ROY BHASKAR

DIALECTIC
The Pulse of Freedom

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION

Dialectic

The Pulse of Freedom

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Contents

Let this be said, then; and also that, as it seems, whether one is or is not, both itself and the others, both to themselves and to each other, all in every way both are and are not and appear and do not appear. Very true.

PLATO

This struggle [between the infinite and the finite] is a conflict defined not by the indifference of the two sides in their distinction, but by their being bound together in one unity. I am not one of the fighters locked in battle, but both, and I am the struggle itself. I am fire and water...

HEGEL

In its mystified form, the dialectic became the fashion in Germany because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to the bourgeoisie and their doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negative, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state; in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well, and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.

MARX

Introduction

Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom [Dialectic], first published in 1993, is one of the great books of philosophy. It is the main work in the fourth moment of Ram Roy Bhaskar's developing philosophical system of critical realism and meta-Reality.[1] Systems, as I have explained in the introduction to a new edition of Bhaskar's first book[2]—though much out of favour these days—are like ontologies (which they sometimes embrace): if philosophers do not develop one explicitly, their work will implicitly or tacitly secrete one. Such a 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[3] that define the intellectual horizons into which we are all 'thrown'. Where 'PMR' stands for 'the philosophy of meta-Reality', 'TDCR' for 'transcendental dialectical critical realism', 'DCR' for 'dialectical critical realism', 'EC' for 'the theory of explanatory critiques', 'CN' for 'critical naturalism', 'TR' for 'transcendental realism' and '>' for 'constellationally contains' or 'preservatively sublates', the place of dialectical critical realism within this beautifully articulated system can be written as:

PMR>TDCR>DCR>EC>CN>TR

The system is also articulated in terms of seven dimensions of being (comprising the ontological-axiological chain) that I normally designate 'stadia'—that is, 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 totality, '2E' [second edge] for negativity, '1M' [first moment] for non-identity):

7A>6R>5A>4D>3L>2E>1M[4]

Or conversely, and chronologically (omitting the numerals): MELDARA.[5]

   This is by no means a purely mnemonic device, as I have noted elsewhere: '*Moment* signifies something finished, behind us, determinate—a *product: transfactual* (structural) *causality,* pertaining to *NON-IDENTITY; first* is for *founding. Edge* speaks of the point of transition or becoming, the exercise of causal powers in *rhythmic (processual) causality,* pertaining to

NEGATIVITY. Level announces an emergent whole with its own specific determinations, capable of reacting back on the materials from which it is formed—*process-in-product: holistic causality,* pertaining to *TOTALITY. Dimension* singles out a geo-historically recent form of causality—*product-in-process:* human *intentional causality,* transformative AGENCY or praxis.'[6] To complete the series: *Aspect* is for the sake of euphony, signifying the *spirituality* presupposed by emancipatory projects; *Realm* is for realms of *enchantment* that the shedding of disenchantment discloses; *Awakening* is to understanding *non-duality* and the experience of *being being,* rather than thinking being, when, as the saying goes, we are 'in the Zone'.

The bare bones of the stadia and moments in their articulation are displayed in Table 1.[7] The ultimate concern of DCR is with thinking being as incorporating human praxis and reflexivity (emancipatory axiology, or the coherence of theory and practice in practice) at 4D, but, as is the way with the developmental moments of a dialectical system, it also brings its own particular emphasis to the thinking of the other stadia. Thus, whereas at 3L EC thinks totality as including values, DCR thinks it also as maximised by praxis, which absents incompleteness. Whereas at 2E CN thinks negativity as contradiction and emergence (social relationism, transformationalism) and EC thinks it also as absenting ills conceived as constraints, DCR thinks it also as determinate absence, generalised to the whole of being as real and ontologically prior to presence and essential to change. And whereas at 1M TR thinks being as structured and differentiated, CN thinks it as also containing mind and concepts, and EC thinks it as also intrinsically valuable, DCR thinks it also as alethic truth, the reality principle or axiological necessity.

Dialectic has three closely related aims: 'the dialectical enrichment and deepening of critical realism…; the development of a general theory of dialectic—or better, a dialectic—[that will]…be capable of sustaining the development of a general metatheory for the social sciences, on the basis of which they will be capable of functioning as agencies of human self-emancipation;[8] [and] the outline of the elements of a totalising critique of western philosophy' (p. 2). This is by any measure an extraordinarily ambitious agenda, in the course of executing which Bhaskar claims to have made two momentous discoveries: a uniquely adequate conceptualisation of negativity, hence of dialectic (p. xiv); and truth as ontological and alethic as a condition of propositional truth (p. 200). This already suggests in broad terms why the explicit dialecticisation of hitherto existing critical realism—which is implicitly dialectical[9]—is necessary: it lacks (1) an adequate theory of absence and a fortiori of change and spatio-temporal process (2E); (2) an explicit overall theory of truth underpinned by alethic truth (1M, 1M–4D);

Table 1 The moments of the philosophy of critical realism and meta-Reality mapped to the stadia of the ontological-axiological chain

Stadion/Moment	1M Non-Identity	2E Negativity	3L Totality	4D Transformative Agency	5A Spirituality	6R (Re-)Enchantment	7A/Z Non-Duality
CR as a whole: thinking being	as such and in general	processually + as for 1M	as a totality + as for 2E	as incorporating human praxis and reflexivity + as for 3L	as incorporating spirituality + as for 4D	as incorporating enchantment + as for 5A	as incorporating non-duality + as for 6R
Form of reflexivity – immanent critique of	philosophical discourse of modernity (PDM)	PDM + 1M	PDM + 1M, 2E	PDM + 1M, 2E, 3L	PDM + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D	PDM + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D +5A	PDM + 1M, 2E, 3L, 4D +5A +6R
TR: thinking being as	structured and differentiated						
CN inflection: thinking being as	containing mind and concepts	negativity, contradiction, emergence (social relationism, transforma-tionalism)					
EC inflection: thinking being as	intrinsically valuable	negativity qua absenting constraints (ills)	totality, understood as including values (retotalisation)				

DCR inflection: **thinking** **being as**	alethic truth (reality principle, axiological necessity)	negativity qua (determinate) absence, generalised to the whole of being as real and essential to change	totality, understood as maximised by praxis (which absents incompleteness)	transformative praxis and reflexivity (emancipatory axiology)			
TDCR inflection: **thinking** **being as**	underlying non-duality (God, transcendentally real self)	transcendence co-presence creativity	totality, understood as incl. unconditional love	spontaneous right-action	spiritual		
PMR inflection: **thinking** **being as**	underlying non-duality (cosmic envelope, ground-state)	transcendence co-presence creativity	totality, understood as incl. unconditional love	spontaneous right-action	spiritual	enchanted	non-dual

(3) a theory of moral alethia and the elements of the good society for human being (3L); and (4) a fully developed emancipatory axiology (4D).[10] The remedying of these deficiencies could only be effected in the context of (5) a settling of philosophical accounts with Hegel and Marx and the elaboration, initiated in Bhaskar's earlier work, of the elements of a totalising critique of western philosophy. In what follows, I come on to these issues after relating something of the personal and intellectual context of the book.[11]

Dialectic had a long period of gestation. The method Bhaskar had adapted from Kant, Hegel and Marx at the outset of his philosophical career— transcendental critique, broadened to include immanent critique—centrally involves the absenting of absences in a conatus to ever more complete conceptual formations. Over the years Bhaskar therefore inevitably pondered the phenomenon of negativity deeply. When in the second half of the seventies he devoted himself to the task of bringing his philosophy of social science to publication, he turned his attention inter alia to Marx and Marxism as the most fundamental body of social scientific work from the point of view of a science of geo-history, and to Marx's own self-understanding of what he was doing in his work. This involved deep study of Marx's relation to Hegel and of dialectics and the dialectical tradition generally.[12] Bhaskar quickly came to the conclusion that the concept of absence was going to provide the key to unifying his evolving system, but for some years was unable to see how all the pieces of the jigsaw fitted together. In particular, how is it possible to think or say the not, declared to be an impossibility by Parmenides (c. 510–450 BCE) and the whole meta-theoretical tradition of presence? It all fell into place in 1991–1992 when Bhaskar deployed conceptual machinery borrowed from R.M.Hare to distinguish clearly the senses in which the 'tropic' (e.g. a fictional being), the 'neustic' (e.g. a theoretically postulated non-entity such as phlogiston) and the 'phrastic' (de-ontic as well as ontic) content of propositions are all real, thereby breaking the link between reference and positive existence (cf. p. 40 f.). The clear demarcation of these three levels of discourse revealed determinate non-being as real and the metaphysics of presence or, as Bhaskar calls it, ontological monovalence—the assumption that being is filled with presence or pure positivity—as a mere superstition. The positive is 'a tiny, but important, ripple on the surface of a sea of negativity' (p. 5), a sea that so far as we know is bottomless and extends horizontally for billions of years in the past-in-the-present (the absent process of formation of a thing) and into the future-in-the-past-in-the-present as increasingly shaped possibility,[13] and is itself shot through with the negative—a conception entraining deep understanding of the precariousness and evanescence of (polyvalent) being. Bhaskar was not slow to connect his discovery to the basic motor of Hegelian dialectical phenomenology, the absenting of absence issuing in

conceptual emergence (which Marx had identified as its rational kernel); and by the same token also to the undoing of absence in Hegel's 'analytical reinstatement' of pure positivity (p. 63 et passim). This made sense of Marx's intuition that Hegelian dialectic is both of great importance and in the final analysis an apologia for the status quo (p. 86 f.), and (along with the theory of alethic truth) provided him with the fundamental logical infrastructure for his own account of dialectic as, formally, the absenting of absence and, substantively, the ontologic of change or (in the human sphere and, in some measure, the biosphere as a whole) the process of freedom.

The decade immediately preceding the publication of *Dialectic* had been dark times for the Left, witnessing not only the demise of 'actually existing socialism' but the roll-back of emancipatory movements in the South and the destruction of the industrial working class as a political subject in the epicentres of capital by the neo-liberal counter-offensive, entraining what Bhaskar soon dubbed 'western bourgeois triumphalism' as the dominant ideological outlook.[14] The eighties had also seen the crystallisation of the postmodern as a global discourse. In Bhaskar's later written global assessments of postmodernism, he was to praise it for its critique of abstract universality and its emphasis on difference and diversity—its critique of modernity and Eurocentrism—but strongly criticise it for its rejection of any kind of universality and its consequent actualism and for its judgemental relativism.[15] Frederick Jameson already in 1984 had offered a real definition: 'the cultural logic of late capitalism'.[16] Bhaskar's own work was very much devoted to moving beyond that logic. While postmodernism's political trajectory was Rightwards in the direction of anti-communism/ anti-Marxism and an endism that saw liberal democracy and capitalism as unsurpassable, Bhaskar continued to work metacritically within the conatus to freedom linking Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Marx (cf. p. 335) and—uniquely among major contemporary philosophers—remained committed to a (libertarian) form of revolutionary socialism. Thus while postmodernism was rejecting the European Enlightenment holus bolus, Bhaskar (while by no means uncritical of it) was elaborating versions of several of its 'grand narratives':[17] those of emancipation through the advance of knowledge and of the tendential rational directionality of geo-history, issuing in the possibility of a new eudaimonian enlightenment. While postmodernism was prone to view ethical categories as mystificatory traces of power relations, Bhaskar was bent on elaborating an ethics grounded in truth.

When *Dialectic* was first published its author was becoming fairly well-known internationally as the originator of the philosophy of critical realism, and a first generation of critical realist scholars had become entrenched within the academy, predominantly in the United Kingdom and (especially Northern) Europe, but also in the Americas, Australasia, (especially South) Asia and South Africa. The book was greeted with a certain amount of

hostility by some established critical realist scholars on the grounds that it was impossibly and unnecessarily difficult—'a Niagara of neo-logisms'[18]— and so an imposition on the burgeoning critical realist movement. It is, indeed, a difficult book, as Bhaskar readily admits, for its subject-matter is.[19] It engages a dialectical critique of analytical reason in order to grasp in thought nothing less than being as becoming, and within that geo-history as process—offering, in effect, a totalising philosophy of geo-history—at a highly abstract level. However, no reasonably well-educated reader need be deterred by its difficulty. There is now an array of aids in print,[20] and *Dialectic's* own presentational dialectics, which are broadly in terms of the stadia of MELD(ARA), will also assist in understanding: Chapter 1 is concerned with critical realism, Hegelian dialectic, and the problems of philosophy—the material that is to be worked on/with and developed or transformed (1M non-identity); Chapter 2 expounds dialectic as the logic of absence (2E negativity); Chapter 3 presents the system of dialectical critical realism and the totalising dialectic of desire to freedom (3L totality, the domain of ethics); and Chapter 4 engages in the transformative labour of the metacritique of western philosophical irrealism (4D transformative praxis). The book's sixty-nine diagrams, many wonderfully distilling the essence of complex arguments and counteracting the limitations imposed by the linearity of the text, will also assist. While more than a modicum of stamina and application is of course required, the rewards are high.[21]

(1) I have already indicated briefly how Bhaskar arrived at the fundamental concept of absence, thereby absenting its absence in the metatheory of presence. *Dialectic* develops a complex dialectical argument, reinforced by the overall thematics of the book, that absence or real negation is not only a sine qua non of any possible world but is ontologically prior to presence simpliciter.[22] If the underlying logical structure of Bhaskar's earlier work is in terms of the interrelated distinctions between (a) the domain of the real and the domains of the actual and empirical/ conceptual and (b) the intransitive (ontological) and transitive (epistemological) dimensions, that of his dialectical work is *also* in terms of the more fundamental distinctions between (α) absence and presence and (β) truth as ontological/alethic and as epistemological. Note that (α), together with the priority of absence, is already presupposed by the ontological depth thematised in (a): the real domain of unactualised possibility is both distinct from and far vaster than (logically, epistemologically and ontologically prior to) the domain of the actual. Table 2 illustrates the logical infrastructure of the book in relation to (*α*) and the unification of its categories in terms of absence. This embraces causality construed as tensed spatialising process (where the Spinozan view that 'all determination is negation' is upheld against its inversion by Hegel, such that *'to cause is to change is to absent is to transform and so*

redetermine' [p. 240]), together with the *'constellational identity of causality* [...] *and space-time'* (p. 77), issuing in the concept of the *constellational unity of identity and change* in the spatio-temporal continuity of any entity, which by perspectival switch is also a *constellational unity of identity and difference* (entity relationism); and it extends to the ethical sphere, where absence may be viewed as constraint or ill.[23]

Table 2 Polysemy and modes of absence[24]

Ontological-Axiological Chain	1M Non-Identity	2E Negativity	3L Totality	4D Transformative Agency
Concrete universal↔ singular	universality	processuality	mediation	concrete singularity
Polysemy of absence	product	process	process-in-product	product-in-process
Causal modes of absence	transfactual causality	rhythmic causality	holistic causality	intentional causality
Concepts of negation	real negating process (substantial and non-substantial)	transformative negating process (substantial)	radical self-negating process	linear self-consciously negating process
Modes of radical negation	auto-subversion	self-transformation	self-realisation	self-overcoming

The close link between absence and causality leads on to a general theory of emergence (which, along with creativity, may be seen as a positive bipolar of absence) on which matter itself is 'creative' or 'autopoietic', making quantum leaps of '(one feels like saying) the materialised imagination' (p. 49) that establish genuinely novel and irreducible levels of reality, and for which the conceptual emergence established by Hegelian dialectic provides an analogue. Absence qua constraint is also closely linked to 'the official motive force of Hegelian dialectic' (p. 40), contradiction, the various forms of which Bhaskar definitively dissects, vindicating inter alia the coherence of the mainstay of materialist analysis and critique, dialectical contradiction, involving the co-inclusion or co-presence of absence and presence both at different times within a temporal stretch (as in Hegel) and simultaneously at different ontological levels within a spatial spread (as in Marx).[25] The figure

of dialectical contradiction underpins a key socio-substantive concept of the book, that of power$_2$ or generalised master-slave-type relations, which in speaking of slavery explicitly calls attention to the exploitative nature of the wage-labour/capital relation, masked by commodity fetishism. This figure is linked to a theory of alienation (a form of absenting) and the dialectics of co-presence. Together these unify the problems of western philosophy and their resolution in transformative social practice as well as in theory,[26] and provide the basis for a conception of geo-history, with roots deep in the Judaeo-Christian-Marxist tradition, as a dialectical process (in the intransitive dimension) that moves from an original unity via diremption to the possibility of a richer, more differentiated unity in eudaimonian society.

(2) Like the conceptualisation of absence, the theory of the truth tetrapolity renders explicit what was already, but only, presupposed by Bhaskar's earlier work. In particular, the concept of alethic truth is implied by the Lockean and Leibnizian moments in the dialectic of scientific discovery articulated in *A Realist Theory of Science* and now considerably developed in the dialectic of epistemology,[27] and more generally by categorial realism: the basic insight is that 'humans do not bring truth to the world (cf. the Kantian categories), rather the world imposes its truth on us (cf. the CR categories)'.[28] The elements of the tetrapolity are displayed in their systematic interrelation in Table 3. Thus (1) truth as normative-fiduciary ('trust me, you can act on it') presupposes (2) truth as adequating (warrantedly assertible), which presupposes (3) truth as expressive-referential, which presupposes (4) truth as ontological and alethic (alethic realism). To give a simple example: (1) The weather forecast says it's not going to rain because there's a stable high-pressure system in place, so don't take an umbrella' presupposes (2) that the statement is warrantedly assertible, which presupposes (3) that it expresses-refers to an objective weather system with a disposition to produce fine weather, which presupposes (4) that such a weather system really is in place. On this theory a proposition is true—as the correspondence view of truth holds (and indeed any realist theory must hold)—'if and only if the state of affairs that it expresses (describes) is real',[29] but correspondence is relegated to the status of a metaphor for but one of the moments of the overall theory, that of truth as adequating.[30] The real reason for things is caught in the alethic moment, which is a form of the wider concept of ontological truth. In our example the (epistemologically mediated) weather system is the ontological truth, and its (epistemologically mediated) dispositional properties the alethic truth, of fine weather (for which there may be a deeper alethic truth, and so on, recursively, such that alethic truth is the stratified form of referential detachment). Whereas ontology and depth-stratification would continue to exist without human being, the related concepts of ontological and alethic

Table 3 Polysemy and modes of truth and untruth[31]

Ontological-Axiological Chain	1M Non-Identity → 7A/Z Identity	2E Negativity	3L Totality	4D Transformative Agency
Concrete universal ↔ singular	universality	processuality	mediation	concrete singularity
Judgement form	evidential	descriptive	imperatival-fiduciary	expressively veracious
Truth tetrapolity – truth as	(4) ontological, alethic (ID)	(2) adequating (warrantedly assertible) or epistemic (TD)	(1) normative-fiduciary (IA of TD)	(3) expressive-referential (4D and 1M) (TD/ID)
Modes of alethic truth	axiological necessity reality principle alethic truth as such	praxis-dependent	totalising (oriented to maximising explanatory power)	contextualised by the dialectic of the singular science concerned
Qualities of truth	grounded	dynamic	totalising	context-sensitive
Theory of moral alethia – truth as	the pulse of freedom (tendency to strive for universal free flourishing)	dialectical reason	universalis-ability	freedom: universal human emancipation
Ethical tetrapolity	(4) universal emancipation as an emergent property of four-planar social being – eudaimonia	(2) explanatory critical theory complex	(1) fiduciariness	(3) totalising depth-praxis
Modes of falsity	(3) *in* an object or being *to* its essential nature (ID)	(1) *about* an object or being (at any one level of reality) (TD)	untrust-worthiness	(2) *in* an object or being (at that level of reality) (TD/ID)
Form of ideology	(3) underlying generative (alethic) falsity	(1) theoretical		(2) practical
Form of alienation	(3) self-alienation	(1) conceptual		(2) practical
Holy trinity	ontological realism	epistemic relativism		judgemental rationalism
Unholy trinity	ontological monovalence	epistemic fallacy		primal squeeze on empirically controlled theory and natural necessity
Domains of Reality	**Real**	**Empirical/Conceptual**		**Actual**

Note. IA = the intrinsic (normative) aspect of the transitive dimension; ID = intransitive dimension. TD = transitive dimension. Correspondences with the (overlapping) domains of reality are loose.

truth are human praxis-dependent, hence dynamic and developing (emergent)—ontology and depth-stratification (the real reason or dialectical ground of things) as encountered and understood in and through human praxis.

It will readily be seen that the moments of this theory can be transposed into the register of untruth or falsity. In particular, as Table 3 indicates, a statement's (1) lack of trustworthiness presupposes (2) its lack of warranted assertibility *about* something (corresponding to theoretical or conceptual ideology/alienation), which may be underpinned by (3) lack of an expressive-referential dimension *in* some social practice (corresponding to practical ideology/alienation, for example, the constant-conjunction form or the wage-form), which may in turn be underpinned by (4) falsity *in* something *to* its essential nature (corresponding to alethic falsity/self-alienation, for example, alienating social structures or someone who is alienated from the potentialities of their human nature, respectively).[32] The alethic truth of something may thus itself be false and there may be real emergent false levels of being at the level of concepts and social practices. Note that each form of falsity depends upon and is typically immediately explained by a constitutive absence of reality: in thought, in social practices and in ourselves, respectively.[33] In this way the theory of the truth tetrapolity lays the ground-work for the Bhaskarian theory of ideology/ alienation,[34] and within that, the theory of the Tina compromise formation which will shortly be developed as the theory of the demi-real;[35] and thence for a conception of the dialectics of emancipation as essentially involving the shedding of real emergent false levels of being or heronomous orders of determination constituted by ignorance and illusion, underpinned by alienation.[36] A Tina compromise formation is entrained when 'a falsity in theory [is] held in tension with a truth in practice',[37] that is, when a theory contravenes axiological necessity (an epistemologically mediated natural necessity that asserts itself in practice). Axiological necessity is the more subjective pole of three modes of alethic truth or levels of natural necessity related to human praxis: at the objective pole lies alethic truth as such and in general, with the reality principle (adapted from Freud) in between. These concepts thus offer three perspectives on the same thing. The concept of alethic truth is not at all tied to specific concrete human practices, whereas axiological necessity always is, and the reality principle relates to concrete practices in general.

(3) (4) When combined with the premise that people as such are free[38] and desire to remove constraints on their freedom, the theory of the truth tetrapolity entrains the developmental logic of the ethical tetrapolity in the sphere of practical reason. While our ethical stance will always be concretely singularised and context-specific at the level of the actual, such that there can be no general theory of the thing to do, Bhaskar argues that there is a tendency to rational directionality in play in geo-history at the level of the

non-actual real. This is not an ethical ideal but a real tendency, a deep yearning and striving for free flourishing latent in human praxis as such, and manifest in every concrete struggle for freedom. This deep content and latent immanent teleology of praxis is the dynamo of Bhaskar's emancipatory axiology.[39] The developmental logic of the ethical tetrapolity moves from (i) the trust and solidarity implicit in praxis (3L), presupposing a principle of dialectical universalisability, to (ii) explanatory critical theories of what is to be done, combined with exercises in concrete Utopias and theories of transition (2E), then to (iii) the totalising depth-praxis that brings the world in to line with our theories (4D), thence to (iv) 'universal concretely singularized human autonomy in nature' (p. 385) as the emergent reality of eudaimonia (1M). This directional striving is the pulse of freedom, which gives the book its subtitle. While its outcome is highly contingent—there will be a multiplicity of other tendencies in play in any concrete geo-historical situation—it is irrepressible and universal to human being, and furnishes the basis of Bhaskar's extended real definition of dialectic in the sociosphere as the absenting of absences on absenting absences, where absences are understood as constraints or ills.[40] Marx's intuition that the moral alethia or object/ive for human being is the free development of each as a condition of the free development of all is thereby vindicated. This presupposes the inversion and transformation of the Hegelian trio of the family, civil society and the state—such that the crowning glory of eudaimonia is, not the state, but individual freedom—and entrains an array of socio-substantive principles, subject to what ongoing depth-investigation of the possibilities of four-planar social being might reveal, as displayed in broad outline in Table 4.[41]

(5) The great failing of western philosophy, according to its Bhaskarian metacritique, is that it is by and large irrealist[42] (non-transcendental realist): it de-ontologises (cf. the epistemic fallacy) and de-negativises (cf. ontological monovalence) the world, entraining 'primal squeeze' on empirically controlled theory and natural necessity. This is the 'unholy trinity' of errors that has determined the basic overall trajectory of western philosophy, to which *Dialectic* counterposes the 'holy trinity' of dialectical critical realism: judgemental rationalism in the intrinsic or normative dimension of the epistemological process (IA), epistemic relativism (TD) and ontological realism (ID). Since primal squeeze is entrained by the epistemic fallacy, mediated by actualism, 'the trinity can be seen as the function of a couple' (p. 406), and the question arises as to which is the more primordial or fundamental error. Bhaskar sources both to alienation and a desire to preserve the status quo (fear of change), arriving at a real definition of western philosophy as 'the Janus-faced[43] aporetic and gener ally unconscious normalisation of the status quo ante'.[44] Considered historically, ontological monovalence determines the trajectory of the western philosophical tradition from the time of Plato, who analysed change in terms

of difference, but considered synchronically or from a structural point of view the epistemic fallacy and the associated ontology of empirical realism is dominant in the thought of modernity. None the less, they can be seen as ultimately two sides of the same coin: on the epistemic fallacy you cannot talk about the world, so absence and change are repressed; on ontological monovalence you can talk about the world, but in a way that rules out absence and change. However, because ontological monovalence, like the epistemic fallacy, entails the exclusion of alterity (which is by valid perspectival switch a mode of absence), ontological monovalence must be judged the more fundamental error.[46]

Table 4 The moments of eudaimonia, with some correspondences[45]

Ontological-Axiological Chain	1M Non-Identity	2E Negativity	3L Totality	4D Transformative Praxis
CR concrete universal	universality	processuality	mediation	concrete singularity
Eudaimonia	(1) universal civic duty (responsibilities, rights)	open process (permanent transition)	(2) social virtue (enterprise, participation)	(3) individual freedom (unity-in-diversity)
Hegel	(3) state	end of history	(2) civil society	(1) family
Marx	(1) realm of necessity	open process	(2) civil society	(3) realm of freedom
Ethical tetrapolity	(4) universal emancipation as an emergent property of four-planar social being – eudaimonia	(2) explanatory critical theory complex	(1) fiduciariness	(3) totalising depth-praxis
Logic of social transition	(4) emergence	(2) dialectical contradiction	(1) dialectical connection	(3) negation of the negation (geo-historical transformation of geo-historical products)
Politics (democratic, participatory)	emancipatory/transformative	movement	representative/syndicalist	life

Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom is one of those big, creative books whose riches will be mined for generations to come, the magnificent outcome of a relentless pursuit of fundamental truth in the cause of freedom that enlists its author in the ranks of 'the very few philosophers who [do] not recoil in fear from the idea of a world without domination and hierarchy'.[47] Even as he was writing it, Bhaskar was pondering deeply the problem of pinpointing and remedying the failings of emancipatory projects in an era of global counter-revolution. At the end of 1994, soon after penning the simpler version of *Dialectic* that is *Plato Etc.,* he had an experience revelatory of the depths of the human inner world, which was in part 'the undoing of oblivion'[48] in relation to the Indian side of his self, and took a decision to explore this whole sphere systematically. By the turn of the century transcendental and immanent critique of emancipatory discourses, of western bourgeois triumphalism and of the prior phases of his own thought would drive his system past the dialectical to a further, spiritual turn that thematises a rich underlying identity or non-duality as ingredient in and sustaining, but occluded by, the heteronomous orders of determination in the world of duality and dualism that constitute the terrain of *Dialectic;* a turn that does not, however, annul but constellationally embraces dialectical critical realism.[49] Indeed, the dialectic of *Dialectic* in important respects opens the way to the new philosophy of meta-Reality: in its conceptualisation of the cosmos as 'a potentially infinite totality, of which we know something but not how much' (p. 15); in its celebration of possibility and creativity; in its dialectics of co-presence; in its grasp of geo-history as a dialectical process of alienation and wholeness; in its prefiguration of the theory of the transcendentally real self; in its dialectic of desire to freedom, presupposing the possibility of freedom from desire; and above all in its intrepid pursuit of truth. Within the new outlook, it retains all its purchase on the world of duality and oppressive dualism, at the heart of which is its demonstration of the irrepressible conatus to freedom immanent in human praxis as such.

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Mervyn Hartwig
London
November 2007

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Notes

1. While the philosophy of meta-Reality goes beyond critical realism, it arguably both presupposes, and is broadly presupposed by, the latter, such that the two form a single system. I use 'moment' in its Hegelian sense of part or phase of a whole (totality), considered either synchronically or in its diachronic development, where parts and whole are both distinct from and internally related or essential to each other.

2. M.Hartwig, 'Introduction' to R.Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science [RTS]*, fourth edition, London: Routledge, 2008.

3. Definitions of most critical realist terms used in this introduction can be found in M.Hartwig, ed., *Dictionary of Critical Realism [DCR]*, London: Routledge, 2007.

4. Allowing for the fact that 7 A and 6R are both elaborated by PMR, it will be seen that the stadia of this schema correspond to the (main emphasis of) the developing moments of the system.

5. 7A is also designated 7Z (seventh zone), in which case the acronym is MELDARZ.

6. M.Hartwig, 'MELD', in *DCR*, 295.

7. Considered diachronically, both the stadia and the moments of the system are less than fully preservative sublations of their predecessors because they enrich and deepen (or, if you prefer, add something) to them; formally, they are *essentially preservative* sublations. Considered synchronically, they are fully or *totally preservative*, because 1M is 'already' enriched or added to by 7A, TR by PMR, and so on. See M.Hartwig, 'Sublation', in *DCR*, 449.

8. This aim is more briefly expressed as the 'emancipation of dialectic for (the dialectic of) emancipation' (p. 40).

9. See my introductions to R.Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science [RTS]*, London: Routledge, 2008; *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation [SRHE]*, London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2008; *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy [RR]*, London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2008; and *Plato Etc.: The Problems of Philosophy and their Resolution [PE]*, London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2008.

10. Emancipatory axiology is already developed significantly in *SRHE* (though not by that name).

11. For a fuller account, see R.Bhaskar with M.Hartwig, *The Formation of Critical Realism: A Personal Perspective*, London: Routledge, forthcoming, 2008. In outlining some of *Dialectic's* main theses, I of course make no claim to indicate anything like its full wealth, which the reader must discover for herself.

12. This work issued in a series of magisterial dictionary entries on Marxist concepts, which bring remarkable intellectual order to a field of considerable confusion. They incorporate a reassessment of the mature Marx as a scientific realist. See R.Bhaskar, 'Contradiction', 'Determinism', 'Dialectics (reprinted with corrections in Bhaskar, *RR*), 'Empiricism', 'Idealism', 'Theory of knowledge (reprinted with corrections in ibid.), 'Materialism' (reprinted with corrections in ibid.), 'Realism', 'Science', and 'Truth' in T.Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell, [1983] 1991.

13. Bhaskar notes (p. 7 n.) that the concept of absence or real negation 'extends our ontology synchronically, irrespective of over what space-time span the indefinite synchronic is defined, so that it does not depend essentially upon process'. The

same note indicates that as late as 1991 (the date of publication of his *Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom [PIF]*, Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, which the note references) he was still confusing 'the epistemological question of our criteria for the reality of absence with the ontological question of whether, for example, a thing is, quite independently of us, absent (distanciated or non-existent), not there' and 'tacitly thinking of non-being (or more generally absence) as *necessarily* involving depth, thus overlooking the simplest species, where it involves merely spatio-temporal distance'.

14. Bhaskar, *RMR*, 165 f. *Dialectic* develops a concept of triumphalism and links it conceptually to centrism (e.g. anthropocentrism), which entails it, and to endism, which is entailed by it (e.g. Hegel's and Fukuyama's postulate of the end of history), but it does not yet name western bourgeois triumphalism as such. See M.Hartwig, 'Centrism→triumphalism→endism', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*.

15. See Bhaskar, *RMR*, 165 f. Bhaskar engages with a number of aspects of postmodernism in *Dialectic*, but the book does not incorporate an overall critique.

16. F.Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism', *New Left Review* I/186,1984.

17. The postmodernist prohibition of 'grand narratives' and philosophical systems is of course the grandest narrative of all.

18. A.Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, London: Sage, 2000, p. 170 n.10. There are very few new words in *Dialectic*, but neo-logisms in the sense of old words (or combinations thereof) put to new, rigorously defined, uses as philosophical concepts abound—as they must in any creative mapping of conceptual space.

19. Its reputation for difficulty often goes hand-in-hand with the inverse-elitist notion that it is badly written because it is not in 'plain English'. For the latest libel that it is 'appallingly written', see S.Creaven, *Emergentist Marxism: Dialectical Philosophy and Social Theory*, London: Routledge, 2007, 42. Creaven notes that 'often the accusation of "bad writing" directed against Bhaskar by critical realists functions as an excuse not to engage with dialectical critical realism', but tucks this away in an endnote (337, n.141); in his own case it functions illicitly to cut Bhaskar's dialectic—which, *pace* Creaven, does not in fact compete with Marxian dialectic, but operates at a higher level of abstraction—down to a size at which it can, he thinks, be swallowed up by his own dialectic. Creaven's own prose sparkles with such good-writerly gems as 'rips into' (p. 23), 'a bit rich', and 'Bhaskar needs to do better' (p. 60). For a defence and appreciation of *Dialectic's* style see my 'Preface' to Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, xvii–xix. I would add that the materialist diffraction of dialectic *entails* the creative multiplication of new concepts. The myth that *Dialectic* is the first book that Bhaskar spoke rather than wrote (which allegedly helps to explain the 'bad

writing') is despatched in Bhaskar with Hartwig, *Formation*. Bhaskar has written a complete version of almost all his books by hand, which he has then spoken into a dictaphone because typists experience difficulty deciphering his neat but miniscule handwriting.

20. Bhaskar, PE, provides a good entrée to *Dialectic,* helpfully recapitulating its main themes. Useful shorter introductions include R.Bhaskar and A.Norrie, 'Introduction: dialectic and dialectical critical realism', in M.S.Archer, R.Bhaskar, A.Collier, T.Lawson, and A.Norrie, eds, *Critical Realism: Essential Readings [ER],* London: Routledge, 1998, and A.Norrie, 'Dialectical critical realism' in Hartwig, ed., *DCR,* 130–38. Hartwig, ed., *DCR,* offers fully cross-referenced entries on all the main concepts. See also Creaven, *Emergentist Marxism.*

21. *Dialectic* has largely been neglected by mainstream philosophy, which is dominated by the analytical problematic that the book strongly critiques (while preserving a vital role for analytical within dialectical reason), but this can be expected to change as we move from an epoch of reaction towards one of progressive social reform, if not transformation. Its relative neglect by the Marxist tradition, for which dialectic is supposed to be 'a scandal and abomination to the bourgeoisie' (as one of *Dialectic's* lead quotes reminds us), is more surprising. Marxists by and large seem to prefer basic or 'pre-dialectical' critical realism, valuing in particular its epistemology of scientific realism and its stratified and emergentist ontology, albeit in at least some cases rejecting the transcendental procedure (which, some fear, opens the way to God) whereby it arrives at these positions. (See especially A.Callinicos, *The Resources of Critique,* Cambridge: Polity, 2006, 10–11, and Chs 5, 6.) *Dialectic's* materialist diffraction of dialectic, inaugurated by Marx, seems to be widely appreciated, and also to some extent the dialectics of freedom and the thesis of the tendential rational directionality of geo-history. But its ethics are (wrongly) deemed to be idealist and voluntarist; it's (constructive) critique of Marx is resented, especially the notion that Marx focuses on the wage-labour/capital relation at the expense of other forms of oppression; and some are worried that Bhaskar's dialectic intends to swallow Marxian dialectic whole, that is, sublate it, albeit perhaps essentially preservatively. (However, as already noted, it operates at a higher level of abstraction and, far from gobbling up Marxism and other emancipatory research programmes, Bhaskar's intent is to underlabour and support them by contributing to the elaboration of a general metatheory for the social sciences.) See especially A.Brown, S.Fleetwood, and J.M.Roberts, eds, *Critical Realism and Marxism,* London and New York: Routledge, 2002; A.Collier, 'Power$_{1.5}$ and the weakness of liberalism', *Journal of Critical Realism* 6(1) (2007): 111–16; Creaven, *Emergentist Marxism;* J.Morgan, 'The merits of enumeration: powers of power and the political', *Journal of Critical Realism* 6(1) (2007): 117–25.

22. Thus if the question of the coming to be and ceasing to exist of any world containing presence is posed in the context of current cosmological theory, it could only be from absence to absence. This does not entail that there was ever absolutely nothing: there may be degrees and modes of absence we do not fully comprehend (cf. p. 47 n.). Here, as throughout his work, Bhaskar takes the implications of modern science seriously.

23. As I have noted elsewhere (M.Hartwig, 'Ont/de-ont', in *DCR*, p. 333), this has an etymological pedigree in the double meaning of the ancient Greek root *deon* (n.) on which *deontology* (the study of moral duty) is formed: (1) to bind, fasten, fetter; and (2) to want, lack, need. These two meanings come together in the pivotal CR concept of absence (de-ont) as constraint (fetter) and as lack or ill-being (need), thereby unifying ethics with the theory of being. However, as Tobin Nellhaus has pointed out on the Critical Realism List, the entry is mistaken in postulating an etymological connection between the Bhaskarian concept 'de-ont' (a negative being) and *'deon'*.

24. M.Hartwig, 'Absence', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, p. 10 (modified).

25. See M.Hartwig, 'Co-presence', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, 84–5.

26. I return to this topic in my 'Introduction' to R.Bhaskar, *Plato Etc. [PE]*, forthcoming, 2008.

27. See M.Hartwig, 'Epistemological dialectic', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, 175–77.

28. M.Hartwig, 'Alethia', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, p. 26. In *SRHE* Bhaskar arrived at a conception of truth as ontological but not yet as alethic, and at an overall theory of truth as a duality (epistemic-ontic) rather than a tetrapolity.

29. Bhaskar, *RTS*, 249.

30. In its expressive-referential moment, truth is a duality (the elements of which are distinct but interrelated) whereby we express the world in discourse, whereas the correspondence theory implies that it is a dualism whereby the world is 'out there' and we and our theories are 'in here'.

31. Adapted from Hartwig, 'Alethia' and 'Alienation', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, 27, 33.

32. These distinctions are first explicitly stated in this manner in R.Bhaskar, *From East to West: Odyssey of a Soul [FEW]*, London and New York: Routledge (Ch. 1.3), but they are strongly implicit in *Dialectic*.

33. *Dialectic* elaborates a theory of the transcendentally real (or alethic) self, which grounds the pulse of freedom, in all but name (see M.Hartwig, 'Subjectivity', in Hartwig, ed., DCR, 443–8). It is first named, I think, and connected with our 'groundstates', in Bhaskar, *RMR*, 70.

34. See M.Hartwig, 'Alienation' and 'Ideology', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, 30–36 and 252–53, respectively.

35. See M.Hartwig, 'Tina syndrome' and 'Demi-reality', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR*, 465–7 and 113–16, respectively. Demi-reality (which is first explicitly theorised in Bhaskar, *FEW) is* (multiply compounded) Tina-reality.

36. Bhaskar, *FEW*, Part I.

37. Bhaskar, *RMR,* 84–5.
38. That is, freedom is intrinsic to what it is to be human. In a world without freedom there could be no intentional action, no formulating and carrying through of our own projects.
39. See M.Hartwig, 'Emancipatory axiology', in *DCR,* 157–64.
40. The shorter real definition of dialectic in the natural (including the social) world is given above: the absenting of absence; this is dialectical critical naturalism. But Bhaskar is quick to point out that, in the natural (including the social) world, where negentropic processes co-exist with an underlying entropy, not all change is dialectical in a developmental sense.
41. For more detail, see (apart from *Dialectic,* esp. Ch. 3.10) Bhaskar, *PE,* Ch. 7, and M.Hartwig, 'Eudaimonia', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR,* 187–9.
42. See Pär Engholm, 'Irrealism', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR,* 266–71.
43. That is, progressive/regressive, rational/rationalising.
44. Bhaskar, *PE,* 216. This distills the essence of the account in *Dialectic,* Ch. 4.
45. Hartwig, 'Eudaimonia', in Hartwig, ed., *DCR,* 188 (modified).
46. I return to Bhaskar's critique of irrealism in my 'Introduction' to Bhaskar, *PE.*
47. Theodor Adorno, cited in V.Geoghegan, *Ernst Bloch,* London and New York: Routledge, 1996,162.
48. One of the literal meanings of the Greek word *alētheia,* of which 'alethia' is the anglicised form. See Hartwig, 'Alethia'.
49. See Bhaskar, FEW; *Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Emancipation and Everyday Life [RMR],* New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, and London: Sage, 2002; *The Philosophy of Meta-Reality, Volume I: Meta-Reality: Creativity, Love and Freedom [MR],* New Delhi: Thousand Oaks, and London: Sage, 2002.

Preface

This book is the site of an encounter between a dialectically developed critical realism and Hegelian and Hegelian-inspired dialectic in the context of the multiple crises besetting humanity, rationality, the social (and, to an extent, the natural) sciences, Marxism and socialism. While it is, on the whole, a preservative generalization and enrichment of hitherto existing critical realism, it is a non-preservative sublation of Hegelian dialectic. The terms of the critical realist dialectic are non-identity, negativity, totality and transformative praxis or agency, in comparison with the Hegelian trio of identity, negativity and totality. However, my accounts of negativity and of totality are radically different from Hegel's. These four terms correspond to four moments or levels of development of the new system of dialectical critical realism and may, if one likes, be very loosely aligned with the four chapters of the work. *Dialectic* extends and deepens critical realism's characteristic concerns with ontology, existence and causality, science, social science and emancipation into (obviously) the realms of negativity and totality, but also the fields of reference and truth, spatio-temporality, tense and process, the logic of dialectical universalizability and on to the plane of ethics, where I articulate a combination of moral realism and ethical naturalism, which allows me to make the transition from the form of judgements to the content of a freely flourishing society. Moreover, the arguments I employ in this book for a dialecticized transcendental realism and critical naturalism can all be derived from positions which do not already presuppose (although they may entail—in some cases, transformed) scientific practices. *Dialectic* necessarily incorporates an exercise in the problem resolution, critical diagnosis and explanation of causally efficacious irrealist philosophies. For it is my contention that, properly conceived, critical realism and dialectic mutually presuppose one another. In addition to considering dialectic historically and systematically, I have treated it, amongst a variety of other modes, as the logic of argument, the method of immanent critique, the dynamic of conflict, the node of change and the axiology of freedom. All my arguments converge on a position which has very radical implications. Dialectic is essentially to do with the absenting of constraints on absenting absences or ills (which may also be regarded as constraints). This presupposes, inter alia, the critique of ontological monovalence, or a purely positive account of reality, which I show to be totally flawed. Apart from what I have said here, I would make only the rather immodest claim that this is the only system of dialectical philosophy I

know to sustain an adequate account of negativity and, a fortiori, since this is the linchpin of all dialectics, I hope of dialectic itself.

I must acknowledge my debt to Sheila Duncan-Bruce, to whom this book is dedicated, and whose tragic loss occurred during its writing. Second, I must thank Colin Robinson, amongst others, at Verso, for his friendship and support during a difficult time, for his patience and the prompt publication of the book. Third, I must yet again express my deep gratitude to Sue Kelly for absolutely invaluable secretarial assistance. I must also acknowledge my appreciation of Justin Dyer's meticulous copy-editing. Next I owe an immense and immeasurable debt to the growing world-wide and interdisciplinary band of critical realists and those interested in it for stimulation, debate and encouragement. Some names picked almost at random must stand in for a comprehensive list that would be impossible to compile: Michael Sprinker, Kurt Bayertz, Joe Urbas, Alan Chalmers, Doreen Massey, Tony Lawson, Gerry Webster, Trevor Pateman, Ed Soja, Margaret FitzSimmons, Terry Eagleton, Chris Norris, Charlie Smith, Peter Manicas, Mario Bunge, Helena Kozakiewicz, Veronique Havalange, Noam Chomsky, Roy Edgley, Tom Bottomore, Charles Taylor, Anita Craig, Sue Clegg, Andrew Sayer, John Lovering, Ülker Seymen, Yilmaz Öner, Jan van Dijk, Tomás Ibáñez, Björn Wittrock, Peter Wagner, Erik Wright, Barry Barnes, Margaret Archer, Terry Lovell, David Will, Guglielmo Carchedi, Bertell Ollman, John Searle, Jeffrey Isaac, Norman Geras, Gregor McLennan, Rom Harré, Gregory Elliott, Rajani Kanth. ... I stress again that this is a sample not a list and I am only too conscious of the contributions of those omitted. The new geographers within this network played a decisive role in the formative process of this book, as did those who persuaded me to take post-structuralism more seriously. The influence of both groups will be felt. Finally I would like to offer my warmest appreciation to those many, many friends whose solidarity has nurtured and sustained me during the writing of this text. Of these I can only specifically mention here a few—Ted Benton, Andrew Collier, Androulla Karaviotis, Judit Kiss, William Outhwaite, Kate Soper and, above all, Hilary Wainwright.

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ROY BHASKAR
May 1993
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Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Works by the Author

RTS2: *A Realist Theory of Science,* 2nd edn, Harvester Press, Brighton 1978 (Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1989) (1st edn, Leeds Books, Leeds 1975)

PON2: *The Possibility of Naturalism* 2nd edn, Harvester-Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead 1989 (1st edn, Harvester Press, Brighton 1979)

SRHE: *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation,* Verso, London 1986

RR: *Reclaiming Reality,* Verso, London 1989

PIF:*Philosophy and the Idea of Freedom,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1991

N.B.: 'C' stands for Chapter throughout the book.

Abbreviations of Terms

1M	=	First Moment
2E	=	Second Edge
3L	=	Third Level
4D	=	Fourth Dimension
EA	=	Extrinsic Aspect
IA	=	Intrinsic Aspect
ID	=	Intransitive Dimension
TD	=	Transitive Dimension
TMSA	=	Transformational Model of Social Activity
T/P	=	Theory/Practice

N.B.: These terms, which are used throughout the book, are explained in the text and the Glossary.

1

Introduction: Critical Realism, Hegelian Dialectic and the Problems of Philosophy—Preliminary Considerations

§ 1 Objectives of the Book

What is developed in this work is neither Hegelian dialectic nor, to my knowledge, any other pre-existing form of dialectic, but a critical realist dialectic. A major point of reference throughout this book will certainly be Hegelian dialectic, and in the course of it I hope to realize Marx's unconsummated desire 'to make accessible to the ordinary human intelligence'—though it will take more than two or three printers' sheets— 'what is *rational* in the method which Hegel discovered and at the same mystified',[1] as well as to clarify the exact relation between Marx's own dialectic and Hegel's one. But I will be discussing a variety of other dialectical (and anti-dialectical) modes, including Aristotelian dialectic, Kantian dialectic and Derridean deconstruction.

A work of this kind—a dialectical critique of purely analytical reason— can claim no more—or less—than dialectical consistency. For the moment this may be exemplified by what I have elsewhere characterized as developmental consistency[2]—the kind of consistency shown by connected theories in an ongoing research programme in science; or in nature by the development of a tadpole into a frog or an acorn into an oak—a consistency redeemable only in the course of, and at the end of, the day. Moreover, this book makes no claim to completeness—and that for immanent dialectical reasons too. Indeed it stands in the closest possible connection to the texts that will immediately follow it: *Hume, Kant, Hegel Marx* will elaborate the central historical argument of the book and provide a more detailed critical hermeneutics of those four thinkers, *Plato Etcetera* will resume the critical diagnosis and metacritique of the western philosophical tradition sketched in this study, and *Dialectical Social Theory* will engage at a more concrete level with the implications of the book's argument for social theory, geography and history.

This book has as its main objectives:

1. the dialectical enrichment and deepening of critical realism— understood as consisting of transcendental realism as a general theory of science and critical naturalism as a special theory of social science

(which includes the emancipatory axiology entailed by the theory of explanatory critique);

2. the development of a general theory of dialectic—or better, a dialectic—of which the Hegelian one can be seen as an important, but limited and highly questionable, special case; and one which will moreover be capable of sustaining the development of a general metatheory for the social sciences, on the basis of which they will be capable of functioning as agencies of human self-emancipation;

3. the outline of the elements of a totalizing critique of western philosophy, in its various (including hitherto dialectical) forms, including a micro sketch of certain nodal moments in the history of dialectical philosophy, capable, inter alia, of casting light on the contemporary crisis of socialism.

I shall contend that these objectives are intimately related, and especially that there are direct and immediate connections between the critical realist development of dialectical motifs and themes and the resolution of the problems, sublation of the problematics and explanation of the problem-fields of contemporary philosophy. To put this in 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, I shall argue, as a block on the development of the social sciences and projects of human emancipation—for this ontology currently informs much of their practice. For the transformation of this state of affairs dialectical critical realism—i.e. the development of dialectic in its critical realist form— is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. Philosophy, for its part, being out of joint with reality, is necessarily aporetic. We shall see in C3 how dialectical critical realism can begin to remedy this, but I hope the import of these remarks will soon be plain. This book represents an attempt to synthesize what I take to be the most fruitful aspects of the dialectical tradition (or traditions), most of which have come down to us through the mediation of Hegel, with the contemporary critical realist research programme—to, I think, their mutual advantage. But the structure of the resulting dialectic is very different from the Hegelian one. At the beginning, in this new dialectic, there is non-identity—at the end, open unfinished totality. In between, irreducible material structure and heteronomy, deep negativity and emergent spatio-temporality. In this work, I want to show that it is possible to think and act dialectically without necessarily being a Hegelian—or, if you prefer, vice versa.

§ 2 Dialectic: An Initial Orientation

In its most general sense, dialectic has come to signify any more or less intricate process of conceptual or social (and sometimes even natural) 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 (or being), plays a key role. But, as we shall see, dialectical processes and configurations are not always sublatory (i.e. supersessive), let alone preservative. Nor are they necessarily characterized by opposition or antagonism, rather than mere connection, separation or juxtaposition. Nor, finally, are they invariably, or even typically, triadic in form. To what may such processes, to the extent that they occur, be applied? Obviously to being, in which case we may talk about *ontological dialectics,* or dialectical ontologies which may operate at different levels. Then obviously to our thinking about reality— *epistemological dialectics;* and insofar as knowledge circulates in and/or out of what it is about—*relational dialectics*. Equally obviously to our practice— *practical dialectics*. Clearly, within these generic categories a vast variety of distinctions can be made, specifying more concrete or roughly parallel (e.g. ethical, aesthetic) dialectics. Equally clearly, dialectical processes may occur in our thinking about our thinking about reality, e.g. in the philosophy of science, so that one may talk of a meta-epistemological dialectic, and so on recursively. For critical realism all dialectics, insofar as they occur, are also ontological dialectics, though with respect to any, for example, epistemic investigation we may and perhaps must think of a distinct ontic field (into which the epistemological investigation may itself be reflexively incorporated). Similarly, all social dialectics are also practical dialectics, even though in the case of, say, structural analysis one may and perhaps must abstract from human agency. In respect of science, ontological, epistemological and the class of meta-epistemological dialectics may be mapped onto what I have called the intransitive, transitive and metacritical dimensions.[3] (For critical realism, relational dialectics, however thorough-going, can never abolish the existential intransitivity of the relata.) All these terms have a subject/topic ambiguity. Thus one might hold epistemological dialectics to be engaged with the dialectic of epistemology rather than the dialectic of what it is about, e.g. science. In this book I will be concerned with both kinds of dialectics, the former belonging to what I will style *metacritical dialectics,* which includes the relations between the two kinds.

Like Hegel, I take dialectic to be a logic of content and not just form. And, like him, I take this to centre on the norms of truth and freedom (mediated in practice by wisdom). That is, I take both to have a certain dynamic to them, a dynamic which I hope to describe. More fully I will show that truth, for example, must be understood as grounded, dynamic, totalizing

and context-sensitive, corresponding to the four moments of the critical real-
ist dialectic that I shall shortly outline. But instead of talking immediately of
truth and freedom, and respecting the geo-historical specificity of both, I will
talk about knowledge as specific kinds of beliefs (of different types) and of
emancipation from specific kinds of constraints. To the extent that I abstract
from content in the earlier portions of this book, particularly in the
exposition of Hegelian dialectic, this is for the sake of didactic clarity alone.

§ 3 Negation

In previous works I have shown how science itself presupposes a critical
realist ontology of the world as structured, differentiated and changing. And
I have argued that the chief metaphilosophical error in prevailing accounts of
science is the analysis, definition or explication of statements about being in
terms of statements about our knowledge of being, the reduction of ontology
to epistemology which I have termed the *'epistemic fallacy'*.[4] As ontology is
in fact irreducible to epistemology, this functions merely to cover the gener-
ation of an implicit ontology, on which the domain of the real is reduced to
the domain of the actual (actualism) which is then anthroprocentrically
identified with or in terms of sense-experience or some other human
attribute. Operating hand-in-hand with this overt collapse, engendered or
masked by the epistemic fallacy, is its practical counterpart, the ideology of
the compulsive determination of knowledge by being—for instance, in the
guise of reified facts or hypostatized ideas—in what I have characterized as
the 'ontic fallacy'.[5] The epistemic fallacy can be traced back to Parmenides.

But Parmenides also bequeathed another legacy to philosophy: the
generation of a purely positive, complementing a purely actual, notion of
reality, in what I am going to nominate the doctrine of *ontological
monovalence*. In this study I aim to revindicate negativity. Indeed, by the
time we are through, I would like the reader to see the positive as a tiny, but
important, ripple on the surface of a sea of negativity. In particular, I want to
argue for the importance of the concepts of what I am going to call 'real
negation', 'transformative negation' and 'radical negation'. Of these the
most basic is real negation. Its primary meaning is real determinate absence
or non-being (i.e. including non-existence). It may denote an absence, for
example, 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 distanciation or mediation,
death or demise, or simple non-existence. It connotes, inter alia, the hidden,
the empty, the outside; desire, lack and need. It is real negation which, as we
shall see, drives the Hegelian dialectic on, and it is our *omissive critique* of
Hegel—his failure to sustain certain crucial distinctions and categories
(including in the end that of absence itself)—that must drive the dialectic

past and beyond him. But real negation also connotes a process of mediating, distancing or absenting, i.e. it has a systematic process/ product bivalency or homonymy. In fact, as we shall see in the next chapter, it also signifies both process-in-product and product-in-process, so that it has a fourfold polysemy. How could one argue for the importance of real negation in, for example, science? Writings—books, research papers, experimental records—provide striking examples of it. Consider a book in a library. It typically involves an absent (and possibly dead) author, an absent reception necessary for its presence in the library, and absences—spaces inside and in between sequences of marks—necessary for its intelligibility, its readability. Again experimental activity involves a real demediation of nature, preventing or absenting a state of affairs that would otherwise have occurred, so as to enable us to identify a generative mechanism or complex free from outside influence or with such interference held constant. These may, if one likes, be taken as transcendental deductions of the presence of real negation in science, as conditions of its possibility. Real negation—think of empty spaces and absent x's where x stands in principle for any entity or feature. 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'.

Transformative negation refers to the transformation of some thing, property or state of affairs. Such a transformation may be essential or inessential, total or partial, endogenously and/or exogenously effected. Like real negation it has a process/product bipolarity: it can refer to the outcome or the means whereby it is brought about. All cases of transformative negation are also cases of real negation but the converse is not the case. They all involve the cessation or absenting of a pre-existing entity or state. A special, and highly important, case of transformative negation is *radical negation,* which involves the autosubversion, transformation or overcoming of a being or condition. It is, of course, important in the human domain to distinguish negating processes from self-negating processes and self-negating from self-consciously negating processes. All these species of negation—real, transformative and radical—have a systematic structural/empirical—or better, real/actual—ambiguity which I shall discuss in due course. Transformative negation, especially of the radical kind, is what Hegelians call 'determinate negation', but this is a misnomer—for real≥transformative≥radical negation may all be more or less determinate— that is, they may be fully determinate (think of the negation of the raw material in a finished automobile) or indeterminate in various degrees; or they may be 'fuzzy', duplicitous or otherwise other than determinate. In Hegelian dialectic real, transformative, radical and determinate negation are all identified, resulting in a linear self-generating process, e.g. of the unfolding of the concept in the *Logics,* but it is important to keep them distinct and see their identification as an important but limiting case.

If real negation is the most all-encompassing concept—extending from non-existence to metacritique—it is in transformative negation that the key to social dialectics lies. Indeed its schema is given by the transformational model of social activity which I have elaborated elsewhere and which will be suitably dialecticized and generalized in C2. Radical negation, for its part, is obviously the pivotal concept in self-emancipation and this connects with 'radical' in a more familiar sense. Moreover, to the extent that we are dealing with a self-contained totality, all transformative negation, that is to say change, will tend to occur as a result of or take the form of radical negation(s), as is arguably the case with global interdependence today.[6] The orthodox Platonic analysis of negation and change in terms of difference not only conflates substantial with formal relations[7] (change is paradigmatically substantial) but also overlooks the fact that differentiation typically presupposes change. This is not to deny that there is equally a case for a category of difference, e.g. established by distinct emergent domains or by sheer alterity or otherness (that is, real determinate other-being), not analysable in terms of change, i.e. without recourse to a unitary origin, a case forcibly prosecuted by Derrida. In rather the same way the implicit supposition behind the doctrine of ontological monovalence is that any instance of real negation can be analysed in purely positive terms. But Pierre's absence from the cafe doesn't *mean* the same as his presence at home (although the latter entails the former—which is equally entailed by his death) any more than it means the same as Jean's occupying his customary place.[*]

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[*] In an earlier publication in which I introduced the terms real and radical negation, their definitions were transposed.[8] I now call the notion of absence, including non-existence, 'real negation' because, as I have just argued, it is the primary concept and embraces that of transformative negation including self-negation. Moreover, conceptually, it extends our ontology synchronically, irrespective of over what space-time span the indefinite synchronic is defined, so that it does not depend essentially upon process. I should also mention that in my exposition of what I now call real negation I confused the epistemological question of our criteria for the reality of absence with the ontological question of whether, for example, a thing is, quite independently of us, absent (distanciated or non-existent), not there. I also failed to notice that our criteria for ascribing reality to absences need not be causal, but can be perceptual—as in Sartre's example,[9] where I see Pierre's absence from the café (when I am expecting to meet him), or as in the case of simple non-existential proofs in science, which will be discussed in C2. This was because I was tacitly thinking of non-being (or more generally absence) as *necessarily* involving depth, thus overlooking the simplest species, where it involves merely spatio-temporal distance. Anthony Giddens has given some currency to the term 'distanciation'.[10] However, it seems to me that in his work it sometimes means (a) stretching (and thereby extending presence or embedding) and sometimes simply (b) distancing (and thereby absenting and possibly disembedding). I shall make use of this term, and exploit this duality of meaning to connote the play of absence and presence, e.g. in the conceptual distanciation that

The chief result of ontological monovalence in mainstream philosophy is to erase the contingency of existential questions and to despatialize and detemporalize (accounts of) being. I shall be concerned with a variety of other modes of negation besides the ones I have already referred to. One may be briefly mentioned here—*subject negation*. This refers primarily to a subject in the process of formation or dissolution (e.g. in Hegelian logic passing over into its 'predicate'). As such it is clearly a variant of transformative negation, but I am going to extend its meaning to cover cases of non-transformative and non-trivially transformative real negation (e.g. non-existence and simple space-time distanciation without any other significant change) and counterpose it polemically to the propositional and predicate negations of standard logic. For it will be vital to my vindication of negativity that one can refer to absence, including non-existence; or, if one prefers to put it this way, that reference is not, contrary to the tradition from Plato to Frege, tied to positive existence. This, I will show in C2. Non-being, within zero-level being, exists and is present everywhere.

I shall also be occupied with negativity and negation in many other senses of the verb to 'negate', including 'deny', 'reject', 'contradict', 'oppose', 'exclude', 'marginalize', 'denigrate', 'erase', 'separate', 'split', 'sunder', 'cancel', 'annul', 'destroy', 'criticize' and 'condemn', and with their interconnections. But my primary emphasis will be on the categories of real, transformative and radical negation of determinate and indeterminate kinds. One other preliminary matter before I pass on. Real determinate negation, absence or non-being, is not equivalent to Hegel's nothing, which entirely lacks determinacy, and any sort of depth. Negativity, although it is the dynamic of Hegel's system and is in fact in the guise of contradiction greatly exaggerated by Hegel, is never developed or even simply retained—it is always cancelled and positivity restored. Seeing this is one of the merits of the young Hegelians. One of the few philosophers to pay serious attention to *categories* of negativity is Sartre, but it should be said straight away that my real negation is not equivalent to Sartrean nothingness but more to his *négatité;* though, as I have defined it, it is not intrinsically related to human activity.

§ 4 Four Degrees of Critical Realism

More generally, in this work, I shall be showing how critical realism, hitherto focusing—in what I shall call its first or prime moment (which I shall abbreviate to 1M)—on the concepts of structure, differentiation,

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occurs in analogical, metaphorial or metonymic work in the transitive process of science, which executes a crucial role in the epistemological dialectic.

change, alterity (as in the transitive/intransitive distinction—epistemic/ontic non-identity within ontology), transfactual efficacy, emergence, openness, etc., must be meshed with the characteristically dialectical categories, arguments, themes and pabula expressed in the ideas of negation, negativity, becoming, process, finitude, contradiction, development (which need not be progressive and may just be regarded as directional change including regression, retrogression and decay, in a thing or kind to at the limit fragmentation, chaos and/or collapse), spatiality, temporality, mediation, reciprocity and many more—including such figures as the hiatus, chiasmus and pause—at what I will call a second edge (abbreviated to 2E) of development. 1M suffices for, e.g., an adequate account of science which abstracts from space, time and the process of change, which posits 'principles of difference' or 'metaphysical inertia'. At 2E, which is the narrowly dialectical moment in a four-sided dialectic, the very principles of indifference are called into question and difference, and we have 'metaphysical (neg)entropy'. This is the moment of cosmology, of human geo-history, of personal biography, laborious or routinized work but also of joyful or idle play. At a third level (abbreviated to 3L) of development we have the characteristically totalizing motifs of totality, reflexivity (which is its inwardized form), concrete universality and what I will call 'concrete utopianism', subjectivity and objectivity, autonomy (practico-epistemological duality, consistency and coherence), reason and rationality including phronesis or practical wisdom, and the unity of theory and practice. This is at once the inner truth or pulse of things and the spot from which we must act, the axiological moment and (if there is such) metaphysical alethia. I will postpone thematizing it until after a consideration of the (very different) Hegelian totality. But 3L is not the end of the matter. A fourth dimension (4D) is required—for the critical realist totality is radically open. So we must return to practice. But this is not as a Nietzschean forgetting, but as active and reflexive engagement within the world in which we seek to achieve the unity of theory and practice in *practice*. Each level in this dialectic is preservative. 4D presupposes 3L presupposes 2E presupposes 1M. (This does *not* mean that every category at 2E is instantiated in some employment of a 3L category. Thus one can have dialectical connection without contradiction.) We are left with non-identity, structure, negativity, finitude, essentially transformative change, holistic causality and phronesis at the end—in agency. But agency is, of course, in a sense already there at the outset in the phenomenologicality of science, so we can say, if we like, that the end is implicit in the beginning,[*] but if we go

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[*] Thus I have previously argued that ontological realism (in the intransitive dimension) is consistent with and necessitated by epistemological relativism (in the transitive, geo-historical process of science), which is in turn consistent with and practically entailed by judgemental rationality (in the axiologically irreducible,

along with this rather Hegelian way of speaking, we must see the agency as a *radically transformed transformative praxis,* oriented to rationally groundable projects—ultimately flourishing in freedom.

What is the characteristic error at 3L which stands to 2E and 1M as ontological monovalence and actualism respectively do? It consists in ontological extensionalism—or what could also be called ontological partiality or 'externalism', where external is to be taken in the sense of the denial of internal relationality. A relation aRb is internal if and only if a would not be what it is *essentially* unless it were related to b in the way that it is. Partiality is, of course, closely related to separability, which goes back to Aristotle's definition of substance taken up in crucial respects by Descartes, and in Aristotle derived perhaps ultimately from the Platonic theory of predication. The canonical, and also extreme, version of ontological extensionalism is provided by Hume's famous dictum that things 'seem conjoined but never connected'.[*] (This is an extreme formulation because it denies even necessary relationships between externally related things.) Besides denying internal relations, other modes of extensionalizing thought and/or practice consist in hypostatizing the moments or aspects of a totality, treating space-time as independent of the system of material things, conceiving morality as independent of the network of social relations (and in particular denying a fact to value and theory to practice link), failing to recognize (and/or being indifferent to) identities-in-differences or unities-in-diversities and/or differences-in-identity or diversities-in-unity, abstracting from specifying differentiations, e.g. by subsuming a particular under a universal without mediation, failing to see the tri-unity of subjectivity, intersubjectivity and objectivity (e.g. within language or experience) but then equally failing to articulate this tri-unity as formed within an always already existing social world into which we are 'thrown' and as occurring only within an over-reaching material objectivity, of which the social world is a contingent, emergent but cosmically ephemeral outcome. Let us just consider for a moment the thought—reality relationship. A philosophical ontology can be detotalizing or partial in at least four ways: (1) it can objectivize reality, e.g. by extruding thought from it; (2) it can subjectivize

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intrinsic aspect of, or normative moment in, science).[11] Even more simply, one might cite the ontological arguments of transcendental realism as exemplifying 1M; the meta-sociology of the transformational model of social activity (which is also the logic of the transitive dimension of science) as prefiguring 2E; the naturalistic ethics entailed, or at least facilitated, by the theory of explanatory critique as intimating 3L; and the emancipatory axiology so situated as indicating 4D. But, as we shall see, *this* historical sublation is not entirely preservative insofar as the moments of critical realism are affected by its dialectical deepening which is also a cross-fertilization.

[*] 'All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another, but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined but never connected'[12]

reality, e.g. by failing to locate thought within a non-ideational and mediated reality encompassing it; (3) it can split reality, e.g. on eidetic/sensual (Platonic), phenomenal/noumenal (Kantian), or social/physical (hermeneutical) lines; and/or (4) it can adopt some combination of these expedients. Let us take a concrete case—that of Humean empiricism, dominant in mid-twentieth-century philosophical, scientific and social thought and present in that of Kant, Hegel and much post-Nietzschean post-structuralism. We can see its characteristic error at 1M to lie in anthropomorphizing and actualizing reality, at 2E that of positivizing and deprocessualizing (de-spatio-temporalizing) it, at 3L that of subjectivizing it and at 4D, in a characteristic and necessary inversion,[13] reifying and fetishizing that part of it which is the product of human practices. If we write d_r as a domain of the real, d_a as the domain of the actual, d_+ as the domain of the positive, d_s as the domain of the subjective, empiricism can thus be seen to rest on an illicit generalization of the special case $d_r \geq d_a \geq d_+ \geq d_s \geq d_e$ where the latter is identified in terms of human experience, and where human sense-experience is conceived as a product or function of reified facts, i.e. $d_e = d_f$. More generally I shall be arguing that western philosophy, including most dialectical and specifically Hegelian thought, is characterized by a disemancipatory anthropocentricism/morphism, marked by ontological actualism, monovalence, extensionalism, subjectivism (in its post-Cartesian period) and de-agentification (a denegation of human agency).

These levels of deepening of critical realism should not be hypostatized. What they specify are co-present and systematically 'intermingle' in reality. Furthermore, although, as in Hegel, it is the second moment—of negativity—that is the narrowly dialectical one, each of the others and the whole are implied in it as a system. Moreover, there are dialectics specific to each level. Thus the dialectics of 1M are typically dialectics of stratification and superstructure-formation or superstructuration, including emergence. The typical dialectical figures here are what I shall call the *dialectical comment,* which I shall write as dc', and *dialectical reason* (dr'), which I shall explicate in relation to Hegelian dialectic. I shall later link these figures to a characteristic pattern of problem-generation, resolution and critique in science and philosophy and to the theme of *theory/practice inconsistency,* which I shall see as essential to dialectic generally and pivotal to the emancipatory spiral of transformist politics and (counter-)ideology. Dialectical reason includes, in metacritical analysis, displaying the common or dialectical grounds (dg') of apparently opposed but mutually complicit dialectical counterparts or contraries, as, I shall argue, in the Kantian opposition between knowledge and faith, or more generally between anthroporealism and transcendent—which I shall rigorously differentiate from transcendental—realism, or between empiricism and idealism. This includes the logic of what Derrida has called 'supplementarity',[14] and what

Freud called 'compromise formation'. Metacritical dialectical reason also isolates the duplicities and dialectical paralogisms generated by philosophies of identity including Hegel's own. At 2E the dialectics are characteristically dialectics of change, including interchange (reversal), and transition. Determinate transformative negation, though it is present in some guise in all dialectics, comes to the fore here, but the most distinctive figure at 2E is *dialectical process* (dp′)—as when, for instance, we are incessantly forced to revise our descriptive, taxonomic and explanatory vocabularies in the light of unexpected, and possibly recursive, epistemic and/or ontic change.

At 3L the characteristic figure is dialectical totality (dt′), as when separated phenomena come to be seen as aspects of a unified (or disunified) whole. Hermeneutics provides a good initial heuristic for understanding what it is to think in this dialectical mode. In a painting it is not only that the parts cannot be understood except in relation to the whole and vice versa but—and this is the clue to Hegelian totality—they mutually 'infect' each other—the whole is in the part, as my body is in my writing hand. This is what Althusser meant by 'expressive totality',[15] though he vastly underestimated the extent to which Marx not just in his exploratory work but also in his systematic writings used, in Pareto's graphic image, words 'like bats'.[16] Nor can we say that this was necessarily wrong—it is merely a particular kind of totality. Montage, and pastiche generally, and entities like the British Working Class in February 1992, provide examples of very different sorts of totalities. Let me give a concrete example of a 3L dialectic—the Lefebvrean dialectic of centre and periphery,[17] where this is to be understood partially literally in terms of the globalization of capitalism and culture and partially as a metaphor for the dialectic of power and resource flows between an increasingly integrated and homogenized 'centre' and an increasingly marginalized and fragmented periphery, in the 'south', in the 'north' and in the 'south-in-the-north'—and in the physical, social and psychic peripheralizations therein. At 4D the dominant pivotal figure is dialectical *praxis*, which I shall write as **dɸ.** Relating it to the immediately preceding example, the dialectic here calls for the retotalization of the periphery in the mutual recognitions of identities-in-difference and unity-in-diversity, mediated therefore by mutual recognition of differential (personal, social, local, etc.) identities and involving a degree of recentrification (psychic, social, local and global) in a transformed transformative praxis for the retotalization of the human race. This would involve a non-preservative *dialectical sublation* (ds′) of the pre-existing state of affairs.

Sublations, generally, as species of determinate transformative negations, may be totally, essentially or partially preservative. Within and outside these categories further important discriminations may be made, e.g. a transformative negation may preserve what is held to be of value in, even though it is not essential to, the sublated social form. But sublations are not,

of course, the only *dialectical result* (dr^0). Results include stand-offs, the mutual undoing of the contending parties, the preservation of the status quo ante, retrogression and many other outcomes besides sublation. Nor does it make sense to talk of an *Aufhebung* in many types of what may be properly called dialectics—e.g. in social life, of *Verstehen* (per se), of structure, process and agency, of presence and absence or of embedding and disembedding in space and time and from space in time and vice versa, or of overlapping, intersecting or disjoint spatio-temporalities. These involve polarities or more complex figures that may figure in sublations or generally outcomes, but, as part of the transcendental parameters of any conceivable social life, are not themselves sublatable, or so it would seem reasonable to suppose. Of course a dialectical outcome or result, of any of these characteristic modes, is only spatio-temporary; the potential starting point for a new round of real transformative negation.

By the end of this chapter the very different topologies of the critical realist and Hegelian dialectics will become apparent. But it should perhaps be said here and now, if it is not already obvious, that, although I will show their connections, my 1M, 2E and 3L do not correspond to the Hegelian moments of understanding, dialectic or negative reason and speculative or positive reason shortly to be discussed. They encompass different types of dialectic, within each of which (dialectical) negativity has a role to play; and the movement or dialectic of critical realism as a whole (which, of course, includes 4D), to be articulated fully in the chapters to come, traverses and envelops all these phases or levels. Nor do the moments of dialectical critical realism match the tetrapolity of analytical, dialectical, totalizing and practical reasoning. For a start, 4D consists not in practical reasoning but in (reasonable) practice—not the same thing at all. Moreover, critical realist dialectical reasoning comprises all these modes of reasoning and practice and their unity. In particular there is a dialectic of dialectical and analytical (or formal) reasoning in the course of which discourse moves in and out of the domain of formal reasoning, be it of a deductive or, for example, inductive type, in which meanings and values remain fixed (or stable in their indeterminacy), which is of great importance in science, philosophy and everyday life. Furthermore, dialectical critical realism is dialogical—discursive, inter-subjective through and through. This will become plain when I discuss the communicative dimension of what I have called the 'social cube' (which is really a space-time cubic stretch or flow) in C2.9. In this way critical realist dialectic incorporates an important range of historical connotations to the word, to be introduced in §6 and thematized in C2, which Hegelian dialectic, rooted in a post-Cartesian monological philosophy of consciousness, however aware of its social matrix, lets slip—a point that Habermas has not been slow to stress.[18]

§ 5 Prima Facie Objections to Critical Realism

There is one other preliminary matter that should be dealt with here before I turn to Hegelian dialectic. It may be contended that critical realism is, or began as, a philosophy of—and *for*—science, even if it is conceded that it is not a scientistic philosophy.[19] How then can I treat of theory generally, or by what right do I identify it as a subset of the domain of the real, or indeed envelop in my critique philosophies—including epistemologies—which do not purport to be about science? Let us consider the last objection first. There is an important grain of truth here. There is indeed a big difference between science and everyday knowledge, which the philosophical tradition has—at least in its post-Lockean period—tended to conflate or otherwise obscure, the significance of which I will bring out anon. But I think, and would like to show, that science provides a hidden 'analogical grammar'[20] for the metacritical analysis of philosophies—at any rate at 1M. (At 2M, 3L and 4D the wider social context is more important, though we should never underestimate the power buried in the human psyche-soma.) Correspondingly, transposing philosophical theses of an epistemological kind into their presuppositions about and implications for science can be extraordinarily illuminating. In particular it effects a *concretization* (itself a dialectical development) of these, which makes it easier to identify exactly what their insights, aporiai, tensions and effects are. A parallel recasting of ethical positions and arguments into social theoretic positions can be equally illuminating. To turn to the first objection now, it is the case that the transcendental arguments used to establish critical realism were in the first instance thrown up by existing reflections on (theories of) science, of which they constituted an immanent critique. But in C3 I intend also to derive (dialectical) transcendental realism both without recourse to science and by taking up the challenge of Heideggerian existential phenomenology. There I will consider science precisely as engaged concernful human activity with *Dasein* exploring its *Umwelt* with its equipment (language, pre-existing, yet not necessarily articulated, knowledge and tools), constituting a 'referential totality' ready-to-hand; that is, I will in effect treat science as an *existential* (employing categories). I will also consider the extent to which dialectical transcendental, more generally critical, realism can be generated by reflection on the presuppositions of the pathology of everyday life.

Finally, I should make it explicit that I do not see science as a supreme or overriding value, but only as one among others to be balanced (in a balance that cannot be wholly judged by science) in ergonic, emancipatory and eudaimonistic activity. Nor do I think the objects of science exhaust reality. On the contrary, they afford only a particular angle or slant on reality, picked out precisely for its explanatory scope and power. Moreover, alongside ethical naturalism I am committed to moral realism and I would also like to

envisage an adjacent position in aesthetics, indeed viewing it as a branch of practical philosophy, the art of living well. A last word here. Starting with knowledge as a systematic phenomenon I reject that cognitive triumphalism, the roots of which lie in the epistemic fallacy, which identifies what is (and what is not) with what lies within the bounds of human cognitive competence. Reality is a potentially infinite totality, of which we know something but not how much. This is not the least of my differences with Hegel, who, although a more subtle exponent of cognitive triumphalism, Prometheanism or absolutism, nevertheless is a conduit directly connecting his older contemporary Pierre de Laplace to Lenin and thence diamat and the erstwhile command economies of the omniscient party states. But Hegel was a much more subtle exponent of cognitive triumphalism, as we shall in due course see.

§ 6 On the Sources and General Character of the Hegelian Dialectic

There are two principal inflections of the dialectic in Hegel: *(α)* as a logical process of reason; and *(β)*, more narrowly, as the dynamo of this process, the method, practice of experience of determinate negation. But to understand both one must go back to the roots of this most complex—and hotly contested—concept in ancient Greek thought. Here I will be dealing briefly with material that I will treat in C2 in more thematic and historical detail.

(α) Derived from the Greek *dialectikē*, meaning roughly the art of conversation or discussion—more literally, reasoning by splitting into two— Aristotle credited Zeno of Elea with its invention, as deployed in his famous paradoxes—most notoriously, of motion. These were designed to vindicate the Eleatic cosmology by drawing intuitively unacceptable conclusions from its rejection. But the term was first generally applied in a recognizably philosophical context to Socrates' mode of argument, or *elenchus,* which was differentiated from the Sophistic *eristic,* the technique of disputation for the sake of rhetorical success, by the orientation of the Socratic dialogue towards the disinterested pursuit of truth. Plato himself regarded dialectic as the supreme philosophical method and the 'coping-stone' of the sciences— using it to designate both the definition of ideas by genus and species (founding logic) and their interconnection in the light of a single principle, the Form of the Good (instituting metaphysics). At one and the same time dialectic was the means of access and assent to the eternal—the universal-and-necessarily-certain—and such Forms or Ideas were the justification for the practice of dialectic. In this inaugural moment of the western philosophical tradition, fundamentalism, classical rationalist criteria for knowledge and dialectic were indissolubly linked. Aristotle's opinion of

dialectic, which he systematized in his *Topics,* was considerably less exalted.[21] For the most part he regarded it as a mere propaedeutic to the syllogistic reasoning expounded in his *Analytics,* necessary to obtain the assent of one's interlocutors but, being based on merely probabalistic premises, lacking the certainty of scientific knowledge. This last was, however, dependent on the supplementation of induction by *nous* or that intellectual intuition which allowed us to participate in the divine, i.e. knowledge as Plato had defined it (although Plato had not claimed to achieve it), the true starting points *(archai)* of science. There are places, however, where Aristotle took dialectic, as the method of working from received opinions *(endoxa)* through the discussion and progressive probative augmentation of conflicting views and aporiai, as an *alternative* way of arriving at *archai.*[22] If he had taken this course consistently, Aristotle, however, would never have satisfied Platonic criteria for knowledge (*epistēmē* rather than *doxa*), never have got beyond induction. The first great *achieved* identity theorist was already caught in a vice between Plato and Hume—a vice that was to determine the subsequent trajectory of western philosophy: *historical determination by rationalist epistemology, structural domination by empiricist ontology.*

The sense of conversational interplay and exchange, involving the assertion, contradiction, distinction and qualification of theses, was retained in the practice of medieval disputation. It was this sense that was probably most familiar to Kant, who also took over the Aristotelian conception of dialectic as relying on premises which were in some measure inadequate as well as the analytical/dialectical contrast. For Kant, dialectic was that part of transcendental logic which showed the mutually contradictory or antinomic state into which the intellect fell when not harnessed to the data of experience. By a turn to transcendental subjectivity, Kant combined, or seemed to combine, the satisfaction of rationalist demands on knowledge with empiricist criteria for being—but only at the price of leaving things-in-themselves unknowable. Kantian dialectic showed the inherently *limited* nature of human cognitive and moral powers, the resulting inherent impossibilities, as well as the conditions of possibility of human (non-archetypal, non-holy) intelligence and will. For Kant this was enlightenment, but it entrained a systematically sundered world and a whole series of splits, between knowledge and thought, knowledge and faith, phenomena and noumena, the transcendental and the empirical, theory and (practical) reason, duty and inclination, this world and the next (splits which were also interiorized within each term separately), as well as those expressly articulated in the antinomies. These dichotomies were to be only weakly (albeit influentially) repaired in the teleologies of the *Critique of Judgement*.

This spread of connotations of dialectic includes, then, argument and conflict, disputation, struggle and split, dialogue and exchange, but also

probative progress, enlightenment, demystification and the critique of illusion.

Hegel synthesized *(α)* this Eleatic idea of dialectic as *reason* with another ancient strand, *(β)* the Ionian idea of dialectic as *process*—in *(γ)* the notion of dialectic as the self-generating, self-differentiating and self-particularizing *process of reason*. This second (Ionian) idea typically assumed a dual form: in an *ascending dialectic,* the existence of a higher reality (e.g. the Forms or God) was demonstrated; and in a *descending dialectic,* its manifestation in the phenomenal world was explained. Prototypes of these two phases are the transcendent dialectic of matter of ancient scepticism, in which the impermanence of the sensate world, or the existence of error, or of evil, is taken as a ground for positing an unchanging or completely true, or perfectly good, realm—logically, of the forms, theologically of God; and the immanent dialectic of spiritual diremption of neo-Platonic and Christian eschatology from Plotinus and Eriugena to Silesius and Böhme, which sought to explain why a perfect and self-sufficient being (God) should disclose itself in the dependent and imperfect sphere of matter. Combination of the ascending and descending phases results in a quasi-spatio-temporal pattern of original unity, loss or division and return or reunification (graphically portrayed in Schiller's influential *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*) or a quasi-logical pattern of hypostasis, actualization and redemption. Combination of the Eleatic and Ionian strands yields the Hegelian absolute—a logical process or *dialectic* which actualizes itself by *alienating,* or becoming other than, itself and which restores its self-unity by recognizing this alienation as nothing other than its own free expression or manifestation—a process that is recapitulated and completed in the Hegelian system itself.

The three principal keys to Hegel's philosophy—spiritual monism, realized idealism and immanent teleology—can now be cut. Together they form the pediment to it. The outcome of the first dialectical thread in Kant was a view of human beings as bifurcated, disengaged from nature and inherently limited in both cognitive and moral powers. Hegel's generation, as we shall see in C4, experienced the Kantian splits, dichotomies, disharmonies and fragmentations as calling for the restoration of what Charles Taylor has nicely called an 'expressive unity'[23]—lost since the idealized ancient Greek world—that is, in philosophical terms, for a monism—but one which, unlike Spinoza's, paid due heed to diversity, which would be in effect a *unity-in-diversity,* and to the constitutive role of subjectivity; that is, one which preserved the legacy of Luther, Descartes and the Enlightenment formulated in the great Kantian call to 'have courage to use your own reason'[24] or radical autonomy from 'self-incurred tutelage',[25] and that was firmly predicated on the achievements of the critical philosophy. For Hegel the problem of elaborating a non-reductionist and