for collecting it (though it depends on the latter)” (Bhaskar 1989:80). Similarly language does not exist apart from our utterances, the rules of grammar may place limits (conditions) on how we use language but do not determine it. The task then of the various social sciences is to find the conditions that make the forms and mediations of social action possible but not to presume that having done so that these act as predictive determinants.²² “Thus people do not marry to produce the nuclear family ... But it is the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is also the necessary condition for, their activity”. Forms of spirituality are then bi-products and mediations and not intentions even though they rely on intention.

2.4.2.8. The limits of naturalism in the social sciences: the methodological implications

Before we explored Bhaskar’s (1998) critique and theory-building, the philosopher mentioned three ontological limits which the objects of social science place on naturalist explanation: “concept dependence” which means that unlike natural structures social structures do not exist independently of our conception about what we do in our activity, “activity dependence” implies that social structures unlike natural ones do not exist independently of the activity they govern, or produce whilst “greater space-time specificity” which indicates geo-historical and geo-political situation as a distinctive interest of social science. None of these limits are reductive. Since theory building and analysis continue in parallel, Bhaskar’s fourth ontological limit emerges later in the work under discussion (Bhaskar 1998:53): The subject matter of the social sciences includes not just social objects whose conception we have seen above, but beliefs about those objects and ourselves. In short the limitation of social science is situated in its subject matter - society. Since society like a magnetic field is not perceivable and cannot be “empirically identified independently of its effects, it can only be known not *shown* to exist” (Bhaskar 1998:82-83 *italics* added). Thus

²²Comment enough to address Waaijman’s reliance on forms?

our remit of response is not to “society” but to our relations. This in itself is not a limit for science but what is most limiting is that society and persons operate in an open system and this denies social science the possibility “decisive test situations” and this fact limits the form of knowledge that distinguishes social theory as descriptive only and never predictive²³. I cannot but interpret the afore-said as an absolute denial of any scientific reversal to non-negotiable formal causes.

Social theory advances in post-fact relationship with the development of its own society which then it must describe. However it must be said just as the social dependence of social theory is established, society itself cannot be conceptualised apart from some theory be it proto-scientific, scientific or ideological. Therefore Schneider’s expectations of “explanation” (Kourie 2009:159) are only conceivable “after the fact”. There are however times of turbulence and excitement (as there are in the natural sciences) when consciousness and epistemology grow unpredictably. Bhaskar’s later conception for this occurrence is “pulse”. I believe that the pulse of secular spirituality is resoundingly palpable in the academy and the world. Success of hypothesis in social science might be tested empirically (after the fact) but exclusively on the basis of its explanatory power and the resonances it sets in motion.

How then do we avoid total arbitrariness? Since the work of the social scientist is so concept dependent much of that work is already identified. The burden of arbitrariness is then to be most likely found in the initial stages of setting up workable definitions by virtue of which, research and re-description become possible. “So I suggest that in principle as philosophical discourse stands to scientific discourse, so a discourse about society stands to a discourse about its effects” (Bhaskar 1998:86)²⁴. It therefore stands perhaps contrary to the denial of definitions in some Spirituality theorists some definitional beginning is required to make a plausible argument. Consequently, in agreement with the interpretive tradition Bhaskar holds that the conclusions of social sciences are “historical, not formal”. His criticism of hermeneutical tradition lies in its closeness to empirical realism which “blinds” it to the reality, falsity or conceptual inadequacies in these conclusions.

²³A point not explored in Waaijman (2002)?

²⁴Hence the necessity of definitions in Spirituality theory, that abandon “determinism” for “transformational agency”?

One must in my opinion, question in the strongest moral terms the lack of ethical/transformational content in epistemology at a certain level and I believe that Bhaskar has already demonstrated eloquently, that the claim to value neutrality amongst the social sciences is itself a value and therefore the claim can logically be dismissed as an inconsistency. We understand I think rightly that Schneiders and others have claimed a very different position for Spirituality: that it is a science (all things being equal) of values which are “ultimates” and that these values as contextual effects, are somewhat enduring and therefore somewhat mutable, but nevertheless reflect the existence and ontological reality of “valuing” and evaluation.

It is perhaps entirely possible that at the ontological level of valuing what we value most are “selves”: mine, yours, others and universalised beyond our species. This might explain why lived spirituality is vulnerable to extreme psycho-pathology and narcissism on one hand and flourishes in empathy and the ability for “kenosis” on the other. Perhaps therefore one should contemplate an “implicit” within du Toit’s (2006:66-69) suspicion that anthropologically speaking, spirituality is a *techne* rather than a mere technology of the self²⁵ and beyond this, society. I believe fundamentally that explanations of values at an ontological level, or as Bhaskar might claim the alethic level is perhaps purposeful. Perhaps it is taken as a given in some circles of the updated Aristotelian tradition that the study of Spirituality implies “depth work” as intrinsic to practical spirituality and enlivening in the academic discipline. In my view such interest even when it is philosophically absent, trumps a mere taxonomy or sociology of values. Historically and in support of postmodern critique we might note the evident study of Spirituality in regionally significant postmodern and more lucrative sector of society as some research, indicates for Heelas (2012:3-10) and Bailey (2001:31-99).

If this analysis is indeed to the point, where might this effect the supremacy that Kourie (2009) and Schneiders (2009) put on hermeneutics and which Bhaskar characterises as critique-less? No doubt at a purely methodological level hermeneutical attitude legitimates tolerance and interdisciplinary study. No doubt hermeneutics furthers (self-insinuates) the breadth and depth of Spirituality study and this is valued. But what value does hermeneutics

²⁵One wonders after reading du Toit (2006:64) here in conjunction with Grainger (2002: 337-346), how or where the differences lie, between spirituality as “technology” and Psychotherapy? Cf. Emmons(1999), contributors to Van Ness (ed.) 1996: 227-303, Lesniak’s “appeals” (2005:7), Monyaco (2006), Shea (2005:49) and Shaw (2005:350-361).

hold that is sufficient to itself? If the answers are to be given in strictly methodological terms as opportunities for the practice of appropriation and transformation, these are laudable and virtuous practices. However without a critique how can appropriations and transformations be universalised for the free flourishing of all? More to the point, if the latter value is not tacitly held how do we come to a judgement about the possibility of individual appropriations and transformation? The obvious *telos* or axiological choice in the Aristotelian tradition (“the good life”) relies heavily on the ability for rational judgement to identify what we truly need and want, coupled with the practical wisdom on how to implement these goods. While these may be taken as given within some Spirituality-talk, there seems to be little interest in justifying either the ontological underbelly upon which good values depend nor for that matter do we address their universality. It would appear that our fear of invoking tyranny and of prescribing to others what (positively identified) values we should have within the geopolitical milieu has left us bereft of the general anthropological principles. We cannot play the game of values at a “lived” level of spirituality and then pretend that at a meta-level these do not apply. And it certainly won’t do, in my opinion that value-free hermeneutics serves as our preferential epistemological value/practice without grounding the role of ontology, rational judgement and critique.

At a meta-epistemological level Spirituality poses critical questions (Kourie 2009) about the limits of historicism for example. An epistemological point is made about the danger of historical reduction. How can such judgement, be made without the exercise of ontologically based reflexivity, upon which we rely so heavily. Put simply without a philosophically derived ontology the practice of interpretation does not make sense.

The methodological meta-critique in academic Spirituality must exercise an open yet critically-minded rational judgement about the reality, falsity and conceptual inadequacies of methodologies and the values they pre-suppose. At root the meta-conception of Spirituality in critical mode, after the ontological turn of late postmodernism participates in and furthers that philosophical resonance. Without so doing the hegemonical shortcomings of social irrealism cannot avoid Kourie’s “trap” (2009:166). If under the hegemony or resonance of tolerance, Spirituality holds itself to value-free neutrality at a meta-epistemological level, while criticising reductions to historicism it must fall into the trap of its own inconsistency. A necessary epistemological good, is as good as any other moral good. The intrinsic values of Spirituality science cannot at any level without solipsism, lapse into moral relativism or so Bhaskar might have it.

The failure to address the question of ontology in adequate terms without which description interpretivism must necessarily fail Bhaskar claims to the good of ontological analysis in critical realism. But again having asked the question of Spirituality and in the interests of truth and consistency, we must ask of critical realism “to what depth” and “who is measuring?” There is to my mind a real mystery implied in Bhaskar’s description of depth which needs contemplation and interpretation yet these must of themselves be recursively involved with a critique of what it is that we truly want and need, or we have nothing at all. Bhaskar (1996:86) has it thus:

Thus what has been established, by conceptual analysis, as necessary for [a] phenomena may consist precisely in that extra-conceptual reality which consists of the real relations and processes in which people stand to each other and nature, of which they may or may not be aware; which is really generative of social life and yet unavailable to direct inspection by the senses.

The generalised epistemological unawareness of extra-perceptive historical conditions challenges Bhaskar to propose a critique of consciousness. This I propose is where Spirituality might wish to take advantage of non-traditional and perhaps trans-traditional vocabulary. The nexus of philosophy, anthropology and comparative religion is useful. The question of values held both above and below the level of consciousness requires analyses. Bhaskar suggests these are, “best exemplified perhaps by Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism” in *Capital* (Vol. 1. Ch. 1, cf. Bhaskar 1998:86). Bhaskar notes in summary of Marx that value relations which are specific social realities, are falsely then translated into natural a-historical qualities of things, by capitalism. (Does Waaijman (2002) commodify spirituality?) Furthermore these relations are then mystified into capitalist (perhaps catholic for Waaijman) conventions like the pay-slip (or other forms), where the power of labour (read spirituality) is transformed into the value of labour (sociological categories of Spirituality). The former derogated to the latter. Obviously for Bhaskar here the categories are confused (perhaps conveniently) and are not applicable to immediate experience.

Coercive confusion most typically characterises ideologies and false philosophies of science, for Bhaskar. Thus it is philosophically imperative to explain and criticise ideology by exposing fallacious value relations (including certain claims to be value-free). It is further required that we should account for why these are so held from a superior explanation – “a mode of explanation clearly without parallel in the natural sciences. For beliefs, whether

about society or nature, are clearly social objects” (Bhaskar 1998:87). Superior explanation or conceptual criticism then engages in social criticism and sets up the conditions for change: “theory fuses into practice as facts about values, mediated by theories about facts, and transformed into values about facts”. The non-sense of value independence in social science collapses because whatever value so held can be proven to be false. Values are reasons and reasons are real causes of agency for Bhaskar.

2.4.2.9 Bhaskar and agency in synchronic emergent powers materialism

Again the context is a critique on “Hume’s law” which Bhaskar disavows by analysis, explanation and refutation. Upon the success of proving from analytic perspective that “reasons” can be “causes” accompanied by answers to traditional objections (Bhaskar 1998: 83-93) Bhaskar builds his theory of people and intentional agency called “synchronic emergent powers materialism” which proposes and describes (apart from abovementioned critiques) the ontological depth of agents in contemporary terms. The term materialism is open to much misinterpretation. Here we can allow Bhaskar’s clarification (1998:125):

Philosophical materialism comprises: (1) *ontological materialism*, asserting the unilateral dependence of social upon biological (and more generally physical being) being and the emergence of the former from the latter; (2) *epistemological materialism*, asserting the independent existence and transfactual activity of at least some of the objects of scientific thought; (3) *practical materialism*, asserting the constitutive role of human transformative agency in the reproduction and transformation of social forms.

To follow the conceptual development of Bhaskar’s theory, again we will allow him to speak in (Baskar 1998:81-97):

I am going to argue that intentional human behaviour is caused, and that it is always caused by reasons, and that it is only because it is caused by reasons that it is properly characterized as intentional.

I intend to show that the capacities that constitute mind, as so conceived, are properly regarded as causal, and that mind is sui generis real emergent power of matter, whose autonomy, though real, is nevertheless circumscribed.

The third step in the argument involves coming to see that not just events, but states and dispositions may properly said to be causes. Thus the *possession* of a reason, conceived as a more or less long-standing disposition or orientation to act in a certain way, may itself be a cause ...

... so that there is no more mystery about why beliefs become wants (causally efficacious) than there is about how wants issue in actions. For the desires that transform beliefs in to wants (interests and needs) and so on ... into actions, are generated like the beliefs themselves, in the course of the practical business of life ... One does what one wants to (or intends) unless prevented. This is a necessary truth ...

Bhaskar's (1998:97-99) synthetic twist accomplishes an accommodation of several philosophers: Husserl's insight that "agency presupposes belief"; Schutz's insight, that belief occurs as a "continual stream unless prevented"; Aristotle's acknowledgement that "there is no problem in passing from desires to action (avoiding existential dilemma)" and that our continuing "activity is trained on the objects of our desires" and Marx, for seeing "the practical life context for desires becoming beliefs" and on which "Marx can explain the 'theory to practice' connection". New theory introduces dissonance into the generative matrix of action, thus Wittgenstein claims; "we now see something different and can no longer go on naively playing" (Wittgenstein 1956:13-40, cf. Bhaskar 1998:116) and finally, Freud's "extension of unconscious beliefs and desires", hence the scope and pattern of naturalism here described.

2.4.2.10 Persons

Bhaskar (1998:81-82) defines persons thus:

...a person ... is a unitary concept of an entity to which both of two types of predicates (material and psychological) are applicable ... a person's activity ... typically consists in causally intervening in the natural (material) world, subject to the possibility of a reflexive monitoring of that intervention ... the first aspect is logically and temporally (both phylogenetically and ontogenetically) prior to the second. The capacity for reflexive self-monitoring ... is intimately connected with our possession of language ... as a necessary condition for any

discursive intelligence. Both the intervention and commentary are, of course, always the situated doings of agents at places in time.

In commentary, I think we can clearly see the logical steps which make “synchronic emergent powers materialism” what it is: A theory of persons as aware of their constant stream, constantly emerging, really agentive within material (as well as cognitive) circumscriptions.

Philosophically speaking Bhaskar (1998:101-104) develops his position on persons directly from his theory of social reality once again asking and answering: “Under what conditions can persons reproduce society?” It must be noted that Bhaskar’s affirmation of emergence requires argument against reduction to materialism and behaviourism.

Basically his argument on the mind-body relationship is this: “The brain is the physiological basis for consciousness, but theories of brain function cannot describe consciousness because the higher order must always explain the lower” (Bhaskar 1998:98). I would suggest again that critical realism is a useful contemplation for the Spirituality scholar for whom a critique of consciousness about agency and transformative values might feature as “ultimate”.

Chapter Three: Bhaskar's critique of ideology, dialectical and spiritual turns

3.1 Development of a theory of explanatory techniques

Here we trace the development of Bhaskar's interest in explanatory techniques and which culminates in his idea of ideology as false consciousness.

3.1.1 An analysis of Bhaskar's critique

The ideological turn in Bhaskar's work which he presents in his theory of explanatory techniques is yet further development of the critical aspect of critical realism, materially concerned with a highly developed critique of Hume, Rorty and others which has constantly contextualised critical realism. The criticism features also as intra-argumentative content for the development of explanation and theory as well as locating the site for a process of critique refinement. The critique of Rorty (1983) is here omitted, but to note that it is relatively easy to extrapolate for ourselves as part of Bhaskar's critique of the interpretive tradition and its participation in epistemic fallacy by extension, once we understand the critique on positivism and empiricism and the argument for non-positivist-critical naturalism. Purely for completeness the critique of Rorty is deeper than most. It is characteristically a refutation of Rorty's (1983) concept of science, relativism, assertion of society language and self as contingency and model of emancipation.

3.1.2 The critical refinement

Having depended mostly on immanent and transcendental critiques the philosopher changes tack and advances, by subsuming the transcendental critique into one that is more sophisticated but presupposes the former: explanatory critique later radicalised in Bhaskar's (1993) treatment on dialectic. According to Bhaskar (1998:121) the features of the critique not only presuppose transcendental refutation but a rational choice similar to theory preference in substantive science. Furthermore, it offers an explanation of the targeted account as a "lived body of beliefs" which requires substantive sociological explanation insofar as the targeted set of beliefs, allows demonstration of its fallacy as necessarily *ipso facto* false, it enables us to identify the targeted account as "ideological" (a dis-placement of science and agency). Such "an explanatory critique entails of course an *evaluative* one" (a point to which we must necessarily return) Bhaskar comments that his change of tack is explicit: "I proceed from refutation and situation to substantive explanation". Consistent with what is claimed above explanatory critique culminates in the "theory of explanatory

techniques”. Bhaskar notes the similarity explanatory critique has to empirical criticism deployed by Kuhn ([1962] 1996) and which is described in our summary of Kuhn’s method in chapter two, above.

3.1.3 Theory of explanatory techniques

As usual this critical milieu is the context for theory development. The development of theory to describe ideology begins in the first steps towards a social theory but picks up momentum in his (Bhaskar 1998:62-71) exposition on “philosophies”. The development is indicative of Bhaskar’s philosophical commitment to ridding science of false consciousness/ideology in which he believes his work under-labours for the emancipation of humanity. His conception of the role of philosophy begins to show distinctive Aristotelian virtue characteristics but in terms of intrinsic ontological and philosophically derivable values. Based on analysis, Bhaskar seeks and uses the good of philosophy (“truth” and “consistency”) to wage war on false consciousness (fallacy and inconsistency). Bhaskar’s development of critique to dialectical meta-critique of philosophy, targeting its unsustainable irrationalism, culminates in the philosopher’s *Plato etc.* (1994). The un-sustainability of irrationalism lies in the fact, that the arguments are extremely vulnerable to the type of immanent critique he has up till now used so well and which he later (1993) refers to as “Achilles’ heel” techniques now deployed against the philosophical tradition (Bhaskar 1993:365-370).

3.1.3.1 A reflection

There is something minimalist in Bhaskar’s refutations. Against Hume’s law for instance, he seeks not to prove that in all cases “is” implies “ought”, nor to explain all cases of illusion: one case will do. Humeans as we will see shortly are still able to claim that in general “is’s” do not imply “oughts” but they may no longer claim that it is *never* the case. *Ergo* Hume’s law in its usual characterisation is an illusion and part of an ideology of false consciousness. It should also be clear by now that, in years to come another philosopher with a superior explanation might expose the flaws in the thinking upon which the entire project of critical realism is based and do so successfully without posing false dichotomies, inner inconsistencies or reductions. It is the importance of this point upon which Bhaskar (1993) later seizes to deliver a profound critique of critical realism it-self, in “dialectical critical realism”.

3.1.4 Bhaskar's argument

The argument building necessitates the identification of lacks or absences in our philosophy. In Bhaskar's social theory we have already seen how relative un-consciousness on the part of agents can account for the fact that we can go on producing and reproducing false consciousnesses and ideologies until challenged by a superior set of explanations of which transcendental realism is an example (Bhaskar 2012:127-129,218-219). In Bhaskar's (1993:223-366) analysis, the three conceptual "lacks" that lie un-accounted for in the heritage of irrealism in our philosophy from Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle onward, are: (1) The concept of ontological depth and the epistemological requirement to plum that depth in science unforeseen by Plato's reified forms; (2) the analysis of "agency" as explanation of change and not "difference" and (3) the concept of "absence" for if agency is causal it must make a difference against a conceptual or political absence. These lacks are expanded to include "non-anthropism ... totality, intransitivity, stratification, transfactuality, contradiction, reflexivity, and agentive agency." Recognition of these conceptual absences in irrealism Bhaskar claims contribute to a philosophical "primal squeeze" on the possibility of transformation ("de-agentification") and a positivistically described ontological monovalence or reduction to homology. Bhaskar blames this state of affairs on a "triple transposition" of Plato's analysis of statements about non-being into false statements, the analysis of change in terms of difference, and the presupposition of the satisfaction of reference.

It is worth commenting on the second point here. Plato conceptualised human diversity as stemming from a diremption (falling) from the "Simple" or the "One" in the unity of the "form" realm. Falling from this realm of unity humanity entered a demi-realm of unhappiness and alienation the indications of which were perceived in our differences and diversity. Lacking a concept of human agency, Plato therefore derogated diversity and change as somehow morally imperfect. Consequently happiness was never possible in this life but only in our return to the realm or world of the simple forms, in which happiness itself dwelt. It is an idea which set up the philosophical theory of "other worlds" in which alone, things could be different or better. One doesn't have to think too hard to see the disaster and dichotomy (the reification of happiness or heaven) of later Christian consequence and with which Heelas (2012) and others struggle. The analytical Aristotle, according to Bhaskar above, transposed this concept into the so called "problem of the one and the many" which is responsible for the two cultures divide in science and continued the de-agenting of humanity within the

philosophical tradition. I am forced to reflect on how often one hears the words “I’ll be happy when...”

Returning to Bhaskar’s admission of an “evaluative” stance above is all important. Largely up till now we have been dealing with a substantive argument and critique at the coal face of the philosophies of science, epistemology and methodology. For some of us it is easy to dismiss substantive argument in philosophy, our interests simply lie elsewhere. However things speed up for the reader at this point of Bhaskar’s development. One gets the palpable sensation that Bhaskar now has a fixed target in his sights: a hegemony of ill-conceived notions and fallacies in which our philosophical tradition has set up a traditionally hallowed resonance of alienation from happiness, change, and confidence in the reality of our own agentive power, by reducing being and causality to a mystifying demi-reality of epistemic fallacy. Consequently the severally demonstrable distinctions of the domains of the real, empirical and the actual were confused between ill-conceived distinctions of the intransitive and transitive dimensions of science.

What we see in the publications from 1980 to 1993 is Bhaskar’s critique of consciousness hence, his pre-occupation with “ideology” which is nothing more than Bhaskar’s name for false-consciousness. Bhaskar’s evaluative critique is targeted at the ideology of irrealism, the foundational moments of which Bhaskar traces back to Parmenides and whose tradition, he finds lacking in a concept of absence necessary for dialectic. Bhaskar’s insight is that this oversight needs resolution, to then address the progress of humanity as “mystical scientist” and scientists as “practical mystics”. It is a deeply challenging revolution of values to be appropriated.

It should also be clear that what Bhaskar terms the “ideology of empirical realism” delivered science into certain hard conceptions of: natural science, the gulf between nomothetical and idiographic sciences, irresolvable and false dichotomies and reductions to “materialism” and/or reifications to “idealism”. The upshot for science, perhaps Bhaskar would say, is that we have been duped into a conception of science as a war between at least two false consciousnesses, both participating in “irrealism” (a philosophical attitude of disenchantment).

3.1.4.1 Hume's law: fact and value II.

We have spent time on Bhaskar's evaluative stance in his critique which leads to the development of his theory of society and persons. The conceptualisation of agency is central however it does ride on his argument for transformation, which in turn is required to derive values from facts. In order to do so, Bhaskar has to dismantle the "taboo" enacted by "Hume's law". The argument is based on the insight (1993:63; *italics added*):

But that truth is good (*ceteris paribus*) is not only a condition for moral discourse, it is a condition of any discourse at all. Commitment to *truth and consistency* apply as much to factual discourse as to value discourse; so cannot be seized upon as a concealed (value) premise to rescue the autonomy of value from factual discourse, without destroying the distinction between the two, the distinction that is the point of the [Humean] objection to uphold.

So what we may deduce is that Bhaskar's critique of Hume does not rest on a simple inference from "is" to "ought" (the major taboo), it rests on proving firstly that Hume's law has a necessary commitment to the separation of "is" and "ought" and which is the "law's" point. Then it rests on Bhaskar to prove that that commitment is false (necessarily only in one case), and if he can do that he destroys the necessity of law-like status, and then proceed to replace it with a superior explanation about the relations of "is" and "ought" and "why" it is that Hume's law fails. It is the same critique that Bhaskar develops along Marxian lines to identify ideology which he equates with bad science, illusion and false consciousness. The begging question which begins the quest may again be paraphrased as "Under what conditions, does false consciousness in science, arise?"

3.1.4.2 The TINA formation

Fundamental to the critique of ideology and operative in things like the history of Hume's law, is Bhaskar's analysis of the ironically termed "TINA" ("there is no alternative"²⁶) formation: operative clusters of confused fallacy and truth upheld as sometimes pre-conscious belief and sometimes expressed in strongly coercive tones, serving as substructures of hegemony (Bhaskar 2002a:202-3):

26P.W. Botha's finger wagging comes to mind. Perhaps time to cross another "Rubicon"?

[The] false theory depends on, presupposes in practice, the true one; even though the false one may dominate and even occlude the alethically true component of the totality which is that particular TINA formation. What is identified here is a cluster of ‘half-lies’ in the service of a grand fallacy The analysis of TINA formations is essential to the whole project of ideology-critique, of demystification and the emancipatory potential of philosophy generally.

If we reflect for a moment on the characteristics and consequences of TINA formations, we notice that they are firstly constellations or complexes of value=thoughts centred around one or other aspect of life. They exhibit enough fundamental truth to acquire assent and enough fallacy to confuse change (Bhaskar 2012:28). Their hidden message or injunction is “not to question”, because “life is like this” and “there is no alternative”. Emotively they reduce response to fear based acquiescence with the tacit acceptance that transformation is too difficult or impossible and certainly not worth the trouble. Together the hegemonic effect is to enslave.

3.1.4.3 Critique of the hermeneutical tradition expanded.

Considering the audience of this dissertation, versed in the theory of theological exegesis I will forgo much of the history and the debates, if only to make Bhaskar’s point more clearly. Firstly, he accuses the interpretative tradition of buying into the empirical realist hegemony of science and in retaliation becoming anti-naturalist. As a result it has committed the epistemic fallacy by extension: reducing in various forms and arguments “being” to “language” or in some cases to “action” and in other’s to “history” and I would suggest in Waaijman (2002), to “forms”. At a second level the critique and analysis is aimed at the (heuristic) conjoinment of social theory and the “personal account” based on an assumption that the latter is in some way incorrigible. This he refutes showing life to be more than merely conceptual or behavioural (1998:134-135) but defined by “it’s [individual account’s] criteria of significance, not our own [that if the social theorist] ... and within a form of life” about

which it might have a declared opinion or not²⁷. Such forms of life cannot be described as reductive or understood generally by sociological descriptions ('re-conceptualisation'), but (against Winch (1959) by the agent's "grasp" of "their existence".

Bhaskar analyses a three-fold socialisation of social scientists which blinds them to this fact and thus he explains the proliferation of heuristic devices deployed in *Verstehen*. The critique and analysis is in usual style comprehensive and the explanation, detailed in the final chapter of 1998. His final point is that *Verstehen*, described in its traditional sense cannot be exhaustive of interpreted (even social) reality. Bhaskar puts it thus (1998:140):

Social science is not only concerned with actions, it is concerned with their conditions and consequences (including the states and relations of structures and agents). And is concerned with what societies and persons are (and may become), as well as what they do. Moreover it is concerned with actions which are practical, not just symbolic: with *making* (poesis), not just *doing* (praxis), or rather with doing which is not, or not only, *saying* (signifying or expressing). Such making always possesses a material cause. So it is important to note the limits of all Vichian arguments for hermeneutics: *what we do not make, we have no privileged understanding of*. And we make neither society *nor* ourselves.

Perhaps for Bhaskar, Waaijman's formalist theological spirituality is not so much about the transformation of the "fallen from grace" but the reproduction of the "fallen into irrationalism"?

3.1.4.4 Four hermeneutical circles

Bhaskar (1998:153) speaks of the tradition as producing four sets of "hermeneutical circles" which he enumerates "C1" to "C4". Consistent with his theory of science he claims C1 as "a condition of any act of enquiry" and C2 as "a condition for any dialogue", in the sense of

²⁷Waaijman's (2002) "forms and foundations" are now largely out of date and where they endure they have done so for a significant period. At their monasticised "high point" few legal alternatives were possible, and to rebel meant death, imprisonment or exile. Their coercive strength relied heavily on the pre-Copernican worldview and one may argue that this worldview still haunts us in a number of social "ownership" ills and structures of our time. It is fitting that we wish to reduce their harm because the world needs to heal itself. If we are to be afforded this opportunity, we are required to become agents of change.

which and in another context Perrin (2007:41 cf. Kourie 2009:164) can claim “Hermeneutics ... can be applied to ... all aspects of human life.” C1 and C2 are thus, following Gadamer “universal” across scientific divides and that due to the limits on naturalism in the human sciences, the conceptions of C3 as including interpretation of other cultures and C4 as including interpretations of meaningful objects, are specific to human sciences alone. In critique of tradition, Bhaskar says that C4 cannot be modelled on “communicative acts” or “context”. Both C3 and C4 require “dialogical social enquiry” and “non-logocentric reading”. The various hermeneutical circles as exercises in *Verstehen* can however be described as being in a part-whole relationship. Bhaskar’s critique of the interpretive tradition is aimed mostly at what he envisions as an inadequate linguistic formulation of *Verstehen*. I suppose here, we all have a bit of difficulty? Lest the critique presented in summary form here appear an over-generalisation, it must be noted that Gadamer is a special case and Bhaskar does pay tribute to his ingenuity in trying to come to an understanding of ontological depth, especially (I suspect) in Gadamer’s “aesthetics”?

3.1.5 The critique of ideology: an appropriation for Spirituality.

There is in my opinion a very important character to critical realism as a philosophy from the margins, undoubtedly part of Bhaskar’s experience (of expatriated, post-World War II, Anglo Indian heritage). It is often the case in my own experience that the marginalised, their experiences of hegemonic relational constraints of poverty, class, sexuality, race and gender, are aware of possibilities in science, law, economics, politics and religion that are not immediately apparent to those who are more complacently accommodated in the tyranny of the “normal”.

I think it also clear that institutions and social forms as relatively enduring structures are the most likely purveyors of ideology as understood by Bhaskar. Institutions and the relations they encourage are notoriously difficult to transform because having come to ideologically held power and governmental funding (and sharing similar notions of what the world must be like) they exist however, under the condition of freedom that presupposes that such transformation is possible. In every arena this condition is based on our ability for rational judgement (reflexivity/wisdom) upon which belief of the intelligibility of science rests and in which social world we can act for *eudaimonia* and the free flourishing of all. This goes some way to show that after some reading, the concepts of critical realism and their easier applicability are simple to grasp and obvious in themselves. Critical realism is in this regard

not merely another philosophical movement it is in my humble judgement a veritable revolution in the realm of epistemology and if extrapolated, an explanation and offering for a spiritual conversion of everyday life.

I have to note that a critique of one's personal consciousness is a very powerful thing. For instance, in "Scientific explanation and human emancipation" (1980) and elsewhere ([1979] 1998, 2012:125-144), Bhaskar elaborates an ethical argument grounded on truth and consistency. If it is to succeed here as to the level it has done so internationally then I suggest what is required of us as an intellectual community is a certain reformation of the mind and the will, to recognise a long overdue and unparalleled reflection on the nature of science extrapolated to the every-day world of existence. We certainly need an account of transformation, emergent causality and the autonomy of the intentional realm, its limits and possibilities, different from the type of sociological/psychological heuristic "taping" of nomothetic and idiographic parts to fit an argument (I would suggest, that we've all seen it practiced if not recognised it!). How can academic Spirituality resist a true critique of consciousness, if not for *ideological* reasons? If the inter-disciplinary or hermeneutic methods are valuable we need to know by analysis of the stature with which critical realism provides, their limits and possibilities for instance the distinction of "forms of life" (Bhaskar 1998:134-135) as existential expressions of socially mediated ontological depth and not as taxonomic categories of determinist expectation.

The transformative resonance that critical realism as a global movement sets-up, relies on a certain self-appropriating freedom by the agents who provide the material conditions for knowledge in the social cube. Freedom to act on the part of others is *sui generis* insofar as it frees the academic will to inform itself of the argument. This dissertation underlabours under these conditions and in this purpose: the literary material on South African shores is still inadequate and in short number however this state of affairs transforms from week to week and improves our chances of partaking in the growing interest which I have contended, has made and will continue to make critical realism an inevitable contemplation for all students of the natural and human sciences. This dissertation is written in a transformative moment (however small) in the history of epistemology of a regional context and therefore furthers a transformative interest.

From the number of articles in López and Potter (2001) for example, but also in the *Routledge studies in critical realism* series, one notes the disparate interests from ecology,

sustainability and information systems. As numerous authors have noted readers of critical realism are often students of other disciplines. So too I believe spirituality scholars will find in critical realism a vindication of the many (methodological and material) values, upon which (consciously or unconsciously) Spirituality operates as an identifiable and emerging resonance-effect in an open field of epistemology and existence.

3.1.5.1 Analytic philosophy: room at the “critical” inn, anybody...?

In a clearly transcendental movement Bhaskar argues the philosophical imperative of conceptual critique expressed logically as social criticism so producing the conditions for the moral imperative of emancipation which, as structurally undergirded condition for the emergence of both critical realism and of a more liberating conceptualisation of the role of dialectic, precedes it. Bhaskar’s project here (1998:vi) is, “to reclaim reality for itself. To reclaim it from philosophical ideologies – such as empiricism or idealism – which have tacitly or explicitly defined [reality] in terms of some specific human attribute, such as sense-experience, intuition or axiomatic-cination, for some or other restricted – individual or group – interest”. His inspiration is Marxian (reason as dialectic) and is an extrapolation of Edgeley’s (1976) “account of how purely descriptive and explanatory theory can be critical of its object” (cf. Bhaskar & Collier 1998:390). Consequently as Bhaskar exposes the false dichotomy between facts and values which is heir to Hume’s Law and the concomitant impossibility of value neutrality in social science, he conceptually builds a case for a modified ethical naturalism for which one hopes, room may be found in the “critical” inn.

3.1.5.2 ...for an ethical heart?

This is nothing more than presenting the ethical “heart” implicit in the discursive conditions for philosophy: dialectic as process of emancipation; (a) intrinsic in any cognitive product of rational judgement (Bhaskar 1980:16); (b) the ways that theory transforms practice (Bhaskar 1993:418-43); (c) the Freudian tradition of consciousness raising and “depth work” and (d) the level of practical rationality (1993:459-61). It has philosophical repercussions for all sorts of interrelated “implicits” in the emergent literature of spirituality be they described as “implicit religion”, “emergent spirituality” or “post-secular spirituality” and the more fundamental concepts of agency, ontological depth, transformation within the social cube, these must presuppose. In short, from the exposition of an emancipative imperative as social cause (amongst other things) be they still emerging or inadequately conceptualised, the

proposition of (cognitively) limited naturalism in the study of spirituality must continue to be posed.

3.1.5.3. A rhetorical question?

It may be argued that Bhaskar as part of a personal conviction to right certain wrongs, sets up a dichotomy in his social theory in which “reproduction” and “production” of knowledge are less admirable than its “transformation”, similar to the “dharma/karma” dichotomy of the East (Bhaskar 2012:45) in the sense that one may move from more or less unconscious living (reproduction) to enlightenment and consciousness. We should note that these terms become synonyms for condition and end-state respectively in Bhaskar’s and Hartwig’s (2010:5) conception of transformation.

One may wish to pose a question: Surely we learn our skills first in the former productive practices? The point is taken that these can remain a trap for entire academic careers especially unreflective of their epistemological bases, especially at the level of substantive sciences. But do these initial steps not warrant too, the good of philosophy and science? To revisit a point made earlier: in all probability and all things being equal that the relative lack of literature in South African libraries and in insufficient numbers for quick inter-library loans sets certain real limits on the possibilities on the number of dissertations from South African institutions of higher learning, dealing with critical realism. Does not the under-labouring aspect of this dissertation, replete with *reproduction* of critical realism, not *transform* an awareness (reflexivity) in the “behind the scenes” and “in the corridors” of those institutions? If this were impossible, and that the only platform for such reproductions be limited to publications, the point of recursively based undergraduate studies is redundant.

Mezirow (2000:xii) describes his findings on transformative learning thus:

Findings suggested that a generic development in which maturity in childhood is understood as a *formative* process that includes assimilation of beliefs concerning oneself and the world, including socialization and learning adult roles. Adulthood was perceived as a *transformative* process – involving alienation from those roles, reframing new perspectives, and reengaging life with greater degree of self-determination. The process was characterized as a praxis, a dialectic in which understanding and action interact to produce an altered state of being.

Perhaps Bhaskar's interest is primarily the matter of transformation, the emancipation of science and society and in the face of which, their reproductions must appear more than merely frustrating. However, the point cannot be left there, dharma and karma, transformation and reproduction, respectively apply to "a life", namely beyond the limits of naturalism and ill-fitting taxonomies of social theory. While the resonance of dharma, transforms the life born into the conditions of karma and (re-) production, a dialectical relationship is set up that is only superficially dualistic. Though the dialectical presence of our conditions never leave us (until we leave them and life as we know it), practice in the arts of transformation con-join with theories of transformation in praxis that can be truly experienced as non-dual and unitive at the level of "alethic" being.

Bhaskar's explanations have often been paraphrased here as, "Why so-and-so got it wrong..." How is it that we get things wrong? We have already understood that multiple social influences and relatively enduring relations act as causal structures in the "doing" of substantive sciences and which, all things being equal (*ceteris paribus*) might have influenced us to get things right. It follows then that the same conditions which produce truth produce error. The multiplicity of *telos* and outcomes, must then presuppose a condition's non-preference or *non-duality*.

3.2 Bhaskar's dialectic

From the development of Bhaskar's conception of explanatory techniques, it will be noted that Bhaskar is becoming more interested in the good of philosophy and its power to critique ideology and deliver people into a new conceptualisation of reality, which is emancipating in the sense of truth making us free. It is for this reason that in *Dialectic: the pulse of freedom* (1993:120) Bhaskar seeks to provide a unified theory of dialectic, a choice he defends thus:

Dialectic has the closest possible etymological, historical and thematic links with argument ... However straight away ... we must distinguish between (a) wide from (b) more rigorous sense of 'dialectical argument'. The former (a) embraces anything from the expansive sense of interplay mentioned above, through any systematic interconnection that unites a body of thought to, such as absolute idealism, Marxism or dialectical critical realism of a 1M – 4D kind, which has any claim to be called 'dialectical' [demonstrating] dialectical connection as between *distinct but inseparable* elements. The latter (b) includes only arguments which turn in an essential way upon 2E notions of real

negativity or contradiction, that is, which involve absence or mutual exclusivity (in addition to internal relationality).

The final chapter of Bhaskar (1998, cf. Bhaskar & Norrie 1998:561) and the sources for the theory of explanatory techniques are proleptic of conceptual development here. Bhaskar and others (in the Routledge series) have provided useful summaries of its development and contents in extracts and articles elsewhere as are detailed descriptions of the major concepts of dialectic, four degrees of Critical realism, negation, absence, totality, emergence and the dialectic of desire of freedom.

3.2.1 The pre-eminence of absence

So it is in *Dialectic: The pulse of freedom* (1993) that Bhaskar's meta-critique gains pivotal ground. The usual pattern of critique, explanation and re-theorising are discernible in his presentation. If critical realism is to be described as a philosophical attempt to think *being*, Dialectical critical realism is an attempt to think *absence* (Bhaskar 2012:37-38). Why is this important? Bhaskar asserts that logically, *being* must presuppose its own contradiction. Both as term and philosophical concept being must be set against and presuppose a ground of "non-being" out of which it *becomes* (ontologically) and which gives being its epistemological definition and bounds (meaning). Therefore if critical realism is to re-vindicate being by offering it a totalisation (its full ontological due) it must address its dialectical ontological partners of "absence" or "negation". Secondly if critical realism is to sustain its basic critique of positivism a purely positive statement of ontology defeats itself. To maintain its own coherence then a "negative dialectical totalisation" of ontology is required (Bhaskar 1993:3-8; *itallics* added): "In this study, I aim to re-vindicate negativity ... , I would like the reader to see the *positive* as a tiny, but important ripple on the surface of a sea of negativity." Also:

I shall be occupied with negativity and negation in many other senses of the verb 'to' , negate, including, 'deny', 'reject', 'contradict', 'oppose', 'exclude', 'criticize', and 'condemn', and with their interconnections.

Bhaskar (1993:239-240) makes the distinction:

Thus negativity is systematically connected with *space-time*, and negation with geo-history ... Contrary to almost all philosophers ... in that I argue negative without positive being is possible but the contrary is not the case, I am not

primarily concerned with nothing and nothingness, but with *real determinate non-being* ... And my base concept of non-being is absence, *the simplest and most elemental concept of all*. It is easy enough to see that any world containing change must contain absence ... Moreover, insofar as all transcendental arguments turn on agency ... all transcendental argument must be seen to presuppose the category of absence.

3.2.2 Eight genealogies of dialectic

Thus the project requires an analysis, explanation and critique of the history of *dialectic*. Bhaskar's primary sources (1993:100-102) include: (1) Heraclitus' dialectical contradictions "identified by Marx as generative", (2) Socrates' dialectical arguments modified by Aristotle "to the pursuit of groundable ideas", (3) Plato's dialectical reason conceptually daring flexibility of mind leading to "alethically grounded and materialistically mediated practices of collective self emancipation", (4) Aristotle's dialectical propaedeutics, a combination of Socrates and Plato "it sets the boundary conditions for the continual circulation in and out of the sphere of formal reasoning, in which meanings and (e.g. truth) values remain fixed and determinate ... characteristic of all (meaningful) discourse in science and ordinary life alike.", (5) Plotinus' and Schiller's dialectical process, "This normally postulates an original undifferentiated unity, geo-historical diremption²⁸ or diaspora and an eventual return to a non-alienated but differentiated self or unity-in-diversity: and it constitutes a deep rooted theme in Judaic/Christian/neo-Platonic thought. In Marxism ... "a spur in the struggle for a society involving the abolition of all systematic forms of exploitation, subjugation and repression." (6) Hegel's dialectical intelligibility or "immanent critique of ... conceptual and socio-cultural forms". In Marx, "the explanatory critique of the causally generated production of social phenomena ..." (7) Marx's dialectical praxis, "unity of theory and praxis ('absolute reason') in practice (not, as Hegel, in theory) in the non-preservative transformative negation of oppressive social forms." (8) Kant's, Hegel's, Marx's and critical realism's dialectical freedom which is "Dependent upon the achievement of absolute reason in dialectical praxis and the transformation of dialectical intelligibility ... this encompasses the absencing of

²⁸In concurrence with Bhaskar's conception of "irrealism", Gillian Rose (1992: 45-56) clearly analyzes and discerns a continued "Diremption of Spirit" in the post-Kantian (postmodern?) hermeneutical tradition, quipping: "O Shadowy Spirit – whereto your Substance? O protean and ghoulish Subtext – what is your Text? O multiple opacity – what is your Actuality?"

constraints [including] the Hegelian dialectic of reciprocal recognition and the Marxian dialectic of real de-alienation, but generalizes ... these dialectics to aspire to the achievement of a naturalistically grounded social humanity in a trans-specific pluralistic global order, subject to the material conditioning imposed by natural constraints, oriented to the self-realization of the concrete singularity of all ...”

In Bhaskar (1993:2) the author claims as he does in Archer (1998:xix):

The dialectical phase of critical realism ... had three main objectives: (1) The dialectical enrichment of critical realism; (2) the development of a general theory of dialectic, of which Hegelian dialectic could be shown to be a general, limiting case, [and in (1993:3) adds] capable of functioning as agencies of human self-emancipation; (3) the generation of the rudiments of a totalizing critique of Western Philosophy.

3.2.3 The dialectical enrichment of critical realism

The “dialectical enrichment of critical realism”, in terms of the synchronic slicing in Bhaskar’s system targets critical realism through the lense of 2E negativity. Thus Bhaskar claims (1993:299): “The system of dialectical critical realism constitutes a second wave of critical realism, structured around the critique of *ontological monovalence* [flattening] and pivoting on the ontological primacy of the category of *absence*. The result is a regional extension on to the terrain of dialectics...” However, the enrichment so claimed is multi-dimensional, meaning that its usual concepts and critiques as encountered above are broadened and deepened. For instance the critique on positivist ambiguation of the real, actual and empirical realms receives greater analytical restatement (Bhaskar 1993:230-235) and the exposition of epistemic fallacy is transformed into a critique of irrealism.

Since we have already covered most of these dissatisfactions we can focus later merely on this enrichment of them as “dialectical effects” which are decidedly ethical, transformative and proleptic of his philosophy of meta-reality. Bhaskar and Norrie (1998:561) write: “The central task of Bhaskar (1993) is to synthesise dialectical methods with existing critical realist concerns”. The effect is to radicalise concepts within critical realism by re-interpreting and expanding Hegel’s ideas of identity, negativity and totality to include transformative agency. In this way the concepts of critical realism are pushed into the realm of morality and ethics. A further way in which critical realism is enriched here is the appearance, of a proliferation of

figure, for the first time and which some may find useful because they not only describe the conceptual development of this book but of the earlier works too.

3.2.4 Development of dialectical theory

The chapters in Bhaskar's (1993:iv) publication are indicative of his development as already presented:

1 Introduction: Critical realism, Hegelian Dialectic and the Problems of Philosophy

- Preliminary Considerations

2 Dialectic: The Logic of Absence – Arguments, Themes, Perspectives, Configurations

3 Dialectical Critical realism and the Dialectic of Freedom

4 Metacritical Dialectics: Irrealism and Its Consequences

It should be noted that as the reconceived dialectical theory emerges, as a meta-epistemology, dialectic takes on a synthetic quality and it is in this vain that Bhaskar critiques a stand-alone emphasis (value) of analysis (and the analytical mind) in the dialectical tradition of Western philosophy. As an aside, in his nuance of “to negate” above Bhaskar mentions “condemn”. A connection may be made here with a further synonym which appears in spirituality literature, *apophasis* whose original pre-Christian usage (Blackwell 2003) meant to condemn or to indict acts of treason and corruption. While its legal *nuance* is lost in the Christian tradition and replaced there with a formulaic *anathema*, the indictment of purely positive descriptions of God (the premise of negative theology) is a limited case proleptic of critical realism's critique of positivism and therefore for some, an interesting parallel.

Bhaskar and Norrie (1998:562):

This complex and profound development of critical realism involves a broad and multiform treatment of dialectic: in its historical and systematic forms; epistemically, as the logic of argument and the method of immanent critique; ontologically, as the dynamic of conflict and the mechanism of change; and normatively-practically, as the axiology of freedom.

Obviously dialectic is operative at many levels in the history of Western thought. One way of characterising dialectic is to note the bi-polar opposite assertions and positions, yet necessarily related (mutually presupposing) concerns of those assertions within a debate.

This is dialectic at the coal face of substantive philosophy, which ideally leads to refinement of oppositions and an enrichment of conceptualisation of the philosophical concerns at hand. Dialectic can also lead to reversal in the sense of Kuhns' "falsifiability".

Bhaskar claims (1993:3-4):

... dialectic has come to signify any more or less intricate process of conceptual or social...conflict, interconnection and change, in which the generation, interpenetration and clash of oppositions, leading to their transcendence in a fuller or more adequate mode of thought or form of life ... plays a key role. But ... dialectical processes and configurations are not always ... preservative.

The dialectical processes and configurations exist at levels of "ontological" dialectics, "epistemological dialectics", "relational dialectics", "practical" dialectics, "meta-epistemological" dialectic operative at many levels of knowing and being within dimensions and inter-relations of the social cube and into the intransitive and transitive dimensions of science. Dialectic receives the full stratified and differentiated ontological treatment of critical realist analysis. Dialectic can also result in a most important (for Bhaskar's development) remedy of argument as in immanent critique, discussed above. Derridian "deconstruction" is therefore a dialectical moment in the history of philosophy. It is also evident that dialectic is responsible for the "unity of Greek Philosophy" (Strauss 2012:55-75) and that dialectic pervades all fields in philosophy (Strauss 2011:207-217). It is plain to see that in Bhaskar's opinion, theories of incommensurability or irrealism defeat or suspend the possibility of dialectic.

Dialectic is therefore not only systematic but historical and trans-historical, constituting movements and epochs in Philosophy. It is a short stretch following the Marxian-Hegelian nexus for Bhaskar to discern dialectic within social forces, and the history of history and most notably in revolutionary and emancipative movements. Consequently the unified theory of dialectic that this philosopher proposes moves from philosophy into the realm of the social as a critical tool for the emancipation of people. I think it is obvious to note that such emancipations happen over time within cumulative events that bring tension and release. Social dialectic like that of its epistemic systematisation, exhibits pulse-like rhythm and moments of excitement.

3.2.4.1 Dialectic: logic of negation

I remember in years past dialectic was presented by a teacher as “a negation of contradiction” and this explanation was based on the Parmenidean-Aristotelian expansion of identity-relations which embargoed contradiction in a law-like principle of “non-contradiction”. Bhaskar disagrees. In a nut shell he claims that without contradiction there can be no learning, correction nor betterment. Contradiction is not something we can or should avoid and for this reason dialectical critical realism is based on a principle of non-identity or negation. Negation is real and has a causal effect which is “to negate” or cause absence. This absence or negation also is stratified and differentiated in its effects (Bhaskar 1993:5):

[Negation can be] ... determinate absence or non-being (i.e. including non-existence). It may denote an absence ... from consciousness (e.g. the unknown, the tacit, the unconscious), and/or of an entity, property or attribute (e.g. the spaces in a text) in some determinate space-time region, e.g. in virtue of distancing, or mediation, death or demise, or simple non-existence. It connotes, inter alia, the hidden, the empty, the outside: desire, lack and need... Of course what is absent or void at or from one level, region or perspective may be present at another. This is what I shall refer to as the ‘duality of absence’.

Consequently for Bhaskar (1993:174-6), at its primary level dialectic is absencing a mistake. Since a mistake is an absence of knowledge, dialectic is an absencing of absence. Thus dialectic can be universalised or generalised to all spheres and strata of existence, absencing ills, absencing constraints, absencing un-freedom, and therefore is “the axiology of freedom”. Consequently, the absencing action of critique is part of critical realism’s dialectical mission.

3.2.5. Absence and dialectical critique

Consequently, understanding dialectic as the logic or causal effect of absence (“absence, absencing absences”) in the world requires that causal absence cannot be reduced to a mere social conception, or a conceived contradiction, or inconsistency (Bhaskar 1993:67). What then is needed and which Bhaskar hopes to provide is a theory of Absence/negation (Bhaskar 2012:37-38), an adequate conceptualisation of which has itself been absented from the philosophical tradition, by positivistically described identity, anthropically monovalent and contradiction intolerant accounts of *being*. Ultimately it is important to theorise absence because the critiques of “epistemic”, “actualist”, “positivist” and other fallacies can be tied

together as parts of a greater “anthropic fallacy”; the reduction of “being” to “human” being or “human experience” of that being, usually described positivistically. “I have argued that any theory of knowledge presupposes an ontology, in the sense of an account of what the world must be like, for knowledge, under the descriptions given it by that theory, to be possible” (Bhaskar 1993:205). For Bhaskar *being* pre-exists *knowing*. If therefore epistemological dialectic depends on “absence”, however ill-conceived or hidden that absence is from theory, does not remove its ontological status in the intransitive dimension of things, thus making a purely positivist account of being untenable. The fact that absence is multiform and therefore stratified necessitates its reality or ontological depth - so too for truth and dialectic.

3.2.6 Non-Identity, non-duality, intellect and morality in space-time

In critical realism till this point the prime moment has rested on a non-identity between being and knowing. Here the non-identity affords a critique of anthropic “centrism” and recommends a moral decentring from the ego (Bhaskar 1993:207-308 *passim*). Important for philosophy it prevents the susceptibility to the standard view on subject-object relations and the dualisms that follow it. Decentring from an ever present ego requires the acknowledgement that the geo-historical past is present in us (an important insight for epistemology and spirituality) constituting a deflation of ego-centricity and exposing the fallacy of scientific and social individualisms ²⁹(Bhaskar 1993:208). In asserting the reality of time and space Bhaskar (1993:210) notes:

There is nothing anthropocentric about the reality of space, time, tense and process. I defend the irreducibility of Mac Taggart’s A series (past, present, future) to his B series (earlier than, simultaneous with, later than), that is, to be specific, the *reality of tense* and the *irreducibility of space-time* on any world-line both for the transitive observer and the intransitivity of the observed.

The contribution bares some thinking. Mac Taggart’s relativist analysis need not detain us here. Bhaskar’s position reflects the theoretical reality of Einstein’s concept of “space-time”

²⁹Bhaskar (1993:208) notes the importance of reasserting the geo-history of being, “of tense and place as irreducible and spatio-temporality as real, of the tri-unity of space, time and causality in tensed spatialising process of emergent, divergent, possibly convergent, efficacious spatio-temporalities and rhythmic, of the constitutive presence of the past and outside.”

as a medium with inter-causal effect. As a medium space-time envelopes us (mediated by gravity and the electromagnetic field) in what Bhaskar might say is the intransitive dimension of reality, however as he claims, we are capable in the transitive dimension of penetrating time (in its zones) by a telephone call and penetrating space with supersonic flight. Bhaskar's insight is that the intransitive "non-duality" of space-time can be experienced as a duality whose effects can be relatively interfered with in the transitive dimension. So too, although conditioned by past determinants, "being with" someone "in the moment" can cut through the effect of the experienced duality and this penetration is not just an effect but a *reality*. We do not in the moment effect time-space continuum but penetrate its dualistic features to its *non-dual status of reality*. We do not relativise space-time or reduce it to the Mac Taggart's B experience, but transcend the transitive to experience the intransitive dimension of non-dual space-time.

Bhaskar's later, but shortly introduced concept of "non-duality" of the intransitive dimension of life is already discernible. However this concept rests on acknowledging the intransitivity of real categories in an attitude of realism.

3.2.7 The otherness of reality

The "otherness" of contradiction ("alterity") necessitates a referential detachment in the knower as does the otherness of existential intransigence in the social being. In a species-being able to differentiate and discriminate a certain distancing is required in our analysis of the otherness of space and time. What alterity masks, is absence. For Bhaskar (1993:72-73), contradiction has a "dialectical fertility" exhibiting a challenge to our complacency. Linking his ideas on dialectic and meta-critique the author claims: "There are seven main philosophical errors conjugating around contradiction":

- (a) To logicize being – by using the principle of non-contradiction as a criterion – or, in Hegel's case, contradiction as a postulate – for defining reality;
- (b) To detotalize being – by refusing to admit the existence of contradictions (logical ones included) in reality;
- (c) To belittle or obtund the significance of contradictions – either as bases for criticism and/or harbingers, indeed dynamos, of change;
- (d) To acquiesce to, rather than try to resolve (or more generally seek an appropriate response to), contradictions

- (e) To imagine triumphalistically that such resolutions are always possible, even if only in principle
- (f) To assume that once a system contains a contradiction, contradictions must spread universally and inexorably throughout it;
- (g) To be intimidated by, or fight shy, of them.

These errors, though not consistent, are not unconnected: they form a dialectical ensemble.

3.2.8 The programme of practical mysticism: rational judgement, reflexivity, truth, trust and alethia.

This dissertation must soon focus on Bhaskar's realm of the "meta" and his theory of practical mysticism which is conceived to emerge from natural roots in the deep strata of being: cognitively encompassing reflection on the "is" realm and morally a reflexive reflection on "ought". To counter any split or dichotomy, Bhaskar (2012:19-23) has demonstrated the defeat of Hume's Law which along with its contribution to irrealism and ontological monovalence in Western philosophy also has played havoc with truth theory generally. Bhaskar may claim to re-vindicate a moral ground to rational judgement based on the insight that all conversation assumes the values of truth and consistency. From there the author expounds the human virtue and ontological reality of trust, the principle of "alethia" - the ground-state of agency, reflexivity, rational judgement and the axiology of emancipation, accounting for inaction as action and the fact that we cannot but act morally (including a-morally) from an "is". This presents the argument in a broad stroke which needs some complementation. Firstly Bhaskar (1993:174):

In articulating dialectic as absencing absences, and socio-substantively as the conatus for freedom (and, further, universal human flourishing in the context of their species and nature generally), I am going to employ three complimentary approaches:

1. A retroductive explanatory derivation of the concept from its genealogy;
2. A meta-critical exposition of the concept within dialectical critical realism, in its 'positive', 'negative (critical)' and systematic extensions.
3. A critique, traditional ('transcendent'), immanent and proto-explanatory (meta-critical), of analytics, or more generally the analytic problematic.

From this method, Bhaskar (1993:175) extracts a theory of dialectic as “logic of change”:

It is *naturalist*, in the threefold sense (1) that it entails an emergent powers materialism, in which society is materialized ultimately in virtue of embodied intentional causal agency reacting back on the kinds of materials out of which it is formed; (2) [thus] it legitimates the possibility of an explanatory social science; and (3) that it licenses us to pass from purely factual to evaluative conclusions.

Central to his advance on “alethia” is Bhaskar’s (1993:214) treatment of truth:

‘Truth’ seems at once (a) the simplest and (b) the most difficult of concepts. (a) Saying ‘true’ to a proposition is to give one’s assent to it – that is its primary function, whereby redundancy and performative theories derive their plausibility. But one is thereby committed to a claim *about* the world, roughly to the effect that that is how things are, from which correspondence theories from the time of Aristotle have drawn their currency. This claim carries the normative force ‘trust me – act on it’, whence pragmatic theories gain their footing. At the same time this claim, if challenged, needs to be *grounded*, a requirement that seems to point in the direction of coherence theories. So a truth judgement will typically carry a fourfold dimensionality, possessing (i) *expressively veracious*, (ii) *descriptive*, (iii) *evidential*, (iv) *imperative-fiduciary* aspects. This four-dimensionality is intrinsic to the judgement form as such, and is not limited to truth judgements. Each aspect is universalizable, albeit in different ways, and aspects may be loosely attached to the concrete universal and the social cube ... For the moment it is sufficient to appreciate that it is in virtue of its basic *world-reporting* meaning ... that truth-talk satisfies a *transcendental-axiological need*, acting as a steering mechanism for language users to find their way about the world.

Bhaskar’s insight here contributes to a later reflection on worldview in the final section of the dissertation.

Stemming directly from the normative-trustworthy dimension of truth experienced in everyday living and without which we would never stop and ask for directions when lost, comes Bhaskar’s (1993:217, cf. Bhaskar 2012:xxiv,286) concept of alethia: “Truth is *alethic*,

as the truth of or reason for *things* and phenomena, *not propositions*, as genuinely ontological, and in this sense as objective in the intransitive dimension.” One could say of alethic truth that it is truth as “instantiation of being” (Cuppitt 1998).

Bhaskar (1993:220-260) notes that in order to universalise truth-talk from theoretical to practical (moral) truth we must recognise two elements at the root of thought.

Universalizability is both (a) a test for consistency and (b) a criterion of truth in the fields of theoretical and practical reason alike.

I. End-states, which would be universalizable, are not always realizable by agents (e.g. one can't get from x to everywhere and one can't go to y from just anywhere). However, in general it is plausible to suppose that one can progress towards them, or mitigate regress away from them [P].

Put syllogistically the flow of reason here goes from a value (1) “be practical”, to satisfy (2) “P” above and thereby (3) “be grounded in an explanatory theory or sets of theories of (a) the current situation, (b) the desired end-state and (c) the transition from (a) to (b)”.

Both an agent's praxis and its groundings should be universalizable in the senses that they be

1. Transfactual,
2. concrete – satisfying all the moments of the concrete universal (including, of course, concrete singularity).
3. actionable, in the sense of agent specific, and
4. transformative, in the sense that it is oriented to change (in the direction of the postulated end-state [P]).

This claim about reason is then universalised.

A moral reasoning is a species of practical reasoning ... it is (non-uniquely) dialectically, and so specifically transfactually, concretely and actionably, ‘binding’ and universalizable in form, and that its ultimate object is flourishing humans-in-nature. Practical reasoning may arise from a failure to satisfy some desire want or interest [an absence]. It logically presupposes a *negative* (proto-) *critique* and a *positive* (proto-) *theory* of how to remedy the situation – an aspect of the duality of theory and critique. To be slightly pedantic for a moment, what

is required is clearly to *diagnose* the problem, *explain* it and then take appropriate *action* to absent it.

Fundamental to Bhaskar's analysis of reason is that in order to fulfil these truth obligations one must have a relationship with the alethic world-as-it-is, and our conception of the world should be tried in reason as to its satisfaction of trans-factual, concrete, actionable and transformative aspects. These epistemological aspects of truth operate within the transitive dimension but are nevertheless intransitive indicators of something trustworthy, namely truth as "what it is" and invoking an instinctual and rational trust. Trust (including levels of mistrust (Bhaskar 1993:274) requires reflexivity: "in its most basic form [reflexivity] specifies the capacity of an agent or an institution to monitor and account for its activity ... It is thus systematically connected, in virtue of the intra-dependence of social being, to the phenomenon of *trust*". Thus it can be claimed that what guides the moral action is a reflexive *wisdom*.

A distinction which is worthy of constant reminder and which Bhaskar often makes, is between the *intransitive* and *transitive* dimensions in which trans-factual causality is said to be resident in the former. How so for the question of morality? Critical realism spends much time in the critique of "idealism" in both Kantian "categories" and Platonic "forms", even so moral realists must hold a place for objective morality in the intransitive dimension. What is it and how do we know? In short the answer is a self-evident confidence in naturally occurring reason, the conditions for which are philosophically derivable of our species-life. The obvious fact that we "are", "act" and "know" before any debate about what it is we are, act and know indicative on the same "alethia" which gives rise to rational judgement in the realm of truth and knowledge, yet may produce error in the transitive dimension specifically guides action through the exercise of reflexivity (Bhaskar 1993:260):

Thus as the criteria for rational agency one must: possess the knowledge to act on one's own real interests (the cognitive requirement); be able to access skill, resources and opportunities to do so (the empowered component); and be disposed to act (the dispositional or motivational condition).

This leaves "the moral consciousness of the species in principle *open*". This naturally open moral power; the ability to "*transition from fact to value*" (Bhaskar 1993:211) and from theory to practice is thus susceptible to the (dialectical interdependent) relations of the social cube.

So there is an ethical alethia ultimately grounded in conceptions of human nature ... the anti-naturalist fallacy [e.g. hard social-contract or form theories] often functions merely to screen the generation of an implicit emotivist or descriptivist morality reflecting the status quo ante of actually existing a-morality – it de-moralizes.

Therefore, the naturalistic and philosophically derivable position of alethic realism is inexorable, because contradiction, dialectic and absence are *real*, as are our rational judgements on what to do about a situation. In the relational or transitive dimension descriptive morality and moral judgements are necessarily relative and diverse. It is evident that being human means being in “action” and being in “knowledge” in the transitive sense, however for Bhaskar, in the intransitive dimension we are conversely, active and knowing in *being*.

The absence in which we have our being, for Bhaskar (1993:6-7) can be real, transformative or radical. Radical negation is that “which involves the auto-subversion, transformation or overcoming of a being or condition. It is important ... to distinguish negating processes from self-negating processes and self-negating processes from self-consciously negating processes.” *Contra* Plato and Frege absence does not rely on a positive presence, but vice-verse. “Non-being, within zero-level being, exists and is present everywhere”.

3.2.8.1 The dialectical effect of Bhaskar’s system: totality and agency

In terms of Bhaskar’s (1993:207-238) system, 2E (experience of ontological limitation) is the “abode” and “heartland” of absence/negativity and “the dialectical category par excellence”. 3L (a conception of “totality”) is the dialectical home of “unity and diversity”, “intrinsic and extrinsic”, “parts and wholes”, “concrete universals as concrete singulars”, “centrifugation and peripheralization” present within partial totalities in complex and open process. “The internal aspect of totality is *reflexivity*”. This accounts for intellectual distancing, ethical judgement, practical wisdom and the axiology of emancipation. It is interesting to note that Bhaskar adopts non-identity as a “prime moment” in a philosophical movement to totality. A dialectical totality or a totality including absence logically speaking cannot have a positive identity and Bhaskar claims we can claim no privilege in it but to take our place as reflexive agents exercising the virtues of our intellectual-moral natures, which in the intransitive realm is “non-dual”. However the abode of totality must be internally cohesive in some way. Bhaskar (1993:209) states:

Totality depends on internal relationality ... aspects of *intra-activity*, including *existential constitution* of an element by another, permeation (or containment) and connectedness (or casuality) ... yields at once hope and possibility to totalizing depth praxis ... mediated not only by the reality principle (which we can now call alethia) but also by the virtue of practical wisdom or *phronesis*.

This reality of internal reflexivity at the heart of cosmic totality is the 4D zone of “transformative agency” decentred from humanity and thus universalised. However in human agency operating at various levels “good reasons may be causes” to exercise the sometimes necessary dialectical reversals of consciousness and self-consciousness in order to impart a “highly contingent, *directionality* to geo-history, presaging a society in which the free flourishing of each is the condition for the free flourishing of all. [Bhaskar adds] Agency ... *trustworthy* totalizing transformatist *transitional* praxis ... is a species-specific ineliminable fact.

It is exactly this intellectual-moral agency which Bhaskar (1993:209) sees being reduced or flattened in the history of philosophical discourse:

First, in the lack of a concept of *embodied intentional causal agency*. This may take the form either of a physicalistic reductionism or a spiritualistic dualism – the former entailing de-agentification, the latter dis-embodiment – or *both*. Second, in *reification* of facts, where ‘reification’ means the attribution of a purely thing-like characteristic to human beings, their products and/or relations, and in *fetishism* of conjunctions, where ‘fetishism’ means the attribution of animistic (ultimately, anthropomorphic) magical powers to things, attendant upon empirical realism. Third, in the logic of *commodification* [:] reducing powers to their exercise.

These for Bhaskar are the general philosophical causes of alienation. I would contend that this ontology of agency or philosophical anthropology of emancipation is not a reduction to optimism, it can and does experience reversal and contends with an open system in which anything can happen, including hegemonically judgemental conceptions of anthropology which proclaim sinfulness and fallen-ness and reductions to a singular pole of the duality whilst, the non-dual ground is occluded.

The ultimate cure then is to realise the “alethic ground of being” for humans in the irreducible “being of agency” and this constitutes the beginning of Bhaskar’s enquiry into the ground-nature of being in the intransitive dimension and the enquiry into what that nature of the human alethic ground state is.

3.2.8.2 Emergence

The basic idea of emergence is no longer a new concept for us here and therefore we can afford a scant summary of argument. Bhaskar (1993:49-51, cf. Bhaskar 2012:234)) claims, “In emergence, generally, new beings (entities, structures, totalities, concepts) are generated out of pre-existing material from which they could have been neither induced or deduced. There is a quantum leap...”³⁰. We can see then that though things emerge from other pre-existences, these pre-existents are not necessarily identified or able to be positively ascribed at the time. Placing negativity as a dialectical background in total “otherness” to positively present existence and as... opposite of the actual, “establishes distinct domains of difference qua alterity – real determinate *other-being*”. This otherness of negation as an ontological causal realm (neither open to reduction or reification) is not a contradiction, but a reality of being. Emergence always happens in some partnership with absence. Conceptualising dialectic as contradiction dependent only, is inadequate. Conceptual emergence may for example sometimes depend (Bhaskar 1993:55) “upon the exploitation of past or exterior cognitive resources ... But it may also be affected by means of a perspectival switch, the formation of a new *Gestalt*, level or order of coherence *without* any additional source”.

3.2.9 Summing up the dialectic.

It seems evident that the nature of dialectic presented here is an enormously rich and interwoven dance in the realms of being and knowing between partners: their presupposed bipolar opposites set up the conditions of their ontology and their role in that dance. Nevertheless between and encompassing the two partners a space is necessary for the dance-partnership to take effect: Absence does not presuppose, but is nevertheless the condition for presence. Non-being is a condition of the possibility of being and emergence in science and life, neither being reducible to the other. From a meta-critical “balcony-view” we are able to imagine a dialectical relationship between “analytic” separates and “dialectic” partnerships of 30I believe that this notion is similar to that of Zohar & Marshall’s (2000:115-163) “New model of the self”, perhaps?

thought in philosophy “in which dialectical reasoning [moving together] ‘overreaches’ analytical [separating] reasoning” (Bhaskar & Norrie 1998:565). This is the intellectual development which sheds many of Bhaskar’s analytic friendships.

3.2.9.1 Absence is mediated by duality

If the bi-polarity of *non-being* and *being* are not reductive to each other, what form of mediation or means connect them and their internal form to totality? Bhaskar’s answer is “duality”. Duality is thus the conceptual target which concerns *From East to West* (2000), the immediate precursor to Bhaskar’s philosophy of meta-reality and the culmination of dialectical critical realism. Duality gives things their identity and distinction (in asymmetrical relationship (Bhaskar 2012:234)) within “the combination of existential interdependence” (Bhaskar & Norrie 1998:565).

Duality locates the specific within the general, agency within structure, freedom within the conditioned, and it is marked by two closely linked dialectical motifs: those of *hiatus-in-the-duality*, which defends autonomy against either reificatory [above/ outside reality] or voluntaristic [unlimited achievement of wants] collapse [implicit self reductions to individualism], as well as locating the possibility of dislocation; and *perspectival shifts*, such as that required by the duality of structure and agency in sociological contexts. Similarly, *constellationality* signifies the necessary connectedness of things, such as dialectical unity of dialectical and analytical reason described above: the former builds on the latter, overreaching but not transcending it, while the latter is at a loss without the former.

I mentioned earlier that Bhaskar’s dialectic is the pivot upon which his spiritual turn is grounded. In the Hartwig interview entitled “The foundations of critical realism” (2010:119), Hartwig calls Bhaskar’s 1993 publication an “extraordinarily ambitious agenda” one agrees, with Hartwig and Wilson (2012:250), in accounting for the reality of absence, Bhaskar is struggling with the problem of apophysis - “the problem of saying the not”. Making “the unsayable sayable”, signals for Hartwig and Wilson the spiritual turn. It is obvious that Bhaskar’s (2012:35-38,125,131-133,145-148) idea of transcendence, in excess of Kee (2002:121-136), is not in line with the usual religious reification but located in the acts of transcendence in the mundanity of every-day life and which we hardly notice or speak of³¹. It

31Cf. Adorno & Horkheim (1944) esp. the comment that metaphysics has descended into micrology.

is noteworthy that the “worlded-ness” of Bhaskar’s conception of spirituality loses him more friends among the more religiously oriented “analytics” leading to some heated disagreement amongst critical realist ranks. Perhaps the best summary of the sticking point is found in Bhaskar’s (2000:156) claim that: “Religion hegemonizes the concept of spirituality, so in order to see the possibility of a non-religious secular spirituality you have to go via it [religion]”. I think this might be answer enough for Waaijman’s (2002:430) doubts on the matter of secular spirituality and why he cannot see it as an emerging possibility. But there again Waaijman has no exposure to the *Gestalt* of critical realism and therefore must fall short of conceptual developments unavailable to him.

For Bhaskar it is evident that traceable religious ideology whose theological hegemony, socio-cultural influence and power relations have suppressed or rather reified transcendence and emancipation. As such the basic conditions of human life came to be replaced with discourses on, for instance “the spiritual man” as sacramental *donatum* in baptism, coercively enacting a partition of “we the spiritual” from “they the secular/heathen/pagan” in which the latter derogations are ill-defined, confusing and punitive, “splitting” selves into irrationalism and demoralising spirit. It takes someone from the margins to see other options³² despite the concerns of Slife & Scott-Richards (2001). These being the natural movement of spirituality as anthropological and philosophically derivable good in non-dual openness and generosity: whose freedom needs no control or catechism but whose formation by religious ideology, presupposes that freedom, that openness and that generosity.

What then constitutes the relative endurance of institutions or indeed Waaijman’s “forms”? Obviously this must have a great deal to do with the meaning they afford to people. We have seen already how it is that coercive ideologies and TINA formations are able to defy rationality for hundreds of years. However meaning is not purely an appropriation of ideology but is constituted in the relatively enduring but nevertheless real relations we have with nature, ourselves, others and an evaluation of their status as natural and cognitive goods, either contributing to sustainable truth and consistency or not. No institution, I believe is consistently good but each exist under the non-dual condition for such goodness as a natural feature. This condition must cohere around an interior intentionality in a worldview context.

32Although Slife, D & Scott-Richards, P (2001), note the difficulties in engaging spirituality talk without theology in the Psychotherapy room.

For an institution or world view to attain longevity it must presuppose its own intrinsic ontological value for the flourishing of humanity, it must plainly speaking, “serve”.

I think it reasonable to acknowledge that human agents who “join-up” or volunteer time to an organisation (especially constitutionally value-laden ones) of other (pre-existing) human doings/functions/mediations, do so for a number of reasons at various levels of awareness. Nevertheless their ontological contribution of self in selflessness to take up positions and hold office and the like reproduce/transform a possibly causative, meaningful, value-laden discourse, already in place. Meaning and appropriation of meanings is part of the human agency which then continues to reproduce, transform or perhaps even abandon those meaningful discourses and their institutionalised embodiments. The cognitive content in meanings must be open to reflexive critique and evaluation, in at least a few members or else the organisation would fail. Self conscious evaluation, Bhaskar says rests in the experience of a type of alethic congruence that is tested with our whole being and what we test is the truth and consistency in the “depth-being” of a truth. Innately so the argument continues, humans are drawn to the practice and practical value of learning, ontologically speaking theory and praxis are an inseparable non-dual reality, rather I suspect, like “space-time”: analogy which can enlighten our commonly held distinctions between *Spirituality* and *spirituality*. We do not argue that these distinctions do not speak of realities, but rather that their realities self-insinuate and therefore may belong to the same ontological non-duality: reflexive humanity who wants and needs to be practical. Our linguistic convention, in bestowing a capital “S” to the epistemological realm, may be part of a set of epistemological conventions which legitimately yet discursively mediate a reality into a discussion. Note the discussion (the smaller item) gets the bigger (capital) letter, when what it attempts to describe exceeds any such conception. Both “theory” and “practice” aspects of the non-dual reflexivity are, possibly diminished/suspended/disoriented by lies, oversight, accepted convention and false consciousness which produce cognitive dissonance and these might obviously impair rational judgement, anything can happen. We are often blinded by dualism (perhaps a function of Foucault’s (1977) “ocularism”?): anything can happen because we occlude the wild and ontological “spiriting” reality which begs a hidden but implied term of (S)(s)pirituality: not an impossibility but merely another thought structure.

If rupture and departure are possible it is so under the same condition as belonging. Rupture or hiatus including the possibility of intra-psychic break-down must be indicative of a break in one or other of the socially binding relations or a breakdown in the trust in their truth of

theory and consistency of praxis. Leaving an organisation however is not merely the only option. We may then engage politically and both critically and dialectically oppose such as many atheists have done so with the church. This is our freedom within the limitations of social matrix so well described in Bhaskar's conception of social theory.

At core for rational judgement and a critique of consciousness to take place and an evaluation of society made possible, we must have values and the possibility of transforming to those *ultima*. This is the insight which makes spirituality a very significant addition to the human sciences. But where do we ground our values? In social contract? In form of life? In the Bible (heaven forbid)? In Aristotle? Aquinas? Or any number of competing social forces, including the existential intransigence in traditions and other ideological hegemonies of the world? The question might seem naïve because values in their diverse plethora are probably the most pre-interpreted aspect of human life. If this is so we reduce our evaluation of values to "because someone else says so". Obedience in this sense becomes slavery. Rather Bhaskar suggests the truth of what others might say if indeed it is a necessary truth must be recognised as alethic, self-evident and *sui generis*: existing as a rational intransitive and emerging into consciousness by their own rational good which we then translate into either social contract, forms of life, religion etcetera. If we continue to reproduce a hermeneutical and uncritical irrationalism in our methodology or seek merely to continue reproducing Aristotle, without a *Gestalt* shift we may not have any place to justify our truths and consistencies but back into human exercise of epistemology and a diremption of values into the realm of relativism.

At some point we have to challenge the fact, though methodologically academic Spirituality has done well generally, that there exists still an amount of obfuscation in our derivation of values. Consequently, no explanation for betterment is possible without an account of non-duality, absences, emergences, agency and progress. The ultimate assessment of Waaijman's (2002) contribution must rest on his ability to account for these things as trans-factually, concretely, actionable and transformative. Rather I suspect he is perhaps guilty of standing too closely to Christian theistic categorical mis-identifications and assumptions which ultimately must lead one to question the implied Christian "actual" in the weight of the content here and to which he then applies a formalistic reduction, and despite his acknowledged attempts to reach for the interior concreteness of being? Perhaps further, his dialogical method and critique of consciousness so implied, fails because (in denial of his protestations), Waaijman fails to see depths of being or the openness of ontological systems, discernible to Bhaskar: comparatively speaking Waaijman is seen to be religion "confined":

(Waaajman 2002:427) Perhaps, an unfair critique? However, it may be argued that under such hegemony “dialogue” here becomes a thinly disguised heuristic construct undergirded by an equally regional “aspected” historical reduction despite his best intentions. The absolutism of theistic boundaries, though extended to that lexicon’s limits merely extends theism into a tyrannous regime which is *sui-generis* by consumption of its opposition. However, the point is here taken that historically speaking the questions of being and its concrete life have long been held in religious terms.

Since social structures so obviously avail themselves as taxonomic descriptions and therefore must (in critical realist vein) be the purview of relative knowledge, does their relatively enduring existential intransitivity stand alone as adequate descriptive of value flourishing, a critique of consciousness or foundations for Spirituality for that matter? “Where is social structure?” asks John Scott (2001:77-86) or are they “metaphors for Social complexity”? Or is it that structures acquire causal powers donated by human agents or in dialectical partnership with them (as I have intimated above) and therefore do not possess an autonomised causal power of a natural human kind? Even as heteronomically reduced agents, people act. Where is Waaajman’s empowerment of the agent outside of the author’s paradigm? Is it true then that the Kantian emancipative impulse which so clearly is evident in philosophy since then, is not that pervasive in the ordinary meanings of the world? Why? Or perhaps we merely wish to deny Marxian challenges for the alternative TINA of an easy-going neo-liberal peace, while waiting for the Lord to come? If spirituality and Spirituality-talk think they can remain unengaged in the debate, where then do we put human flourishing and/or our perishing (López & Potter 2001:36)? In a “final judgement”, the temporal equivalent (in a critique of consciousness) from which, we have resigned?

On the other hand if we concede to postmodern relativism and individualised alienation, “uniqueness and choice become the only vectors of difference.” (López & Potter 2001:40). Forms of life do have some intra-inter-dependent causal impact. What is the price of a true spiritual consciousness within the collective lattice-work of our many individual and social relations? Do we return to James’ (1902, cf. McGinn 2001:291) pragmatic stance (Thayer, 1982:169 cf. López and Potter 2001:42) and accept an agentic relativism in a world that we do not fully comprehend, dodging without deconstructing the inappropriate values of former times? Certainly the creative aspect of human agency and the evaluative intention is very much in question here. Our originality is often severely limited in and by our world of power-related unnatural causes and hegemonic pre-suppositions about “whose story is told”. Where

then is the alethic appreciation of the things we most need and want, if not beginning with a thorough going critique of consciousness?

Chapter Four: Bhaskar's spiritual turn and philosophy of meta-reality

4.1 A critique of consciousness in philosophy and the world

Repeated mention has been made that Bhaskar (1993) crafts a dialectical meta-critique of Western philosophy, the beginnings of which are described above. Thereafter using the so called “Achilles’ heel” techniques Bhaskar critiques the un-sustainability of major conclusions in that tradition completed in *Plato etc: Problems of philosophy and their resolution* (1994). Though interesting to the philosophical the detailed critique of irrealism: the “primal squeeze” on ontological depth, strata in being, agency, diversity and rational judgement, having (one hopes) adequately understood them for our purposes, perhaps can be dispensed with. It is to the philosophy of meta-reality that we can now turn. In Bhaskar’s (2002a:167-70) *Reflections on meta-reality*, he summarises his analysis of the philosophical discourse of modernism which introduced the second chapter of this dissertation. His fifth phase is described as “Western triumphalism”. Here he raises a series of facts so often remarked upon in spirituality literature.

We have witnessed the rise of political and religious fundamentalism, the resurgence of fear-based communalisms amongst which I strongly suspect the proliferation of strongly conservative, nationalistic, strongly orthodox movements and religious orders loosely confederated around a conception of the Pope John Paul II “reform” in America and beyond, effecting and entrenching the explicitly triumphal entronement of Benedict XVI during the following period. This time, during which the church has had to confront its own negation and moral absences and presages again, a soul-searching re-evaluation of its existential poverty after very vague official apologies of the “no comment” style. American and “Nato” politics fare no better (with their arsenals of bombs, drones and robots) for a non-egoist emancipation of humanity. In greater geo-historical proximity it seems that leaders are unable to contend with the pressing problems of poverty, greed and transformation, presaging a repeat and reproduction of a most unfortunate history.

If we wonder at the depth and radical analysis of irrealism (Bhaskar 2012:xxvi,171) and whether it bares responsibility and real effect, let us reflect on the obvious roles of greed and mistrust that I believe continue a culture of denial under modernism and increased moral denial under the hegemony of Western triumphalism. Our media-borne everyday experience of hegemony in contemporary corporate and “branding” economy, bares some reflection. In a forthcoming publication entitled *The sleep of reason: The crisis in capitalism, the crisis in*

banking, the crisis in branding, David Goatham (2014) synthesises contemporary naturalist investigations in the science of selfishness, to critique the consciousness of corporate culture whilst suggesting that large scale hegemony discourages change. From an interdisciplinary “dip” into positive psychology, quantum spirituality, the reflections of leading economists and other journalism, the author seeks to justify the discourse on the emotions and values. Goatham’s (2014:2-36) synthesis reports on an international corporate culture riddled with psychopathy, predatory callousness, environmental irresponsibility, greed, mistrust, alienation, coerciveness, denial, “group-think”, shunning behaviour, Peter Pans, materialism, youth-obsession, lying and cheating - all indicative of a lack in thinking and empathy. In this naturalistic analysis of consciousness a number of Bhaskar’s TINA’s dance with great destructive effect (Goatham 2014:1-2):

The implosion of companies like Lehman Brothers and Fannie Mae, the international financial meltdown, the double-dip recession, the bizarre performance of Bernie Madoff, the scandals surrounding Goldman Sachs, the Barclays Libor rate-fixing debacle in the UK, the collapse of the Royal Bank of Scotland, the September 2012 trading antics of Kweku Adoboli, who was allegedly only ‘two trades away’ from sinking UBS, Switzerland’s biggest bank, the US Senate’s 400-page report on HSBC, Europe’s largest financial institution, revealing that the bank had accepted \$1.5 billion from ‘money-laundering Mexican drug lords and Al Qaeda sympathisers’, and the stratospheric bonuses that bankers in failed companies insist on paying themselves despite their flawed performance, have together generated much discussion about greed and a perceived lack of ethics in banking, and what is sometimes called ‘The Crisis in Capitalism’. Capitalism is not a naturally-occurring phenomenon like gravity, nor an object like the planet Jupiter. We made it. It is a human cultural artefact like an AK 47 or a chocolate cake ... But the problems facing capitalism and banking are not really about the intricacies of finance and its sophisticated tools; they are about the lusts and avarice and fears and fallibility of people ... We might note that some enterprises and financial institutions (headed and staffed by people) seem to regard their clients not as members of the same species but as insentient objects, fodder for the corporate maw.

Though I do have minor philosophical reservations about some premises and conclusions, the investigation is clear about the locus of the problem, namely a generalised alienation of being and morality. Goatham's (2014:42) cure is, "Doing good by being good":

The world has changed. There's now a need for companies to be seen to be doing good by being good. One extremely influential book cataloguing these trends is 'WHO CARES WINS' by David Jones. The message of the book endorses the findings of the Edelman Trust Barometer: that HOW a company behaves is as important to its success as what it sells, and is as important as its bottom line to many investors. Consumers have choices; but are not always in possession of criteria that enable them to make fine distinctions between marginally different intrinsics and features of one product over another. It is much easier to use an emotive 'image' or aggregate gestalt impression to discriminate at the moment of purchase. Companies need to be earth-centric, animal-centric, AND people centric. They need to be good, or they will be punished in powerful social media.

What then our society needs, says Goatham (2014:50-59) is something like Bhutanese *Gross national happiness*: "Bhutan Studies has defined eight prerequisites for happiness—physical, mental and spiritual health; time-balance; social and community vitality; cultural vitality; education; living standards; good governance; and ecological vitality. This is wisdom, not greed"³³. The author suggests a route of virtue practice for the individual. "Live Martin Seligman's Six Key Truths: Wisdom and knowledge; courage; love and humanity; justice; temperance; spirituality and transcendence." Again rational judgement, a critique of consciousness and action seem to be called for. "To see past the average, the status quo, the good enough, the seductive panacea of the okay, you need vision and intensity of mind and an undying fury".

From this excursion into economic crisis it is proposed we can see that Bhaskar's analysis and critique of the philosophical discourse of modernity, in which the critique of consciousness, conceptual life and ego is implied, reveals: a recursive ideology of irrealism and hegemony of oppressive de-agentification and a heteronomy of ontological monovalence. In response we have retreated away from reality into a numbing, dumbing hyper-realist

³³In support of Goatham's idea here, cf. Diener & Ryan 2001: 15-34.

distrust of our ability for transformation. We fail to be enchanted with being in the world, retrench the insatiable greed and increasingly banish our-selves from any number of more “sunny” options. Upon these facts and acts Bhaskar develops a cultural-ideological critique and progressively sets himself up to focus on the necessity of spirituality as a corrective to marginalisation and other ills in the philosophical discourse of our time, replete with possible hegemonic inflections for academic Spirituality. Bhaskar (2002a:xxii):

The world of demi-reality is a world of illusion, a world of falsities, which are nevertheless causally efficacious. The causal efficacy of these falsities presupposes a truth, at a deeper level of being or reality, which is screened, masked or denied, in some manner occluded by the level of demi-reality, which also dominates it.

However what of critical realism in this context? “... critical realism actually began around 1968 and was initiated really with a concern with problems of modernization and underdevelopment” (Bhaskar 2002a:123-4). Bhaskar claims that he quickly came to understand that theories of development had no relevance for underdeveloped countries.

But when I looked at the philosophical tools which should have enabled me to point to its irrelevance, I discovered that actually there was no way that I could do that, because philosophy had actually pronounced a taboo on the world: it had said you cannot talk about the world in itself, you can only talk about our descriptions of the world. So this doctrine, which I called epistemic fallacy which prohibited the discourse in philosophy about the world, about how the world was in itself, was encapsulated by Hume and Kant and was actually the conclusion of a whole long train in western philosophical thought.

So began the critical realist train material to this dissertation.

4.1.1 Meta-reality: development and turns

In *Reflections on Meta-reality* (2002a) Bhaskar does exactly that. The book is not a consistent development of argument as we might expect. Rather it is a mixture of philosophical development interspersed with talks delivered during that time. These reflections dwell on the conceptions which have emerged from his (2000) autobiographical writings. For those uninitiated into the spiritual thought of the East the transcriptions are indeed interesting.

Unlike treatment of critical realism till now the publications on the philosophy of meta-reality will not be analysed separately, in order to provide a shorter but fuller presentation of conceptual development. Admittedly the task is made more simple by Bhaskar's inclusion of a summary of the philosophy (Bhaskar 2002c:ix-xiv) from which much is presented here.

Internal to the programme of critical realist development, transcendence is dialectically located as operative in over-coming or transcending irrealism. Post-fact to an argument already established the philosophy of meta-reality asks of critical realism (and here paraphrased), "Under what conditions are transcendental acts possible?" Fundamental to these conditions, one might assume is the quality of alterity, the real otherness of reality. It is this alterity and contradistinction of the self in relation to totality that the naturalistic beginnings of thought about power relations have been earlier proposed, in the initial development of moral consciousness and hence spirituality. Such conception would be totally consistent with dialectical critical realism. However it is here that Bhaskar reverses some of the many categories and principles of dialectical critical realism claiming that to speak about non-duality, dialectical positions must be necessarily abandoned and transcended. Although Bhaskar doesn't say this in so many words it is evident that the "philosopher" though not left behind, is subsumed into the concerns of the "guru". Hence much of his "reflection" rehearses a set of values and philosophical principles which are appropriate to a discourse on *non-duality*, there-in contradicting some positions held by critical realism in its context of dualism and dialectic (2002a:185-230). One can imagine the (lack of) reception these about-turns received amongst critical realist philosophers.

The new philosophy is not a total abandonment of critical realist principles (Bhaskar 2002a:8):

Meta-Reality is a new philosophical position. It accepts but goes beyond critical realism, insofar as it pinpoints the reality of the 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 Meta-Reality is to realize the limitations of the world of duality.

However some principles of critical realism stay whilst others are turned:

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 men have 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.

These ‘turned’ principles are the ones so hard fought for and re-vindicated in previous argument against irrealism, particularly the principles of non-identity and alterity. In critical realism these share an innate intransigence against purely anthro-centric appreciations and subjectivism and as far as the new philosophy shares and appreciates critical realism, these principles are acceptable for their place in critical realism and in the dialectic of a philosophy in the context of duality.

If we are to sum-up the central characteristic of critical realism it is an analysis, critique and explanation of a wide and deep historical field of category mistakes and ambiguities which have seduced us into philosophical and social pathology (Bhaskar 2002c:xv) “deep fundamental errors constitutive of our misunderstanding of being ... Thus we mis-identify our-selves as egos; we mis-identify consciousness as mind etc.”.

In the philosophy of meta-reality (2002c) however the alterities of interest which “turn” are the two concepts of *non-duality* and *transcendence*. In non-duality there can be no duality of dialectic, no alterity nor existential intransigence: dialectical thought in consciousness is transcended or abandoned and for Bhaskar this fact suggests that otherness of being becomes a *co-presence* of the other, in us.

The justification furthered in the axiology of argument holds that alterity and non-identity have to be transcended if re-enchantment is to be possible and non-duality of ground-state is envisioned. Establishing his argument for “intention”, “enchantment” and “non-duality” by rational and reality-centred transcendental movement, Bhaskar is afforded the opportunity to describe the basic four moments of critical realism (1M – 4D) as moments of “will”, “thought”, “love” and “spontaneity/creativity” respectively. These qualities then act as causal reasons in transcendental acts in the world, and result in (all things being equal) *unitivity*. It should be noted here that unlike Wilber (2000), Bhaskar sees unitivity founded on non-duality as an awakening to the “suchness” of the reality he has spent forty or so years vindicating. It is both a ground-state and end-state and everything (stratified) in between, in which anything can happen. It is not (as Jacobs 2009:83) claims of Wilber a reductive

teleology, but a dynamic axiology of freedom. Bhaskar (2002c:179) comments: “Thus, on the new position of the philosophy of Meta-Reality ... shows the scientist to be nothing other than a (practical) mystic; and shows the mystic to be of necessity engaged in the most this-worldly concerns”. I do not think Karl Rahner (1967:39-48) ever dreamt of vindication from analytic (perhaps post-analytic?) philosophy! However the world of duality has a specific effect (Bhaskar 2002a:10-11):

In our world it is duality, and its characteristic forms of reasoning and behavior, instrumentalist, mediated, conditional, heteronymous, forced, attached, analytical (in the worst sense of dividing and breaking up), which rules. The possibility of human emancipation depends upon expanding the zone of non-duality within our lives; and in the first instance upon the shedding of our own heteronomy, so that we become in a way non-dual beings in world of duality.

4.1.2 The argument for non-dual ground states and the cosmic envelope

Basically, Bhaskar’s argument (here paraphrased) runs thus: If we believe ontology to be dynamic and stratified it is conceptually possible to speak of a “ground-state” of pure potential and from which the many other layers of ontology (being and consciousness) emerge into variable and contradictory (sometimes dialectical) phenomena in a species and therefore generally. Such a ground state we must then conceptualise as “non-dual: “the non-dual sustains the world of duality” (Bhaskar 2002c:ix). Furthermore to exist in a species the ground state must presuppose a general non-dual ground state of all species and categorical ontologies, beyond and deeper than that of the species and the emergence of their “concrete singularities”. Here envisioned is a ground state of all that exists regardless of such species-beings coming into actuality and thereafter, experience. To describe this ground state of all Bhaskar chooses the term “cosmic envelope”: The non-dual level that connects all reality and in some way circumscribes creation (Bhaskar 2002a:12, 2002c:ix) as “a basis or ground, a mode of constitution and a fine structure ... (or interior)”.

Bhaskar is quick to point out that individualised boundaries do not exist at this plane of potential (perhaps by way of thread entanglement? Or enfoldment (Bhaskar 2012:xxv) and that this ground is not God (“the ultimata” not The Ultimatum (Bhaskar 2002c:xii)). However Bhaskar is neither for nor against theistic distinctions of the type putting God “into” or “out-of” creation. For the theist the Divine realm is supra-transcendental lying behind and beyond the connectivity of the cosmic envelope, but is not ever forbidden from it. So it would seem

that the theologically termed “incarnational reality” of the Second Person of the Trinity, must still cross the boundary of creation into the cosmic envelope before the divine can become human. Bhaskar (2012:29,125,150-164) claims that philosophy of meta-reality exceeds but can accommodate non-reductive discourses on God. The particularly Christian interest above remains theologically intact although Bhaskar’s interest lies in a philosophical reflection of this world of ontological reality, the human dimension of practicality that even the Christian must traverse.

4.1.3 The turn from non-identity to identity.

The first step of critical realism rested on a distancing from epistemic fallacy, a separation of and liberation of being from knowing. This non-identity principle then served in a generalised emancipation or dis-identification from all the category mistakes and fallacies Bhaskar has thus described and which have damaged our notion of being. The work of critical realism up until the dialectical stage is therefore a work of critique and analysis (separating concepts) of dualism from within the context (history) of dualistic knowledge. The analysis of dialectic has then developed the unavoidable conceptualisation of “non-duality” and “transcendence” thus necessitating a greater synthesis (connecting concepts) of critique. The synthetic instinct or aspect in philosophy as a dialectical partner and fulfilment of analysis is expressed here in the addition of non-duality, requires a conceptual reversal of the duality-bound necessity of *non-identity* in critical realism. Perhaps it may be said that having separated ourselves from the mistakes and mis-identities of orthodox philosophy (through critical realism) we need to re-identify ourselves with a more liberated *identity principle* presented in the philosophy of meta-reality. (Does Bhaskar here join other Spirituality writers to imply that spiritual awareness is perhaps contextualised by reversal? If so does this conceptualisation give ontological depth to a process in life and which is therefore a more adequate conceptualisation of Plato’s diremption?) Likewise, transcendence requires a mindful identity “with”, “into” and “beyond”. Bhaskar (2002c:xiv) has it thus:

...it is pretty difficult to get a coherent account of knowledge, unless involving in some way the identity of the knower, known and even the process of knowing. Moreover, identity can hold between any two terms, and it is indeed difficult to see how ultimately any two things in the world could be related in some way unless in some mode or point they are interconnected, and in that moment of interconnection, they are identified ... otherwise there would be no

grounds for declaring the non-identical elements distinct.

Bhaskar (2002c:xiv) makes an important distinction:

...this philosophy of identity has nothing in common with philosophies of identity where identity is modeled on punctiform, atomistic point, or on the other hand an abstract blanket whole. This is rich holistic, differentiated and developing identity.

Therefore central philosophical principles like “categorical realism”, “stratification” and “alethic-being” no longer connote the necessity of “alterity” as they did for critical realism. Having distanced ourselves from our mis-identity with the mystifications of conceptual and social life by a critique of consciousness, we are ready to engage the real “enchantment of being”.

Bhaskar (2002c:xvii-xviii) notes three mechanisms “in virtue of which relationships of identity occur: The first consists in relations of *transcendental identification* or being one with our attention to some-one or a task. The second is *reciprocity* involved in relationships between beings who come into causal or other connection with each other. At the moment of connection there is a level of reciprocity, which is actually definitive or constitutive of their being that connection...” In the footnote Bhaskar adds:

This thus presupposes a moment of identification, the basis of which lies in co-presence, that is, the capacity to be one with another lies in the fact that the being or qualities of the other are implicit or enfolded, and in this way already, co-present in the other ... the claim of the philosophy of meta-Reality is that all other beings are enfolded within myself, or at least the alethic truth of all other beings, such as the molecular structure of a crystal or the nature of gravity or what it is like to be a dragon.

Of *alethia*, Bhaskar (2001c:xxiv) claims: “ ... just as meta-physics signifies the ground and truth and first reality (the ground level reality, so to speak) of physics or nature, meta-Reality signifies the ground, truth in the sense of alethia and first reality of being ... So this could be said to be a philosophy of truth ... Hence the ‘meta’: it is the ground and truth of reality”.

Consequently (Bhaskar 2002c:xviii):

Co-presence is important not only because it is the ultimate ontological basis of our possibilities of transcendental identification and the laws of reciprocity, including karma, but also because it explains why ... we subjectively feel and experience a commitment to the project of universal self realization, that is the fulfilment and flourishing of all beings in the universe. Because they are also a part of my positive incompleteness.

4.1.4 Co-presence

These ground-state qualities are *sui generis* moments in the ground state of interconnection of all in which Bhaskar (2012:165-182) claims we are *co-present* in each other, there being no contra-distinctions to be made in an “intransitive dimension” of non-duality and without which fact we cannot be “pre-interpreted” nor carry with us our “history” nor act “reciprocally” (Bhaskar 2002a:12-13):

It is an understanding of co-presence which allows us to make sense of the enfolding and unfolding of possibilities within being, including possibilities of human beings learning things and performing acts which they never dreamt about, or identifying (transcendentally) with beings and at a level they never knew or thought existed ... More generally, the phenomena of co-presence explains what happens when we have unfulfilled or split intentionality, we carry the desire, in the form of an attachment, within us ... Unfulfilled and split intentionality describe two forms in which human beings contain elements of heteronomy which block or check their freedom, when we contain nothing inconsistent with our ground states, [and] have eliminated negative incompleteness [the result of our intentionality], we may be said to be ‘enlightened’ or ‘realized’... But such a being, situated on the cusp of the cosmic envelope, will immediately be orientated to the elimination of negative incompleteness which is not the product of his intentionality but the product of the intentionality of others – for he has no ego, or sense of separateness, which allows him to privilege his own lack of suffering and freedom over the suffering and unfreedom of others.

However Bhaskar is as aware as is Gelman (2008) that ground state is notoriously unavailable to language - it seems to possess itself with a *sui generis apophysis* in the sense of its observer status. It possesses a dialectical unavailability: it refuses to identify itself but

by its heteronymous targets which it seeks to absent and dissolve in a way removed from discursive analysis. Ground-states operate at a level of total openness by way of which lack of self-statement it protects and whose mystery makes scientific progress possible.

4.1.5 Non-duality and transcendence

Bhaskar (2002c:ix-xi) claims there are “three ways in which non-duality sustains the realm of duality”: 1. As a ground state the connectivity of all ground states and the “ultimate ingredient in all other states of being, activity and consciousness”; 2. In the sense that “certain features of transcendence are essential to the constitution and reproduction of everyday life”; (a) *relatively*, in the sense that “one situation can surpass and resolve the problems in a pre-existing situation”; (b) *absolutely* as “non-duality or unity in or with a total context”; (c) “Between the relative and absolute sense we have the phenomenon of *emergence* out of the blue” and (3) as constituent or “deep interior of any moment or aspect of being or consciousness [revealing] qualities of bliss, emptiness, suchness, rich identity, or pure unbounded energised love ... continuous with the ground state qualities of creation ... its ontologically ultimate interior”

He adds:

The four principle forms of transcendence ... [1] transcendence away from objective totality into its own subjectivity; [2] its transcendence from its subjectivity totally into some objectivity ... *transcendental identification in consciousness*; [3] its total absorption in agency ... *transcendental agency*; and [4] its total unity in action with other agents ... [as], transcendental holism or teamwork.

Bhaskar also notes the importance of three other concepts: (1) “*transcendental* or real self” ; (2) two inflections of *transcendental consciousness*; (a) “consciousness of or at our ground state” and (b) consciousness in “transcendental identification or unity”; (3) “*transcendental ingredience* [as] only one factor ... in the whole complex [of] other states which may be regarded as emergent from it”. At the outset it is understood that Bhaskar’s presentation of transcendence is *any* ordinary transgression of the boundary between duality of life, and non-dual states. It is indeed a two-way street, (Bhaskar 2002a:10) “indispensible features of all human being, social life and indeed necessary condition for any human act at all”. Bhaskar’s analysis of *non-duality* and *transcendence* is therefore far in excess of the realms of Western

traditional mystical writing, yet I think a profound insight into the human/spiritual/transcending state of affairs within a *naturalistic* and *anthropological* conception, philosophically derived. It is no more a “secularisation” than *any* emergence/incarnation of *alethic being*. Knowing full well the human dimension implicit in the theological framework yet unfamiliar with contemporary developments within the sub disciplines of theology, I can merely beg the question that parts if not all such analysis must be implied or reconceived in those disciplines and the philosophy of religion.

Set against this conception of reality’s “ground state of non-duality” Bhaskar builds his theory of transcendence. Explaining then, the newness of Bhaskar’s philosophy of meta-reality one appreciates that the critique of consciousness is foundational. Bhaskar does not approach Western theology explicitly, rather in line with what I discern as an ironic intention and the limits of Christian theology, the epistemology of which he (Bhaskar [2002b] 2012) expounds. Generally Bhaskar borrows his terminology from the East which is his chosen representative of the marginalised spiritual emancipation of humanity. Bhaskar seeks to express (philosophically) the fundamental spiritual truth which lies behind or at the base of reality and which therefore accounts (as a condition) for reality as split, dualistic, dichotomous, ailing and sometimes “downright sinful”, in my opinion³⁴.

If positivistic representation of reality lacks a clear exposition of absences (but which it must necessarily presuppose) dialectically speaking, *alethia* in intrinsic self-evident truth and the irrefutable ground of being (“at ground-level of being”) must pre-suppose *non-duality*. Thereafter and upon which non-duality; a “practical mysticism” that transcends and grounds the realm of the spiritual/religious categories can be negotiated in Bhaskar’s words “from East to West” and later “beyond East and West”. Clearly the axiology is trans-traditional and the preoccupation is the agentive process towards non-duality namely, transcendence.

4.1.5.1 Christian non-duality?

Let me state at the outset of my comments here that I am not a theologian and I cannot comment in more than general terms from a philosophical stand-point sympathetic to concerns of spirituality. However any reasonably read person will be aware that in the Hindu,

³⁴As further indication of Aristotelian tradition’s mark in critical realism here, one is immediately reminded of Aquinas’ conception of evil as ‘privation’ of good.

Buddhist and Taoist traditions the concept of non-duality is a fairly well developed traditional experience or value. This is however not overtly so the case in the West where theological explanations tend to speak in terms that are either neo-Platonic or similarly dichotomised terms couched in a form of dialectical relationship with God in Jesus. However in Christian conceptualisation, non-duality is neither forbidden nor explicitly valued. This fact alone means that a theology of God outside of anthropomorphic categories acting as media, for instance, and not at the totalized mystery as “the beginning and end of all things”, often means for we Westerners that identifying with a god here, we experience a diremption of the present - we have no *now*: a diremption of the *middle* space between past and future.

The space of the *present* has always been “up for grabs” amongst ideological competitors. After all it is *the* space *par excellence*, that “be-ing” is the only rational thing to do. The history of mysticism would suggest that this authentic (ontological) space or ground state, transcending dichotomy and analysis is a very “valued” (sometimes value-laden) experience with a number of benefits. It is also a place of extreme liberty from the tyranny of history and concomitant indwelling of the past. As such it experiences an open future.

For hegemonies it has been important to “own” the interior landscape of consciousness by owning its appropriated social double - the “ego” or the self-expectant socialised self. The insight being that, give a person an ego and the interests of the inner free world, is split. In the East and certain monasteries of the West people are encouraged in the meditative practice of the “now”, but essentially it is not what hegemonies want to encourage too much. In Christian-Western milieu generally mystics who have said too much of their experience have run into trouble with the censor’s (De Melo, Merton, de Chardin, Chenu, Avila, Eckhart, to name a few). There is something dangerous and unpredictable about mystical non-duality begging as it does, the absence of God.

Owning the experience of the inner world requires a theory of anthropology and in the West I suspect the “guts” have been torn from the experience of authentic being. We do not practice the *present* but the *presence* of God, in whom alone is our real-self hidden. Christianity certainly approaches non-duality through a relocation of the self into God who is of another place and time (“on High”, (Heelas 2012:11)) yet whose Presence and Incarnation must be enacted “as” the present. As a result the protestant quiet time is theologically branded with expectations to be “doing” something. Christianity is a story of an alienated and reified human middle: Christ is cure alone. However this time-necessary duality in Western

conception of God suggests a non-dual reality below the surface of philosophically embedded Christian discourse.

In the diachronic development of biblical thinking there is no access to an analysis of God apart from the human categories of relationship and alterities deployed in the emergence of Revelation. Perhaps one might say that in the process of scripture making, especially that of Old Testament writing that God *emerges* but generally what is meant is a description of a conceptual emergence in theology, a purely epistemological exercise but described as and encased in the human experience of love. Consequently non-duality in theology (strictly speaking) is subject to the same conceptual squeeze evident in Bhaskar's description of "de-agentification" in philosophical tradition and put into *another time* and *another place* beyond the bounds of proto-theology or a speculative Creation/Eschatological theology, one suspects.

Having said this however none of the above precludes the synchronic experience of non-duality described in the literature of Christian mysticism. It is in mystical writing that one does encounter vocabulary of non-dual or "unitive" states. To mention a few traditional interpretations unitive states have been thomistically conceptualised as "infused contemplation" "practice of the presence of God" (Bother Lawrence) or "divine union" (plethora) often characterised in terms of spiritualised eroticism (the 'Songs' of Solomon and the love poetry of Egyptian royalty?) all of which are understood as a mystical grace. This brief excursion is not intended to overlook the many other descriptions to be found in the tradition or their diachronically transformative *telos* towards the mind of Christ, or union with God and the ultimate value of theological virtue, it espouses. Consequently we can justifiably claim that unitive experiences as types of non-duality and found in Christian mystical tradition are in some way prototypical or exemplary, synchronic moments, theologically extrapolated and diachronically represented in: (a) ecclesiological descriptions of the "mystical body", (b) creational "fact/act", (c) sacramental life and so on. Rahner's famous claim for the ubiquity of mysticism in Christian life of the "future", I suspect very much rides on these understandings. Of immediate interest then is the presupposition that the relational aspect of Christian existence has on human ability to access unitivity and non-duality. I am aware that some authors in former texts on mystical theology keen to avoid accusations of pan-entheism preferred to distinguish between states of union and non-duality. Their distinction often has rested on the primacy of love restricted to the human-divine (*theotic*?) axiology.

So even here the Western dichotomy of mind reconceptualised in theological, divine-human relational matrix provides context. For some sceptical of the possible theological overreach or/and despite the reality of divine-human relationship or even our relations with such claimed relationship by others at some level, is indicative of an ego-illusory, demi-reality resting on a primal split of consciousness so ailing our philosophy and our world: a false separation of self within self and self from others and the open field of creation. I have no need to raise the ire of the theologically inclined however I think we can agree that within the academic realms of Spirituality there is great appreciation of the point that theology has been burdened with dichotomy. In the critique of religious consciousness which is deployed here and mostly in the next chapter much of the argument seeks to demonstrate the harmful consequences of dichotomy and its layered existence in Christian thought. The very same dichotomy Bhaskar recognises as a profound philosophical fault, clearly discerned by many in theological inheritance. Furthermore it would then be correct to say that insofar as the mystical tradition values unitive experience, transcendental Christian experience is a special and limited case (or description) of transcendence into non-duality.

4.1.6 Confluence?

Where I think spirituality, mysticism and Bhaskar's philosophy are essentially confluent is in the elucidation of "intentional aspect" of human life (Bhaskar 2002a:36) denoting a surge to the common ground of reality, in secular spirituality: a transcendence not up-and-away but material and grounded within the stratifications of "telluric" and "alethic" existence, part of the same reality that critical realism has described from its inception (Bhaskar 2002a:175). Perhaps providing a worthy contemplation or *anthropological* therapeutic for so-called "incarnational" theology? Certainly within the common ground of discourse here "an emergence out of nothing or a kind of engulfment by something awesomely different" (Bhaskar 2002b:xii) are well documented limited understanding of transcendence.

4.1.7 Bhaskar's system: summary of the diachronic development of critical realism represented as a synchronic system – further development

Bhaskar (2002a:178-179) says of his project:

To summarise, transcendental realism breaks the taboo on a rational discourse about *being*; critical naturalism on a rational discourse (and therefore possibility of sublation) of duality, *contradiction* and split; the theory of explanatory

critique breaks the taboo of a rational discourse about *values*; dialectical critical realism of a rational discourse about negativity, dialectic, process and *change*; and finally, transcendental dialectical critical realism of a rational discourse about *transcendence* and the transcendent ... thus critical realism is a process of development in thought which builds ever more complete and rounded totalities, continually self-critical in a process of self-transcendence without any conceivable or a priori positable end.

Thus Bhaskar's (2002a:181-188) system is expanded from transcendental dialectical critical realism ("TDCR" here) to the philosophy of meta-reality ("PMR"):

1. Ontology incorporates "the idea of alethic truth, including conceptions of an essential ultimate ingredient of the cosmos as a whole (thematized in conventional theology as God)" at TDCR level, expanded to PMR understanding of "ground-state and cosmic envelope and then as the ground of the ground-state and that envelope"³⁵ which exhibits "the moment of *will*".
2. Negativity as back-drop to the transcending process towards a greater totality "in any dialectical process" in TDCR and "and transformative processes" in PMR: "the moment of *thought*". I would add for our purposes, the practice of seeking the presence of God in discernment set against a panoply of apophatic absences including theological ones³⁶.
3. Totality is described as "the idea of love as an essential binding, healing and totalizing force in the humanised world, and indeed possibly in nature generally"(TDCR) and (PMR): "the moment of *emotion*".
4. Transformative praxis is "spontaneous right action and cosmic consciousness or enlightenment, as the realization of the goal of absolute reason, that is the unity of theory and practice, the norm of reflexivity, which we have seen drives the dialectic of philosophical enquiry" (TDCR) and "self-realisation and ultimately

³⁵Cf. also McGinn, (2001) *The Mystical Thought of Meister Eckhart*, especially the movement between the ground of being and the universal ground for which description, Eckhart invented terminology.

³⁶Cf. Sells (1994) for nuances of the apophatic panoply.

universal self-realisation”: “the moment of *making*” ... We might add again the mature stage of discernment as pre-empting the mystical state of “union” (Bhaskar gets there in stage seven).

If dialectical critical realism focuses on dialectic through a theory of absence, the philosophy of meta-reality has derived and then analyses 5A: “the moment of *intentionality*”, thus broadening and deepening the conceptual axiology of critical realism, demonstrated above. From there on Bhaskar again works dialectically, saying that thinking in terms of intentionality implies a sixth realm of *re-enchantment*: (Bhaskar 2002a:183-184) “... re-enchantment can help to roll back disenchantment and enables the space of the re-enchanted world, that is the world which was always enchanted, to develop and grow, the effects of disenchantment to be reversed or undone, and indeed enchantment to take on the aspect of a new form”. The seven dimensions of being (“the ontological - axiological chain”) are completed (but never final) in 7A (“seventh awakening”) which stands for non-duality/unitivity.

So in the philosophy of meta-reality proceeding from the dialectical movement from non-identity through absence, to totality presupposes transformative agency and is expanded along a dimension of transcendence. Transcendent acts bring us into our ground-state which is necessarily engaged when we let go of our (“egoic”) selves to join up with tasks, goals, people, discourses beyond personal interest alone. The simple fact that we do and can pay enwrapped attention to another object, instruction or person in the operations of our everyday life (reading a presentation of Bhaskar, for instance), Bhaskar (2002c:167-171) demonstrates the alethic reality of transcendence at the ground of everyday existence. The reality of ground-state and the unavoidable necessity of acting transcendently are conditions without which the actions of everyday life would not be possible. Consequently all acts of an alethic nature and where values might be “causes”, emerge agentively from the ground-state of being. Consequently all positive intentions (Bhaskar 2002c:91-166,172-232,313-364) like “creativity”, “love” and “freedom” are consistent with “ground-state” and are its everyday mundane occurrences in the world of duality. This is so even when that world of duality might evince acts of destruction, hate, and hegemony. The blatantly obvious presence of negative intentions and emotions rests upon the necessary existence of their positive counterparts in the ground state.

4.1.7.1 Love

Perhaps Bhaskar's treatment on "love" (Bhaskar: 2002c:xxxiii,172-232, cf. Bhaskar 2012: 235, 339-362) is most telling. "There are probably five theorems which are worth anticipating here":

1. Negative emotions, such as fear and pride, depend entirely on the absence or incompleteness (e.g. conditionality) of love;
2. Nevertheless such emotions exist only in virtue of, are sustained by and derive their energy from the ground state quality of love;
3. Such emotions disappear when there is only love;
4. Negative emotions, the whole nexus from desire and greed through jealousy, anger, fear, etc. are all systematically related to each other; to the social structure and to categorical errors (philosophical mistakes) which are constitutive of the reality of the dual realm and are ways of thinking, interpreting and living it;
5. Emotions such as love are not themselves actions. Emotions are motives, feelings, the grounds for action, rather than action itself. They belong to the realm of the non-actual real. Two things of great importance follow from this: the first thing is that you cannot identify from an action alone ... what the emotion behind the action is. And secondly when you perform an action out of love or for that matter out of any emotion such as sadness, then in performance of the action, you must perform it so to speak, without 'wobbling' ... So to identify any of the stages in the morphogenesis of an action such as will, intentionality, thought or the creativity embedded in it, or emotion or the love which informs it with the ensuing action is not just to make a category mistake, it is to make a practical error.

4.1.7.2 Re-enchantment and consciousness

It appears to me that there is no loving where enchantment is missing, a matter of perception perhaps. Bhaskar writes (2002c:xxxvii), "To understand perception, as immediately non-dual identification of the world, as meaningful, valuable etc. we need to critique the philosophy of modernity, which generated a thesis of dis-enchantment. So what does *re-enchantment* mean?" Bhaskar lists three major philosophical collapses: (1) Subject-object duality and the semiotic triangle,

... so that we have the immediate identity of being and meaning, reality becomes meaningful ... we have the displacement of meaning, signification onto reality itself so that things in the world mean things and are constituted semiotically and interpreted hermeneutically in a multiplicity of ways. The world becomes a meaningful text.

(2) The fact-value distinction, “Values are not subjective classifications of the mind, they are constitutive of reality itself, which becomes valuable, to be nourished, honoured and realized: or false, consisting of blocks on the realization of what is truly valuable in being” ; (3) the distinction between the sacred and profane, “everything is sacred, nothing is profane ... we can read the spiritual into the structures of everyday life ... And the standpoint of self-referentiality implies a thorough-going critique of heteronomy including the heteronomy imposed by leaders, people in institutions who manipulate power, be they religious, political, economic, or whatever”.

Lest we accuse Bhaskar of a materialist reduction, he has this to say (Bhaskar 2002c:xxxix):

The most important philosophical features which enable us to sustain a robust account of the re-enchanted realm and generate in its wake a critique of materialism, can be most easily seen by looking at four aspects of consciousness in form of mind (though the same analysis could be pursued in the case of the emotions):

Irreducibility

Causal efficacy, including... creativity

Spontaneity

Directness or immediacy

Bhaskar (2002c:xxxii-xxxix) understands “mind” as a constant emergence:

... that is we have to understand sui generis emergent powers and properties of mind as being real and capable of direct effects on other minds, and similarly in the case of emotions...consciousness is the transcendental quality ingredient in the first moment or aspect of daily life; and transcendental consciousness is ingredient, though rarely exhaustive of all consciousness.

In the first phase of the dialectic of learning Bhaskar (2002c:xxx-xxxi) examines the phenomena of alethic understanding, the moment of “getting it”.

The important point in this first moment ... is the moment of Platonic anamnesis, in which knowledge enfolded within the being is explicated in his consciousness, awakened, so to speak, by the pedagogical skill of the teacher or the ingenuity and endeavour of the student or both ... Actually it would probably be better to call the first moment just the moment in which it was already implicitly enfolded, then the second moment would be that in which the implicit or enfolded was made explicit or unfolded in consciousness, emerged into consciousness. In this moment ... what is learnt has to be written down or held consciously in one's mind because it is so easy for it to slip back into dormant or enfolded state. The third moment ... is that in which the student has to shape, play, toy with that new idea or skill until he becomes thoroughly familiar with all its properties.

4.1.7.3 Meta-reality and ontology

Bhaskar (2002c:xviii-xix) notes:

Critical realism is well known for being the systematic attempt to think being progressively, in greater depth, along five successive dimensions:

Being as such

Being as processual

Being as totality or a whole

Being as incorporating transformative agency and reflexivity (or unity of theory and practice)

Being as incorporating a spiritual dimension or aspect....

And the philosophy of meta-Reality [adds] two new strata or levels of understanding of being, namely:

Being as enchanted: and Being as non-dual.

As we should be aware, “being as non-dual” signifies Bhaskar's seventh dimension of being, represented as “awakening”:

... to call it an awakening does indicate a certain difference, that at this level ultimately we are not thinking being (indeed it could be said that in a sense we are not thinking at all), but rather **being being**, a being of being, or rather, a **becoming of our being**, the becoming or realization of ourselves, self-realization. It is this which is necessary to unify theory and practice in practice and satisfy the criterion for reflexivity in philosophy ... really what is required to bring out or complete our understanding of the fifth aspect [spirituality], which must lead to notions of enlightenment or self-realisation and emancipation, leading ultimately to universal self-realisation.

4.1.8 Practicing humanly

It follows syllogistically that in order to be a positive person, with positive effect we should be intentionally engaging our ground state as often as possible and we should seek to live from that centre or ground, the beginning lessons of both emotional intelligence theory and positive psychology. Contemplative engagement with ground state in prayer, meditation and other spiritual exercises, especially examinations of consciousness is thus justified as a personal responsibility, for the free flourishing of ourselves and others. This argument for transcendence, ground-state and spirituality, is borne out of a generalised theory of ubiquitous potential and possibility in every human being. Bhaskar (2002c:14) suggests:

...another feature of Meta-Reality: ... is the commitment of the enlightened being, and proleptically of all beings who access their ground states (which we must all do to an extent) ... In fact some such commitment is a basic feature of all universalizing systems of ethics, and is a tacit presupposition of the emancipatory project as such.

4.1.9 Bhaskar comments on meta-reality

Bhaskar (2002c:xx-xxviii) has this to say:

... the non-duality of being is essential to understanding of all the previous six-levels of being, as their basis or ground ... Furthermore the understanding of being as re-enchanted, contrary to the thrust and explicit claims of modernity ... essential for the understanding of the most basic engagement with the world, in perception, in action and intra-action and communication with our fellow human beings ... One could say that if 6R designated not only the realm of the

(as conventionally understood) para-normal or supernatural (itself a category mistake), it also designates the typical domain of religion, whereas 7A designates that of spirituality. One of the claims of the philosophy of meta-Reality is that not only are the two not the same, but that one can be spiritual without a religious practice, just as one can observe religious rituals without being spiritual ... Possibly the most striking claim that can be made for the content of the theory developed in the philosophy of meta-Reality is ... that whatever objective you set yourself in life will eventually lead you to a path of self realization ... That is to say that you will be inevitably committed to the goal of universal self realization; and *that commitment* is implicit in whatever desire, objective or wish ... The minimum necessary unit for emancipation is the whole human race ... So we disinvest in our identifications with our egos, our minds, our attachments and aversions and the social forms which they produce and reproduce and together with characteristic modes of relating to each other and nature. Then of course all this has a biological basis in our specificity as human animals, in principle subject to even biological evolution.

Chapter Five: Final argument and conclusion - joining-up critique and knowledge: making the implicit critique of religion explicit

5.1 The role of critique

This dissertation has insisted from the introductory phase, that liberating spirituality in ourselves requires a critique of consciousness because without it no transformation is possible. Especially in the critical-philosophical-anthropological approach to secular spirituality this critique is seen to be universalised and extended to the range of human existence within the social cube. In the recent literature and this dissertation one has witnessed a critique of consciousness which is decidedly postmodern in character. We are now able to say of secular spirituality, regardless of the problems associated with the appellation “secular”, that it is characteristically postmodern (du Toit & Mayson 2006:i-xvii; du Toit 2006:59; Kourie 2006:77-78; Prozesky 2006:128). Not only is the critique justified (Botha 2006:99) but Agnivesh (2006:191) citing Berger (1979) encourages its “heretical imperative”. Typically the critique is deployed against a number of societal, religious and epistemological relations. Targeted concerns included in the epistemological level are how to account for; (1) ontology, epistemology and rational or moral judgement (Botha 2006:99-101; Prozesky 2006:127), (2) theory-practice unity (Prozesky 2006:132) in order to bridge the gulf between “religious knowledge and social action” (Agnivesh 2006:193), (3) reductionism (Kourie 2009:166-167; De Villiers 2006:102), (4) dualism and dichotomy (Bailey 2001:1-3,26-27; Botha 2006:55-101). Du Toit (2006:67) points out the role of religious absolutism in bolstering dichotomy:

The problem with relativising natural theology by invoking absolutes of faith, revelation, divine sovereignty or whatever is that it does not account for the relations between faith and rationality, nature and supernature, science and religion and, ultimately, church and world. Thus it leaves believers with a paradoxical world view.

The harmful effect is what Bhaskar would call a TINA formation or double-bind of which Agnivesh is able to claim (2006:193): “Conventional religiosity preaches love but denies it”. Critique of society on the other hand targets capitalism, hegemony and neo-Liberalism (Prozesky 2006:128; Mayson 2006:20; Botha 2006:98; Kourie 2006:89-90). The critique of

religion is a double critique in so far as religion has participated in the ills mentioned above. Botha (2006:104) claims:

In contemporary criticism, Aers and Beckwith (2003:211) remind us, “religion is apt to be seen as politics in another guise, and the task of political criticism will be to deliver the medieval and early modern text from its own illusions...

Prozesky (2006:129) claims religion is not “ethically effective”. Agnivesh (2006:135-204) says that religion is a “domain of power” filled with “ritualistic pollution” and that religion as hegemony is a contrary movement to libertarian spirituality and the author recommends that religion needs to become “rational and accountable”. Furthermore Agnivesh suggests what needs to change is the idea of the parochial and personal “ownership” of God, adoption of an ecumenical attitude of “inclusion” and an “incarnated” spirituality, “radicalized” sense of worship, revision of “self and other’s image” (Dutton 2011:155-170) and a shift from “professing and confessing to practice”. Agnivesh diagnoses the following problems in religious ideation: Ritualistic pollution, fatalism, doctrines of sin, punishment and reward after death, relative isolation of religious communities and an emphasis on personal salvation. Agnivesh claims that what we desire is a “shift from surface to depth”, “listening”, and for religions to become “movements not monuments”.

One needs to mention here that none of these critiques is foreign to Bhaskar and that therefore we would be severely impoverished if we were to undervalue his contribution to the secular spirituality debate. Bhaskar would counter any irrationalism or the heuristic manoeuvring required to clear the epistemic problems that Bhaskar, Kourie (2006:88-90) and Botha (2006:102-104) seek to address and for which this dissertation has presented critical realism, as cure. To rehearse these problems or absences in summary we need to mention accounts of ontology (Botha 2006:105; Kourie 2006:78-80), epistemic fallacies and false dichotomies, the fact-value taboo, theory to praxis dynamic which Bhaskar has, to some extent re-theorised. The reason for their importance is in delivering a workable trans-factual or “trans-traditional” (Kourie, 2006:75) theory of transformation which this dissertation suggests is a necessary component in any definition of spirituality and supported in this belief by Heelas (2012:6,10-11,16-20) Botha (2006:102), Prozesky (2006:134) Agnivesh (2006:193) and without which I suggest du Toit (2006:63) could not believe that secular spirituality is a model for “post-secular” or postmodern natural theology nor Kourie (2006:77) discern Tillich’s “loss of depth” nor credence given to Agnivesh’s appeal (2006:203) in this regard.

5.2 Fleshing out the critique: the battle for anthropology

What is attempted in this section is to broaden and deepen the critical aspect of the dissertation. Bhaskar would have us believe that human ability to participate in the intentional enhancement of reflexivity and to examine consciousness self-consciously, are suspended in our further ability to seek ground states and engage the non-dual *alethia* of being. We are able to discern this factor when responding to crisis and which reveals that transcendence is a necessary human act, not a special sign of holiness. Transcendence is what makes spirituality a dimension of not just our experience, but our *being*. Bhaskar's theory of Spirituality is established on a theory of being possessed of a thirst for truth and consistency, rewarded by trust in the transcendent experience of non-dual *alethic* truth, which is so common as to often evade consciousness itself. Needless to say his theory or philosophy of meta-reality is deeply anthropological and continuous with the thoughts of numerous authors above.

On the other hand from the religious tradition I am most familiar, Christian anthropology is exactly that: a Christian extrapolation of anthropology whose elegant history (at least in non-fundamentalist thought) is based on various interpretations of Thomistic metaphysics and has been associated with several outstanding thinkers: Etienne Gilson, Bernard Lonergan, Jacques Maritain and Karl Rahner, to name a few in the catholic tradition. "Natural religion" or "natural theology", have shared consistent interest in the *natural* religiosity of human beings. In my opinion none of these, nor their more proximate intellectual counterparts could or would disagree with Bailey's (2001:31) suggestion from intra-religious perspective, that Christian religiosity is "baptised" secular religion: the former pagan religiosity being overlaid with Christian observance and partially deleted from time and place. In the catholic tradition this is widely accepted. As is the fact that Christianity might be a repackaging of proto-religion with: theological explanation of hermeneutically traceable and contextualised biblical development, re-invention and editorship. Included is a history of praxis to faith dynamic and elisions in tradition and doctrine and adoption of pre-existent holidays and rites of Pagan and Jewish origin, all replete with reified conceptualisation of the Divine and a dirempted mythology (humanity's "fallen-ness"). The history of explanation it seems to have progressively dichotomised levels of being, as Platonically couched explanation took hold.

However remarkably unlike market-place "brands", the recurrent repackaging of religion, often through a process of decline and fall (Mayson 2006:8), has been a long and slow process but nevertheless held by Christians to be, an "evangelical" and intentional affair

mostly on the part of God. It may be argued that religious traditions exhibit relative endurance in history and society partly by owning the word (literacy) and the tools to produce the word. The role of religion in cultural evolution makes spirituality and religion one of the most well documented and edited epistemological traditions of being human. Anthropological readings, though much edited and mediated are *implicit*. It seems religion has evolved within the community and of the community to re-define that community in fundamental terms of diremption from happiness and dichotomy of being, and yet belonging to that same community is presented as cure for our ills. Consequently one may rightly assume there comes a point of historical maturity when that community can no longer understand itself without the ideational history of its own creation. People come to feel Christian, Muslim *et cetera*. Whether we do so consistently (Heelas 2012) is not so important. These pronouns feature then as shifting chimera of commitments in an ontological identity and perceived existential reality. It is in the relative endurance of the community that internalisation happens and the community self-perpetuates practice and ideology.

There are signs of course that all religions exhibit this evolution and diachronic *emergence*, building on the religious cultures of the past even when such development is explicitly claimed as interruptive of the previous. History also teaches that religions have excelled in the hegemonic coercion of conversions, ubiquitously responsible for murder and mayhem.

However Botha (2006:98) is quick to remind us that the re-packaging of religion continues:

‘Religion’ has been re-packaged and commodified for consumption through the idea of ‘spirituality’ and business has adopted the positive gloss of ‘spirituality’ to support its corporate interests and working practice. The attempt to model social life in its totality upon the ideologies and practices of the market directs the search for meaning and value towards the rather limited perspective of their instrumental and monetary value.

The caveat is worth taking seriously, spirituality may well be again a place of war and ownership for interests that are not truly liberating.

5.3 Values and hegemony

It might not be naïve to pose a simple bottom-up stratified ontological model of *mysticism* as asymmetrically related non-dual ground of *spirituality*, dualistically held in all limited *religion* and diversified into particular geo-historical and regional *religions*. Each term

categorically unlike the next, as Bhaskar has done for scientific realms of reality. However as Bhaskar claims, such description is only possible from the higher order of intellection which is implicitly woven into the social cube relations, of time and place. Simplifying the model as above is not however consistent with the etymological origin of terms (McGinn 2001: ix-xx): Historically, *religion* precedes *mysticism* which then preceded *spirituality* in our lexicon. The historical line of development adds an etymological justification for some epistemological approaches which describe anthropological realities purely through a linear development of religion, which masks the ontological priority of mysticism in the development of spirituality and religion. This is perhaps the anthropological and philosophical insight which drives Troeltsch's understanding (cf. McGinn 2001:266-290) of mysticism as religious *a priori* and also Harnack's phylogenic conception of "mysticism to rationality", dynamic. Both of these theologians and philosophers of religion in some respects, conceive of a spiritual grounding and development within an ontological depth.

However, Troeltsch's exposition takes on a tri-dimensional analysis which seems to have become a trend for many sociological-historical explanations including Bailey (2001) and Waaijman (2002). Certainly this phenomenological triplicity is an artificial (epistemological) shape that has come into almost ubiquitous popularity in presentation of theory in the twentieth century. It seems that anyone who can describe spirituality at three levels has a "theory". Methodologically speaking the socialisation of forms are indeed superficial to the eye and require superior explanation and critique as we learn to accommodate deeper dimensions to be explored (Agnivesh 2006:203). Nevertheless, what this methodological concern demonstrates are the epistemological values which create hegemonic ideology (either social, religious or epistemological) then come to be the preferred explanation for natural and social events and accounts for a certain confessional preference for descriptions of forms, movements and taxonomies in the socio-historical approach, now dominant in the study of Spirituality, one may argue. The unintentional (?) consequences of an intentional agenda in the rise of some sociology are arguably three-fold: (1) ontology and anthropology become subject to "epistemic fallacy" *via* truth claims and (2) the relative endurance of the explanation sets up a surface "history" of interpretable "facts" and "acts" mimicking those same explananda in the "actualist fallacy": in which (3) the *intransitive ontological depth* of implicit spiritual reality, is occluded. Regardless of their scholarly excellence and supremacy, two authors (McGinn 1991; Waaijman 2002) have presumed in like fashion that the *Foundations of mysticism* and *Forms and foundations of spirituality*, respectively, are; (a)

religious, (b) theistic (c) Western and (d) Christian. It is noteworthy that McGinn (1991:xi-xx) is explicitly aware of these geo-historical limitations and mediations amidst the “richness of humanity’s spiritual heritage”.

In the development of the dissertation, as indeed was made explicit in the introductory section, Bhaskar’s conception of categorical realism is here deployed to critique certain historical, phenomenological and sociological representations of spirituality. This has required investigation of critical realism in the content. In the main therefore the character of presentation has been philosophical and methodological. However as development of the dissertation clearly shows the primary intention is bound-up with the concern for ideology and hegemony which encases epistemology and present argument. The argument itself over and above but not incidental to Bhaskar’s philosophy, is an explicitly critical anthropological approach to spirituality and Spirituality study. Its hoped-for intention is to re-vindicate the ontology and *concrete singular depth* of “implicit” spirituality in its dualistic diversity, away from traditional presentation and ascriptions which I believe have produced inadequate, dichotomous formalism and problematic heurism as structurally efficacious (fallacy preserving) contributory factors in the study of Spirituality. The critique then is general (participating in meta-critique) and not a specific critique of any one presentation or author at purely dialectical level of epistemology. The possibilities for the latter are then obvious. The limitation is self-imposed purely in the face of management concerns. Therefore the very noticeably targeted, implicit, footnote critique of Waaijman (2002) has necessarily encroached into the body of the dissertation. However it remains suggestive and incomplete. The subliminal critique redolent in the begging questions in the dissertation here, are perhaps then a somewhat unsatisfactorily attempt to set-up critical resonance.

5.4 Are religions brands?

To illustrate the point to be made here, it is probably easiest after reading Goatham to consider whether we can define religion as a brand of spirituality and faiths as brands of religion? Can a brand analysis of religion, similar to Lindstrom (2008) (although it remains superficial) proffer any enlightenment about the psychological dimensions of religious internalisation and the process to hegemony? There are sure to be interesting similarities and differences no doubt. However in so far as sacramental religious observance and religious rite mark the gradual cyclical “absence to presence” development and “presence to absence” demise of human life, we can assert that formal religious expression displaces former

historically traceable, anthropological rites of passage. In this way the individual and communal life cycle is “commodified” as “Christian”, for instance. It is not so much the point that sacramentals are commodified by Indulgences (Luther’s argument), but that sacramental life commodifies human being and living. Where sacramental life is ideologically inapplicable namely, the world of nature, that nature is marginalised, unrecognised and discarded to the status of religious irrelevance. Brands don’t commodify in this way it seems, although I wonder about monopolistic intentions exhibited by certain health and wellness brands (“owning sperm to worm”³⁷). However from the ownership of the “sacramented” life-cycle, it is a short step to owning our emotions. In the larger definition of brands having both, *commodity* and *emotion*, formal religion might be a brand.

Indeed in both religious and cultural terms the individual life is branded by the laying on of hands, oils and water. The natural need to mark our children with scarification, body paints, tattoos and circumcision (to name a few phenomena) is alternatively ritualised by religion and the natural sacredness of the occasion occluded. The threads are there for a brand (especially if brands are regional?) analysis of religion. Could similar studies on cults, brain-washing shed light on how it is that we surrender intellectual and moral power to a hegemonised ideology (whether those be scientific, cultural or religious), to such extent that we no longer exercise rational judgement.

I should imagine that all of these would proffer an opportunity for critique of the social consciousness. The very socialisation of our being mediates our reflexivity, our spirituality, and our implicit religion always in the past whose history we carry as pre-interpreted beings. However, Bhaskar’s point is that the reality of spirituality so “formed”, is not the complete picture nor its superficial phenomenological shell, the appropriate target for knowledge unless all we want to elucidate are those pasts, superficialities and shells in tiresome reproduction. The needful question from an authentically evaluative stance being, “how much transformative insight do these really proffer?” Agnivesh (2006:193) is convinced that “Spirituality ... is the change from what is to what might be, a change from the real [Bhaskars’ “actual”] to ideal [Bhaskar’s “real”]. Both Bailey and Bhaskar give good philosophical grounds to believe that religion hegemonises an ontologically implicit spirituality and that a blanket compliance with religion is not necessarily an equivalent of

37Overheard comment (2004): from an unknown speaker in the context of a hospital-management tour.

spiritual fulfilment or transformation. The dichotomy is clear to see and the experience of the marginalised is often testament to its effect.

In this presentation it will be noticed that the necessarily and categorically differentiated terms “mysticism”, “spirituality” and “implicit religion” have been elided in usage. Since the usual studies in the social history of these have failed to come to any agreement on their exact definitions, it might be useful to avoid the functional slip by conceiving of mysticism as internal to, yet exceeding spirituality and spirituality internal to, yet exceeding religion. Conceptually each successive category inhabits larger space within the socio-historical matrix yet, are inexorably reliant on the excessive emergence of the former. Consequently each category is available to sociological descriptions as social facts in regional contexts, geo-histories and the like. Formalistic taxonomies differently, imply an epistemological reduction and plethora dialectical alterities. These may therefore preserve the tendency amongst theistic religion to see everywhere, “otherness” (“alterity”) as an implicit threat and in consequence, we are successfully tempted to put our self-lauded Christian interests “against” other forms, places and times, involving a game of Mayson’s “apartheid rules” (2006:11). In contradistinction to this trend numerous authors note that secular spirituality embraces postmodern holism (Mayson 2006:19; du Toit 2006:51-52; Kourie 2006:80; Prozesky 2006:129).

5.5 The disease of dichotomy

The problem of dichotomy is not only epistemologically, scientifically, culturally and religiously consequential, the dualities preached by spiritual hegemony might be seen as dogmatically necessary by some who are convinced of its role in protecting a real Alterity and religiously held “Ultimate Ontological Mystery” in supernaturalism (du Toit 2006:55). A particular argument has it that doctrine mirrors Christian life but presents itself in *koan*-like positivity which temporarily occludes the reality of the negative mystery. No doubt such argument attempts to represent the non-dual aspect of doctrinal spirituality, for some. Implicitly the positive theology presents one side of a coin to an absence defined by believers as ineffable presence. We are trapped into a language game. However I suspect our over-usage of the term “ineffable” is epistemologically self-defeating. This is not to claim that some retreat from analysis is inevitable in the mystical “moment” of ground-state experience, but merely to point out that accepted vocabulary can contribute to occlusion of ontological depth. It is easier said I suspect for some to forget the doctrine because “we just don’t know”. Perhaps what we should be saying is forget the doctrine because it fails in explanation for a

concretely materialised, un-theologised, “telluric” (Kourie 2006:79-80) transformation, here understood (Heelas & Woodward 2005:12, cf. Kourie 2006:79-80) as “self understanding, change and the true-life”.

Numerous levels of disinterest in traditional ascription presently abound, however I think that our history of alienation particularly abhors two philosophical positions namely, reduction and dichotomy of *being*. Admission of our philosophical, epistemological, methodological and spiritual diminishment in a fractured social cube once again threatened with extinction (Anderson 2006) admittedly permits certain Biblical themes. The experience of exposing our common guilt as epistemologists (scribes?) absolves (unburdens) and enlightens but will require the personal responsibility and commitment and transformative transcendence “into the world come of age” (Mayson 2006:8), newly delivered from “apartheid rules” in which a re-writing of history, might also be required. The question might be raised that it may be time for a little heretical “deuteronomising”. This to my mind more honest admission which may proffer greater progress and transformation for epistemology and methodology, or so one wishes to argue.

For others dichotomy is bridgeable through a dialectical language game of redefining tradition and yet for others doctrinal dichotomy raises the importance of seeking a transcendently satisfying ontological re-grounding. The fact that religious movements are often born in the face of previous existential intransigence, hegemony and persecution affects a religious identity, bound or “stitched-up” with being differentiated from the other in “being other to the other”. However historical analysis might show greater evidence of incorporation in religious development, than exclusivity. The point can be made in more negative terms also. Heretical “threat”, is so called because of its historically internal proximity to official doctrine than to its alterity. The distinctions of alterity are then used as hegemonic explanation of a political *anathema sit*. I presume then than numerous “Anathema’s” and other “apophatised middles”, have sat, dusted their sandals, took up their crosses and said “follow me”. The mind-set preference for alterity, exclusivity and separation in the mentality of the “temple courtyard”, must consequently imply for us that secular faith, implicit religion and anthropological spirituality are viewed by traditional description in presumed (and derogated) otherness when this might not be the case at all, at practice level. Kourie (2006:80) is quite correct to claim that what secular spirituality requires are “alternative thought-structures”. This too has important consequences: dichotomy may be held as a politico-religious necessity, for some religious believers.

I suspect the real problem dichotomy poses *is* a moral one. In its heyday Christian hegemony left moral agency behind and its congregation became passive audience to a church which grew in corruption, ruling and warring: indistinguishable from any other land-baron with powers over life and death. Greater reflection on the history of the church I think brings critical consciousness to the sin of dichotomy and its hegemonic demoralisation of the world. The insight which grounds the conceptual turn from the principle of “non-identity” to “transcendental identification” in Bhaskar (2002a, [2002b]2012, 2002c, 2002d) is: if a critique of consciousness is to be successful a certain attitude of non-identity with religion needs to be processed in order to reclaim and re-identify with our natural emerging powers of spiritual freedom.

5.6 Hegemony of paranoid alterity

The lessons of social media are being absorbed by the church and I’m sure that insights from branding experience are too. Whether cynic or disciple the mission to convert and make followers is open to hegemonic abuse or “religious imperialism” (Agnivesh 2006) and may speak of potential converts as alterities (“pagans” and “secular”) and imposing religious licence to behave like colonial and enslaving despots, undervaluing the marginalised and remaining blinded to its marginalisation of sexuality and women. Yet it will still rely on the generosity of those marginalised groups. The contradiction is glaring to the conscience. The “wrongness” is *alethic*: it not only speaks of but is an ontologically real absence of the good. To regain evangelical effect the church has had to confront its self-harm its sin and the consciousness which produced it. Of no small significance have been (a) the advent and reversals of Vatican II, (b) the de-hegemonised seating of Spirituality in the academy, (c) the rise of critique of consciousness in high modernism, and (d) a concurrent postmodernist moral apathy based on a permitted split between facts and values. Most telling of its fallacy one suspects is the unavoidable and humiliating fact that by not *valuing* natural *facts* in our acts, we have enacted the ecological crisis (Anderson 2006:21) which currently threatens human sustainability. If the signs of papal conversion within the church filling the social media, are an attempt to gain footing in the social mediation of duality and not to merely reflect back at us a *status quo* of irrationalism in some self-justification, the church does so out of a need to survive.

5.6.1 Church possibilities?

For some the Church's mission therefore is to re-vindicate the dignity of humanity and assure us that we have the power to transform our social cube and redeem our personal, social and ecological relations. It necessitates an affirmation of certain emergent powers in our being³⁸ and must adopt the consciousness of the marginalised and renounce all *paraphernalia* of dichotomising triumphalism. Certainly this could take a minute or several centuries depending on how demoralised we've become and how sick the patient needs to get before we release the maddening splits. In a sense Christianity needs a descended church of (downward, a-linear) transcending solidarity with a non-reified theory-in-praxis and attention to what really matters. It should no longer harp the glory days of its hegemonic undoing. In essence the process demands we redress the practice-theory dichotomy, re-assess the traditional role (priority) of ontology and anthropology (Mayson 2006:7) in praxis and whose "non-religious content" (Kourie 2006:79-80) is acknowledged, in theory. Collegiality of the Bishops has a role to play as does the empowerment of regional liturgical expression and the procedure for election to the Synod but apart from these we need a massive mobilisation to save the planet from Mayson's "apartheid".

None of the above is achievable if Christian identity remains a function of alterity. Yes brands need identity and differentiation from competitors however we may ask, is the church to brand in normal terms? However important the experience of existential intransigence and alterity is in the formation of spiritual consciousness when "identity" is so much the issue in young lives, a mature spirituality would suggest that we make identity at the very moment of every transcendental act and which escapes analysis. Let us assume that the church faces reality squarely and follows through in becoming ideologically less dichotomous. Surely such process necessitates the transcendence of the church as we know it or to be more exact, the church of the past. Certainly the discourse about the church will continue to feature, whilst others will de-church their consciousness and jump into the mystery of an enchanted concrete existence, midst growing "internationalism" (Mayson 2006:4). I believe that there exists in secular spirituality a discernible utopian axiology (Mayson 2006:12-14; Kourie 2006:82; Pozesky 2006:129-133; Agnivesh 2006:190) even when critiqued by du Toit (2006:68). Is not

³⁸Cf. Beyers Naude's (1986) comment to the South African Council of Churches (cf. Mayson 2006:17) : "Something new is groaning to emerge which will challenge the whole church in South Africa to the depths of its being. But why doesn't it happen?"

the anthropological resonance so palpable in the church not a call to join-up and enact a reversal of its own epistemic fallacy for a non-dichotomous redefinition of ontology in itself, the world and God? The muddle of Platonic thought in theology begs a Bhaskarian re-interpretation of ontology, but considering the time frame the ontological living of spiritual praxis must take priority to any after the fact re-interpretation (Botha 2006:101-103). I suspect we cannot look at facts of crisis and beyond those the causal non-dual conditions of life, whilst suffering the church's usual discourse, interpretation or mythology of those facts. To do so, is to legitimate a split intention. Achilles-heel techniques of critique are applicable and we might propose a superior explanation of ontological spirituality for our time, such as I believe Bhaskar and Bailey go a long way to establish. However if deliverance from our crisis in ontology is to arise, it cannot be a mere intellectual exercise.

5.6.2 Ontological cure to paranoid alterity

The cure is more likely to be found from a non-dual appreciation for the sacredness of all, a question of anthropological values-based practice in the “re-enchantment” of being. In the dual realm of dialectic there is plenty of ideation to go around: Bhaskar speaks of *cosmic envelope* and some in the church of *Cosmic Christ*, Bhaskar of *spirit* and the church of *Holy Spirit* and so on, but both participate in a vocabulary of non-equal terms. Dialectical engagement with religion is not truly possible without having to deal with the sometimes existential intransigence and traditional explanation. In short I believe it is in *this time* and *this place* here and now to “do good by *being* good”: instilling the values of “integrity” and “goodness” (Prozesky 2006:134).

This I believe to have been the harnessing power of the first churches, the goodness of alethic conviction, kindly service, and the existential intransigence which met with martyrdom. Any number of historically and socially derivable contextual themes might be mentioned. However I cannot discount the “praxis and theory” relationship nor that the experience of the early church was grounded in emancipative ideals worthy of sons and daughters of God and yet whose lives were surrounded by threat. Nothing much has changed but that this existential reality now extends to the entirety of humanity. The otherness of tightly-knit cellular church community of the first centuries, no longer describes the global context.

Nor can we afford to address our problems from a purely theoretical perspective or confessional allegiance (McGinn 2005:267). The pre-eminence of *alterity* as both epistemic and moral value cannot co-exist with implications for *Jesus today: a spirituality of radical*

freedom (Nolan 2006) or the classist distinctions of freeman, slave, male, female and so forth. Nor do we want the heteronomised “spiritual man” bound in a reified love which is sign of someone else’s spirit. If we wonder at how the spiritualised package of religion Paul taught came to hegemonise the naturally religious milieu, it is because the church trusted him and esteemed him to the point of jealousy, perhaps fearing his intellect and history of fanaticism. The other thing that the Apostles were to accomplish was preach to the slave, prisoner and poor in terms of their own reality, the evangelists and letter writers were able to deliver a critique of consciousness which explained the receiver’s experience and promised immanent redemption, they weren’t lying they believed it. If Paul’s ideation here is extended to a historically traceable hegemony of religion, it was perhaps John who accomplished a similar “Logocentric” explication of unitive mysticism.

5.6.3 Aetiology and diagnosis

Isolation by terror, thinking better of one-self for the persecution, a profound spiritualised connection in the community, sense of purpose and value for the development of spiritual character are all naturally occurring constituents of loyalty. Here convinced of one’s place in the theological drama and explained in ready to hand dichotomised concepts suiting the experience of the underbelly of empire: the gospel appealed. Put simply the gospel appealed to the spiritually thirsty and who suffered an alienated existence, in a language they could understand and which resonated in them. If being spiritually alive came to be associated alone with “Life in the Spirit” and the Christian message we should not be surprised, widespread existential alienation remains a global motivator in the turn to spirituality (Kourie 2006:19). Nor should the Christian advancement of alienation, its interest in splitting-off secularity where “secular” and “faith” are treated as officially distinct opposites and when they are in fact “two sides of the same coin” (Bailey 2001:1-3), remain unchallenged.

5.7 Summary of the argument

Speaking generally one reflects, as a project Christian Doctrine on Man (sic) reframes and theologises humanity. Without overstepping the bounds of expertise, it might be argued that many if not all theological interests over the past seventy years have highlighted the problematic of *anthropology*. A pattern begins to emerge, if there indeed is (an un-necessary) war between the faith and the secular it is a war about the ownership of humanity, intentionality and agency constituting a struggle in the realm of the social cube relations of anthro-polity, driven by an evangelical injunction to be fishers of men.

The market place practice of branding might be a similar phenomenon. It could be argued that God was the first to brand producing everything a corporate would desire, in His: Longevity, loyalty, ready media coverage and rights to it: a brand that promises salvation and delivers in the hagiographic blurb. Like all brands it relies on visibility on a marketable but not necessarily unique product, trust and emotion. We trust brands to reflect our values and social cube relations (attitudes). Amongst the appeal of successful brands religious trust is the best type. In the comparative world of religion the church is merely one brand amongst a plethora of religious brands, all of which have superficial factual resemblances and in the face of which “forms”, some scholars stop and genuflect.

If there is an indication that the church brand is not changeless, it is the historical removal of the market-site from the church yard. Nevertheless the distance is now “virtual”. Despite its geographical removal from everyday life religion evidences to the world that faith is real. Whether or not one loses faith with the church, faith (trust) still exists at an existential level in the implicitly secular and remains open to negotiation. The fact that trust is a human necessity is indicated by its endurance even in the church. On the reverse side of people “leaving” institutional religion many stay and continue a reasonably numbered congregation whilst, in Africa and South America expressions of faith grow amidst adverts for penis enlargement.

People (mostly women) stay despite their wounding experiences received at the hands of a patriarchy. The list of the church’s sins is endless. “The church is only human” or so the plea goes. The point exactly! Yet the liturgical entertainment which interrupts the “rosary group” at prayer is a multi-strata affair celebrating numerous anthropological based sequences and transforming them into holy mysteries, promising not only salvation in the future when we need it now, but something in the order of an eternal dinner party, or so some believers believe. Religion re-sacralises a reality already sacred. In the sharing of communion the dichotomisation of our joy and tragedy are materially consumed as one human condition regardless of what the “cup” truly signifies. We need not reflect on the promises of religion for too long, since no one really knows what they stand for or what to trust in them. Un-natural (supernatural?) religion is sold to people as cure of their ills and fears (Marx is quite correct)! One is free to suppose following Freud that religiosity is some comfort in our fear of death. So on the superficial shell of the Christian-Church brand, certain elements resemble an over-reach of brand building. Its product is communal “belonging” as cure for alienation but presented as a mental and physical space to celebrate faith/trust and religiosity. In this

church-owned space in turn the clerical church gets to deliver its official message presented for adoration and celebration, sometimes a good “show” replete with reverence.

Speaking officially the local representative will explain that this reverence and this cure for alienation is a gift of belonging to the brand being one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, not the *Zeitgeist*. A moment’s reflection on these gifts might strike us after reading Bhaskar that these are philosophically derivable human necessities, resident in the fine interior of deeply stratified being. So all we really have for “doing” church is a celebration of the relocation of what we had in the first place: indeed a spiritual place of valuable *re-enchantment* and inspiration namely, the world. However this communal relocation (anthropo-dis-location) has not in any way diminished the isolationist privatisation of spirituality, implied in the discourse of modernism.

However one has only to conduct a quick analysis to see how the results of catechesis and Christian formation have appropriated ordinary life and sold it as a brand, a minor product in the range of which is “Holy (sacramental) water”. Perhaps others would have us celebrate the sacredness of water and waterways. The anthropological basis of church thinking is omnipresent yet occluded by the “Holy”, the “Sacred” which is suspended away from reach and alienated from us, to be replaced by the mediation of the church itself subtly “denying identity [and instilling] conformity, insincerity and apathy” (Bailey 2001:33). Within the exercise of formation one is encouraged to distrust self and trust the brand. The ontological rug is pulled from our feet. The coercive underlay exploits the anthropological fear of falling, whilst promising salvation from above and where, the church is the only self proclaimed helicopter: one starts doubting that it will ever come when needed.

However the official theological doctrine is quite entertaining in its opinions and has a lot to say on the entire experience of living having descended from Abraham “our father in faith” who many say is a spiritual proto-type of Paul’s “spiritual man”. In the publically held myth of the brand is a value for proto-spirituality and the Christian extrapolation of anthropology “in Christ”. What often escapes us is “the Christ” who hangs on the cross of duality, raised up in the social cube of his day by the sectarian relations, actions, intentions which constituted a grand power-play between hegemonies and brands of liberation. If we recognise doctrine as *ideology* we see within the official heart of the church and its theological origin the Cross, the “logo” interpreted for the masses as the sign of anti-hegemonic contradiction. However the historical memory of the cross as threat of empire is still a rallying point set against the other

and the secular, *ergo* that which is implicit to Christianity itself. One could therefore argue that the cross permits a dichotomised and inconsistent subliminal message on one hand the dying Christ's agonised prayer "forgive them, for they know not what they do", is coupled by the leadership's "do as I say not as I do". The subtlety of coercion in the brand is hardly likely to be explicit nevertheless one got the message under Cardinal Ratzinger's ascendancy "don't mess with the Vicar even when he's messed with you".

Some sociological facts about the church suggest it fairs morally neither better (Finnegan 2010:27-37) nor worse than our species and concrete singularities empower. The sacred-secular split or dichotomy is glaringly harmful to the implicit innocence of being and self-integration. Religion in the official exercise of structural, political, liturgical and theological hegemony has first and foremost damaged its representatives in a vicarious set of power relations, the injunction to do all good things without a value for *eros*. How then is *agape* (the "fulfilment" of *eros*) sustained, but "up and away"? The subtleties of hegemony continue to damage ontology and seek to suspend it away from its rightful two-legged stance – intellectual and existential slaughter, in my opinion. Inherent in the myth of the cross is the message of suffering "if it's good enough for God, it is good enough for you!" Every Christian is called to the Cross it explains for some the *mystery* of human suffering when it is plain to see that all suffering is a condition of existence: it is neither thus far avoided, nor applauded, it is plainly horrible when it happens and we would all like to be delivered of it. Nevertheless we may ask "why the need to turn an anthropological and natural horror into a mystery?" For others the cross is a sincere rallying point of human solidarity with the weak, suffering and oppressed. Yet the generous spirit of humanity that "helps out", has a history of brands: Oxfam, Red-Cross, Red Crescent: to name a few. Owning the social pie is always part of hegemonising brand war-fare. It is however interesting, that organisation titles like *Gift of the Givers* contribute a plainly anthropological truth ("alethia") to this mix. Of further interest, this organisation of many givers is the inspiration of a Turkish holy man given to a South African and devoted Muslim.

Christianity is not alone in attempting to colonise the (essentially un-colonisable, but socially available) consciousness of persons. One of the fundamental points Bailey (2001:4-9) wishes us to consider is that the plural-diversity of religious practice within the church must indicate the "potential religiosity of everyday life".

5.8 The critical cure

No doubt in catholic circles earlier anthropological argument was couched in Thomist or neo-Aristotelian terms now a somewhat lonelier discourse amongst the conservative branch. However the resonance is anthropological, amongst broader and more recent embrace of mitigated-naturalism. I suspect that critical naturalism will become of interest. There is within the Catholic and some Protestant comfort here a place for natural religion and the philosophy of religion in the formation of the thinkers, speakers and readers (du Toit 2006:66-69), for instance. To these Bhaskar is to deliver a profoundly rewarding contemplation. So too, one suspects for those interested in naturalism and natural religion in service of emancipation from hegemonised Spirituality. Lest we elide Bailey's "implicit religion" with Bhaskar's "practical mysticism" on account of anthropological interest alone (Bailey is not in favour of such elision), Bailey's interest is religious in the social cube duality of religiosity, whilst Bhaskar's is a trans-traditional grounding of spirituality into the necessities of being. For Bhaskar religion hegemonises spirituality, Bailey agrees but has a value for the religious mystery which both contradicts (as non-paranoid alterity) and is theologically co-opted into the religious hegemony. For example the structure of the church is cast in theologically epitomised "ideal types" (Bailey 2001:14) which lends self-retreating characteristic to dialectical engagement, thus providing what some have used as an existential safe-haven in the face of scandal.

The *hypostasis* of Christian duty to *grace* un-avails or occludes a natural agency, ontological depth and social responsibility into a reified theory of ultimate agency of God as prime mover. Consequently Bailey suggests, "The last third of the twentieth century was marked by an increasing recognition of the reality of what is implicit". Nevertheless both Bailey and Bhaskar would agree with numerous others, that a thorough going critique of consciousness characterises personal and public practice: (Bailey 2001:14) "... a growing of self awareness – and the growing awareness of such self-awareness" pointedly suggests contextualising secular spirituality in a post-modernist frame. Nevertheless amongst Christian leadership, an eccentric amongst "there is no alternative" types of intransigence, has grown to old age. Partly accountable for its resilience church structure has made a home for itself as institution, culture, morality, spirituality, mysticism, politics, trade and academia, a poly-present and multi-layered intention. Western civilisation owes much of its worldview to the power of the church. The church's elevation of *Zeitgeist* to "Holy Ghost" midst resurrections, ascensions, assumptions, transportations (Bailey 2001:32) in its message, has laid the foundation for a

triumphalist establishment. It should come as no surprise to (non-positivist) naturalists to discern the veneer of hegemony: a seduction into complacency and the strangely fearful coercion of ideological power, which nevertheless counts on the generous spirit of naturally spiritual and “implicitly religious” people who donate their social cube to it. Often they do so in the belief that in so doing betterment of that same social cube (which hasn’t changed much over two thousand years of preaching the beatitudes) is afforded. Also afforded is the comfort of knowing that they are “doing” but not always “being” their best. It is often remarked that people don’t think most of the time but even hegemonised and “reduced” beings act, love, free and create.

There is no doubt that the Christian experience is also bi-furcated at its ground. God exists but also doesn’t exist as a category, unless categories require the magical numbers of one and three. Religion carries within it, its own irrationalism.

Bailey (2001:25) explains thus:

Thus the belief itself follows the object of that belief in being *sui-generis* and, therefore, simultaneously inevitably unprovable except through the witness of ‘religion’ and of life itself. For his [the Buddha’s] and our, silence is otherwise ambiguous. It could be a mark of respect for his [God’s] ubiquitous presence of the consequence of his unreality. It could signify reverence or denial.

Bhaskar simply refuses to enter into this sort of fray except to lay down some interesting methodological limitations of theological discourse ([2002b] 2012:145-164). Convinced as he is that the absence of (negativity) of being in no way signifies or necessarily moves towards presence, the existence of “god” must presuppose god’s non-existence. If then, one god can exist why not a *pantheon* and such multiplicity of god as category must necessarily have the ability of merging with the cosmic envelope.

It is both Bhaskar’s and Bailey’s conception and forming a particular religious interest in the latter, that disempowering dualities in expression and experience are “fought shy of” in the practice of the practitioners. Both authors for instance have noted the dichotomous assumption in religion: Bailey (2001:25) says “that the experience of transcendence is restricted to the exception ... such a ‘theology’ would leave most religious practitioners dumbstruck. They thought their belief was primarily to do with the ordinary, the usual”. Does church attendance have to be usual? Bailey seems to suggest that this has for some centuries,

not been the case (in The United Kingdom and United States of America). Yet despite the myth of secularisation the hegemonised values of society have not changed much: the same controversies abound in the dialectic, including emancipative ones. This raises the question: If the “implicit secular religion” were to be explicated what would we find? Bailey suggests nothing much different from what we have now as regionalised practitioners because and in particular Christian practitioners already make explicit their natural religiosity. This would not surprise Bhaskar, who understands that practice mediates ontology.

At the epistemological level (Bailey 2001:27) dualisms produce problems, the student “runs the two-fold danger: either the religious or the secular becomes the merely automated consequence of the other”. In answer to Kourie’s (2006:88) questions about the longevity or sustainability of secular spirituality in the future, perhaps Bailey would suggest that secular spirituality has never, *not* had a future. Critical to the Bailey/Bhaskar project is the idea of *emancipation*. In order to fulfil our interconnected and flourishing, we are required to overcome our own personal dualisms and heteromomy. Bailey (2001:26) sees these dualisms as harmful to life, religious life, and to (dialectical) engagement between the two:

The sense of moral compulsion, starting as a ‘divine inspiration’ but sliding into ethical imperialism, inspires an equal and opposite moral reaction, which slides into moral negativism. If conscience itself is ‘deified’, then the opposing conscious is ‘atheised’ [if not demonised] and moral ‘compulsion’ becomes mechanistic ‘causation’ [not Bhaskar’s rational causation]. If freedom is threatened by belief, free will is denied by disbelief, or so believers believe. If divine revelation is claimed as self justification, then all revelation is denied in self-defence. The position of Religious Studies is not dissimilar. A *sui generis* religiosity may be seen as either dominant or as irrelevant. An epiphenomenal religion may be seen as either subservient or insignificant. The need is for a model of religion which allows the phenomenon itself sufficient reality to interact with the secular, neither as dictator nor as toady but in the unrelaxed, creative partnership of dialectical dialogue.

I do not anticipate that we encounter any obstacles in seeing how in Bhaskar’s notion of TINA formations which here breed discontent in religion do so under the same conditions that can lead to their dissolution. Their truth factor is set free to engage its dialectical opposite in critique. Secular spirituality’s critical resonance is very much concerned with the defeat of

chimerical irrationalism, whose ability to monopolise the ground of some Spirituality language games with slippery dualisms and denial of ontological freedom, reflexivity and transformation. Contrary to usual claims this type of talk a-moralises and demoralises: perverting alethia or non-dual and ground state conviction, that doing good by being good in the realm of natural virtue can transform the natural, social, inter- and intra-personal dimensions of our social cube. Some comment is necessary by way of a question firstly: Is Bhaskar's non-duality of practical mysticism any recourse to the problem? The answer is complex. Not only do TINA's, hegemonies, ideologies and dualities dance in Bailey's, du Toit's and Botha's world, but they occlude the implicit religion of secularity that is set against a traditional battle-field over the booty of being. However despite Bailey's concern for reality it might easily be surmised that what Bailey lacks is Bhaskar's elucidation of social cube which may negate the need or want to examine religion in terms of sociologically explicit and Platonically reminiscent tripartite schemata ("leader, scholar, practitioner"). I know that this is difficult to imagine when studying a social phenomenon whose hierarchies, power structures and other historical facts, suggest such a scheme (e.g. the church as Priest, Religious, Lay or alternately Waaijman's "forms"). Certain categorical lacunae make it easy to elide these features into sociological taxonomies as though these forms were inherent and incorrigible, and not the superficialities of history exposed in the Bhaskar's critique of actualist fallacy. Church self-description of religious options might have a completely different intention: to express a theological value in a view of itself imitating the Christian "Tri-une" of ultimate reality.

It is fine and well to read the doctrine, documents, pastoral letters and synod minutes to find in there some intentional interior to the organisational spirituality of a leadership caste. However two problems necessarily arise. The first is that these official articles gain exclusive voice when the silent religiosity of the practitioner is implicit in the person who is bishop, priest, professional religious and scholar. Furthermore it is spirituality at a more fundamental level that holds the entire religious structure together. The fine structure of being spiritual or "spiritual beings" remain somewhat opaque to us. However in consequence, not only is the secular religion deprived of a voice but the religious depth of officially religious persons is derogated, by such deprivation. Both Bhaskar and Bailey are very nervous about obvious taxonomies for good reason because these tend to miss the intention and meaning of practitioners, whilst busily hunting down sociological/phenomenological "facts" and

“constants”³⁹. Bhaskar admits that taxonomies do act as causal categories in the social realm by exhibiting a relatively enduring ontology. Above and beyond the tendencies of causal ontologies in the natural realm, social causality is ontologically inter-dependent: never acting as an atomistic individual in the cube of relations.

5.8.1 Epistemology and methodologies: “fact-u-lying” society?

Bhaskar's suspicion of taxonomy is not based on doubt in the value of its epistemologically available ontology: categorical realism holds that we need more categories, not fewer. If this philosopher holds that we can no longer rely on an uncritical and naïve interpretation of the epistemological truism, that a discipline takes after its object in innocent and certain fashion and from which evidence we then conduct research analysis and so on. To re-explain those facts heuristically or taxonomically means that so doing, blithely enacts an uncritical actualism: we enter into the bind of epistemic fallacy. In other words we tend to emphasise the contingent, time-dependent reality of social targets in epistemology and ignore to their alethic intransitivity. Social targets do not only endure against socially dialectical critique, they are partly and relatively ontologically contingent of the past. From epistemological

³⁹Despite Waaijman's protestations and championing of the phenomenological-dialogical approach, one may ask whether the formal phenomenology presented there actually allows for dialogue and in what sense? If there, the dialogue is between the hermeneutical and the formal, what is elicited? Apart from one level mirroring the other and again, what does this illicit but an 'echo', not even the most superficial type of dialectic. My suspicion of Waaijman's reduction to spirituality as “the Divine-Human relational process” (2002:427) binds him to the overwhelming realm of the supernatural transcendent which limits dialogue in the public realm of dialectic where one movement challenges another but always with in a singular paradigm. Here even the public arena is taken to be reduced or extremely controlled by the censors, imprimaturs etc. Waaijman's characterisation of spirituality, its forms and foundations must, I think should be read as operative in a Christian, religiously closed description of social systems, unlike natural open human society. In short, Waaijman's 'sin' is to reduce spirituality to a confessional taxonomy. Waaijman is quite correct in valuing the dialogical method, however of what sort? Is it a superficial dialoguing with the past, purely to entrench a taxonomical hegemony, and would any such thing possibly be conceived to exist, if there was no active and intentional ontological depth to interpret, underlying the epistemic surface, thus derived. The strong determinism attributed by Waaijman to the past, in historicist reduction, must at some point be acknowledged for the inherent epistemic and actualist fallacy. For clarity, I must declare that I do appreciate the role of historical-sociological study, I am cautious of its hegemonic ascendancy in post-Kantian tradition. Near encyclopedic insight and rigour of scholarship, not discounted, should not be expected to deliver more than a patchwork of guess-work and description.

perspective they are always “in the past”, presenting themselves into the present by our reproduction in the “here and now”. At the relative level of epistemology our constructions often occlude this ontological relatively enduring, being in the past. A purely Kantian view of pre-interpretation or the reality of our history “with us” imposes ready-made denial of our *constant* “presenting” or being present in the present-making of the past, in such fashion as to deny the ontological being which does all this but may enact alternatives. As a result the present mimics a distortion of the past’s presumption and opinion of itself. The social consequences thus become existentially intransitive to change or rather they give us the existentially palpable “there is no alternative finger-wag” of closure. What Bhaskar suggests we need and want is to develop our categorical realism to appreciate the depth of being, its capacity for change, and thereby liberate our axiology of emancipation from the realm of irrationalism (or Baudrillard’s “hyper-realism”?), inherent in the discourse of modernism.

The empowerment of our *practical mysticism* and our exercise of *ground-state transcendence*, make inter-dependent flourishing possible in the duality of the social realm, by derivable *co-presence* and effect of *envelopment* in the *non-dual* being. In their epistemological reflections our emancipations lie in; (a) a critique of consciousness, (b) dialectical critique of hegemony, acknowledging that many subtle and categorical differentiations between facts and causes must be discerned and considered, (c) developing a methodology where the realities of emergent powers (materially) into our reality and where-upon the realms of the empirical, the actual and the real are conceived to *expand* whilst the progress of the epistemologically transitive dimension may be said to advance toward the intransitive, in an intelligible plumbing of ontological depth and advancement towards cosmic totality (also Kourie’s insight, 2006:79-80). Along the way anything can happen. Who knows perhaps we can “put the toothpaste back in the tube” (Bourdain 2013) or in this case, put reflexive and agenting ontology back into the conceptual frame. A purely social-centred and tacitly past-bound taxonomic explanation of spirituality must be inadequate.

Even if the causes in the social dimension of spirituality are themselves socially produced, discernment and interpretation of those causes should never be reduced to either, “social patterns, historical lines nor a combination”. The unseen causally transformative intention in our agency does not lie in such obvious superficialities of history (McGinn 2005: xi-xx, 291-326).

Interpretation must fundamentally require a moment of transcendence in which the co-presence of text in the interpreter, grounds that moment of inter-subjectivity in the anamnesis of a “now” state of alethic (emergent) knowing. Perhaps one might say, a moment of self-revelation in a moment of transcendental identification with that text. In other words objectivity must be fundamentally and logically available to our subjectivity. What I have described must be the condition of possibilities for any intelligible epistemological advancement for it signifies the interior cohesion of the moment of will and intellect, in the rational and ontological conditions for truth and consistency essential for science. Our sociologically based constructs should perhaps take a de-centred or non-localised role, set against a conceptual re-totalising of ontology and with it the intentional emancipative axiology implicit in our rational needs and wants.

I would suggest (perhaps entirely wrongly), that what Waaijman’s phenomenological-sociology provides instead is socio-historical dialectic between historically justified social movements within a narrowly regional reality wherein agency is limited (despite the hermeneutical content) and undeniably set in the past. The *dialogical* exposition of intentions, reasons and causes is I think a totally differing reality. How to plumb these is in no way easily obtained and I must admit that I do not possess a solution, critical realist considerations are many, yet not one of them suggests stasis. Rather what Benedikter and Molz (2012:59) intimate is “a new phase of development of (neo-) integrative thought ... a third way” beyond modernist and postmodernist discourses.

This is not to deny that religious life takes on readily expressible forms of life in the social realm. In any team one is likely to find the leader, the follower and the anti-task group. In the history of the church it is a well documented fact that the prophetic anti-hegemonic voice has been successively and successfully co-opted into manageable cloistered life. How else was the church to manage un-attached women and bothersome mendicants like the Beguines and former heretics? The successful corporation and religious hegemony alike, co-opts or at least attempts to co-opt its own critical voice. The emergent and implicit in the subject are occluded and that is why we scholars involve ourselves in the red herrings and other heuristic devices pretending to some understanding of *intentions* as usually empirically evidenced in sociological phenomenon. We often get away with the charade (however unintentionally) because our findings mirror an archived self-agreement in which our ideology of science tells us “this is how we do things”. We reproduce reams of representations with none to represent. Thus we layer our subject with veneer and opacity preserving a specialised brand of

spirituality and miss the *alethia* of spiritual being. We unconsciously participate in the hegemony and render a *pastiche* of its life. Erudition trumps truth, or so it seems. Also noteworthy is the fact that within this tri-partite conception of religious forms (there being a Bailean similarity, with Waaijman (2002) and Heelas (2012)) a paradigmatic effect is at play: the injunction of the theological “as-above-so-below” conception, and as one might say of it despite the protest of “unity” does not concur with Bailey’s conclusions. Analysis of the account (Bailey 2001: 27-28) is revealing:

I was wanting to show how ‘secular’ life might receive additional illumination (additional to all the other ways in which we regard it, from the perspectives of economics, politics, history, psychology, and so on), if we regard it as sometimes putatively containing within itself something like its own religion... it served the purpose of revealing, even though in this case [of a reported conversation] it took some ‘ordinary’ forms. Indeed his [the reported] account revealed three different implicit religions, and whether they expressed or fitted in with traditional Christian shapes was hard to say and (from our then point of view) was not the question.

Religiosity is perhaps best conceived as the ritualistic and social mediation/aspect of spirituality is a multi-faceted and (relatively enduring) ontologically stratified phenomenon, open to the usual dualistic chimera in the relations which produce social being. The morally conscious point being: religion veneers and glosses us with a wounded heart and unhappy soul in need of a happy homecoming. I would merely comment that the son of man has no such home but in the here and now. As Bhaskar would have it, this is not *atheism* it is indeed *alethia* undergirded by a non-duality of being, truth, theory=practice, in the reflexively actionable expression of our freedom and flourishing wishes. Kourie notes (2009:167) the Pauline social impact of “dynamic union with the Risen Christ”:

This union has social implications and is inextricably linked to [social cube relations?] the church and thus has collective and cosmic meaning ... The mystical initiative come from God; it is both an act of grace and also effected in historical actuality of Christ...

The social cube or world is subject to some hot theological debate. Some wish to *ground* it in the cosmic, others to *suspend* it in the cosmic, however the point is taken that cosmic significance is “in” (Kourie 2006:79-80). For some the top-down cosmic dimension has

priority mediated by the church as divine representative in the world of relations. Essentially the subliminal message is that outside of the church there exists no salvation and this message licenses hegemony which is heteronomously received, in reified and pacified notions of transformation. On the other hand one has the liberationist critical conception that the church is all that exists in creation but still in sacramental practice and preaching, I would claim the church still sees its object: Divine Subject of union, God who pops into and out of existence, and on record as such, is “on High” (Heelas 2012:11), Alone (in three Persons), the truly Merciful, reconciling all things to Himself in Christ. In other words “making better”, whilst we devote our social cube and concrete singular energies to giving witness to either a cosmic-centred Christ or cosmically enveloped Christ in some Teilhardian mysticism, but more ordinarily for Bailey (2001) building trustworthy relations of practicality. However lest we overplay the dichotomy we should not forget that de Chardin’s (1961) *Hymn of the Universe* demonstrates a pietistic and dated but nevertheless profoundly prayerful monologue of a naked “I – Thou” encounter in a non-dual sacredness of all.

Bhaskar vindicates the experience of ground-state in his own way. In the practice of one’s mysticism or religiosity, dualism is transcended at the very ordinary level. This level of practical mysticism is so implied in everything we do that we barely reflect on it, or look for it in our study. In the light of which obviousness we might critically consider Berling’s (2006:40, cf. Kourie 2009:160) claim for the comparative study of religions hoping to add a necessary dimension to the anthropologic approach in study of Spirituality. We might conclude that there is an implicit religion in every moment of theory-practice unity in the practice of everyday life. Even so for Christians whose rationale might or might not fit into Christian or indeed, Bhaskar’s or Bailey’s description.

Here then is the methodological problem which has in this dissertation stared us in the face: since the (transitive) method follows the (intransitive) target, the causal target eludes and extends beyond mere facts of its indication and phenomenology and defies induction and taxonomy. In a bi-furcated (sometimes tri-furcated/triangulated) hegemonic world, regarding people holistically is regarded as an attempt at everything. The taboos against perennial philosophy come to mind, yet our scholarly community still exhibits a penchant for socially owned perennials and constants as though our reams and footnotes add veracity, to their much reduced causality. The worry is that spirituality represented purely as a societal pattern of events actually further derogates its ontologically transformative power. Yet we wonder why it is that hegemonies fund institutes and universities. Is it not time for a good step back

into a balcony view, to view the patterns and recognise the emergence of things undreamt of? Or as Bailey (2001:29) rightly suggests: “in particular to understand them [people] from the particular perspective of whatever goes to make up their *intentionality*”. Obviously Bhaskar if he met Bailey would not be considered an irrelevance, in the meeting. However two things which have remained elusive to epistemology: *intentionality* and *experience* may become more available in the *dialogical* attempt of interpretation. However, such dialogue has little chance in a dirempted present: if dialogue happens not in the “now”, it happens not at all. Reports of conversations are not the same thing: the text has changed from the creator to the created, from the real to the epistemic. Dimensionality and depth are lost to us, unless the dialogue is extended into the present. Picking up on an old conversation is unavoidable as are encounters with logo-centric representations, in the formative stages of learning however the transformative affect of dialogue such learning hopes to inspire, penetrates a depth of being in the self-forgetful ground of creative experience. It seems to this author, abundantly clear that it is from the ground of being from which our inspirations, insights and alternative thought structures emerge. Does the balcony view of meditation make us more intelligent? The epistemological problems do not immediately dissolve: language is deceptive, dualistic, even intentionally deceiving. Perhaps what the value of categorical realism suggests is that it is time to call a spade a “spade” and a shovel, a “shovel” to begin with. Such an approach needs a discernment of the novel ways of loving, creating, and freeing at a deeper level. In the realm of epistemology and methodology I take Kourie’s point that, we should avoid the trap of re-inventing our discipline. However to put it somewhat crassly, we must do better than extracting the scummy surface at the top of the soup whilst continuing to scorch the “stock”.

5.8.2 Being and seeing through

Whether one belongs to an extra-, intra- or inter-denominational camp or neither is not primarily the point. Interest and some pre-occupation with the subject of the *implicit*: be it in implicit religion, primordial-proto-spirituality or indeed anthropological reflexivity within academic Spirituality, attests to secular spirituality’s sometimes epistemologically yet incompletely apophaticised emergence amongst us – a palpable absence for some, yet growing resonance for others, thus far. I believe this ontological spirituality which dares not speak its name in this instance, yet whose communications are clear contemplates itself in the mirror of consciousness and in a context where that epistemological mirror is much critiqued for its “transformational” absence. A preverbal spirituality doesn’t give us room for description but I believe that its philosophical derivability opens to us the spiritual dimension

in the ground of being along with its potential and longed for possibility, as a sacred space of transformation. What point, the experience of *dark night* without the full moon and the break of day? I feel the resonance effect, its temporary impotency and its ultimate possibility in the recognition of our common flourishing needs and wants from a de-centred position against a totality which is utterly enchanted and mysterious. Within this conception what evaluation of formalism, paradigmatic taxonomies can be made? Surely they (and the forms of those forms) must fail on grounds of a superior explanation of (a) ontological depth, (b) unity as diversity, (c) theory-practice unity in practice, and above (d) the emancipative intention in all reality.

There are further considerations in the diagnosis of a truly contemporary spirituality apart from critical realism's categories and theories. Despite the debates on naming (already an academic resonance) for instance: "new spirituality", "new mysticism", "secular spirituality", "atheist spirituality", "meta-reality", "natural religion", "natural theology", "post-secular spirituality", "implicit religion", "emergent spirituality" or whatever other family names are available, the reality beyond the name needs to resist all coercion and one suspects is enjoying the game of hide and seek amidst the dialectical bun-fight. The social character of such partying displays the positivist and alienating split in our politics of identity. I suspect the subject of a conjoined myopia here is exposed as the "something there" (Hay 2006) and "behind the eyes" (Benedikter 2007). Bhaskar delivers for me something like *anamnesis* or "un-forgetting" of reality and more profoundly an un-forgetting of spirituality. Perhaps most appreciated in the innocence from pre-emptive ascription but not lacking *a priori* argument in our analysis. From simple beginnings of a philosophical question spirituality once again reveals itself at the ground-zero of *being* and *consciousness*. The problem for atomists and monists is their tendency to look for the implicit spirituality of humanity in one thing, an identifiable and deniable form in dualistic social matrix. Encased as we are in an open expanding system of consciousness the reality of spirituality basically outstrips epistemic, after the fact neatness. Causality thus represented is not consistently nor hardly (if we imply, by this "most often") occurring in the singularity of an epistemic target which to remind ourselves is spirituality. In this sense spiritual emancipation is a reflexive and transformative process diversified in the realm of duality, open to the hegemony-building power relations, self justifications and TINA blindness of social life and whose naturally transcending quality is intransitive and irresistible in its quest for relations in a totality beyond duality.

A naturalist spirituality is not reducible from its plural-diversity in a multitude of concrete singularities which are all connected in the totality of non-dual being. Whatever the new spirituality of profound goodness reveals of itself (perhaps as *the practical mysticism of universalised human solidarity and transformation*) it does much to enhance the value, wonder and enchantment of being seeking and seeing to its own seeking, reflexively, everywhere and ordinarily scouring for truth and consistency (*phronesis*) in which to trust and act upon, in a ubiquitous stream of transcending and non-coercive (but possibly militant) creative response. It is not merely a utopian ideal but a necessity for our survival and hoped for flourishing. So whatever we end up calling this spirituality with its possible forms (one hopes not) and taxonomy (even less) and (ordinary) phenomena, whatever is described in the epistemological realm will be far less than its facts in the world and far short of its non-dual reality. The world of epistemology and barely teenaged Spirituality departments in academia need not fear the scandal of an out-of-wedlock pregnancy here. The neonate is long in the meadows and cities and what we talk about will be very much like gossip after the fact. Hence the urgency felt by some to find a name, perhaps.

To be expected of such a time within epistemological context a lot of teasing and some too-close carnivorous interest are sure to attend. Certainly in our post-fact realm of epistemological discernment no one could or should contain *ontic* swelling. If we are to play the name-game a suggested route is that we do not deny ontology, depth, process, and emergence. Perhaps one should merely note for the moment the critically active emancipative-anthropological ground-swell. Indications are that amongst the protectors' of this spiritual reality are to be found the contemplative arts of self-critique and the conscious reflexivity grounded in inter-connective relations of compassion for the ground states and actionable conditions for all. This a-morphic "wonder" Bhaskar reveals as ordinary and the "alethic-ground-truth" of all being. This spirituality of the ordinary is the non-dual condition under which all spirituality diversifies, comes to concrete singularities, hegemonises social cube relations and which possible heteronymous effects, nevertheless speak its name and the truth that without this silent figure, they would not play. So ordinary is practical mysticism that midst upheavals sometimes the baby is lost under our noses.

If we consider Bhaskar's analysis of the discourse of modernity, we cannot deny the possible anger of emergent spirituality set against Western triumphal denialism and hegemonic hurdles of dichotomy. The phenomena of violence are no strangers to the student of Spirituality and the world. However, set against the self-implosive aspects of oppression and greed, random

acts of violence might do little more than harden attitudes. Although after reading Goatham it is difficult to see how some attitudes are to get any harder. A critical and existential intransigence in the ground-swell movements of massive numbers is a very powerful force. The history of revolution cannot be ignored (Mayson 2006:12) and any person wishing for the flourishing for all, cannot legitimately imagine them-selves to be alone. However the route of non-violent resistance as we have witnessed in the “Occupy Wall Street” campaign most recently, is profoundly consciousness-raising by exponential potential: Ghandi continues to inspire. If the empowerment of basic spirituality is too weakly felt, more than the first quivers of a resonance effect are audible in the academy and the world. The real moral enemy is the despair, apathy, denial and the illusion of irrealism projected by hegemony and heteronomy.

Remaining enchanted and in good faith with the reality of deep existence is difficult if all we discern around us are the chariots and horses of decrepit empires. Bhaskar and other mystics have long understood that the workings of ego-illusory TINA formations must be dissolved from within their half attractions and the places we key into them. The first step in our disengagement is to occupy ourselves at the real-centre of ground-state, non-duality and non-attachment, or so I believe this Spirituality paradigm holds. If traditionally this state is mystical there is no magic to it: it is available to all at the very ground of being, rationality and will: from which, love, creativity and freedom naturally emerge. The inescapable fact of their emergence is represented in epistemology quite clearly in Mayson’s (2006:1-23) description of “a World come of age” indicating a critical maturation within Spirituality theory (du Toit 2006:xiv-xv):

Major secular developments are occurring in political, social, economic, cultural and religious relationships. These can succeed only through the spiritual powers of generosity not greed, honesty not corruption, compassion not compulsion, and temerity not terrorism ... Spirituality on the other hand, freed from religious prison, enables us to experience ourselves as part of a deeper reality in the whole world. Spirituality embraces truth from all quarters in the quest for the well being of all, a truth that sometimes reveals the “preposterous illusions to error” in some religions. The quest for ethical wholeness includes not only the good of people, but social and environmental concerns. Rapid developments outrun conservative approaches and demand new experiments in

goodness ... We need a new view of spirituality and ethics – a confederation of conscience, knowledge, love and spirit committed to the well being of our secular world. This, then, is the concern of secular spirituality.

As presented by du Toit & Mayson (2006): (1) Anderson (2006:25-47) in his contribution recognises the hegemonic partnership of “religion, capitalism, jurisprudence, democracy and nationalism” in driving the “Sixth Extinction”. (2) Cornell Du Toit (2006:49-73) claims spirituality is a “dimension” of all human experience. Experience is derivable only from ontology, Bhaskar would remind du Toit. (3) Kourie (2006:75-94) speaks of “post-patriarchal”, “telluric” spirituality in a sense reminiscent of spiritual eco-feminism and critiques reductive philosophy. Bhaskar would agree. (4) Pieter Botha (2006:95-126) recognises discontent with usual and traditional religious discourse. (5) Prozesky however is highly critical of religion, posing ethical critique and exhibiting a deeply anthropological and emancipative bent very similar in attitude to Bhaskar and Bailey (Prozesky 2006:127-138). Abrahams (2006:139-152) discerns “deeper wisdom” in his “new spirituality”, while Mndende (2006:153-174) and Manley (2006:175-183) see African cultural and communal spirituality as distinct from the secular which in their opinion erodes a sense of the metaphysical. On categorical definitions of the “secular” or the “metaphysical” from within a Western epistemology Bhaskar might wish to disagree, but not with these contributors general point which is to expose the fallacy of “individualistic” spirituality.

5.9 Concluding the deal on worldview?

Perhaps it is helpful, retiring from the fray of dissertational discourse and in the concluding moments of balcony view contemplation and summation, to appropriate Benedikter and Molz’s (2012:29-73) overview of neo-integralist worldviews and ideology for more rounded context. For these authors, the “common core aspiration” of neo integrative worldviews seek to reconcile “spirituality and rationality ... transcendence and secularism ... realism and nominalism” (:29) the resolution of which amongst social presentations are pluriform and patchy, yet “integrative worldviews may provide at least potentially useful 'layers of stratification’ ... to facilitate the build up to a more balanced civilizational paradigm appropriate to the needs of the upcoming first ‘planetary civilization’” (:29-30): the overcoming of modernism which “was shaped primarily by big overarching ideological blueprints” (:30):

An ideology is by definition a normative set of ideas with suggestive value that claims to legitimate the social political and sometimes the economic life of a given society in a given historical period for a given time. Its legitimacy ... is usually asserted on the assumption of ‘scientifically proven’... view of the whole ... ‘instilling habits or beliefs in people’ by ‘providing the capacities needed for the maintenance of a given culture and its institutions’ ... to constitute a unifying complete ‘sociopolitical program’... Ideologies have claimed ... to be the integrative theory *par excellence*, integrating or subsuming all other theories of their time [into a] single point of view”.

Ideologies have holistic and integrative pretensions. Unlike ideologies, so Benedikter and Molz (2012:33) claim, neo-integrative worldviews are now plethora and paradigmatically, “‘post-national’, ‘post-ideological’ or even ‘a-spectival’ ... ‘multi-positional’, ‘pluri-ideological or ‘inter- and trans-perspectival’”. Epistemologically, neo-intergrationalism is contextualised by: “awareness of the productivity and relative advantage of multiple positions” (:33), a “search for inclusion for the largest number possible viewpoints on one and the same issue or question” (:34) in which, “‘subversive’ patterns of legitimation and distribution are slowly, but continuously ascending to become co-decisive pre-political and/or contextual political tools” (:34), and driven by “applicability to reality ... that no nation, no country, no culture and no political actor ‘can meet the worlds challenges alone’” (:34), constituting a search for a “new kind of integration” (:35). In the world, multi-paradigms “remain ambiguous” (:36) amidst which context, epistemology attempts to “create a ‘unity in diversity’ or ‘diversity in unity’ paradigm” and “multi-dimensional research endeavours”(36-37) with which to meet “the contemporary state of the world” (:37), needing to balance the “nomalistic remnants of postmodernity”, “re-balance nominalism with realism, the particular with the whole, the subjective with the objective, as well as rationality with the – unavoidable and irreducible – existential and metaphysical uncertainty and precariousness of life” (:46), in order to speak of transformation, “or practice orientated experiential spirituality”. The characteristic resonance or “philosophical mood” (:38) (of “meta-inclusivity”(45)) moves beyond “Kant’s antimony”(38) noting: “intense intertwinement of ‘societal software’... hardware, technology and demographics” (:38-39), the rise of “public reason” (:39) and a “new alliance between theory and practice”, here seeking “sustainable ... collective development of social activism [and] spiritually founded patterns of value.” (:44).

In critique of contemporary epistemology, Benedikter and Molz (2012:49), note:

[T]he great questions of freedom and community, value and purpose, knowledge and action in an integrative way – questions that were (and are) otherwise often diluted, concealed or forgotten by the hyper-specialized discourses that dominate the academy, as well as by the over-simplified discourses that dominate the mass media and political arena ... simultaneous amidst “partial attempts to establish worldviews crossing the divide between science, wholeness, integration and spirituality.

What is required, they suggest (2012:51) are:

more encompassing cognitive position[s] ... across different types and levels of knowledge ... to contribute a meta-rational understanding of how they can peacefully co-exist ... able to withstand oppressive forces ... crossing all manner of boundaries ... grasping and shaping connective patterns between rationality and spirituality ... This is partly due to the fact that in our age of a ‘global renaissance of religions’ or more precisely, of ‘globalized religions’, the ties between value development and concepts of wholeness, on the one hand, and spirituality, on the other, tend to be strengthened to re-emerge in powerful re-alignments that are sometimes regressive and sometimes progressive in form.

In the social life of neo-integralism, Benedikter and Molz (2012:54-55) note a declining number of the population who live in, “a life split between traditionalist religious dogmas in private and compliance with secular requirements in professional and public life.” (:54) (Waaajman’s “laity”?) While others reconcile, “private and public [life] through atheistic positions or through the rational reinterpretation or reduction of transcendence and wholeness to mental processes, mechanisms and needs”(:55). Two other trends grow: “a new, non-dogmatic openness towards ‘non-local’ correlations between the individual and the whole’, engaging in multiple forms of highly individualized and patchwork beliefs or hybrid worldviews, which often tend to be transient” (:55)and another section of society who are “open to empirically and personally integrating both dimensions in order to effect deep, life-changing transformations and whose worldview is based on first-hand experience in rational as well as in ‘meta-psychological’ engagement” (:55).

Postmodernism in exceeding insights of positivist and objectivist paradigms valued diversity, “championing the role of culture, discourse and power in the social construction of world-views”. Taking sides with the oppressed and marginalised, “genealogical and deconstructive techniques” were deployed against “a huge varieties of issues (including research into balancing social issues in general)”. Benedikter and Molz (2012:56) claim:

Reality beyond discursive formations was, however, negated or at least neglected by postmodern theory building; and ... increasing performative as well as logical contradictions appeared. Common ground among competing discourses ... was rendered impossible because everything as the mere construct of contextual and situational factors. Therefore, no particular reason could be given for preferring such a postmodern stance over pre-modern or mature modern stances. Integration and ‘balance’ became increasingly impossible, because if everything was a contextual construct, paradigmatic balance between nominalism and any alleged objective essentialism was no longer feasible.

In coming to conclusion this dissertation holds that du Toit’s (2006:50-68) insight that Spirituality is imbricated or concerned with cultural problems which in turn set themselves up in the current worldview, is correct. In this sense it might be claimed Bhaskar wishes to institute a new *Gestalt* or worldview which is confluent by providing a philosophically derivable basis for postmodern holism in which *transformation* is vindicated. A worldview (Schoeman 2004:181-183), essentially vocalises the bond of *trust* by which we live: practically, morally and epistemologically. It is a contract of trust based on the alethically known existential “goods” far more critical than a betting or word-gaming handshake. A worldview though mediated and open to revolutionary upheaval, emerges out of need. This dissertation’s critical engagement with Spirituality may bring to some an *anamnesis* of what we need and truly desire. A worldview is distinctive in so far as it describes the things and phenomena and values in which we place our trust as opposed to things we do not trust or have come not to trust. The fallacies and dichotomies of modernism and traditional religion have become recognised as undesirable.

“Postmodern holism”, might be an apt blanket description of what it is that we want and need in our newer worldview. To trust and have faith in a worldview requires that we have a degree of “gut-felt” certainty about ontologies and realities even if that experience is found in the most dire and desperate of times. What unifies a worldview is a resonance about its values

as distinct from others', normally, but not necessarily: otherness alone is never a clear-cut or reliable measure. What it is that in the social cube of things our relations and relationships rely on is the discernment of where to put our attitudes of realism and what things, concepts and categories are worthy to re-vindicate reality and ontology. Worldviews exude an attitude about the reality and importance of things and the hierarchy of values we wish our cultural world to express and live by. In this sense spirituality is about living in a deep relationship with things we trust. The things we trust in postmodern holism are well described in the contributions presented above, for instance Kourie's delineations (2006:82).

Postmodern (post-secular) holism, if that be our world view is distinct from that of modernism, by way of our contemporary negative attitude to dualism and reduction or to a world of separation wanting replacement by a superior attitude to (value for) connectivity. As Kourie notes (2006:89), "... postmodern spirituality ... exhibits a willingness to engage in the totality of existence". What changes worldviews is a new attitude and discernment of causality with which, we seek to trust and unite. It would be ludicrous to insinuate that our notions of causality and connectivity do not expand or alter, over time. Where we deploy our attitudes of realism may be personally, colloquially and regionally, inconsistent within a greater worldview in which we are accommodated.

Furthermore, worldview values or attitudes of realism or trust-as-held in cultural *ultimata* are only relatively enduring. Sometimes we are tempted along with Kourie (2006:88) to beg impossible questions about the possibilities of the future. We simply cannot predict the mediations and items of the future: we have to *make* them with words, relations and agreements. To clothe this process in suspicion is to foreclose the possibilities of cosmology, physics, biology, naturalism and theology, not to mention survival itself. Thus to claim that these things are relative and of deniable value is to deny Glynn's (1997:139, cf. du Toit 2006:58) understanding of the fundamentals of a new worldview - where "the very logic of the human enquiry is compelling a rediscovery of the realm of spirit". What every new worldview invents is the categorical realism that will suit its values and truths and needs.

Bhaskar would have it that in order to accommodate the values of postmodern holism a whole new set of realised thought structures, attitudes, categories and refinements are in order even as he presents them, to start with. I think this goes some way to explain why it is that thinkers have without this sense of categorical realism had difficulty in elucidating the ontology of secular spirituality. Our conceptualisation however is on the way from dualism to

ontological holism in diverse neo-integral worldviews. The subject (epistemological object) here requires a new philosophy or rather the fulfilment of the Copernican insight: it cannot be negotiated with a split intention induced by the mire of old debated dichotomy. Rather what this dissertation recommends for the immediate future are the Bhaskarian resolutions as a more than tentative, ontological provisional step to joining-up knowledge in order to attain, a “joined-up world”.

If not much mistaken this might account for du Toit's (2006:88) adamant vindication of naturalism: “... it is a case of deepening human self-understanding through contact with nature and natural sciences. There can be no true self-knowledge without knowledge of nature”. One suspects that Botha (2006:101) is of the opinion that secular spirituality bears the burden of dualism. There seems to be here an indication that secular spirituality as a “model for post-secular holism” (du Toit 2006:49-73) requires some philosophical clearing and that Bhaskar’s insistence that more and varied categories or greater categorical realism is needed, might well further the cause.

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